The Heart Beat

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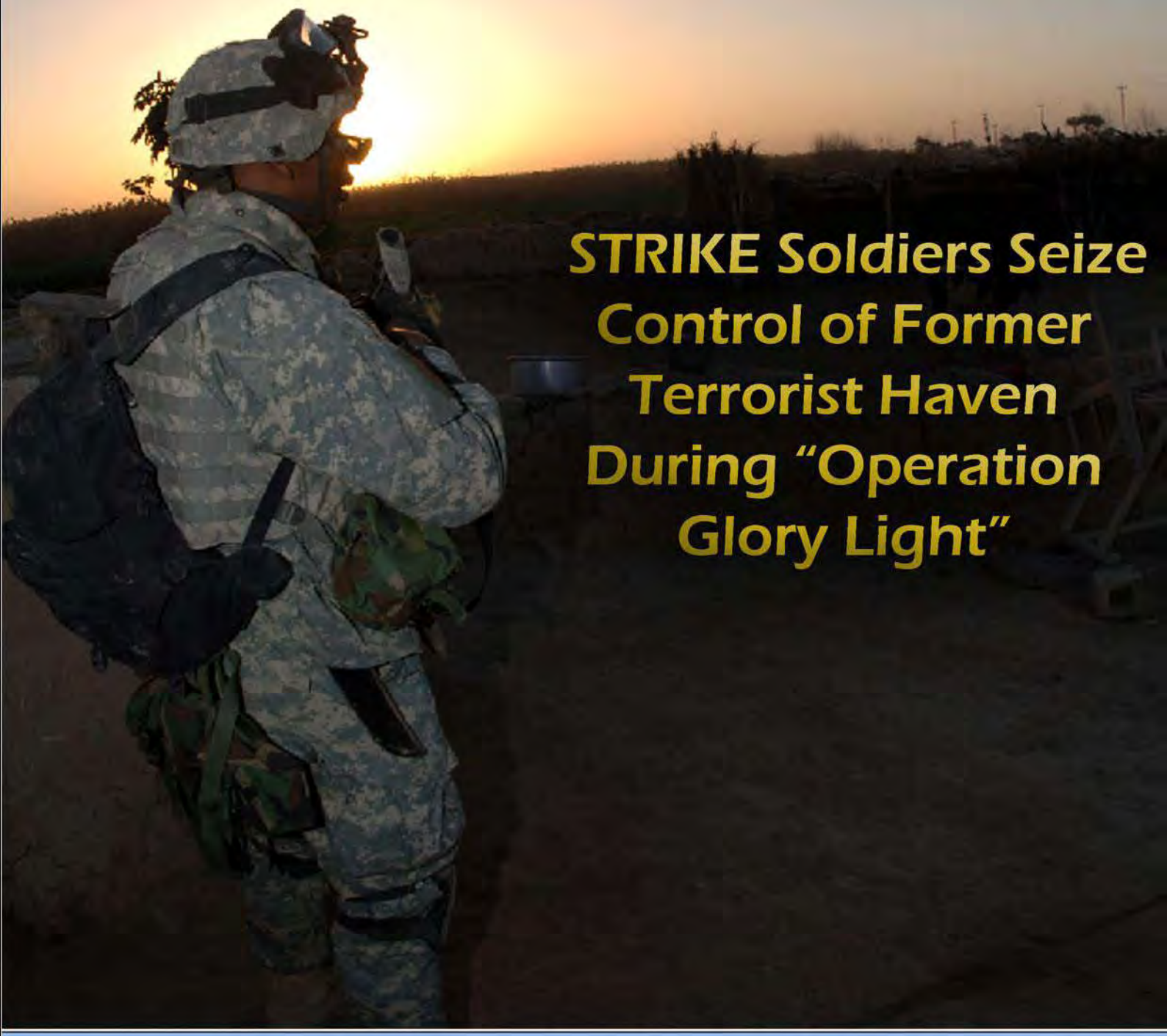

STRIKE Soldiers Seize Control of Former Terrorist Haven During "Operation Glory Light"

Free Mail

TO:

FROM:

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STRIKE 6

Fear not; for they that be with us are more than be with them.

— 2 Kings 6:16

While we are in Iraq, there is no question that the times are often disquieting and for some even terrifying. Our present environment seems shaky and insecure. Our world, bounded by reeds, mud huts, buildings, IEDs, innocent children, women and men and insurgents is constantly changing– we know first hand, and too well, that terrorists threaten to disrupt and destroy all that is good. In Iraq, each of us sees this crisis.

It is well that this crisis should urge us to make the world over, but long before we can do this, we can let this crisis make us over into the sort of people the world is going to need.

We must let this crisis change us, but not let it change what we stand for. We, STRIKE Soldiers, clearly stand for freedom, honor, integrity and justice. We need not change our hearts in order to defeat these terrorists; rather, we must recognize that in our hearts there are many that stand by us in our cause. We are in war, because this war is just. It is not easy– no war is.

"We're in war...There is only one thing to do in a war. Form our battalions and carry the fight to the enemy."

Oliver Wendell Holmes

You, STRIKE BCT — "Black Hearts," are indeed carrying the fight to the enemy and each of you is doing it magnificently. You are changing, and you are changing this world– there is no doubt, there are more with us than against us.

I am truly proud of you.

STRIKE!

Col. Todd J. Ebel

Commanding

Cover photo

Photo by Spc. Timothy Story

A Strike Soldier stands guard in Sadr Yusufiyah, while the Sun rises during Operation Glory Light.

STRIKE Soldiers Seize Control of Former Terrorist Haven

Story by Maj. J. Frank Garcia

Photos by Spc. Timothy Story

BAGHDAD — Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division combined with soldiers of the 6th and 9th Iraqi Army Divisions, conducted operations in the city of Sadr-Yusufiyah, near the Euphrates River to secure a terrorist stronghold early this month.

The operation began on March 2 with the air insertion of 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry south of Sadr-Yusufiyah followed by the air insertion of 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry and elements of 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division north of Sadr-Yusufiyah. The entry into the area was met with minimal resistance.

"This combined operation was conducted based on overwhelming credible evidence and probable cause that terrorists were using this area as a haven to build IEDs and to stage attacks against the coalition forces and the Iraqi people." said Col. Todd Ebel, commander of 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.

Despite not encountering significant enemy contact, signs of a terrorist presence were found. While clearing an objective, 1st Battalion, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) found the first of 17 caches near Sadr-Yusufiyah. Throughout the course of nine days the following items were found: 13 122mm rockets, 54 120mm rounds, 10 82mm rounds, 67 60mm rounds, nine 50mm mortar rounds, two boxes of 60mm mortar primers, four rockets, one rocket propelled grenade launcher with nine RPG rounds, nine RPG boosters, eight machine guns, two vehicles rigged with explosives, 300 lbs. of TNT, several rolls of detonation cord and a large amount of material normally associated with the making of road side bombs. "The mission was a success. Whenever you find these types of munitions and IEDs you have saved lives." said Ebel. "We were prepared to use force to secure the area, fortunately we were able to accomplish our task without a significant fight from the enemy." Ebel said.

The Soldiers of 1st Bn., 502nd Inf. secured an area south of Sadr-Yusufiyah to allow freedom of maneuver for 2nd Bn, 502nd Inf. The 1-502 Soldiers were the first to be inserted and expected a fight. They experienced some small arms fire, however it did not prevent them from accomplishing their mission. "Glory Light allowed us to take the fight to the insurgents and kick them out of areas they have been operating out of freely," said Lt. Col. Thomas Kunk, commander of 1st Bn., 502nd Inf.

The primary effort was in the north where 2nd Bn, 502nd Inf. and soldiers of the 6th and 9th Iraqi Army Divisions, including elements of an Iraqi mechanized infantry battalion established a presence in Sadr-Yusufiyah.

The Iraqi army played a key role in the operation. They arrived by night in helicopters alongside their US comrades. "The Iraqi army is able to communicate well with the locals," said an interpreter for the Iraqi army who goes by the name of Fox. "We know Arabic culture and are able to pick up on body language and other indicators that assist us in establishing a good relationship with the locals." Fox said he is a true believer in a positive future for Iraq and is happy to play a role in its future. His brother also serves as an interpreter for the US Army. "As an English speaking Iraqi I feel it is important to work with the US Army and learn what we can. The Iraqi army gets stronger everyday. It is our country we must be responsible for its security."

The commander of 2nd Bn., 502nd Inf. was very happy with the way the operation unfolded.

"This operation was vital to our battalion and the local Iraqis living under fear of terror. We cleared anti-Iraqi forces and foreign fighters from Sadr-Yusufiyah and established a presence in the town to keep the terrorists from returning into the area," said Lt. Col. Robert Haycock, commander of 2nd Bn. 502nd Inf. Haycock was very impressed by the Iraqi army participation. "The 4/6 Iraqi army were the ones who led the cache searches and are mostly responsible for gathering the information from locals about the whereabouts of the terrorists and caches," said Haycock. "These Iraqi soldiers found a com-

Story continued on Pg. 12 see CONTROL

New Medical Center opens for Camp Striker

BAGHDAD — For five months the wounded and sick Soldiers at Camp Striker have been treated in older, deteriorating tents. A sick Soldier from 2nd Brigade Combat Team would have to walk through the mud and gravel only to sit in the entrance of a dark, hot tent and wait on wooden benches to be seen, but on March 17 this all changed when a ribbon cutting ceremony was held for the new "Strike" Memorial Troops Medical Clinic (TMC).

Before 2nd BCT deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, the commander, Col. Todd Ebel, had a plan to provide proper medical care for his Soldiers in a sturdy, well-built and clean facility that could offer the right care in the right environment.

"Frankly I was discouraged upon my arrival to Camp Striker, I was looking deep as my role as a commander of a brigade combat team which I knew would go into the most lethal of all areas in Iraq," said Ebel. "I was discouraged in that a facility, that we will now enjoy and can benefit from, was not even in the forecast for my Soldiers nor for the Soldiers that transit through Camp Striker."

The plan came full circle for Ebel and the Medics of Company C, 526th Brigade Support Battalion, when the construction of the new medical facility was completed and the lights turned on.

"The medical facility is the first thing I asked to be built, it seems like it should never even have been requested," said Ebel. "It should have been understood that we would always take care of our Soldiers on Camp Striker."

The new TMC offers more than adequate space for each section of medical care. There are offices and rooms for examination, physical therapy, pharmacists and dentistry.

"The old location was two tents, our dentist was actually working in a very crowded corner," said Capt. Shannon Rowe, Company C commander. "Now he actually has an entire room dedicated to dental care where he can do dental x-ray which was very limited in the old facility."

Through a set of double wide doors, easily accessible from the road, is the large trauma center. In this spacious area, centered in the TMC, patients requiring trauma care can receive x-rays and be stabilized before being moved smoothly out the back door to be evacuated if necessary.

"We also have a seven bed patient hold ward which can hold up to 15 [patients], our old facility could only hold up to six," Rowe said. "This is important because we can hold soldiers who have been wounded in combat for up to 72 hours keep them here with BCT and allow the leadership to take part in the healing, so that has been extremely beneficial."

In addition to more room for inpatient care, the new TMC also now has dedicated rooms for the lab as well as x-ray. The providers have their own separate area which helps the medics with patient privacy, Rowe said.

Space is not the only challenge the medics were faced with in the old facility, the capability to treat certain wounds and illnesses was extremely limited and the medics had to send Soldiers away from Camp Striker for treatment.

"This facility, with in the last three weeks we have been here, our patient numbers have gone up 50 percent," said Rowe. "We are actually holding more patients here and we are able to do a lot more on site care. We could do some limited care in the old tents, but right now we are actually evacuating less people and keeping them here closer to the fight."

This facility is not only a blessing to the Soldiers who may need care in the future, but it will benefit the medics who are serving on Camp Striker now and in the future.

"[The new TMC] actually has been a huge motivational jump for [the Soldiers], it was kind of disheartening to be one of the few medical units here that wasn't in a fixed facility," Rowe said. "When we moved over here five months into the deployment, morale skyrocketed."

Each Soldier of Company C, 526th BSB, spent countless hours working on the new building. Some Soldiers built shelving units for the medical supplies, some set up the offices and others even helped with the construction just to offer the proper care for their patients.

"It's been hard work," She said. "This has given them a huge

Story Continued on Pg. 14 see TMC

TASK FORCE 1-22 UNCOVERS FIVE WEAPONS CACHES NEAR AL RASHID

With the help from a tip from a local national, Soldiers from Task Force 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, made a significant discovery March 24. The Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Company B, also known as "Bear," uncovered multiple weapons caches south of the Al Rashid District in southern Baghdad.

The insurgency took a major set back with the discovery of the five weapons caches and confiscation of the large amount of ordnance found. This cache find will deny the Anti-Iraqi Forces ability to launch future operations against Coalition Forces. The five weapons caches consisted of 283 82 mm mortar rounds, 175 73mm rockets, 158 60mm mortar rounds, 200 boxes of ammunition with an additional eight boxes of loose ammunition linked and ready to be used, 29 120mm rounds, seven 122mm missles and multiple boxes of fuses, unknown ammunition and other ordinances.

It took the Soldiers approximately 12 hours to unearth and account for all pieces of ordnance found in each of the five cache sites. Once all of the ordnance was compiled at a nearby location, the Air Force Explosives Ordnance Disposal Team directly supporting TF 1-22 conducted a controlled detonation the multiple explosives, denying the insurgents use of the weapons.

"The Soldiers on the ground did an outstanding job finding the cache with the help from the S2," said Capt. Matthew Weber, B/1-22 IN Commander. "The discovery by my soldiers will keep more weapons out of insurgents' hands and make the Rashid Nahia a safer place for everyone."

Roger That

American and Iraqi Soldiers Live, Fight Together to Bring a Better Iraq

Story and Photos by
Spc. George Welcome

BAGHDAD-- Patrol Base Warrior, located in the Sadr Yusufiyah area is not much different than most patrol bases one may find in country. At one time it was the lavish home of a sheik who is now detained on charges of terrorism, but as far as function, missions are planned and executed from the outpost just like any other base.

The fact that American and Iraqi troops are living together on the base doesn't really make it incredibly special either. What is unique about Warrior is the atmosphere that exists there. Soldiers on both sides seem to have gone from having mutual respect for each other, to developing genuine friendships.

As the base has only been established for one week, the men were still busy filling sand bags and HESCO baskets to ensure force protection. Despite not speaking the same language, the men laughed and joked with each other as they continued to fill what looked like thousands of empty sandbags.

"The Iraqi army have been helping us out since we got here," said Spc. Jimmy Schneiter , a team leader with 3 platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.

According to an interpreter, soldiers of the Iraqi army have been so productive due to the fact that they are not separated or treated like outsiders.

"The Iraqi soldiers are made to feel like they are a part of the team, so they don't get treated any differently than the Americans do," said the man known as "Fox", who has been an Army interpreter for the last 18 months.

Although his primary job is to be an interpreter, Fox, 28, a native of Baghdad feels that he is obliged to be much more.

"I like my job because I get to help the American and Iraqi forces," said Fox. "My job is more than just to be an interpreter. "We help the Iraqi people and American forces understand each other."

Although he feels strongly about helping his country, Fox knows that his job is not without risks.

"If an insurgent only has one bullet and has the chance to shoot a Soldier or an interpreter, he would shoot the interpreter," Fox stated. "The terrorists want space between the Iraqi people and the American forces. They need it in order to succeed."

He also believes that the Iraqi army will be ready to face the challenge of defending Iraq once the United States leaves.

"The IA is the future of Iraq," Fox said. "Eventually the U.S. will be gone, and these soldiers will be ready to protect democracy because they believe in what they are doing."

The Iraqi soldiers also feel a strong sense of parity and are glad to be having the opportunity to serve their country.

"After three years of working with the Americans I haven't felt until now, that I was safe with the Americans or that they didn't hate me because I am Iraqi. Now I am treated like a soldier, and I am taken care of," said Sgt. 1st Class Mahdi Tahar Mareb. "If you want proof of that, look at our station now, it is an American and Iraqi station. We work together, fill sandbags together, we do the same jobs so we don't feel different. It's a very good feeling."

"I like working with the U.S. Army. They are helping us to build our own army," Mareb explained. "We are working together to capture insurgents, and are working to change history so that there will be good relations between the people of Iraq and the people of the United States."

A Soldier uses a bobcat mini bulldozer to fill HESCO baskets with dirt. Iraqi and American troops are actively involved with fortifying Patrol Base Warrior.

Sadr Al Yusufiyah: A Source of Change in South Baghdad

Story and Photos by
2nd Lt. Brett Matzenbacher

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq – The word "Sadr", in Arabic, roughly translates as "the beginning". In the case of Sadr Al Yusufiyah, it refers to the small cluster of houses that surround the source of the Yusufiyah River. However, this town has become symbolic as a source of more than just a modest river. It is a source of sweeping change in this war torn region of Iraq. For months the small village of Sadr Al Yusufiyah, 25km southwest of Baghdad proper, had been the base of operations for the numerous insurgents launching attacks into the capital. That all ended in early March when the 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 101st Airborne Division, heavily supported by their Iraqi Army counterparts, air assaulted into the area, driving out the insurgents and liberating

this small town and the surrounding countryside. Impressive as this action was, the "true focal point of the operation will be the return of the local government and rebuilding of the area, which has been suffering under insurgent control," said Maj. Paul Schmidt, the civil military operations officer for 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division.

This town of 3,000 people, living in a state of fear as loved ones were kidnapped or murdered by insurgents, had seen its infrastructure nearly collapse and essential services virtually disappear. "Supply of electricity is sporadic at best, and fresh water is a rarity," continued Schmidt, as he surveyed a newly renovated water treatment plant that had ceased to operate due to lack of security for workers who were threatened with execution by terrorists. With the arrival of Iraqi Security Forces, backed by Coalition Forces, the local government has been able to return and begin addressing these serious issues.

"Half a dozen projects are already underway in the wake of this operation," says Maj. Eric McFadden, the program manager for 2 BCT/101 ABN, "these projects are a mix of short and long term solutions to the problems facing these people. Some of these projects are simple road repairs to facilitate civilian transportation, while others are complicated and longer term projects developed to repair local electrical networks over the long haul," continued McFadden.

A project to repair a broken water pipe has already been completed. "The pipe had been broken and was spewing water, resulting in complete loss of water pressure and contaminating the supply of drinking water to the people in that area," said McFadden The Yusufiyah Ministry of Water " acquired the repair parts and contacted a local contractor to make the repairs, with Iraqi army soldiers providing security," continued Schmidt, a relatively minor task "that was all but impossible until the insurgents were driven from the area."

Although many of these initial programs may be small in size and scope, these projects are "crucial to the stability operations that are under way," says Schmidt. "The focus here is to assist the local government and ministries in rebuilding these regions once they are secured by Iraqi Security and Coalition Forces. If there is a stable government in place and it is able to provide for the needs of the people, then the insurgent recruiting base will dry up," said McFadden. Other benefits are also being reaped by the local citizenry. "The contractors that come in here to do work are members of the local populace" said 1st Lt. Charles Claypool, the project purchasing officer. "Because of the strangle hold put on this area by the insurgents, many of these people are out of work, and need the income generated by these projects," Claypool continued. "It's really a win, win situation for the locals; they can improve their hometowns and earn some money to feed their families at the same time." The message being sent is simple, "the Iraqi government is going to provide for these people, not the terrorists," concludes Schmidt.

Thus, Sadr Yusufiyah, one time insurgent stronghold, may now be given a chance to live up to its namesake and truly become "the beginning" for the entire region, a beginning of peace and prosperity.

FACES OF

SOLDIERS FROM 526TH BSB STAND AS THE BATTALION'S NEWEST SERGEANTS ARE INDUCTED INTO THE NCO CORPS DURING AN INDUCTION CEREMONY ON MARCH 18 AT 526TH BATTALION HEADQUARTERS.

G. GORDON LIDDY, HOST OF THE G. GORDON LIDDY RADIO SHOW TAKES THE TIME FOR A PHOTO OPPORTUNITY NEAR AN M1114. MR. LIDDY VISITED CAMP STRIKER TO INTERVIEW SOLDIERS AND TAKE A TOUR OF THE BRIGADE'S AREA OF OPERATIONS.

SOLDIERS FROM THE 16TH ENGINEER BRIGADE RECEIVE COINS FROM COL. EBEL BEHIND THE BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS. THE SOLDIERS RECENTLY COMPLETED BUILDING THE NEW BRIGADE CURRENT OPS CENTER AND MEDICAL CENTER.

SOLDIERS FROM CHARLIE COMPANY, 2-502 FI SANDBAGS, WHICH WILL BE USED TO FORTIFY PATROL BASE WARRIOR. IN SADR YUSUFIYAH. WARRIOR IS THE MOST RECENT PATROL BASE ESTABLISHED BY "STRIKE FORCE" SOLDIERS

A SOLDIER FROM CHARLIE COMPANY 1-22 INF. REGIMENT GIVES THE PEACE SIGN WHILE ON AN M1-A1 TANK AT ONE OF THE UNIT'S SEVERAL CONTROL POINTS.

THE HEART

SGT. DAN NEUSCHAFER, HHC 2BCT CRACKS UP AS MAD TV COMEDIAN MICHAEL MCDONALD DOES HIS FAMOUS "STEWIE" IMPERSONATION AT THE MWR AMPHITHEATER STAGE ON MARCH 19.

AN INTERPRETER HOLDS OUT A COIN GIVEN TO HIM BY GEN. CODY FOR HIS COURAGEOUS ACTIONS. THE INTERPRETER PULLED A SOLDIER TO SAFETY DURING A FIRE FIGHT WITH INSURGENTS.

MEMBERS OF THE 2-101 BTB EOD TEAM GET TOGETHER AFTER RECEIVING AWARDS FROM 4TH ID CSM RILING IN A CEREMONY ON MARCH 18 AT CAMP STRIKER.

1ST LT. FRANK RAMOS, PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT FOR 2-502 IDENTIFIES A PRESCRIPTION FOR A LOCAL NATIONAL IN SADR YUSUFIYAH.

A SOLDIER STANDS READY TO DOWNLOAD SUPPLIES THAT HAVE BEEN DELIVERED TO THE SOLDIERS AT PATROL BASE WARRIOR.

Echo Co. 1-22 Infantry Regiment: Helping Iraqi Army Build a Strong NCO Corps

Story by 1st Lt. Nate Rawlings and 2nd Lt. James Hall

Until recently, Iraqi citizens traveling along Southern Baghdad's main highways encountered few soldiers from the emerging Iraqi Army, and insurgents wishing to smuggle weapons and bomb-making materials encountered few obstacles entering or exiting the capital city. As part of the overall coalition strategy of transferring territory to the Iraqi Security Forces, the Sappers of Company A, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, working as part of 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, have focused their efforts on developing the Iraqi Army's Noncommissioned Officers.

Traditionally, NCOs have been responsible for the enforcement of discipline and ground level supervision of soldiers. This has continued to evolve where NCOs still act as supervisors, but their experience enables them to provide crucial advice and counsel to the Army's officers of all ranks.

One of the challenges the soldiers faced developing the Iraqi Army was to build a corps of NCOs that would execute the myriad of tasks crucial to any successful army. Many soldiers who joined the new Iraqi Army were assigned the rank of sergeant based on previous service and experience; however, a significant number of these new sergeants had never served as an NCO or attended formal training prior to joining the Iraqi Army.

Staff Sgt. Benjamin Tate, one of the Company E NCOs, has been training and working with two Iraqi Army companies. To address the need to build the leadership skills of the Iraqi NCOs, Tate and other Company E NCOs have been conducting professional development training designed to help Iraqi NCOs take ownership over their respective elements.

Among the many exercises that Echo Company NCOs designed were demonstrations on how to conduct proper inspections and make soldier corrections. Passing commuters could see American and Iraqi NCOs trooping the line at various checkpoints demonstrating techniques to ensure that the soldiers were wearing proper protective gear and searching vehicles in a safe manner.

A paramount concern that hampered NCO development was the fact that all enlisted Iraqi soldiers are paid the same amount until they complete the Iraqi NCO training school, the equivalent of the American Primary Leadership Development Course.

"We've been working hard to get slots to have our NCOs school-trained," said CPT Nelson Parrish, a member of the Military Iraqi Transition Team that has been working with the 4th Battalion, 6th Iraqi Army Division. "Right now we have four slots for this next month, and we'll keep sending as many as we can until they're all school trained."

The key to success in developing a professional Iraqi NCO Corps will be the effort the NCOs place on their own development, which is a concept not lost on the Echo Company soldiers. "The Iraqi NCOs are ready and willing," said Sgt. Ray Andrade, who has been working with the 3rd Iraqi Company. "They just need the time and experience leading soldiers, and they'll be ready to take the fight."

A Space To Learn: STRIKE Civil Affairs Soldiers Build School Desks for Iraqi School Children

Story and Photo by Spc. Karl Johnson, 363rd MPAD

MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq – Ask an Iraqi child what they want to be when they grow up. You'll find little difference in the hopes and dreams of an Iraqi child and that of an American child. Whether to be a doctor, a policeman, or a businessman, these children imagine themselves as successful adults, and they see no reason why their goals should not come true.

They cram into schools throughout Iraq, sometimes without even the simplest of learning materials that most take for granted. These children face an uphill struggle to success, but there are those who share in their goals and who do everything they can to help these children receive the best education possible.

Armed with hammers, drills and stacks of wood in place of their usual rifles, civil affairs Soldiers based out of Forward Operating Base Mahmudiyah in southern Baghdad began refurbishing desks for local schools March 9, 2006.

"We've been to a lot of schools in the area, and we've found classrooms with three sometimes four children squeezed into one desk space," said Sgt. Timothy Atz, a medic attached to Company C, 490th Civil Affairs Battalion.

A reserve Soldier and journeyman carpenter when at home in St. Paul, Minn., Atz has takes a special interest in projects like these.

"We've found that nearly all the schools have a surplus of old desk frames but lack the material, the money or the lumber to fix them," he said.

The building supplies necessary for refurbishing school desks are one thing these Soldiers have an abundance of. With assistance projects like these set as a high priority, stores of construction supplies have been compiled so that civil affairs teams may complete projects like these designed to help the Iraqi people.

"With the supplies that we have, we could quite literally rebuild several hundred desks," said Atz. "It's both simple, and cost effective."

Considering the number of schools in need, the surplus of supplies is good.

"The numbers vary from school to school, but anywhere from 10 to 50 percent of their desks are broken," said Cpt. Darrell Retheford, a team leader for Company C, 490th CA Bn.

With nearly every school in the area in need of new desks, the Soldiers working on this project have their work cut out for them.

"We do as much of the work as we can here on FOB Mahmudiyah," said Retheford. "Once we get to the schools, all we have to do is put the desks together."

On the surface, rebuilding these desks may seem like a minor project, but the consequences of helping these children are limitless. For every desk that is refurbished, there is an Iraqi classroom that is less overcrowded and a child who receives a better education.

"They have plenty of room in the schools, but because they're limited to desks they put a lot of kids into one room," said Atz.

It's hoped that with the increased number of desks, the children will begin to be less crowded and thus be able to receive more individual attention from their instructors. The project has not only helped the children, but has also been very positive for the soldiers who worked to make it possible.

"It gives us a sense of accomplishment to help these children out," said Atz. "Installing these desks and seeing the joy it puts on the kids faces is priceless."

These Soldiers have seen the positive impact of their missions in support of the area schools. They've done everything from delivering school supplies to rebuilding infrastructure.

"The teachers and the people in the area have been very grateful and really appreciate our help," said Retheford.

The children of Iraq face an uphill struggle to success, but with their heads focused on the chalkboard and their hearts on their dreams; these children will be able to take the assistance given to them by the Soldiers of C-490th CA Bn. and achieve their goals.

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Staff Sgt. John Chappelle, prepares to fasten a wooden desk top to its metal frame. Desks are being repaired

Story Continued on Pg. 12 see DESKS

From Combat to Support:

Soldier Makes Transition from Line Unit to LNO

Being an infantryman on the front line in this war against terror is unquestionably one of the hardest jobs in the Army. These brave Soldiers expose themselves to danger daily as they battle a most cunning opponent.

In an infantry platoon, a Soldier rarely has the luxury of wondering why certain decisions are made on his behalf. A Soldier on the line is far too busy conducting endless hours of grueling patrols, destroying insurgents and ensuring that he and his buddies live to fight another day.

What happens to a Soldier who goes from fighting for his survival and that of others to working in a reasonably secure environment like Brigade Headquarters? Such is the situation with Staff Sgt. Phillip M. Miller, an Infantryman who was recently chosen to move off the line, to work at the Brigade Tactical Operations Center as an LNO for 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.

Miller, who has been in the Army for nearly eight years, was most recently the platoon sergeant for first platoon, of Bravo Company, 1-502. He has been involved in more engagements with the enemy than most could imagine, and has suffered the loss of brothers. For him, it would take some getting used to, going from direct contact with the enemy and good people of Iraq, to becoming combat support.

"The transition was pretty difficult," Miller said of his moving to brigade. "You are always used to going, getting missions and being away all hours of the night. You don't fully understand why stuff is the way it is because you are not at higher, where all the missions are coming from. Being an LNO, you actually get to see firsthand why resources and supplies go to where they go. Things slow down a lot because you are not the main effort anymore, you a sort of take a back seat."

As an LNO, Miller gets to work as a link between what goes on in brigade, to what goes down to the battalion.

"We go to daily task matrix meetings, since the battalions are so busy we are the go to guys on what the battalions are doing," said Miller of his new duties. "We make sure that Soldiers coming up from the battalions get to where they need to go, whether it's EML or classes."

Staff Sgt. Phillip Miller checks a battalion battle roster on his computer to ensure that he has accountability for all the 1st Battalion Soldiers arriving to the TOC.

Leaving the line wasn't an easy decision for Miller, seeing him go wasn't any easier for his men.

"They were really upset," Miller said of his Soldiers reaction to his leaving. "They didn't want to see me go, but they knew that this was the next step for me. They still call me. They want me to hook them up with jobs," Miller said jokingly. "They're doing okay."

Miller recently re-enlisted to stay in the Army. His next assignment will be as a Ranger Instructor at the 5th Ranger Training Battalion. Afterward, he hopes to go to the United States Military Academy at West Point to become an instructor.

"Hopefully I will retire after twenty years, and then live a somewhat normal life," quipped Miller.

CONTROL continued from Pg. 3

allowed us to take the fight to the insurgents and kick them out of areas they have been operating out of freely," said Lt. Col. Thomas Kunk, commander of 1st Bn., 502nd Inf.

The Iraqi army played a key role in the operation. They arrived by night in helicopters alongside their US comrades. "The Iraqi army is able to communicate well with the locals," said an interpreter for the Iraqi army who goes by the name of Fox. "We know Arabic culture and are able to pick up on body language and other indicators that assist us in establishing a good relationship with the locals." Fox said he is a true believer in a positive future for Iraq and is happy to play a role in its future. His brother also serves as an interpreter for the US Army. "As an English speaking Iraqi I feel it is important to work with the US Army and learn what we can. The Iraqi army gets stronger everyday. It is our country we must be responsible for its security."

"This operation was vital to our battalion and the local Iraqis living under fear of terror. We cleared anti-Iraqi forces and foreign fighters from Sadr-Yusufiyah and established a presence in the town to keep the terrorists from returning into the area," said Lt. Col. Robert Haycock, commander of 2nd Bn. 502nd Inf. Haycock was very impressed by the Iraqi army participation. "The 4/6 Iraqi army were the ones who led the cache searches and are mostly responsible for gathering the information from locals about the whereabouts of the terrorists and caches," said Haycock. "These Iraqi soldiers found a complex VBIED that was rigged and ready for movement to its target. Thanks to their bravery and discipline this VBIED will not hit its target"

Iraqi and 2nd BCT Soldiers continue to patrol the area in search of terrorists and those that harbor them.

"I am very proud of the Soldiers who participated in this operation. They continue to make a difference in this difficult environment." Ebel said. "They are heroes. Most importantly, the Iraqi soldiers are heroes to their country. This operation shows that Iraqi soldiers are on their way to protect their country from terror."

NEWEST SERGEANTS OF 526TH BSB INDUCTED INTO THE CORPS OF NCOS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SPC. GEORGE WELCOME

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq—From the time they are potential recruits to the time they become Advanced Individual Training graduates and through the formative years of their military careers, young Soldiers are constantly being trained, assessed and mentored by noncommissioned officers.

On March 18, 15 Soldiers from the 526th Forward Support Battalion were inducted into the corps of NCOs during a ceremony held at battalion headquarters.

NCOs are considered to be the "backbone" of the Army. They are directly responsible for the training, discipline and overall well being of the Soldiers in their charge. This is no small task, as it requires technical and tactical proficiency, professionalism and a healthy dose of motivation.

When a corporal or specialist earns the rank of sergeant, they are joining a corps of professional Soldiers whose leadership is the driving force of the modern Army. The ceremony was held to instill a sense of pride in the unit's newest sergeants.

The event was presided over by Command Sgt. Maj. Ardandy Brown, 526th FSB Command Sgt. Maj. and each of the battalions First Sergeants.

"Our junior noncommissioned officers are the most important asset we have," said Brown. "A lot of people would lead you to believe that the Soldiers are the most precious asset, but without leadership they don't have direction and leadership starts with the junior noncommissioned officers."

One of the main reasons for the NCO induction ceremony is to show the new sergeants that they are a part of a time honored corps and shouldn't take their accomplishment lightly.

"One of my responsibilities as a Sgt. Maj. is to preserve the traditions of the Army," Brown said. "To take that a step further, to assist and facilitate learning for my NCOs and instill a sense of pride in them. If you don't instill a sense of pride in an NCO, they will not always have the right attitude."

During the ceremony, each sergeant took part in a reading that described what it means to be a NCO and the importance of the Army values. After the reading, the Soldiers went up and signed an oath which stated their new responsibilities and NCOs. They each received a certificate and a commemorative pen which came in an exquisite wooden case as a token to remember the special occasion.

"I'm really proud to have been inducted into the NCO corps," said Sgt. James Spangenberg, one of the new inductees. "Now that I'm a sergeant, my job won't necessarily change, but my level of responsibility does."

As 526th FSB welcomes its newest NCOs, it can be certain that they will continue the long and proud tradition of being professional Soldiers and providing quality leadership to those they are responsible for.

The Soldiers who were inducted into the NCO corps are:

Sgt. Alexandra Beches, Sgt. James Spangenberg, Sgt. William Darden, Sgt. Lonnie Cross, Sgt. Alberto Watt, Sgt. Ivan Ansbaugh, Sgt. Tiffany Munoz-Santos, Sgt. Reginald Wilson, Sgt. Mirya Lessman, Sgt. Zachary Hayes, Sgt. Armstead Chambers, Sgt. Tyler Wilkerson, Sgt. Carlos Rodriguez, Sgt. Ashley Voss and Sgt. Brian West.

Congratulations to all!

TMC continued from Pg. 4

Soldiers tour the new dental facility, which has also been included into the STRIKE TMC. The new clinic replaces the old TMC which was housed in a tent.

seven bed patient hold ward which can hold up to 15 [patients], our old facility could only hold up to six," Rowe said. "This is important because we can hold soldiers who have been wounded in combat for up to 72 hours keep them here with BCT and allow the leadership to take part in the healing, so that has been extremely beneficial."

In addition to more room for inpatient care, the new TMC also now has dedicated rooms for the lab as well as x-ray. The providers have their own separate area which helps the medics with patient privacy, Rowe said.

Space is not the only challenge the medics were faced with in the old facility, the capability to treat certain wounds and illnesses was extremely limited and the medics had to send Soldiers away from Camp Striker for treatment.

"This facility, with in the last three weeks we have been here, our patient numbers have gone up 50 percent," said Rowe. "We are actually holding more patients here and we are able to do a lot more on site care. We could do some limited care in the old tents, but right now we are actually evacuating less people and keeping them here closer to the fight."

This facility is not only a blessing to the Soldiers who may need care in the future, but it will benefit the medics who are serving on Camp Striker now and in the future.

"[The new TMC] actually has been a huge motivational jump for [the Soldiers], it was kind of disheartening to be one of the few medical units here that wasn't in a fixed facility," Rowe said. "When we moved over here five months into the deployment, morale skyrocketed."

Each Soldier of Company C, 526th BSB, spent countless hours working on the new building. Some Soldiers built shelving units for the medical supplies, some set up the offices and others even helped with the construction just to offer the proper care for their patients.

"It's been hard work," She said. "This has given them a huge sense of purpose and a sense of pride."

The medics also have the ability to work hand in hand with all providers now, before it was very limited but actually all of the brigade providers work out of the "Strike" Memorial TMC so there is actually a better interaction with doctors and the Soldiers, she said.

Ultimately, the new medical facility offers more than an immediate solution to proper medical care for the Soldiers at Camp Striker.

"This TMC isn't just for the 2nd Brigade," Rowe said. "It is for who ever follows us on [Camp Striker]."

Justice for the People of Al Rashid

Soldiers from 3/1/6 Iraqi Army and Task Force 1-22 conduct a combined patrol in support of "Operation Eagle Strike" in March.

Baghdad – As the Soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Division begin to interface with the citizens of Al-Rashid in South Baghdad on a more frequent basis, the local people seem to be more confident that the Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army units operating in the Al-Rashid Nahia can sufficiently protect their neighborhoods and villages from insurgents who are terrorizing the area.

The people's surge in confidence in Coalition Forces that include Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army forces is evident in day-to-day activities and reporting of the local people at traffic control points, at the Patrol Bases, and in an increase of local people who have called in tips against the insurgents and criminals in their neighborhoods. The trust of the people has become apparent in many instances, one of which is highlighted below.

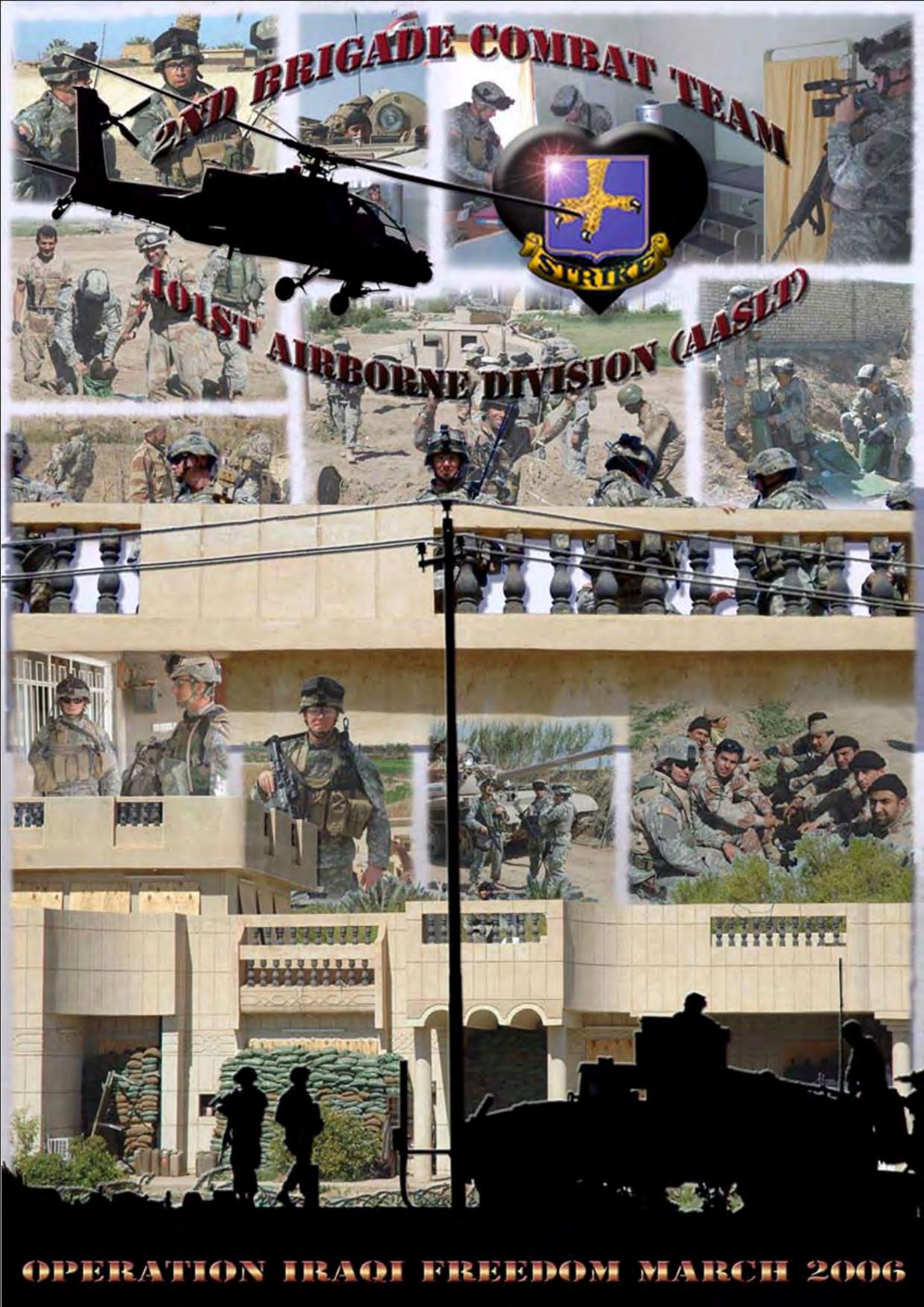
During the most recent Ramadan, a seventeen year-old boy and his fourteen year-old friend were brutally murdered by a local insurgent group without apparent cause. The families of the two boys have been demanding justice for this outlandish crime.

Yesterday, justice was served while Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Division Iraqi Army was manning a traffic control point along Highway 8. While manning the traffic control point, an unidentified man approached one of the Iraqi soldiers and identified two individuals in a car stopped at the traffic control point as criminals who had committed the murder of the two boys during Ramadan. The unidentified man stated that the two individuals were also responsible for a multitude of crimes. Once identified and questioned, the two individuals were apprehended and taken to an Iraqi Police detainment facility where they are currently awaiting legal processing.

We will never forget our fallen eagles

PFC Angelo Zawaydeh
March 16, 2006

PVT Joshua Powers
February 25, 2006


2ND BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM
STRIKE
101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AASLT)
OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM MARCH 2006