



THE DRAGON'S HERALD



COMMAND NOTES BY DRAGON 6

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Dear Soldiers, Families, and Friends of the Dragon Battalion,

The Dragon team is entering the twelfth calendar month of its deployment in support of Operation New Dawn. I am privileged to be an eye-witness to the professionalism and mission focus that the Officers, NCOs, and Soldiers in this battalion demonstrate as we complete this historic mission. As a team we recognize that our deployment will only be remembered by the manner in which we finish—not how we started.

I would like to thank Dealer Company for the outstanding job they did closing down Joint Security Station Deason. Their September was challenging because they were required to live in extremely austere conditions while simultaneously conducting

force protection and partnered operations with the 17th Iraqi Army Commando Battalion. Dealer packed eight years worth of equipment for Echo Company to haul back to the Victory Base Complex. When Cobra Company arrives on VBC later this month the team will be consolidated for the first time in a year!

The Advise and Assist Mission which we were tasked with for much of this year has successfully completed. The Iraqi Army is still our partner—but we have transitioned the lead to them in many missions. I would like to thank the Stability Transition Teams for the remarkable achievement of enabling two Armies to work side by side in pursuit of similar goals.

The battalion advanced party

will arrive at Fort Riley, Kansas the first week of October and begin to set the conditions to receive the rest of the battalion in November. We love and miss our families at home and our looking forward to the reunion. We are on the home stretch and all that the "Dragons" have accomplished this year could not have been done without a robust support team back home!

Seek, Strike, Destroy, Dragons!

Dragon 6



The Commander and staff of Task Force 1st Battalion 63rd Armor Regiment September 2011, Camp Liberty, Iraq

CSM NOTES

By Command Sgt. Maj. Toney Smith



Team Dragon,

We have one month to before the battalion redeploys to Fort Riley Kansas! NCOs and Soldiers stay sharp and stay focused until we are all on the plane flying home. If we get the short timer mentality we are at risk for preventable accidents so stay professional! The temperature over here is cooling off but our OPTEMPO is still high so keep drinking water and stay hydrated!

Congratulations to SGT Dominguez for winning the NCO of the month and SPC Principato for winning Soldier of the month. I am proud of the example they set as part of the "Dragon" team!

Thanks to all the spouses for their support of our Soldiers. This battalion operates as a team and the family is an integral part of that team! We hope to see you soon!

Seek, Strike, Destroy, Dragons!

Dragon 7

Congratulations for the excellent performance given by this month's Dragon Battalion board winners

NCO OF THE MONTH—OCTOBER



SGT Dominguez
Delta Company

SOLDIER OF THE MONTH—OCTOBER



SPC Principato
Headquarters and Headquarters Company

Dragon Grip and Grin



Cpt John Krampien received an Army Achievement Medal for his meticulous planning and execution of "Operation Dragon Arrow"



Cpt. Paul Stankich received an Army Commendation Medal for his actions as the on-scene commander 22 May 2011



LTC Michael Henderson and CSM Toney Smith presented "Dragon" battalion coins to the leadership of Alpha Battery 1-7 FA for their professionalism and mission execution while TACON to the "Dragon" battalion. Standing next to LTC Henderson wearing the PT belt is the A/1-7 FA CDR, CPT Brian Cotter.

'Dragon' Battalion Soldiers mourn loss of 'dedicated, focused' Iraqi partner

By 1st Lt. Patrick Leroy Beaudry, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C

The 17th Iraqi Army Division received word of a possible improvised explosive device early on the morning of Sept. 1, and sent Iraqi Army 1st Lt. Matham and his explosive ordnance disposal team to respond. However, during the process of rendering the explosive inoperative, an accident occurred, taking Matham's life and injuring another Soldier on the EOD team.

Matham was partnered with the 710th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, attached to Company D, 1st "Dragon" Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center, located at Joint Security Station Deason, Iraq. When Matham agreed to take his post as the 17th IA Div. EOD team leader, he did so knowing the man he replaced had been crippled by an IED. Matham fully understood the risks he was taking with his new job—yet he embraced them totally.

Matham leaves behind his wife and a son, and is mourned by his family, friends, and colleagues.

As American troops begin to leave Iraq, more responsibility is shifted to the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police. It is the Iraqi Soldiers and the Iraqi Police officers who now have the task to protect and defend Iraq.

Matham chose a job that allowed him to contribute directly to making Iraq a safer, more stable nation for future generations to enjoy when he could have used his education to do something else.

"We have difficult jobs and it is always hard to lose a good Soldier," said IA Lt. Col. Hussein, commander of the 17th IA Div. Field Engineer Regiment. "He was a good Soldier and he shall be missed greatly."

Matham was genuinely interested in his training with the U.S. Army's 710th EOD Company at JSS Deason, and always paid close attention to the instruction, said Staff Sgt. Rommel Antonio, team leader with 710th EOD Company and a Woodland, Calif., native, who has conducted joint several counter-IED training exercises and classes over the past ten months.

"[An] Iraqi EOD [team] operates on the premise that if they know how something is built, they will know how to destroy it," said Antonio. "1st Lt. Matham, in particular, was extremely focused on this process. I've rarely met any Iraqi who was more dedicated to learning how to render enemy devices safe."

On a number of occasions, the 17th IA Div. EOD team would bring back disarmed devices to a secure storage facility located at the 17th Division Headquarters on JSS Deason. In July, those devices were destroyed in a massive demonstration, totally denying the enemy their use.

Matham and his team were responsible for the safe destruction of more than three tons of explosives. He dedicated himself to the destruction of the very weapons that took his life, served his country, and protected his comrades as Iraq progresses towards self-governance and combating extremism.



BAGHDAD—First Lt. Matham, right, a fallen Explosive Ordnance Disposal team leader with the 17th Iraqi Army Division, and Staff Sgt. Rommel Antonio, left, team leader with the 710th EOD Company attached to Company D, 1st "Dragon" Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center and a Woodland, Calif., native, just after reviewing a hole dug for devices set for demolition during a massive controlled-demolition operation in July. The mission had some oversight from U.S. troops, but Matham's team led the operation. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Daryl Neumann, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C)

“Dragon” Battalion Soldiers take fitness to the next level in gym honoring fallen comrade

By Staff Sgt. Justin Phemister, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf., Div., USD –C

BAGHDAD—“By order of the commander—Get Faster, Get Stronger,” says the sign written in infantry blue that hangs across the inside of the entrance to the Pfc. Ramon Mora Jr. Gym at Camp Liberty, Iraq. A group of Soldiers with Company A, 1st “Dragon” Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center working out here are taking that order to heart.

“A lot of us worked out back in garrison, and of course we all ran pretty well from regular morning [physical training], but none of us maintained a routine like we do here,” said Spc. Eder Tavera, a gunner with Company A, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a Bakersfield, Calif., native.

Tavera and three of his fellow Soldiers with “Ace” Company have developed a rigorous training regime that uses circuit training to increase muscle strength and cardiovascular fitness simultaneously. Their level of intensity matches that of many who frequent the Mora gym.

“Our circuits are crazy hard—we never stop so that we keep the heart rate up,” said Tavera.

Not lost on their group is the impact of the facility’s dedication to one of their fallen brothers. The gym received a series of renovations, new equipment, and a few inspiring cosmetic additions, including a picture and

a sign of Mora when it was named in his honor.

“The gym is completely different than it was when we got here,” said 1st Sgt. Alexander Aguilastratt, first sergeant of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a Miami native. “These facilities are the best on [Victory Base Complex] because the spirit of Mora drives Soldiers to work harder than anywhere else.”

The atmosphere of intensity has inspired the group of Ace Soldiers as well.

“Guys in here work out really hard, and you find yourself doing the same thing, almost like you’re in competition,” said Spc. Lee Brown, a medic with Company A, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a Ft. Wayne, Ind., native.

Their routine consists of up to seven different workouts, each focusing on a single muscle group. There is little rest afforded while moving between sets. Most people might call that a day, but the Ace Soldiers are only halfway through. They follow each circuit for a major muscle group, like chest, with its supplementary group, in the case of chest—triceps. Finally, they follow that up with an abdominal routine with which they finish every workout.

“Guys in here work out really hard, and you find yourself doing the same thing, almost like you’re in competition,”

“We work out almost every day,” said Sgt. Joshua Curry, a team leader with Company A, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a Lubbock, Texas, native. “Sometimes twice a day, when we run in the morning.”

Their story is not an uncommon one across the whole of the Dragon Battalion. The Soldiers who frequent Mora’s gym in particular seem to have taken to their respective fitness programs with an almost religious fervor.

“I don’t want to say anything cheesy, like he’s here with us,” said Sgt. Carlos Rojas, a team leader with Company A, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a Tuscon, Ariz., native. “But a certain mindset dominates this gym, and you can’t help but get into it when you’re here.”



BAGHDAD—Spc. Eder Tavera, a gunner with Company A and Bakersfield, Calif., native, does overhand pull-ups to warm up before a chest workout Aug. 17, 2011 at the Pfc. Ramon Mora Jr. Gym at Camp Liberty, Iraq. “Our circuits are crazy hard—we never stop so that we keep the heart rate up,” said Tavera. (photo by Staff Sgt. Phemister)



BAGHDAD—Sgt. Joshua Curry, left, a team leader with Company A, 1st “Dragon” Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment and a Lubbock, Texas, native, bench presses 205 lbs. as Spc. Lee Brown, right, a medic with Company A, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a Ft. Wayne, Ind., native, looks on Aug. 17, 2011 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. Above Brown’s right shoulder hangs a picture of Pfc. Ramon Mora Jr., in whose memory the gym is named. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Justin Phemister)

EAGLES

As we near the final quarter of our deployment, the “Eagles” of Echo Company continue to provide premium support to the Dragon Battalion. Echo’s Soldiers perform their missions with a serious focus every day. There are a multitude of tasks that are executed by Echo Company’s Soldiers in order to support the Battalion’s much larger mission.

In the Field feeding Section, we have a handful of cooks, most of whom are located at Joint Security Stations. They prepare three meals every day for all the Soldiers at living at these locations alone. The rest of our cooks work with us on the Victory Base Complex and supervise the foreign nationals that do cook. Regardless of location, the “Eagle” Cooks duties include scheduling for resupply, health and sanitation inspections, and quality control. One contribution that the Echo Company cooks make is morale. At times they engage Soldiers and make it their personal mission to improve our deployment conditions.

Distribution Platoon conducts weekly logistics convoys. They conduct numer-

ous Combat Logistics Patrols every week to our Joint Security Stations outside of VBC. In addition to movements outside of VBC, they also conduct local missions. The missions on post consist of anything from moving Tanks to porta-potties around the base. I am proud to say Distribution Platoon has always delivered and no location has wanted for food, water, or fuel.

Maintenance Platoon’s many sections have a variety of skill sets, but a singular mission: maintain the Battalion’s diversity of vehicles and equipment. Parts Load List (PLL) Section’s Soldiers track the acquisition and distribution of parts that require daily pickup, drop-off, and maintain a complex system of accountability. The DS, or Direct Support Section, has been individually inspecting and repairing on radios, antennas, Night vision equipment, and weapon sights. Recovery Section is always on stand-by to bring disabled vehicles safely back. The Maintenance section is trained and prepared to take on any challenge from multiple directions.

As Echo Company’s “Eagles” look toward the final quarter of this deploy-

ment, these highly focused Soldiers, regardless of task, title, or duty position, stand ready to provide strength through support in whatever form that might warrant, to the Dragon Battalion.

Eagle 6



CPT Alex Hunter - Echo Commander



BAGHDAD—Spc. Kevin Quick, in vehicle, a maintenance specialist with Company E, 1st “Dragon” Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center and a Holcomb, Ill., native, uses a container handler to move containers to follow-on locations during preparations for the Dragon Battalion’s redeployment from Iraq, Sept. 5, 2011 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. After more than eight years of U.S. troops living and working in the country, preparing the large amounts of equipment that has accumulated during that time to leave is underway. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Alex Hunter, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C)

BOUNTY BOARD



CPT Patrick Vardaro

Dear Bounty Hunter Family & Friends,

The days are flying by now as we prepare to transition JSS Constitution and redeploy back to Fort Riley.

Earlier this month, our brothers in 1st Platoon returned to the Company after being attached to the Brigade for the entire deployment. 1st Platoon was selected to represent the Battalion as the security force for the Brigade Deputy Commanding Officer. They performed admirably at this challenging mission and built upon their already strong reputation. We're happy to have them back on the team and the entire Bounty Hunter family together again under the same roof.

The other platoons have continued to keep the pressure on the enemy by patrolling aggressively with our 6th Iraqi Army Division partners. Our training and advisory efforts with the 6th IA are beginning to have a visible effect on their operations as manifested in the recent detention of several insurgent leaders. It is extremely satisfying to see the increased professionalism of our Iraqi partners and corresponding security improve-

ments and know that our hard work is bearing fruit.

Congratulations to our Maintenance Team Chief, SSG Harris, for earning a battlefield promotion to staff sergeant. Battlefield promotions are special honor available when deployed in a combat environment. The Deputy Commanding General of all US Forces in Iraq is the approval authority, which means only a handful of Soldiers each year receive this recognition. SSG Harris's battlefield promotion to staff sergeant is a testament to the caliber of leader he is and a well-deserved recognition for all the great work of our entire maintenance team.

October will be our busiest month yet, but for good cause as we know it means we're coming home. We appreciate all the sacrifices you continue to make as the loved one of a Soldier.

See you in November!

CPT Patrick Vardaro

Commander, B/1-63 AR



ISG Gary Stout



The Commanders and Senior NCOs of Task Force 1st Battalion 63rd Armor Regiment September 2011, Camp Liberty, Iraq

Pre-Ranger course helps top 'Dragon' Battalion Soldiers prepare to attend elite school

By 2nd Lt. Brandon Mulrine, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C

BAGHDAD—In order to select and prepare the best candidates to fill a limited number of slots for the Army's elite Ranger School, 1st "Dragon" Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center conducted a Pre-Ranger Course in late July while deployed in support of Operation New Dawn.

The month-long preparatory and selection course was led by Staff Sgt. Jeffery Paluso, a squad leader with Company A "Aces," 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a Chapman, Kan., native, and Staff Sgt. Gregory Werthmann, the senior targeting noncommissioned officer with 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a Seattle native, each of them having recently earned their Ranger tabs, which signify successful completion of Ranger School. They used their experience to select the best candidates while giving them the tools to graduate the notoriously difficult Ranger School.

"The [Pre-Ranger Course] gives the Soldiers of the Dragon Battalion the opportunity to improve on the many skills they will need to complete the actual school," said Paluso. "These [prospective] Ranger-qualified Soldiers will benefit the battalion even if they aren't selected, not only by the training they will receive and leadership development, but by their 'lead by example' candor and professionalism."

The PRC consisted of a wide variety of training events and classroom instruction, but the heart of the program consisted of patrolling simulations and physical challenges upon which they could be graded.

"Our task was to conduct a PRC consisting of a Ranger Physical Fitness Test, a 12-mile foot march, two-mile buddy run, obstacle course, planning bay procedures and basic patrolling procedures," said Werthmann. "The RPFT is similar to the regular Army test, but is a bit more exacting—in addition to the sit-ups and pushups, the RPFT has a five-mile run and the candidates have to perform some quality pull ups."

Some Soldiers found it challenging to work in a PRC while simultaneously conducting a full load of combat operations. Only 30 Soldiers from the Dragon Battalion were able to attend frequently enough to be considered candidates. Also, many of the events had to be repeated in order to afford each willing Soldier an opportunity to attend a training or qualification event they may have missed due to being on a mission.

"It was the hardest part from our perspective," said Paluso. "Being deployed, everyone's schedule was tight, and [we] repeated many of our classes to fit everyone's schedule."

Seven of the 30 Soldiers would eventually compete in every PRC event. From among them, only four were selected.

"You learn to exceed your limits there [at Ranger School]," said Werthmann. "The more Ranger-qualified Soldiers we have in the Battalion, the more capable and effective fighting force we will have."

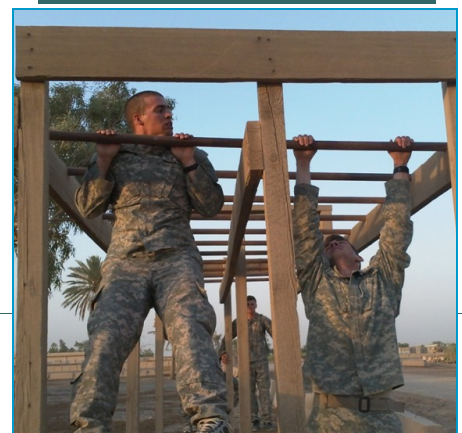
The four Soldiers will be returning to Ft. Riley early to prepare themselves to attend the 62-day Ranger School. Pass or fail, they will return to the Dragon Battalion better Soldiers from the experience.

"The opportunity to learn what is required of us at Ranger School was an eye-opener," said Sgt. Alex Knittel, a team leader with Company A, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., native, "but I feel more confident now in my abilities and am even more excited to join the ranks of Ranger School graduates."

"The RPFT is similar to the regular Army test, but is a bit more exacting—in addition to the sit-ups and pushups, the RPFT has a five-mile run and the candidates have to perform some quality pull ups."



BAGHDAD—Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Paluso, left, a squad leader with Company A, 1st "Dragon" Battalion, 63rd Armored Regiment and a Chapman, Kan., native, leads prospective Ranger School candidates in a physical training and team-building exercise during a Pre-Ranger Course July 21, 2011 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. Four Soldiers with the Dragon Battalion were chosen to attend the 62-day Ranger School, one of the Army's most demanding courses. (photo by Staff Sgt. Gregory Werthmann)



Sgt. Ian Sharer, left, a team leader with Company A, 1st "Dragon" Battalion, 63rd Armored Regiment and a Malvern, Pa., native, motivates a fellow candidate while doing pull-ups as part of a Pre-Ranger Course July 21, 2011 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. The Ranger Physical Fitness Test, unlike the Army PFT, requires Soldiers to have enough upper body strength to do six perfect pull-ups. (photo by Staff Sgt. Gregory Werthmann)



BAGHDAD—Soldiers with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st “Dragon” Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center listen to the final block of instruction detailing the standards of the clinch drill, the culminating exercise of Modern Army Combatives level one, Sept. 10, 2011 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. The clinch drill involves a student having to try and close the distance between themselves and the instructor as fast as they can while exposed to being punched. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Brandon Cunliffe-Owen, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C)

BAGHDAD—Spc. Jamie Jenkins, right, a communications specialist with 1st “Dragon” Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center and an Abbeville, Ala., native, ‘clinches’ a Modern Army Combatives level one instructor during training Sept. 10, 2011 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. The clinch drill is the culminating event of level one and teaches students how to close the distance between them and their opponent. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Brandon Cunliffe-Owen, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C).



COBRA CORNER

Cobra Company continued to support the Karkh Area Command Security Transition Team as well as the 2nd Federal Police Security Transition Team. We have also bolstered our relationship with the Local Populace and Iraqi Security Forces, leading to a more secure environment for ourselves at Joint Security Station Muthanna and the area immediately outside our JSS Muthanna.

Much of the focus this month was in support of the drawdown of United States Forces in Iraq, with our Company supporting the Drawdown of Joint Security Station Justice, as well as ensuring that our own base is ready for closure at a later date. We are in the process of removing all non-mission essential equipment, vehicles and personnel to ensure the future seamless transition of our base of Government of Iraq.

Many Cobra Soldiers were recognized this month for their outstanding service. SGT Richards, SPC Trevellyan, and SPC West all earned impact Army Achievement medals. SPC Mckoy, SPC Morin, SPC Thomason, SGT Schilling, SPC Gresham, PFC Kirkland, PFC Hallberg, PFC Tijerina, PFC Martin, PFC Lacruze and PFC Longsdorf all received Certificates of achievement for their contributions to the mission here. ILT Holman received a well deserved promotion to Captain at the end of the month, with PFC Ryan, PFC Hamberg, PFC Tijerina, PFC Alberto and PFC Ramli all being promoted to Specialist.



CPT Justin Ottenwalter



ISG Marcus Holmgren

Sincerely,

Captain Justin Ottenwalter

First Sergeant Marcus Holmgren

BAGHDAD – Staff Sgt. Larry Hornbaker (left), with Company C, 1st Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center and a Warner Robins, Ga., native, supervises Soldiers on a short-range marksmanship range Jan. 8 at Joint Security Station Muthana, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by 2nd Lt. Douglas Bengal, 2nd AAB, 1st. Inf. Div., USD-C)



A shot in the dark: "Dragon" Battalion medics conduct no-light intravenous training

By 1st Lt. Douglas Bengal, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C

BAGHDAD—It's darker than your average midnight in a palm grove. All the lights are turned off inside the aid station where medics with Company C, 1st "Dragon" Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center prepare materials for intravenous injections which they will be administering to simulated casualties.

Only the dim ambient glow created by their PVS-14 monocular night vision device illuminates the outlines of Soldiers waiting to be "stuck." It's a worst-case scenario that medics with Company C, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. at Joint Security Station Muthana, Iraq feel they must be ready to handle.

The optics require medics to maintain the same consistent distance from their point of focus regardless of the complexity of the task. Clarity, color and shadow are regulated to shades of green and black.

"You find different angles for using your skills," said Spc. George Wilson, a medic with Company C, 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a San Antonio native. "You have turn up

your senses and use them in a different way."

There are many steps to executing an IV stick: apply the tourniquet; find a good vein; clean the puncture site; align the needle and stick; observe a "flash" of blood indicating the stick was successful; lower the needle and advance it slightly; remove the tourniquet; fully insert the catheter; apply pressure to occlude the catheter and then remove the needle.

Achieving a stick may be easier to achieve under full daylight if the casualty is still and the vein easily accessible, but battlefield conditions are rarely that simple, and medics are constantly devising different, challenging simulations with which to improve their skills. Veins must be able to be detected with touch, needles indexed by memory, puncture sites maintained by touch and held to mark them. Sticking slightly to the side of the vein could result in a catheter being advanced into tissue. Perceptive fingers are needed to find thinner or covered veins.

The Company C medics are unanimous in their opinion regarding the likelihood that this training will be applied in the field.

"The complete darkness stick represents an extreme, worst-case scenario," said Staff Sgt. Jeremy Coleman, the aid station noncommissioned officer-in-charge at Joint Security Station Muthana, and a Soddy Daisy, Tenn., native. "The exercise serves two additional purposes to preparing to work in these conditions—familiarization, and as a confidence builder."

On the off chance that all chemical lights, flashlights, headlights, houselights, and even weapon lights are inoperable, and casualties are in need of treatment, the Company C medics are up to the task.

"It's something new and it's something different," said Coleman. "The medics have to go strictly off their knowledge of the cardiovascular system and ours did an excellent job."



BAGHDAD—Spc. George Wilson, left, a medic with Company C, 1st "Dragon" Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center and a San Antonio native, begins to conduct an intravenous "stick" on a simulated casualty using his night optics device Sept. 2, 2011 at Joint Security Station Muthana, Iraq. Company C medics constantly challenge themselves to train for the worst case scenario—in this case, administering IV injections without a light source. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremy Coleman, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C)

THE DEAL

September may have been the busiest month of the whole deployment for the Death Dealers. The Dealers were kept occupied with security patrols, packing, and planning and executing the closure of JSS Deason. There were several moving parts that simply could not have been tracked and orchestrated without the Company and the Battalion as a whole working as a team. This created a busy, hectic month for Delta Company, but it made the time go quickly and got us closer to coming home.

As the base closure date was getting closer, 2nd Platoon was sent to VBC to establish the new company CP and a D Co Presence on the FOB. A few days later 1st Platoon from Bravo Company led by ILT Best arrived to provide JSS Deason with Base security while the remaining Platoons focused on Base Closure tasks and combat patrols. Their help was instrumental in the safe, professional handover of the JSS to the 17th IA Division.

Meanwhile, the 17th IA whom Delta was partnered with was going through major changes of their own. In the last week of the draw down sMG Ali, the 17th IA Division Commander, received orders to take command of the 2nd IA Division in Mosul. His replacement arrived immediately after the

JSS closed down, which occurred three days earlier than anticipated on the 22nd of September. This added one more layer of confusion and complexity to an already difficult task, but the Death Dealers took it all in stride and executed their tasks flawlessly.

Dealer 6



CPT Michael McClain



ISG Leonard Alaniz



BAGHDAD—Lt. Col. Michael Henderson, right, commander of 1st “Dragon” Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center and an Emmett, Idaho, native, plays a friendly game of pool with Iraqi Army Staff Maj. Gen. Ali, left, commander of the 17th Iraqi Army Division, Sept. 19, 2011 in Baghdad. Ali, who has worked closely with Henderson and the Dragon Battalion during its deployment in support of Operation New Dawn, is departing the Baghdad area to assume command of the 2nd Iraqi Army Division, stationed in Mosul, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Erik Kemerling, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C)

Taming Iraq's Triangle of Death

by Jim Frederick "Time" Magazine

To illustrate the historic nature of the "Dragon" Battalion and "Dealer" Company mission included is this 2008 reprint from *Time magazine*

"A lot of officers refused to come here," says Iraqi Army Brigadier General Ali Jassim Mohammed Hassen al-Frejee, describing how in November 2004 he became the battalion commander of the area surrounding Lutufiyah, a town 18 miles south of Baghdad that had become one of Iraq's worst nests of insurgent activity and sectarian violence. "It was a dark time." Featuring one of the most volatile social and religious dynamics in the country, the area is dotted with Shi'a urban centers surrounded by Sunni farming communities. The Sunni tribes, many of whom were favored under Saddam's regime, became early allies of al-Qaeda in Iraq, while the Shi'as increasingly aligned themselves with Moqtada al-Sadr, his Mahdi Army and its many more extreme offshoots. Two major highways from the south bisect the region, making it a favored way-station for anyone ferrying money, fighters or weapons into or out of Baghdad. Locals were often forced to join a side or suffer kidnapping, extortion or murder as the area frequently broke out into low-grade civil war. But after nearly four years of continuous fighting, the area is now one of the safest in the country as a result of increasingly sophisticated counterinsurgency techniques and close cooperation between the Iraqi and American armies. The success here may be a model for Iraqi-U.S. Army cooperation in the future, and many American commanders in the region attribute a large part of the success to "General Ali's" skill as a professional soldier. "He has been here from the beginning," says Lieutenant Colonel William Zemp, the U.S. commander of a unit that works daily with General Ali's men. "The pacification of this area is his struggle, it is his story." Promoted to general in May 2007, Ali now commands the 7,000 soldiers of the 25th Brigade of the Iraqi 6th Army Division, who defend the 20-mile band south of Baghdad between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Although the Iraqi Army is plagued by charges that many units are not fit for battle, U.S. officers say that is not the case with the 25th Brigade. "Are they ever going to maneuver and fire like American troops? If that is your yardstick, then probably not for a very long time," says Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Rohling, who is in charge of a U.S. battalion on the western side of General Ali's region. "But they are competent, they fight, and their first loyalty is to the Iraqi Army. Plus, they are far better at things like searching houses, finding hiding places and interrogating detainees than we are." Not yet 40 years old, the chain-smoking Ali grew up in Baghdad, the third-generation son of a military family. Graduating in

the top 10 of the Iraqi military college in 1988, he fought against coalition forces as the executive officer of a commando battalion around Baghdad's airport during the invasion of 2003, before quitting on April 9 as the Iraqi army crumbled. Rejoining the army in March 2004, he quickly established himself as one of the rising stars of the new military due to his aggressive instincts ("My tactics are simple," he says. "Whenever we see the enemy, we go after them.") and his uncompromising belief that the future of Iraq must be non-secular. A Shi'a, he is married to a Sunni, and one of his sons is named Omar, a distinctively Sunni name. Accusations of pro-Shi'a bias have plagued the Army (which is predominantly Shi'a) since its post-Saddam reconstruction, but Ali says he does not tolerate any favorit-

days of heavy fighting that killed five Iraqi soldiers and 25 insurgents. Ali threw approximately 1,000 Iraqi soldiers into the battle, devised and directed their missions to clear the city, and visited the battlefronts repeatedly to provide firm leadership presence. "This was Shi'a soldiers fighting Shi'a militias, and the soldiers never wavered," says General Ali. Colonel Zemp says that while the U.S. Army provided intelligence, air support, and 150 reinforcement troops, the Iraqi Army spearheaded the effort. "The battle was General Ali's crowning achievement so far. It showed both Shi'a extremists and the people of the city that the Iraqi Army is not just the area's legitimate authority in theory, but that it is in charge in reality." A major downside of General Ali's non-partisan stance is that he makes enemies from many parties. When, in April, the residents of Mahmudiya began uncovering mass graves of dozens of mostly Sunni bodies, a television station with ties to the Sunni Islamic Party accused General Ali of having a hand in the killings. General Ali's troops had raided the Islamic Party's Mahmudiya headquarters earlier in the year, uncovering a cache of weapons and explosives. A committee appointed by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki exonerated the general. An internal U.S. Army report similarly concluded that there was no evidence of Iraqi



Iraqi Army Brigadier General Ali Jassim Mohammed Hassen al-Frejee

ism among his soldiers. He bristles at one American-supported strategy. Much of the peace in the area also stems from the deployment of the "Sons of Iraq," armed Sunni security groups funded by the U.S. Ali grudgingly acknowledges their role. However, even the name makes him testy. "I hate this name. Are we not all Sons of Iraq? I call them volunteers. They have helped securing the peace, yes, but there is only one army and one police force and at some point, these people will have to become a part of these forces." His own mainly Shi'a units demonstrated a loyalty to secularist ideals during the Sadr Uprising instigated by the Mahdi Army that engulfed several cities in late March. While many Iraqi soldiers in Basra and Baghdad either refused to take up arms against other Shi'as or even handed over their weapons to them, General Ali's soldiers in Mahmudiya, the largest city in the area, stuck through five

Army involvement and that the Mahdi Army was most likely responsible. Threats in the city are far from fully quelled. Every day, joint Iraqi and U.S. Army patrols gather intelligence and raid suspected insurgents' homes. Recent tips suggest that Shi'a extremists are planning another armed attack on the city or high-profile assassinations of city leaders. General Ali makes no excuses for being a patriot and a pragmatist. While he goes out of his way to praise his U.S. co-commanders and their soldiers — and to thank the families of America who have sent their sons to fight and die in an unpopular foreign war — he ultimately sees America's input as a means to an end. "I am an Iraqi," he says. "I want Iraq to be independent and strong. And the best way for me to help make that happen is to work with the coalition forces. That is the best path for the future I want for Iraq."

Photos from the “Dagger Spouse Challenge” - the Dragon spouses finished third in the challenge, great job!



1-63 Town Hall Meeting

With CPT Steiber and 1SG Cruce

- 20 October 6pm
- ACS annex 1020 Hubener Ft. Riley KS
- Limited childcare slots. Reservations are a “MUST”. Contact Mimi Woodworth at mimi.woodworth@us.army.mil no later than

12 October 1200 noon.

Family Readiness Group Quick September Roll-Up and upcoming events:

- HHC participated in Apple Days. Served PBJ and Grilled Cheese sandwiches.
- Dagger Spouse: Took 3rd Place. Pictures are posted on Face Book
- Alpha FRG Meeting: 11 October at Battalion
- Bravo FRG Meeting: 12 October at ACS Annex @ 6:30 p.m.
- Battalion Banner making: 06 October at Battalion



Dragon Reenlistments

Headquarters and Headquarters Company

SPC GARCIA, CESAR R.

SSG WALL, DAVID D.

SSG RUBALCAVA, RAFAELA.

SSG ADAIR, CHRISTOPHER T.

Echo Company

SSG GARDNER, SHANE P.

SSG INMON, LADRON

SEPTEMBER DRAGON PROMOTIONS

A CO

PFC KARLTON WOODS

SPC ERIC E. ADAMS

SPC DOUGLAS S. CHAPIN

SPC STEPHEN C. KEESEE

SPC SILAS J. KEIM

SPC MARK A. LITTLE

SPC CLAY J. MATHEWS

SPC BRICE J. PETERS

SPC GUADALUPE RODRIGUEZ

SPC JOSEPH W. SHIFFLETT

SPC HOVHANNES TASHCHIYAN

SPC EDER J. TAVERA

B CO

PFC DOUGLAS J. HLAVACEK

SPC SEAN R. DAVIS

SPC JOHN C. IUEN

SPC RORY M. MORRIS

SPC JOSE M. SILVA

SPC ASIEL E. SMITH

SPC RYAN N. WILSON

C CO

SPC MICHAEL JOHN S. ALBERTO

SPC MARK C. FUGA

SPC MICHAEL A. GARTEN

SPC CHRISTIAN R. RAMLI

CPT BRENT W. HOLMAN

D CO

SPC KIRBY F. CALDERWOOD

SPC ANTHONY D. DAWSON

SPC RICHARD J. DEITRICK

SPC ERIC A. ESTRELLA

SPC DEMOND L. LEA

SPC ADAM J. SHARPE

E CO

PFC JORDAN R. HORCH

SPC DEREK R. AUSTIN

SPC KENRIC E. BLADES

SPC EDWIN M. FELICIANO

SPC CODY J. ODOM

SPC ANTHONY W. PLATT

SPC ROCKY S. RAGON

SPC ANDREW O. SINCLAIR

SPC SCOTT A. STEVENS

SPC ERIC M. WILLIAMS

SGT LAKEITHA GOLDEN

HHC

SPC THOMAS M. BUNDY

SPC JAMES R. CADLE

SPC BRANDON M. CUNLIFFEOWEN

SPC KEVIN M. DIAZ

SPC TREVOR J. DODDS

SPC TIMOTHY H. GRESHAM

SPC ELI I. HOLWAY

SPC PIETER N. JAMES

SPC DARYL L. THOMAS

SPC ALEXANDER A. ULLOA

**1ST BATTALION
63RD ARMOR
REGIMENT**



"The Dragon's Herald" is a monthly publication of the 1st Battalion 63rd Armor Family Readiness Group. This newsletter is not an official Army publication but is intended as a communication tool between the Battalion and the Family, to share constructive news about the battalion, and to promote teamwork.

TF 1-63 AR 2 AAB
Camp Victory

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