



DRAGON FIRE

Vol. 1, Issue 2

July 2007

Connecting with Rashid



For the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

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July Fourth a milestone in history

FROM THE MOUTH OF DRAGONS

Greetings and welcome to the second monthly issue of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's Dragon Fire magazine.

We had an extremely successful month of June, and in the pages of this issue you will see many of the good news stories that came out of the Dragon Brigade as Operation Dragon Fire East continued, highlighted by the largest single car-bomb factory find in Baghdad since the Iraq War began in 2003. Also of great importance, is the tremendous work the brigade has done with retention, as Soldiers are reenlisting at record rates to stay in our Army in a time of war.

I am humbled by the patriotism, courage, dedication and sacrifice of our troops and it is a great honor to lead you all.

As we move into the month of July, our fifth full month on the ground here, we celebrate our Nation's independence. By the time you read this issue, we will have celebrated America's 231st birthday here in Iraq, while citizens all over our great country have done the same at home.

The Fourth of July holiday is a significant one because it reminds us all of the difficult road freedom requires. With the Declaration of Independence, our nation's struggle to be free of British rule was only beginning. And, when General George



Col. Ricky D. Gibbs shows Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond the Doura Market.

Washington's army defeated Cornwallis at Yorktown, our path to independence was not yet complete. It took more than a decade of armed conflict and government building to establish the United States of America. More than two centuries later, ours is the most free and powerful country in the world.

As we continue to accomplish our mission here in Iraq, I ask you to consider our own storied history, and realize that a viable democracy here will take time, just as it did on our own soil in 1776. The Iraqi people want freedom, and desire to live their lives without fear of harm coming to them or their families.

This is a difficult time for everyone here in the Rashid District, but I am proud of the way the Soldiers of the Dragon Brigade have faced the daily challenges and rigors of our operations. Years ago, patriots such as yourselves dedicated themselves to an ideal and through hard work and sacrifice, achieved greatness. You too, are following in the same footsteps of those American nation builders, only this time you are acting on behalf of a people who have never known freedom in the thousands of years of this region's history.

Yours is not an easy path, but is one you have taken on with the professionalism and courage that defines the American Soldier.

I also want to thank the families and our respective communities back home, whether that be stateside or in Germany, for their continued support and love. Our success here in Southern Baghdad is a direct reflection of you all keeping the home fires burning and carrying on with all of the daily challenges when we can't be there to help.

Thank you all for your continued work and keep getting after it!

*Col. Ricky D. Gibbs
Dragon 6*

NCOs inspire troops to excellence

Soldiers and Families of the Dragon Brigade:

Our noncommissioned officers are getting after it and making me extremely proud.

At Cantigny, France in 1918, it was the NCOs who led the way, bloodying the noses of the Germans showing the world that Americans of the 1st Infantry Division were a world class fighting unit. On June 6, 1944, when Big Red One Soldiers stormed Omaha Beach, it was the junior leaders, especially the NCOs, who dragged the men off the beach and slugged inland. It was also the NCOs who ensured the enlisted Soldiers exited the humid jungles of Vietnam.

Today the NCOs continue to be the backbone of the Army and the Dragon Brigade. Our NCOs continue to teach our Soldiers the importance of attention to detail.

On June 10, Dragon Brigade Soldiers dug up the second largest weapons cache of the war. Fighting triple digit temperatures, harassing enemy fire and dangerous chemicals, our troops unearthed over 700 five-gallon containers of nitric acid, hundreds of



Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Champagne and Command Sgt. Maj. John Jones.

mines, and a 500-pound bomb among other dangerous things.

Soldiers of Task Force Black Lion witnessed rockets being set up in a school yard and immediately captured them before they could be fired into Coalition bases and Iraqi civilian areas.

These are not the only things our Soldiers are doing to make us proud.

This month, a woman brought a severely dehydrated child to one of our checkpoints. Our Soldiers immediately took action and brought the limp and virtually lifeless child

to the Troop Medical Clinic at Forward Operating Base Falcon. Our doctors and medics from Charlie Med, properly diagnosed the child and saved his life.

On one day alone, our Soldiers found 11 improvised explosive devices, two torture houses and two car bombs before they could be detonated against our troops.

How do our troops do this? They do this through vigilance, dedication to duty and the attention to detail our NCOs have instilled in them.

During my trips to coalition outposts, I see this in the Soldiers' eyes and in their actions. We can be very proud of them.

Though we have a long way to go, our Soldiers remain the guardians of our way of life, and protectors of innocent Iraqi civilians.

Dragons, I am very proud of your actions each and every day.

NCOs keep after it!

*Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Champagne
Dragon 7*



Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, Company A, "Aztecs" 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment walk through the mist during a "Fathers Day" combat reconnaissance patrol in Southeast Baghdad, June 17. The 2-23 Inf., based out of Fort Lewis, Wash., are attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div. out of Fort Riley, Kan. (Sgt. 1st Class Jason Briglin, 4IBCT)

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On the cover

2nd Lt. Robert Plummer, from Anniston, Ala., 1st Platoon leader, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, slides a plastic bracelet on the arm of an Iraqi girl during a patrol in a neighborhood in the Doura region of the Rashid District of Baghdad, June 10. The 2-12 Inf. based out of Fort Carson, Colo. is attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. Kirk Luedeke, 4IBCT Public Affairs)

Riding with Dirty



Below: Sgt. Jonathan Lane, a team leader with 'Dirty' Platoon, Company A, 9th Engineers, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Eules, Texas, inspects copper wire found near an improvised explosive device blast site in southern Baghdad June 20. The unit is currently attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div.

First Lt. Eric Laflin, the platoon leader for 'Dirty' Platoon, Company A, 9th Engineers, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from St. Paul, Minn., asks an Iraqi questions about an improvised explosive device. Soldiers involved in the attack were from Laflin's platoon.

'Vanguard' engineer platoon hunts insurgents in Rashid



*Story, photos
by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4th IBCT Public Affairs*

BAGHDAD – The day was only five minutes old when Soldiers of 'Dirty' Platoon, Company A, 9th Engineering Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division were struck by an improvised explosive device in southern Baghdad.

With two wounded, the platoon, which is attached to Company C, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, returned to Forward Operating Base Falcon to regroup, and the afternoon of June 20, 'Dirty' Platoon was walking the streets of

Baghdad, looking for answers as to who was responsible for the attack on their comrades.

Before that, the Soldiers were given the task of finding the culprits of an attack on the Al Sadiq Mosque in the Northwest Sadiyah region, where the troops talked to citizens and sought answers.

All in a day's work for the 'Dirty Deuce.'

Being quick to adapt and respond is nothing new to these Soldiers. Their deployment has been more like Odysseus' journey in 'The Odyssey,' spending stints attached to Company A, 1st Battalion, 77th Armored Regiment and two with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-18 Inf. after being pulled from their organic unit, Company A, 9th Eng.

First Lt. Eric Laflin, the platoon leader from St. Paul, Minn., said despite all the moving around, it has been a good experience for the Soldiers.

"There have been a lot of changes, but guys have stayed flexible and adaptive," he said. "You just have to go with the flow, not letting little things get to you."



Sgt. Jonathan Lane, a team leader with Company A, 9th Engineers, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Euless, Texas (front), Staff Sgt. Jonathan Babinger, a squad leader with A Co., 9th Eng. from Piedmont, Okla. (middle), and Staff Sgt. Jason Martin, a squad leader with A Co., 9th Eng. from Stinnett, Texas, scan the street outside the Al-Sadiq Mosque in southern Baghdad June 20. The Soldiers, currently attached to the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div., were seeking the culprits of an attack on the mosque that took place earlier in the day.

“It’s created a tighter bond within the platoon.”

“When you spend that much time with anybody you get close, especially in this environment,” Staff Sgt. Jonathan Babinger said.

Babinger, a squad leader in the platoon from Piedmont, Okla., said the biggest challenge to all the moving around was adjusting to the different areas of operations.

“As soon as you get comfortable with a sector, you get moved to a different sector,” he said. “We don’t get complacent, and everybody’s been staying flexible and open-minded.”

The platoon has had an opportunity to perform a few combat engineering missions, with the destruction of four bridges and a cache house to their credit, but being attached to the different units has been an opportunity to perform missions most engineers don’t get to, Lafflin said, such as raids and cordon and search operations.

“It’s been a pretty good experience,” he said.

“I’ve learned a lot about infantry and tankers and how they operate.

“We’ve got a really diverse background.”

With all the moving around within 1-18 Inf., Lafflin said the battalion has been very helpful to his Soldiers.

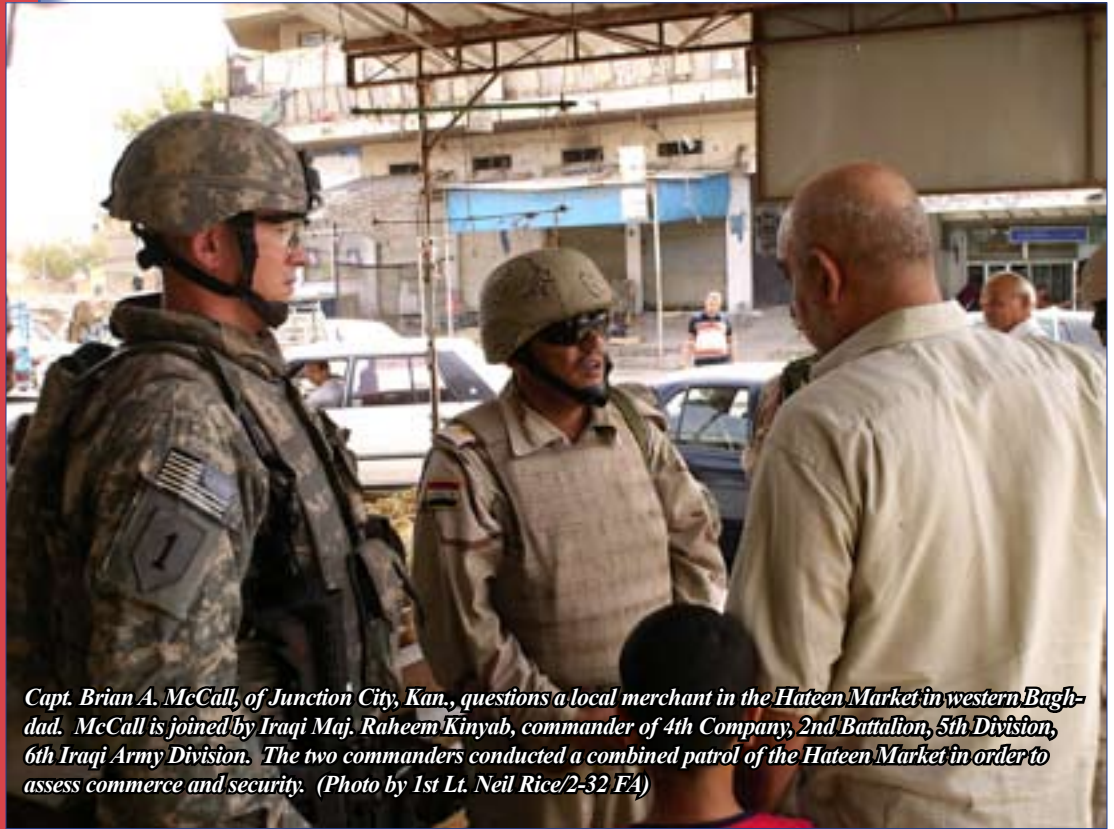
“(1-18 Inf.) has supported us a lot,” he said. “They’ve helped us whenever we’ve needed it.”

The 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment out of Schweinfurt, Germany, is attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Fort Riley, Kan.



Staff Sgt. Jonathan Babinger, a squad leader with ‘Dirty’ Platoon, Company A, 9th Engineers, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Piedmont, Okla., scales a wall while searching a house in southern Baghdad June 20. The platoon is the only engineer element of Task Force Vanguard. The unit is attached to the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, which is part of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div.

TF PATRIOT ENSURES MARKET SUCCESS



Capt. Brian A. McCall, of Junction City, Kan., questions a local merchant in the Hateen Market in western Baghdad. McCall is joined by Iraqi Maj. Raheem Kinyab, commander of 4th Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Division, 6th Iraqi Army Division. The two commanders conducted a combined patrol of the Hateen Market in order to assess commerce and security. (Photo by 1st Lt. Neil Rice/2-32 FA)

By 1st Lt. Brian Cooke
2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery

BAGHDAD- Multi-National Division-Baghdad Soldiers and Iraqi Army Soldiers have reworked their security plan for the Hateen Market in the Mansour District of western Baghdad in recent weeks, resulting in a substantial increase in economic activity in the market and fostering better relations between local merchants and the Iraqi Army.

Soldiers from Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery (Task Force Patriot), attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division teamed with members of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Infantry Division to find a way to stimulate business in the Hateen Market while keeping it safe at the same time.

The market, located in the southeastern Mansour neighborhood of Hateen, is the economic center of the neighborhood and its sales are directly tied to the economic prosperity of the residents.

Markets in Baghdad have long been a favorite target of suicide bombers, and the previous Iraqi Army unit in Hateen worried that the Hateen Market might be next in the long line of attacks committed by insurgents.

With its three blocks of grocery stores, butcher shops, cafes, and vegetable stands, the Hateen Market presented a security problem for 3rd Bn., 5th Bde., 6th IA Div. In response to this problem, 3-5-6 Iraqi Army blocked the

roads leading into the market with concertina wire and built a blocking position, using concrete slabs and sand-filled barriers, called Hesco Barriers.

The concertina wire and concrete kept suicide bombers at bay, but it also limited pedestrian access to the market. As a result, sales plummeted and a number of proprietors closed their shops.

The local merchants were angered by the decline in customers, and they demanded that the Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces find a way to secure their market without limiting pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

The merchants found their answer when a new Iraqi Army unit moved into Hateen.

The 2-5-6 Iraqi Infantry Division, already operating in neighboring Yarmouk, assumed control of the Hateen battlespace on May 20, and the Battalion Commander, Col. Ali Al-Obaydi, made fixing the situation in the Hateen Market his top priority.

On May 21st, Ali toured the market, along with Maj. Jim MacGregor, 2nd Bn, 32nd FA Executive Officer, and Capt. Brian McCall, commander of Alpha Battery, 2-32 FA.

Together, the three leaders engaged local merchants about the status of commerce in the market and asked the shop owners what could be done to stimulate business. Most of the owners agreed that the Iraqi Army needed to remove the concertina wire and abandon its blocking position, and they also asked that US forces conduct regular



Iraqi Col. Ali Al-Obaydi, commander of 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Infantry Division, talks with a local woman in the Hateen Market. Ali toured the market in late May in order to find out what was keeping customers away and determine how the IA could increase commerce in the area. (US Army photo by Capt. Brian McCall/2-32 FA)

combined patrols of the market with Iraqi Army units.

Within a week, the blocking position was unmanned and the concertina wire gone, and the pace of business in the market picked up considerably.

Soldiers from Battery A, 2-32 FA now regularly conduct foot patrols through the market with Iraqi Army soldiers alongside, and local merchants greet soldiers from both forces with smiles and, many times, an offer of a cold drink or snack.

"It was unbelievable," remarked Cap. Brian McCall, Battery A commander, following a patrol of the market a week after his tour with Ali. "Just a week ago, half of these stores were closed, and the ones that were open had owners who only wanted to complain to Ali and I. Today, a week later, I felt like

I was walking through a completely different market. The shops were all open, the merchants seemed happy, and best of all, there were customers everywhere."

McCall went on to say that his unit, in conjunction with 2-5-6 IA, will continue to evaluate economic activity in the market and is currently planning an advertising campaign that will use billboards to highlight the security of the market. Local merchants seem to like the use of billboards as advertising has become prevalent in the market.

In a neighborhood like Hateen, however, where everyone seems to know everyone else and news spreads fastest by word of mouth, the word on the street is that the Hateen Market is safe and open for business.

2-32 welcomes new commander

4th IBCT Public Affairs

BAGHDAD — Lt. Col. Michael J. Lawson assumed command of the 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division during a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Liberty, June 9.

Lawson took over the "Proud Americans" from Lt. Col. Gregory Gadson who was injured by an improvised explosive device.

"Occasionally we are thrust into a situation not of our choosing but vital to the success of our calling," Lawson wrote to the battalion in its newsletter. "I found myself in that situation on the 8th of May, when the Department of the Army informed me that I would be deploying in less than a month's time to take command of 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery. These were not the circumstances under which I wanted to take command, to lead because another leader had fallen, but I am fortunate to have the support of great divisions behind me, superb brigade combat teams with me, and a supporting and loving family."

In that column, Lawson wrote he is very confident in the unit for three reasons.

"First, the battalion is well trained and combat-tested. This proficiency is a testament to both the current and former leaders.

"Second, artillerymen have demonstrated and continue to demonstrate adaptiveness in formations and soldiering which allows them to accomplish difficult and diverse missions.

"Third, this battalion has proven over the past month that it possesses the professionalism and discipline to overcome adversity with a "Can Do" spirit."

The Proud Americans are currently attached to the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.



PHOENIX

at the gate

Sgt. Brian Nickle, a mechanic with Company B, 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Clinton, Ind., searches a local national at Gate G of Forward Operating Base Falcon June 17. The Soldiers guarding Gate G are the unsung heroes of FOB Falcon, preventing dangerous people and materials from entering the base.

Support Soldiers Guard Falcon

Story, photos by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4th IBCT Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – The infantryman kicks down doors. The engineer destroys enemy positions. The military policeman detains suspected bomb makers.

Some jobs in the Army get all the glory. There are many jobs, however, that are vital to success in Iraq that people may not think about. Not the least of which is the duty of preventing dangerous people and materials from entering a base.

The 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division out of Fort Riley, Kan., has undertaken that important mission at Forward Operating Base Falcon's Gate G in southern Baghdad.

First Sgt. John Padgett, the first sergeant for Company B, 610th BSB from Fort Riley, Kan., said monitoring the vehicles and individuals that come and go through FOB Falcon has become a battalion-wide effort.

"We have supply personnel, we have drivers, we have mechanics, radio repair Soldiers," he said. "They work an eight-hour shift or more in their (military occupational specialty) every single day and this is an additional job that they take on.

"This is a very hard job and they do a very good job of it."

For Pfc. Brandy Moore, a driver with Company A, 610th BSB from Bellevue, Neb., the job isn't difficult. In fact, it is the opposite.

"I enjoy it," she said. "It gives me something to do every day."

With an average of 175 vehicles and 930 personnel a week passing through the gate in the month of May, it gave Moore plenty to do, and according to Padgett, there's no room for error.

"I won't let them lose their focus," he said. "My NCOs won't let them lose their focus.

"The worst thing those guys have to deal with is me."

One way Padgett and his NCOs prevent a loss of focus is by switching the Soldiers around at the entry control point, giving



Pfc. Lance Francis, a driver with Company A, 610th BSB from Kingfisher, Okla., pulls guard on Gate G at FOB Falcon June 19. Since the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team has arrived at Falcon, the Phoenix Battalion has prevented any security incidents from taking place.

“It’s very difficult when we’re in full battle rattle . . .”

Soldiers that have been in the sun a break in the shade for a period of time.

Moore said the company of her fellow Soldiers helps her keep focused on the task at hand.

“We talk, and we search our vehicles,” she said. “It’s okay, it’s just hot.”

While the job may not seem hard, Padgett said searching hot vehicles under the sun in triple-digit temperatures is not easy.

“It’s very difficult when we’re in full battle rattle, we have to watch the Soldiers and make sure they stay focused, make sure they stay hydrated.

“It’s an extremely difficult job this time of year.”

While the job is challenging, Padgett said FOB Falcon and the Soldiers operating out of there are in able hands.

“We have some of the best NCOs in this battalion,” he said. “The FOB is a safer place from us being here.”



Pfc. Sarah Crandall, a generator mechanic with Company B, 610th BSB from Tampa, Fla., searches a vehicle before entering Forward Operating Base Falcon June 19. In May, an average of 175 vehicles and 930 people entered the base per week.

“Chosen” census doesn’t let terrorists . . .



Story, photos by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4th IBCT Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – “Know your enemy.”

The adage seems as old as time, but Soldiers in Baghdad are applying the same principle today to battle the insurgency in Iraq.

The “Warriors” of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, who are currently deployed to southern Baghdad out of Fort Carson, Colo., are performing a census in their area of operations to get a feel for who is there.

Sgt. Eric Callahan, a team leader with Company C, 2-12 Inf., from Cheyenne, Wyo., said while performing the census, Soldiers are able to perform background checks on civilians moving into the region to prevent terrorists from taking up residence in the area.

“One activity we have seen has been insurgents moving from other

(neighborhoods) into other muhallahs, trying to spread the insurgency,” he said. “This helps prevent the spread of the insurgency.”

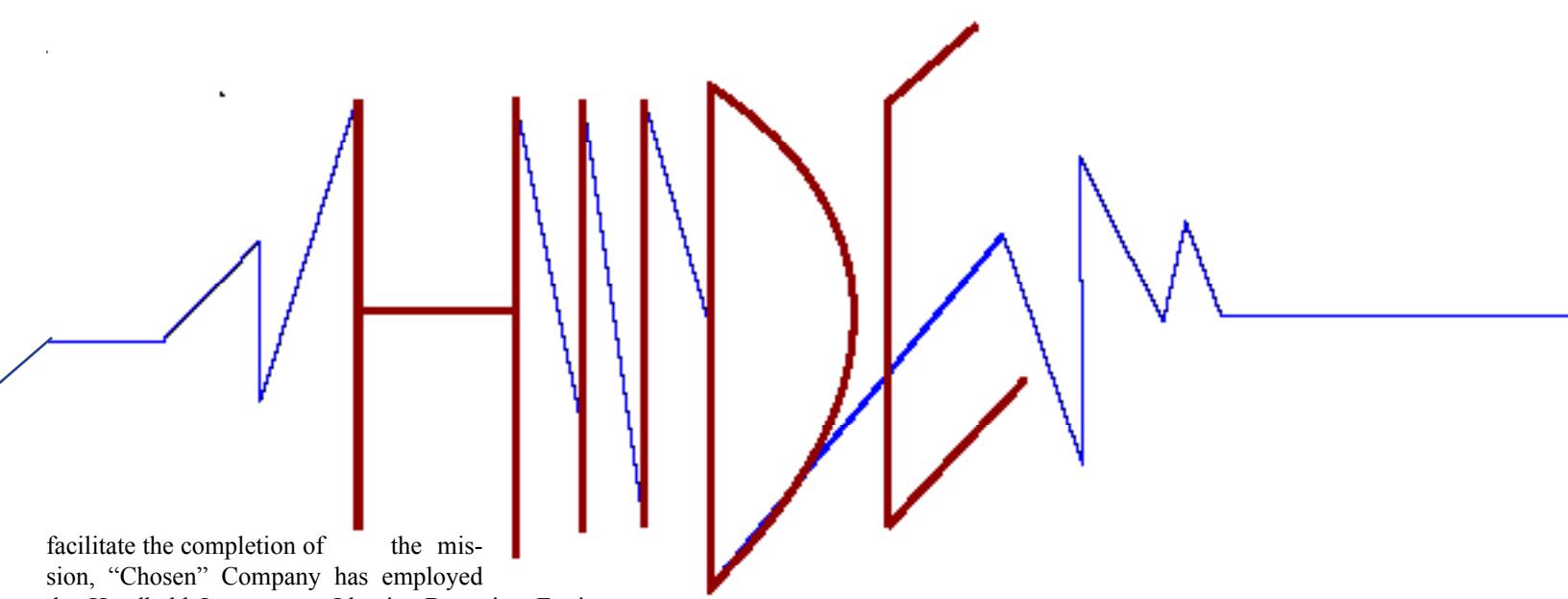
Three weeks into the census, which the battalion started from scratch, more than 600 houses had been catalogued.

Staff Sgt. Steven Quast, a fire support noncommissioned officer with C Co., 2-12 Inf. from Belleville, Ill., said Iraqis in their portion of the Rashid District have welcomed the census with open arms.

“In the past week, I’ve drank a gallon of chai,” Quast joked. While conducting the checks, troops have been offered the Iraqi tea by many civilians.

“Anything we do to push insurgents out, they’re happy with,” Callahan said.

Even with the people’s cooperation, cataloguing all the citizens in the area is no small task, Callahan said. To



facilitate the completion of the mission, “Chosen” Company has employed the Handheld Interagency Identity Detection Equipment, or HIIDE.

The HIIDE, first used by the Marine Corps to keep track of civilians moving into Fallujah, feeds information into a national database that is accessible by other units and services across Iraq. This aids the units with tracking down criminals trying to spread violence into different regions of the country.

The HIIDE is complete with a retinal scanner, fingerprint scanner, and a touch screen that allows the Soldier operating it to input different information about the residence, such as location and number of residents.

While such technology may seem complex, Quast said the learning curve is actually quite small.

“You can pick it up and know how to use it in five minutes.”

Quast said the census has had roundabout benefits to his company.

“We spend more time in the houses, and people get more receptive,” he said. “People open up and start giving (information) without even knowing it.”

Quast said the census fits one of basics of counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq-know who is in your area of operations.

“This is going to help our fight. How do you fight an insurgency if you don’t know who the insurgents are,” Quast said. “We have to separate fish from the sea so we can spear them.”



Above: Staff Sgt. Steven Quast, the fire support noncommissioned officer for Company C, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division from Belleville, Ill., asks Iraqi citizens questions while conducting a census in southern Baghdad June 8. The census allows Soldiers of 2-12 Inf. to better understand who is their enemy and who is their friend.



Left: Staff Sgt. Michael Nash, a team leader with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division from Salem, Mo., scans an Iraqi man’s retina using the HIIDE program in southern Baghdad’s Rashid District June 8. The HIIDE inputs the man’s retinal scan, fingerprint and information Nash inputs on a touch-screen into a national database, accessible by other units and services across Iraq.

Cache find limits enemy arsenal

By Spc. Ben Washburn
4th IBCT Public Affairs

Following a narrow dirt road, flanked by tall grass, palm trees, and reeds on both sides, Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, and 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, attached to 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division uncovered and destroyed a weapons cache and improvised explosive device factory in the thick vegetation of East Rashid on June 10.

Using raw manpower, the two companies worked diligently throughout the morning and day, excavating the site. By mid-day, with the sun high overhead, the Soldiers were exhausted. The Soldiers' bodies were covered in sweat, their uniforms soaked through to their body armor. Their faces showed the fatigue that digging for hours on end delivered to their bodies.

The shade of the palm trees provided little relief, as the sun baked the Soldiers in their full combat gear with temperatures well past 100 degrees. Despite the searing heat, and the danger inherent in digging for explosives, the Soldiers pressed on with their mission. Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, the commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, and a native of Harker Heights, TX, said he was impressed with their dedication.

"It says a lot for the Soldiers; their training, their discipline, their commitment, the fact that in the heat of the day they were able to find these things, buried under the ground, under the trees."

The hard work of the Soldiers paid off.

Spc. Marquis Dawkins, an infantryman with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., guards over 200 five-gallon containers of Nitric Acid that were discovered in the eastern part of the Rashid District of Baghdad.



Left: Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew Demmer of EOD Mobile Unit 6, Det 12, inspects timers and electronics used in the production of improvised explosive devices. The Floresville, Texas native said Soldiers seized enough wiring, timers, and other equipment to make 300 IEDs. Assisting him is Brentwood, Calif. native, Staff Sgt. Ryan Rezendes, squad leader with the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

Below: An EOD technician carries a mortar round. The round was one of the 54 88mm mortar rounds found in the cache.

Bottom: Land mines, mortar rounds, artillery shells, bombs, and propane tanks make up this large pile of explosives found at the site.



They found one vehicle wired as a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device and laden with explosives and three others without; 54 82mm mortars, 27 155mm artillery shells, one 500-pound bomb, 64 anti-tank mines, two 200-pound bombs, one 150-pound bomb, six 100-pound bombs, 30 130mm projectiles, 30 hand grenades, 200 artillery boosters, ten 40mm HEDP rounds, four 60mm mortars, a bag of blasting caps, one rocket of unknown caliber and origin, a bag of booster charges, six bags of propellant, over 700 five-gallon cans of nitric acid used to make homemade explosives; a bag of breaching charges and 15 bags of anti-personnel mines with 100 mines per bag. Also found in the cache was enough wiring and bomb-making material to create more than 300 improvised explosive devices.

In a separate cache near the complex, an additional 125 five-gallon containers of nitric acid were found.

Acting on a tip from an Iraqi citizen, Coalition forces seized the IED factory. Gibbs said the operation sent two messages to the terrorists.

“The first message it sends is that the people are against the bad people who are trying to make Iraq a safe-haven for terrorism. Secondly, it says there are no safe-havens in Iraq. The people of Iraq are going to tell us where they’re at — where all these things are buried. When they do, we’re gonna go find them.”

The discovery of this site was a big victory for Coalition Forces in the Rashid District. Baghdad is now a safer place, and these weapons will never be used against the peaceful people of Iraq, the Iraqi Security Forces, or Coalition Forces.



Rashid Sheiks meet

Story, photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons
4th IBCT, Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - More than 60 Sheiks from across the Rashid District met June 13 at the District Council Hall to discuss the way ahead at the founding conference of Sheiks in the Al Rashid District.

The meeting, which 67 Sheiks, both Sunni and Shia, called by Sheik Faisal Karem Jabour Al Saadi, the Al Rashid DC Sheik Council Chairman and Mr. Sabeeh Al-Ka'abi, the District Council chairman is a first step into bringing Sheiks into the transition process.

Besides security issues, the meeting also covered the negative impacts of sectarian violence and the status of essential services. During the meeting, the attendees agreed to meet again and to have a better

mix of Sunni and Shia Sheiks present.

Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division commander who was invited to speak at the meeting asked the tribal leaders to take the lead in their security.

"The violence in Baghdad and the Rashid District is crushing the people of Iraq," said the Harker Heights, Texas native and commander of the unit responsible for the District's security. "I foresee a great nation with all people living together in peace. To get there, we all have to work together."

While presenting his remarks, Gibbs highlighted the gains made in the Anbar and Diyala provinces against Al Qaeda and other terrorists by Iraqis working in conjunction with Coalition Forces.

"The people in Anbar, Diyala and other areas of Baghdad are show-



for progress, security

ing their courage by standing up to terrorists and improving the stability of their provinces,” he said. “Together you can do this.”

After asking how the Dragon Brigade could assist, Gibbs said he couldn't stop the violence without the influence the Sheiks have over their tribes.

“I sat with Maj. Gen. Abdul Ameer, (Deputy Commander of the Iraqi Karkh command and 6th Iraqi Army commander) one of the Iraqi Army's great leaders recently and he said that it is the people who must rise against the terrorists and criminals who are harming Iraq.”

Gibbs said more than \$110 million has been spent on rebuilding Iraqi infrastructure and highlighted Doura Market and the District Council as examples of success.

“The market is a shining star for all the world to see,” he said. “It shows the Iraqi strength and resolve to push past the violence and reject terrorism.”

He also asked for the Sheiks' help in speeding up reconstruction efforts by “ensuring the workers on the projects are from your neighborhoods and keeping the contractors working.”

Besides Col. Gibbs, Iraqi Brig. Gen. Salam, Mr. Omar Jabouri, Amar Al-Moamorai, Iraqi Col. Mahdy Jassim and Sheik Faisal spoke.

“I have been to Iraq three times,” Gibbs said during his remarks. “The next time I come, I would like to bring my family here on vacation to spend time with your families and the wonderful citizens of Iraq.”

Harker Heights, Texas native, Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, speaks to more than 60 Sheiks at the founding conference of Sheiks in the Al-Rashid District June 13 at the Rashid DAC Hall in southwestern Baghdad. The conference was the first step in the process of bringing Sheiks into the security process.





Sappers of Company A, 4-1 Brigade Special Troops Battalion, salute during the change of command ceremony June 22, at Forward Operating Base Falcon. During the ceremony Cpt. Chad Edlund took over the company helm from Capt. Terrance Alvarez.

Sappers welcome new boss

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons
Photos by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
 4th IBCT, Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Capt. Chad Edlund took command of Company A, 4-1 Brigade Special Troops Battalion from Capt. Terrance Alvarez during a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Falcon, June 22.

Co. A is the sole engineer company organic to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, and is tasked with keeping the roads clear of improvised explosive devices.

Lt. Col. Joseph Birchmeier, 4-1 BSTB commander said that Alvarez, who arrived at the unit in 2005, “when you could count all of the battalion on one hand,” was an efficient leader who helped prepare the battalion for deployment to Iraq.

Birchmeier also said Edlund will continue the tradition set by Alvarez.

“It feels good to take command,” Edlund said after the ceremony. “I have been waiting 4 years for this since I made captain. I wish my family could witness this, but just not here.”

The unit’s mission is a dangerous one. They go out before dawn to slowly scour the streets for any types of explosive devices that could injure Coalition or Iraqi forces. The company lost 1st Lt. Ryan Jones and Spc. Astor Sunsín-Pineda to an IED while on a



Pfc. Abby Pace, a heavy equipment operator from Sheffield Lake, Ohio, holds the guidon for Company A, 4-1 Brigade Special Troops Battalion during the change of command ceremony, June 22.

route clearance patrol.

“Our mission is critical,” said Edlund, who was born in 1978. “This is something that is not overlooked by brigade. The battalions are looking to us to ensure their safety.”

During the current deployment, the Sappers of Co.A, have gone on 130 missions covering more than 100km and found more than 30 IEDs, Birchmeier said.

For one Soldier who used to serve with Edlund in the



Lt. Col. Joseph Birchmeier, right, commander of 4-1 Brigade Special Troops Battalion, hands the Company A, guidon to the new company commander, Capt. Chad Edlund in a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Falcon, June 22.



Edlund

brigade engineer cell, he is the best man for the job.

“He is very knowledgeable, professional and more than capable of handling the company,” said Sgt. 1st Class Troy Mulliger, who worked with Edlund for more than a year. “He easily adapts and overcomes any difficulty.”

During the brigade’s National Training Center rotation in November 2006, the engineer cell was having trouble tracking IEDs, Mulliger said, until Edlund helped create a successful tracking system that the brigade still uses.

“His leadership style is what will help him,” said the Canandaigua, N.Y. native. “He is kind of laid back and easy to get along with, but if he needs to get in your face he will. But, he is not a hothead – he will do very well.”

Edlund is married to Erin Peterfeso, an officer in the Army Nurse Corps and has two children, Josh (4) and Lauren (2) and is expecting a baby girl in August.

Before arriving at the 4IBCT, Edlund was a platoon leader for the 44th Engineer Battalion at Camp Howze, Korea; Battalion Maintenance Officer for the 52nd Engineer Battalion at Fort Carson, Colo.; Executive Officer for Company A, 52nd Eng. Bn. during a deployment to Iraq in support of the 101st Airborne Division; and was the Team Chief for the 1-338th Training Support Battalion at Fort McCoy, Wisc.

Alvarez, who Birchmeier said went “from building the unit training to building the team,” was proud to serve with the Sappers.

“They proved their mettle at Patrol Base Dog,” Alvarez, a graduate of Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania in 1996, said to the company. “Though the requirements are complex, you have remained flexible.”

Alvarez, who is going to be the brigade liaison officer at the 1st Cavalry Division, has a Bachelor’s Degree in Classical Literature and a Master’s in Arts and Public Policy from Webster’s University. He entered the Army in 1997 and was stationed with the 50th Signal Battalion at Fort Bragg, N.C., until attending Officer Candidate School. Following Engineer Basic Course, he was assigned to the 1st Engineer Battalion at Fort Riley, Kan.

While there he served as platoon leader, company executive officer, plans officer, and rear detachment commander. He attended the Engineer Captain Career Course at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. in 2005 and was assigned to the 4-1 BSTB. He assumed command of the engineer company Oct. 15, 2005.

He is married to Leslie Hufstedler Alvarez and has two children, Christian (9) and Gracie (2).



Alvarez

**Co. A,
4-1 Brigade
Special
Troops
Battalion**

**Missions:
150+**

**Kilometers:
100+**

**IEDs Found:
50+**



Brigade exceeds reenlistment goals

Story, photos by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div.
 Public Affairs



Staff Sgt. Magalit
 2-32 FA

BAGHDAD – Re-enlistment is a privilege, not a right, and it’s a privilege that Dragon Brigade Soldiers have been taking advantage of.

The 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division currently leads that division in re-enlistments, and is projected to lead Multi-National Division-Baghdad by the last week of June.

With such success, one may think the career counselors are just trying to keep Soldiers in the Army, but Sgt. 1st Class Tito Reed, the senior brigade career counselor from Long Island, N.Y., said it’s about the troops.

“I could care less about numbers,” Reed said. “The numbers will take care of themselves if you take care of the Soldiers.”

The numbers have certainly taken care of themselves, with the brigade having already re-enlisted 85 initial term Soldiers (315 percent of the goal), 72 mid-career (100 percent), and 66 career (120 percent).

For the 4th IBCT career counselors, Reed said customer service is paramount.

“The challenge is making sure we can get Soldiers what they’re asking for,” he said. “Some career counselors have to go above and beyond to get that, especially in this environment.”

Reed said one of the things he and his counselors help Soldiers with is not only getting assignments they want but getting assignments that help them progress with their Army career.



Sgt. 1st Class Tito Reed, the senior career counselor for the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Long Island, N.Y., hangs up yet another re-enlistment photo at the brigade’s headquarters building June 22 at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad. To date, the brigade has reached 315 percent of its initial re-enlistment goal, 100 percent of its mid-career goal, and 120 percent of its career goal.

For Staff Sgt. Jacob Allen, a military intelligence analyst with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th IBCT from Bradenton, Fla., the process of re-enlisting was quick and easy.

“I went up there one day to see what my options were,” he said. “Twenty minutes later, I walked out ready to re-enlist.”

Allen said the benefits and the job security the Army has to offer were the main catalysts for his re-enlistment.

“The Army’s done a lot for me,” he said. “I love my job.”

Allen re-enlisted for a monetary bonus and stabilization, but other incentives offered to Soldiers include station of choice and reclassification to a different military occupational specialty.

Despite the incentives for re-enlistment, Reed attributed the brigade’s high re-enlistment numbers to the attitude of the unit’s career counselors.

“I built my team to be successful,” he said. “We don’t cut corners, and we don’t give bad information.

“We’re here to help you, and that’s what we’re going to do.”



Staff Sgt. Link
 2-16 Inf.



Sgt 1st Class Cruz
 1-4 Cav.

Dragons

Quarterhorse Leads MND-B

Story, photo
by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4th IBCT Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Retaining experienced, proven Soldiers is one of the cornerstones of the Army remaining an effective fighting force.

The 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division is currently leading Multi-National Division-Baghdad in re-enlistment rates.

With Troop A leading the way, the Raiders have already re-enlisted 34 Soldiers, which is more than twice the original goal, with four more scheduled for this week.

For many Soldiers, re-enlisting is a big decision. In a combat zone, re-enlisting is made easier with all the bonus money offered, but it's still about more than that for many Soldiers.

For Pfc. Dale McCullough, a cavalry scout with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Pittsburgh, it was about camaraderie and the memory of a fallen hero and friend.

"The night before (Spc. Robert) Dixon died, me and a friend decided to make plans to stay at Riley for four years because we were so close," McCullough said. "We spent the last year-and-a-half at Riley.

"When he got hit, the first thing my friend, (Pfc. Justin) Courville, and I went to do was re-enlist."

While McCullough had extra motivation to sign on the dotted line, his story



Sgt. Stephen Bakich, a team leader on the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division personal security detachment from San Jose, Calif., folds an American flag with the assistance of First Sgt. Richard Strong, the first sergeant of Troop A, 1-4 Cav. and Spc. Pablo Castro, a gunner with Troop A, 1-4 Cav. from Granger, Texas, at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad June 15. The flag was used at a re-enlistment ceremony for four 'Raiders' of 1-4 Cav., including Bakich. The squadron has the highest percentage of Soldiers renewing their oaths of enlistment in Multi-National Division-Baghdad.

is just one that highlights 1-4 Cav's remarkable re-enlistment rate.

Sgt. 1st Class Juan Cruz, the Quarterhorse career counselor from Arecibo, P.R., said morale has been the largest factor in the Raiders' re-enlistment success.

"Morale is good, morale is high," Cruz said. "(The Soldiers) have a lot of respect for the command.

"It has a lot to do with the way Lt. Col. (James) Crider conducts himself."

Morale is the biggest motivator for Soldiers, Cruz said, because a lot of the re-enlistments have been to come back to 1-4 Cav.

With the spike in re-enlistments, the troops have been competing with each other to see who can re-up the most Soldiers.

"We're just having fun with it," Cruz said. "With (Troop A) leading, (Headquarters

and Headquarters Troop) is trying to catch them."

With troops competing to have the most Soldiers renew their contracts, it might seem simple to get Soldiers re-enlisted. That's not so, said Cruz.

When Soldiers approach the career counselor about their re-enlistment options, he always talks to them and briefs them before sending them back to their platoon sergeant, he said.

Afterward, if the Soldier still feels re-enlisting is in his or her best interest, Cruz continues the process.

"It's a whole squadron effort," he said. "It goes back to the leadership. They're more like family. If you have that commander or first sergeant that talks to (the Soldiers), that's good for the Army."

19 ***"It's a whole squadron effort, it goes back to the leadership"***

Dragon Fathers learn to stay in touch

Story, photo by
Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4th IBCT Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – The high school graduate was sitting at her ceremony looking into the bleachers at her family. Everyone was there, except one: her father.

The father, a Soldier currently deployed to Iraq, tried to make it home, knowing the importance of the event. The young lady, while disappointed, understood why he was gone, but didn't necessarily like it.

The ceremony over, the diplomas handed out, she went to greet her family, and there he was: Sgt. 1st Class Lonnie Powell, 'Dad' to the student, Loneia Powell.

He had made it.

It sounds like something out of a "Lifetime" movie. It's the part where the women cry as the guys fall asleep, but for the Powells, it's a true story that took place in May.

Powell, the equal opportunities advisor for the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Tampa, Fla., and father of three, will be celebrating his third Father's Day away



Cpl. Kyle Patterson, a vehicle commander on the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team personal security detachment from Kirksville, Mo., shows off a picture of his son, 17-month old Lane, at Forward Operating Base Falcon June 12. Patterson will be spending his first Father's Day away from Lane while deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

at the time, but the second wasn't any easier."

"This time they understand, I think this one is the hardest one for them."

While this deployment may be the hardest, Powell said he and his kids know how to better stay in touch.

"We all learned from the last two deployments," he said. "We stay in touch more, we

from his kids, first in 1991 and again in 2003.

"It never gets easier," Powell said. "The only reason why it was a little easier the first deployment, my daughter was only three

write more, the e-mail helps out a lot and the VTC helps out a lot. The DSN phone helps out. "

"The only thing that existed back then ('91) was regular mail."

While Powell had the benefit of knowing what to expect as a father while deployed, other younger Soldiers weren't as lucky. Cpl. Kyle Patterson, a vehicle commander on the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's Personal Security Detachment from Kirksville, Mo., is one such Soldier.

Patterson, the father of 17-month old Lane, will be celebrating his first Father's Day away from his son. While he doesn't like being away from his son, the infantryman said it's for a worthwhile cause.

"It's for a good reason so the wife and him understand," he said. "I'll tell him I was fighting to keep him, his mother and the rest of the family safe."

Even though Patterson has not had the benefit of learning from experience the way Powell has, he still finds ways to keep in touch with his son.

"I try to talk to him every night on the phone," he said. "He recognizes my voice, and I send videos of me talking to him."

Married Soldiers Renew Army Vows

Story, photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons
4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div., Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Being in a combat zone can bring Soldiers feelings of loneliness, isolation and fear.

Whether married or single, these feelings create a cocoon of feelings that the Soldier may never break out of.

Some married Soldiers have the luxury of deploying with their spouses; reducing the stress levels.

For Spc. Vanessa and Pfc. Norris Johnson, who renewed their Army vows during a reenlistment ceremony June 8 at Forward Operating Base Falcon, the Army is a good way to stay together.

"It can be stressful we rarely see each other," Vanessa, 20, a logistical specialist with Company B, 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div. "We both work different hours and live in different buildings."

The San Antonio native admitted though it is easier for her.

"When I am stressed out I can talk to him," she said. "I can trust him because I know he won't say anything – he knows me, he knows my family. It's not the same when you go to your fellow Soldiers because they don't understand you. There are definitely times when he takes all the stress off me."

For the couple being nearer to each other and to home was a large part of their decision to reenlist for six more years.

"We wanted to stay in for a long time," said Norris, 21, a truck driver with Co. D., 610th BSB. "We are looking forward to being closer to home."

The Johnsons, who met while at Fort Riley, Kan., and wed, Dec. 1, 2006, reenlisted to be stationed together at Fort Polk, La.

"I like my (military occupational specialty) and my unit," said the native of Baton Rouge, La.

Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. commander, administered the oath during the ceremony because of a conversation Norris had with him.

"I was at the dining facility when I had dinner with him," he said, "when he said, 'If you reenlist for more than five years, I will reenlist you.' We gave him six."



San Antonio native, Spc. Vanessa Johnson, 20, Company B, 610th Brigade Support Battalion, and her husband Pfc. Norris Johnson, 21, a truck driver with Company D, 610th BSB, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, reenlist for six years during a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Falcon, June 8. The couple, who met at Fort Riley, Kan., and wed Dec. 1, 2006, reenlisted to be stationed at Fort Polk, La.

Ranger medics feel the heat

Story, photo by 2nd Lt. Ryan Wood,
2nd Bn., 16th Infantry Regiment

BAGHDAD — Flames jumped out of the engine compartment of the stricken van as the windshield turned black and shattered in the heat. Sgt. Alfredo Garza, a medic with 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment rushed up to the stricken vehicle, extinguisher in hand and threw open the door. The initial blast of heat was daunting, but getting to the injured person in the vehicle was all that mattered. With a hissing roar the extinguisher knocked down the flames. A firefighter standing next to the door nodded, congratulated the Soldier and promptly threw more paper and wood on the fire.

This is not the story of firefighters gone bad, but of a day of training not usually seen in Iraq. Medics from 2-16 Inf. and the 2nd Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division gathered to improve their skills in vehicle fire suppression, patient extraction and mechanical extraction with the Rustamiyah Fire Department on May 18.

Utilizing an abandoned van, the Soldiers were able to practice proper techniques for approaching and defeating vehicle fires. Later they worked with a combat vehicle to practice extracting patients from vehicles damaged in combat.

“With the threats that we face outside the wire,” Garza said, “we are encountering most of our injuries in vehicles. This training improves our ability to react to the situations instinctively.”

According to Garza, who is the non-commissioned officer in charge of the 2-16 Inf.



Pfc. Ryan Estrada, a medic with Company A, 2-16 Inf. uses the “Jaws of Life” to remove the door from a burned out training vehicle. Soldiers practiced fire rescue, and vehicle extraction with the Rustamiyah Fire Department May 18.

evacuation squad, vehicle fires and vehicle extractions are being seen more and more often as the improvised explosive device threat continues to rise.

“This sort of training allows us to balance speed with necessity. We can better fight the fire, immobilize the patient and extract them

from the vehicle as a team” he said. “We have improved our skills and thereby improved the care and protection we can offer our Soldiers.”

In one of the scenarios, Soldiers worked under a blazing sun in 107 degree weather to extract two patients from a humvee. The radios, very tight seating and piles of ammunition and gear worked against the Soldiers but with the training provided by the paramedics teaching the class, the Soldiers were able to cut minutes off the extraction time while moving the patients in a safer more secure manner.

Specialist Kisha Rasheeda Lloyd, a medic with 2-2 BSB, saw immediate value in the training as it pertained to receiving injured patients at the Rustamiyah Aid Station.

“There have been a lot of times,” she said, “when a patient rolled up to the hospital in a combat vehicle and I thought, ‘Wow. How are we going to get this person out without causing more injuries?’ Now we have the skills.”

In addition to the fire training, Soldiers were treated to a rare experience by the Rustamiyah firefighters who taught and mentored the Soldiers throughout the day. To cap off the event, firefighters broke out the fire hoses, air tanks and hydraulic tools and trained the Soldiers in mechanical vehicle extractions.

Along with the well-known “Jaws of Life,” the Medics used hydraulic hammers, steel cutters, saws and other tools to access the training vehicle from all points – even directly through the side wall of the van.

“Putting on the gear, knocking down the fire with the fire hose, tearing the vehicle up, it was like being on TV,” Lloyd said. “And we still got the skills needed to help people out.”

Hey Hippie get a haircut!

Army Regulation 670-1 states the male haircut will be tapered in appearance; will not interfere with the wear of the headgear; will present a neat appearance; the front will not touch the eyebrows and the side will not be over the ears when combed. The haircut may be blocked as long as it maintains a tapered appearance.



Good Haircut
bershop in the Post Exchange building from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday — Thursday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Soldiers can get haircuts at the bar-

New Internet Cafe Opens

A new Internet Cafe opened June 23 at Forward Operating Base Falcon. The cafe named after Sgt. Curtis E. Glawson is located in Bldg. 705. The café has a sports theme in honor of Glawson, a light-wheel vehicle mechanic and avid sports fan that served with Company E, 610th BSB before being killed in action on March 20th by an improvised explosive device in southern Baghdad.

The first Internet Cafe, located between the 1-4 Cav. and 1-28 Inf. Headquarters, and the newest cafe are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week unless there is a communications blackout.

Hear the Alert? Hit the Dirt!

MacArthur Award goes to . . .

Battle 6

By 1st Lt. Robert Riggs
1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment

Recently exceptional company grade leaders from across the Army were honored at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. for the tremendous leadership they have displayed. These leaders were selected from hundreds of strong leaders to receive the General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award.

Capt. Brian Ducote, who commands Company B, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, was one of the leaders given the coveted award.

Battle Company is presently deployed as part of Task Force Black Lion in Southwestern Baghdad; so Ducote was unable to attend the Pentagon ceremony. However, despite being unable to personally attend, former Iraqi Army officer Furat Awne Abud (Ducote's close friend) represented him and met President George W. Bush.

During an ambush, Furat was shot 11 times by insurgents and left for dead.

Ducote's award recommendation reads:

"Captain Brian Ducote personifies the Warrior Ethos, demonstrating the elements of military leadership as defined by General MacArthur's ideals of Duty, Honor, and Country. This full spectrum warfighter has harnessed his battlefield experiences from Operation Iraqi Freedom and skillfully integrated these critical skills as a Rifle Company Commander within the newest, modular Infantry Brigade Combat Team in the U.S. Army. A true Pentathlete, CPT Ducote has remained actively engaged with the Iraqi Army Battalion that he personally trained, clearly living the Warrior Ethos – "I will never leave a fallen comrade;" as he led a distinguished group of Americans in funding the travel and medical expenses of a critically wounded Iraqi Army officer.

CPT Brian Ducote arrived at the Big Red One, Fort Riley, Kansas with a wealth of experience: President of his West Point Class, Airborne Ranger, Bradley Platoon Leader, and a combat tour in Iraq with the 1st Infantry Division. He immediately took command of Battle Company, I-28 IN, 4IBCT, IID and became the architect of a new modular rifle company. Within 6-months of activation, CPT Brian Ducote has built the most proficient and lethal company within the IBCT; aggressively pursuing a demanding training plan designed to expeditiously reach the FORSCOM ready phase for combat deployment. CPT Ducote's combat experience was integrated throughout the demanding collective training program that included 72-hour squad and platoon external evaluations, four squad live fire exercises, and realistic platoon and company combined arms live fires. Demonstrating great innovation in

achieving the IBCT Commander's guidance that I-28 IN would be the Air Assault component within the Brigade Combat Team; B/1-28 IN has graduated 33 Soldiers from the U.S. Army Air Assault School.

CPT Ducote has accurately established his company property book, ensuring precise accountability of all assigned equipment. The Battle Company Family Readiness Group functions superbly and the unit BOSS program actively supports single Soldiers. Recently, Battle Company was deployed to the National Training Center to role play the Iraqi Army.

CPT Ducote ensured that Soldiers within his company understood the cultural context of American interaction with Iraqi Security Forces / Citizens; the unit has since demonstrated this cultural understanding during collective training at Fort Riley, where every B/1-28 IN Soldier is a diplomat on the battlefield. CPT Ducote has empowered his Soldiers to use their initiative, to take prudent risks, and exploit opportunities to accomplish the mission. In the absence of orders, Battle Company Soldiers act as confident and professional decision makers, rapidly determining what the orders should be and competently executing those orders. As the first company commander for B/1-28 IN, CPT Brian Ducote has built a professional team with a holistic organizational approach.

CPT Ducote learned in December 2005 that CPT Furat Awne Abud, an exceptional Iraqi Army Officer that he had served with during OIF, had been paralyzed in a terrorist ambush. Furthermore, without treatment in a western medical institution, CPT Furat would not survive.

CPT Ducote demonstrated a unique ability to organize a dynamic leadership group that included the Senate Majority Leader, Senator Frist, around the cause of CPT Furat's medical treatment in the United States. Several months after being wounded by enemies of the legitimately elected Iraqi Government, CPT Furat arrived in Atlanta, Georgia and received world-class medical treatment at the Shepherd Spinal Clinic.

CPT Ducote continued to engage American government leaders on behalf of his Iraqi comrade in arms, securing an extended stay in the United States based on threats to CPT Furat's life. Despite his separation from the battlefield in Iraq, CPT Brian Ducote steadfastly refused to leave his fallen Iraqi comrade; his actions as a warrior-leader demonstrated General MacArthur's leadership ideals of Duty, Honor, and Country to both Iraqis and Americans.

This 21st Century Leader has exhibited to his new modular rifle company, the American people, and to the Iraqi people, that General MacArthur's leadership ideals: Duty, Honor, Country, remain the foundation of Army leadership."



Embrace the present for a better tomorrow



your book *shouiaa, Couiaa, wou-
da.* It is his attempt to help people to learn to live in the present by letting go of past failures and hurts. In this book (and he has written quite a few) Dr. Parrott is working to show individuals how to embrace the present and how to create a hope-filled future. His work focuses on what people need to do let the past be in the past in order to create something in the present, which is informed by the past, but is not determined by it.

There is a passage of Scripture that focuses on living in the present. Jesus once told his disciples, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:57)

Did you ever wonder what he meant by that? He was addressing our tendency to second guess our decisions and commitments. He was asking us to choose not to live by regrets. You know that little voice that says,

"If only..." Instead Jesus called his disciples to follow another voice and to find the freedom that His truth and wisdom make our lives.

A life without regrets demands a new of things from us. First, make wise choices. Every decision has its own consequences. When we make good decisions we find we can live with the consequences. The ability to make wise choices involves patience and gathering good information. Don't make it your habit to do your decision making by shooting from the hip or the lip as the case might be. Emotions are powerful things, but they are not always accurate indicators of what is going within us or around us. Make informed decisions.

A second need is to stay focused on the important things. Major on the majors and minor on the minors. Don't just talk your priorities, rather live them. Make your priorities come alive. For example, don't just tell me that your family is important, but show me. Or don't tell me that you believe that "taking care of Soldiers is what it's all about!" Let me see it.

Third, practice situational awareness. If I would live a life without regrets I must be aware of how my life impacts others. A chaplain friend would say it like this, "Check your wake!" Every now and then I have to ask myself, "What am I leaving behind me?" Or, "What effect do I have on others?" Then, I need to be prepared to act on the answers to the question. I have to be ready make changes or adjustments as necessary. Otherwise I will learn the truth that "no change means no change."

Finally, soak up the grace of God. Grace is that undeserved kindness that allows me to move beyond my failures. It also empowers me to get past my disappointment in others when they fail me. Grace can shape me so my wake is not full of garbage and mess. Grace can work to allow my life with all of its rough edges still to have a positive effect on the lives of others. Grace can free me to find the future that God has for me.

May God grant you grace and strength to make the most out of the possibilities placed before you.

And may you know that God is with you even here at FOB Falcon.

FALLEN DRAGONS

NO MISSION TOO DIFFICULT
NO SACRIFICE TOO GREAT

"If you are able, save them a place inside of you and save one backward glance when you are leaving for the places they can no longer go. Be not ashamed to say that you loved them, though you may or may not have always. Take what they have left and taught you with their dying and keep it with your own. And in that time when men feel safe to call the war insane, take one moment to embrace the gentle heroes you left behind."

- Maj. Michael Davis O'Donnell
Dak To, Vietnam, January 1, 1970

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Dunham
1-3-1 NPTT May 24

Sgt. Shawn Dressler
1-18 Inf. June 2

Pvt. William Johnson
1-4 Cav. June 12

Staff Sgt. Russell Shoemaker
1-3-1 NPTT May 24

Pfc. Joshua Brown
1-18 Inf. June 2

Pfc. Michael Pittman
1-4 Cav. June 15

Spc. Clinton Blodgett
1-18 Inf. May 26

Pfc. Justin Verdeja
2-12 Inf. June 5

Staff Sgt. Michael Bechert
1-18 Inf. June 15

Pfc. Joshua Moore
1-18 Inf. May 30

Pfc. Shawn Gajdos
2-16 Inf. June 6

Pfc. David Wilkey
1-28 Inf. June 18

Sgt. Bacilio Cuellar
1-18 Inf. May 30

Sgt. 1st Class Gregory Sutton
2-1-2 MITT June 6

Pfc. Jerimiah Veitch, Jr.
2-12 Inf. June 21


Spc. James Lundin
1-18 Inf. May 30

Staff Sgt. Brian Long
2-3 Inf. June 10

Sgt. Anthony Dahl
2-23 Inf. June 23

Pfc. Matthew Baylis
2-12 Inf. May 30

Pfc. Cameron Payne
2-16 Inf. June 11

A close-up, profile view of a soldier wearing a dark combat helmet and goggles. The soldier is looking out of a window, with a blurred background of a vehicle's interior and exterior. The text "LOUD AND CLEAR" is overlaid in the top left corner in a stylized, gold-colored font with a red glow.

LOUD AND CLEAR

Spc. Jeremiah Webster, a gunner on the personal security detachment of 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry (Stryker) Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division from Salt Lake City, performs radio checks before a mission June 16 at Forward Operating Base Falcon. Webster, with the rest of his platoon, was escorting Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr., commander of the 1st Cavalry Division, to Coalition Outpost Aztec, one of 2-23 Inf.'s new outposts in Baghdad. The 2-23 Inf. is attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. (Smith, 4th IBCT)