

The Daily Charge

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□ *Telling the MND-Baghdad Story* □ Wednesday, Dec. 27, 2006



Christmas day means business as usual on Courage

By Spc. L.B. Edgar,
7th MPAD

PATROL BASE COURAGE, Iraq - While excited children and delighted parents open their presents Christmas morning across America, many Soldiers in Iraq awoke to business as usual - another day down range.

Though holiday greetings of "Merry Christmas!" are rampant on outlying patrol bases such as Patrol Base Courage, the festivities are subdued and the mission remains first and foremost, said Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Wooten, the patrol base mayor, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

"The mission has not changed regardless of (it being) Christmas. We'll try to squeeze Christmas in sometime between missions," said the native of Virginia Beach, Va.

The mission for the Soldiers at Patrol Base Courage, a small outpost locat-



(Photo by Spc. L.B. Edgar, 7th MPAD)

Pfc. Logan Gathman, a tower guard with 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. hailing from Sacramento, Calif., looks out from his guard tower post on Patrol Base Courage, north of Baghdad, Dec. 25. Gathman surveyed the area for enemy activity Christmas Day, helping to ensure the patrol base would not be attacked on the holiday.

ed north of the Iraqi capital, is to secure their center of operations, which looks almost like a hasty-fighting position, and the surrounding area of Abru Quf, as well, said Wooten, who is deployed for a second tour of

duty.

Despite spending the holidays in a remote location, away from friends and family, Soldiers are at least able to celebrate with one another, said Wooten, who has been away

from his family during Christmas four times during his military career.

According to Maj. Chad Shields, the company com-

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Soldiers on Camp Striker celebrate Christmas together by candlelight

By Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie
2-10 Mtn. Public Affairs

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq - In a city where many of the residents must use candlelight because they have no power, Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) celebrated Christmas by candlelight in Baghdad.

Soldiers of the 2nd "Commando" Brigade and the local community gathered

in the 2nd BCT chapel for a Community Candlelight Service Dec. 24 here.

The service was opened with an invocation then members of the choir led the congregation in Christmas carols.

"It was encouraging to take a break from everything and gather with the other believers to celebrate Christmas," said Capt. Scott Carow, a physical therapist and native of Tampa, Fla., serving with the 210th Brigade Support Battalion. Carow, a member of the choir, played the guitar and

sang during the service.

Although the Soldiers were unable to be with their families on Christmas Eve, the service offered the warmth of the season.

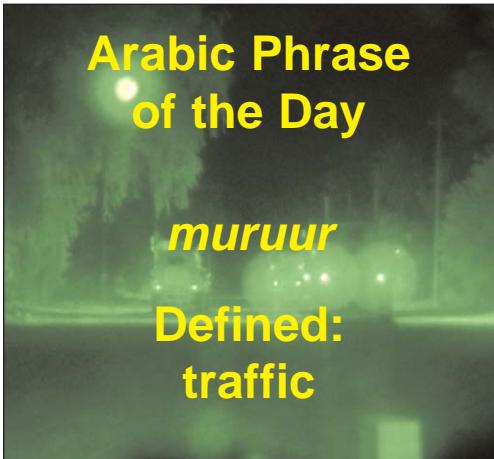
"The service made me feel like I was at home," said Pfc. Shana Keenan, an intelligence analyst and native of Steubenville, Ohio with the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion. "At home, we do this (attend

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(Photo by Spc. L.B. Edgar, 7th MPAD)

Pfc. Lilian McLucas, a medic with Troop E, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, who hails from San Angelo, Texas, listens to Texas Congressman Mike Conaway inside the DeFleury Dining Facility at Camp Striker, Iraq Dec. 25. Conaway came to Baghdad to visit with troops on Christmas Day.



Iraq 3-Day Weather Report





Today Tomorrow Friday

High: 63	High: 47	High: 48
Low: 39	Low: 28	Low: 27

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(Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2-10th Mtn. Public Affairs)

Sgt. Brendaliz Morales (left), a 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd BCT, 10th Mountain Division (LI) intelligence analyst and native of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., reaches to light her candle from one held by Pfc. Shana Keenan (right), a 2nd BSTB intelligence analyst and native of Steubenville, Ohio, during a community candlelight service at the 2nd BCT chapel at Camp Striker, Iraq Dec. 24.

Celebrating Christmas "down range"

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mander, the best part of spending Christmas on a patrol base is, "being with the boys," who he called a bunch of "great Americans," who serve selflessly.

"We've lost two Soldiers already, but the boys understand we have a mission to do. Everybody understands the mission and we have a motivated company. We're sticking together and we're going to see it through," said Shields, who hails from Brandon, Miss.

In addition to the camaraderie built from experiencing a common challenge, the Soldiers of Patrol Base Courage share a special Christmas meal, compliments of

their diligent cooks, Shields said.

For some Soldiers on outlying patrol bases, experiencing Christmas while deployed to Iraq taught them the true meaning of the holiday. That been the case for Pvt. Patrick Ozment, an infantryman with 2nd Bn., 14th Infantry Regt., 2nd BCT, 10th Mountain Div.

Ozment enlisted at 17, deployed after turning 18 and is spending his first Christmas away from his family in western Baghdad. He now calls Patrol Base Gator Swamp home.

"Now I really know what it's about. It's about family and I miss mine," said the native of Jefferson County, Texas. "Just grasp every single moment you can because it's the most precious thing."

Candlelight service brings troops together Christmas night at Camp Striker

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candlelight services) every year."

While some Soldiers attended the service as part of a home-away-from-home tradition, others rejoiced for the first time.

"This is something different for me," said Sgt. Brendaliz Morales, a 2nd BSTB intelligence analyst and native of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., as she recalled her Christmas family traditions.

"My family would get together and stay up until midnight then open presents. But the service allowed me to be with my family here."

Throughout the ceremony Soldiers united with each other as they lit candles.

"To me, the candlelight service is way of calming down the hustle and bustle of the season and bringing things back to the real meaning," said Spc. Jenna Maravillas, an information systems operator with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd BCT and native of Lake In The Hills, Ill., as she recalled going to candlelight services throughout her childhood.

"It was nice to see so many people show up to take time to remember the real meaning of Christmas."

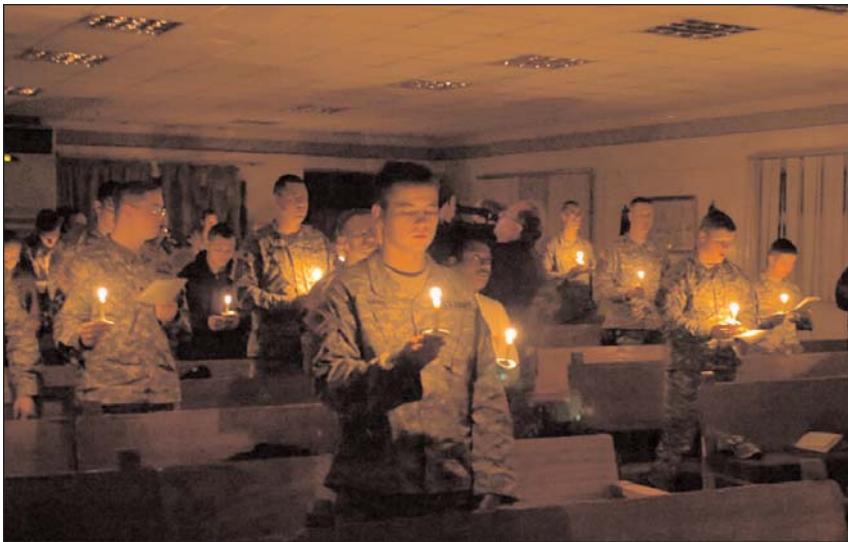


(Photo by Spc. L.B. Edgar, 7th MPAD)

Maj. Chad Shields, commander, Co. B, 2nd Bn, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div., oversees the security situation of Patrol Base Courage, Dec. 25.

Christmas

Dec. 27, 2006



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

Just before midnight, troops on Forward Operating Base Falcon in Baghdad gather for a candlelight mass at the base chapel Dec. 24.



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Wood, 2-1 Inf. Div.)

Pfc. Mayur Patel, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div., hands an Iraqi girl a new pair of shoes and some candy during 'Operation Santey Claus.' Soldiers and officers from the battalion went through Baghdad neighborhoods bringing with them some holiday cheer.



(Photo by Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1-1st Cav. Public Affairs)

Despite a minor error in spelling, Sgt. Christopher Calahan (left), command drivers section leader for the 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. and and Pfc. Seth Cote, a gunner for the brigade's Personal Security Detachment, took time to joke after creating an impromptu present out of one of the puppies on an observation post near Camp Taji.



(Photo by Sgt. Cheryl Cox, 1-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

Capt. Adrian Spevak (left), commander of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div., hands Pfc. Justin Rockwell, a 'Bandog' Company driver, a stocking stuffer at the company's forward patrol base in Mushahidah, Iraq.