

JULY 2008

# The Sustainment Times

**FORWARD**  
*Camp Taji, Iraq*

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## DCLP SOLDIER



# Commander's Corner

Col. Kevin G. O'Connell, Commander

## WHY WE SERVE

*Dear 1st Sustainment Brigade Soldiers and Families,*

The 1st Sustainment Brigade mission support to Multi-National Corps-Iraq has been phenomenal. Our number one customer, Maj. Gen. Hammond, the commanding general of Multi-National Division-Baghdad, has described the Brigade as "performing the sustainment mission better than it's ever been done in the history of the Army." This is a great tribute to every single Soldier and contractor working their hardest every day to provide world-class support to our customers. This is truly amazing when you consider we have Soldiers on the most dangerous roads in the world every single night, and operate everything from distribution, supply, maintenance, shower, laundry, clothing, renovation, force protection, Army post offices, and finance services at over 20 locations throughout the greater Baghdad area.

**"Performing the sustainment mission better than it's ever been done in the history of the Army."**

Our Soldiers are the best in our nation's history and part of the best Army in the world. We have enormous talent throughout our ranks. Leaders need to find ways for subordinates to achieve their full potential. Everyone came in the Army for one of the following reasons: training, education, adventure, money, or service to the nation. Let's retain quality Soldiers and continue to afford them the



Col. Kevin O'Connell, talks to his Soldiers

opportunity to reach their individual professional and personal goals, while contributing to a team that is bigger than themselves. We need to capitalize on the experience of the current force in order to ensure we can maintain in the future the quality Army we have now.

Families are important and always on a Soldier's mind. I want to thank our Families for all they do to take care of the home front. It takes a special person to be an Army spouse or child. Their sacrifices are great, and they don't get paid by the Army, but their contributions are enormous, and we can't thank them enough. Everybody has someone out there that loves you, whether it's a grandparent, parent, brother, sister, spouse, son, daughter, niece, or nephew, let a loved one know you're thinking about them too, and thank them for all their support. America is very proud and grateful for everything you're doing.

Strive to make your squad, section, platoon, company, or battalion the best team you've ever

been on. Sustainment operations, the Army, and life are all team sports. No one can do it by themselves.

**"I want to thank our Families for all they do to take care of the home front. It takes a special person to be an Army spouse or child."**

Being on a great team is something that you'll never forget and will be the highlight of your life. You've got to give a little more than you take, help your fellow Soldier, and take responsibility for your actions. You've got to train hard, always be prepared, and take care of each other. Thanks for all you do for the 1st Sustainment Brigade team!

*Durable 6  
Colonel Kevin G. O'Connell  
Commander, 1st Sustainment  
Brigade*

# CSM Time

CSM Frank G. Cardoza

## A Cinderella Story

How Camp Taji's education center went from uneducated to educated

*By Sgt. Jennifer Schweizer,*

*1st SB PAO*

Derelict and nearly empty, the Camp Taji education center could barely support service members and civilians with internet access let alone any type of educational needs; that is until the 1st Sustainment Brigade took command and control. With the help of twenty-four, new SPAWAR computer systems, along with the three original computers, the education center now accommodates seven times the amount of people previously serviced with internet access and much more.

"I was tasked to set up the (SPAWAR) system in January and get the center operational," said Sgt. Seth Griffin, a New Orleans native, and noncommissioned officer in charge of the education center. "There was nothing here; it could barely be called an education center," he continued.

Placement of the new (computer) systems was only the beginning step in turning this, once ineffective, facility around. The education center can now provide service members who seek to improve their GT (general technical) score with the Armed Forces Classification Test. For those who wish to pursue a career as a warrant officer, they can take the Alternate Flight Aptitude Selection Test without leaving the forward operating base. In addition, (service members and civilians) have the opportunity to CLEP (college level examination program) college courses or use the DSST (DANTES subject standardized test) system for credit hours, using on site test proctors; which were not present before.

Together, both Griffin and Sgt. Charles Benaza, a Los Angeles native, and test control officer for military exams, proctored over 230 Soldiers, Airman, and civilians attending colleges ranging from

Maryland to Central Texas College and helped over 90 Soldiers and Airman raise their GT score.

"We have come a long way; before we could not even hand out a study book," stated Benaza.

Currently equipped with over 250 study books offering a wide variety of subject areas from the AFCT to the SATs (scholastic aptitude test), and even the LSAT (law school admissions test), college test proctors, and improvement classes, it can rightfully be called a place where all members of the Armed Forces can come to for self and professional growth, an education center. **STF**



After work studies at Ed Center

## NCO INDUCTION CEREMONY



Newest NCO's in the Brigade



NCO creed

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FEATURES



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## MAKING HISTORY

1,215 Service Members reenlist en masse

By Sgt. Aaron LeBlanc



**1st Sustainment Brigade  
Public Affairs Office**

**Commander:  
Col. Kevin O'Connell**

**Command Sergeant Major:  
Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Cardoza**

**Editor in Chief:  
Staff Sgt. Bryant Maude**

**Staff Writers:  
Sgt. Jennifer Schweizer**

**Spc. Andrea Merritt  
Spc. Michele Meadows**

**Assistant Editors:  
Lt. Col. Christopher McCurry  
Capt. Adam Smith**



(Cover Story)

## 23 32 DAYS IN A HET

Soldiers with HET Platoon, 57th Transportation Company, 168th BSB, took a 32-day, once in a lifetime, journey through the country on Iraq and Kuwait.

By Staff Sgt. Bryant Maude

## 5 BAPTISM BY FIRE

15 months on the most dangerous roads in the world tested the metal of the 24th Transportation Company.

By Spc. Andrea Merritt

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Contact us at [Bryant.maude@Iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:Bryant.maude@Iraq.centcom.mil)

Cover photo by Staff Sgt. Bryant Maude: Soldiers with the HET Platoon conduct pre-combat checks.



## BAPTISM BY FIRE

**24th TC keeps rolling despite mountains of challenges**

Ready to roll

*Story by Spc. Andrea Merritt,*

*1st SB, PAO*

Looking back on the last fifteen months of their lives, the Soldiers of the 24th Transportation Company, 1st Sustainment Brigade, can say that even though their deployment was long and challenging, it was indeed a success.

Since April 2007, the 24th Trans. Co. has been deployed to Combat Operating Base Q-West, Iraq, attached to the 17th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, an Alaska-based unit, in support of Multi-National Division – North conducting line-haul and convoy security missions.

One of the unit's main missions has been escorting convoys that haul critical supplies from Harbor Gate near the Turkish border back to Q-West.

"One of the most critical routes we have in MND-North is their route to Harbor Gate (near the) Turkish border and back," said Lt. Col. Rodney Fogg, a Castlewood, Va., native and the commander of the 17th CSSB.

"A lot of the critical supplies like fuel, fresh fruits and vegetables, and all other types of cargo comes in at Turkey over the Turkish border at Harbor Gate, then it pushes down to Q-West, and then from here is pushed out to MND-North," Fogg added.

As transporters, they knew the possible threats they would face on the road, especially since one of the routes they traveled went through Mosul, Iraq, which is known to be a very dangerous area.

"To execute that (combat logistics patrol), you go through three to four known IED hot spots and they were traveling that route everyday," Fogg explained.

In the first few months of their deployment, from June to August, the unit experienced high IED activity on that specific route. Out of all the platoons in the company, 3rd Platoon experienced the most activity.

"Starting out it was pretty rough. The first month we had 10 or 11 IED incidents. We had an IED incident on almost every mission that we went on that first month. We found two IEDs in that time, but we had a lot more detonate on us," said 1st Lt.

Luke Pratt, the platoon leader for 3rd Plt., 24th Trans. Co.

"We didn't really know what we were looking for at the time, and we hadn't figured out a way for our scouts to operate with the convoy as well," said Pratt, an Oklahoma City native. "Plus the enemy was surging in its activity at that time and all of that kind of wrapped up together to a pretty rough baptism by fire."

Although being on the roads was much like being in the lions' den, 3rd Platoon proved they were able to contend with the enemy's tactics. With lessons learned the hard way, the platoon came up with strategies to counter the attacks.

By training at a practice IED lane and adjusting their convoy procedures, the platoon has been able to find more IEDs before they detonate.

"When we first started out, we only used one scout, then we changed it up to two scouts to have more people look for IEDs. We went from getting hit 50% of the time to finding them 60% of the time," said Rolla, Mo., native Sgt. 1st Class Nathan Mercer, the platoon sergeant for 3rd Plt., 24th Trans. Co.

"It was a combination of getting hit so many times and then we built the light bars and then the additional training we went through to learn how to find (IEDs)," said Mercer.

The light bar is a piece of metal with adjustable light fixtures bolted to it. It shines ambient light in different directions to make it easier to spot IEDs. Another advantage of the light bar is its dismountable, so if one scout truck is disabled, it can be put on another truck and the convoy can continue.

Out of the other platoons in the 24th Trans. Co., 3rd Platoon has found the most IEDs. A few of their Soldiers received the Eagle Eyes Award, which is an impact Army Commendation Medal awarded to Soldiers who spot IEDs while on the road.

Even though 3rd platoon has had their luck of the draw on the road, ➡

» each platoon has had its own challenges. Eight Soldiers from 2nd Platoon were awarded Army Commendation Medals with valor for their actions August 20, 2007, where they detained five insurgents who participated in an attack on their convoy.

“They assisted the battlespace owners by taking the enemy off the roads and off the battlefield,” said Fogg.

On account of all the adversity they encountered on the roads and their bravery in the face of danger, the 24th Trans. Co. has become the most decorated company within the 17th CSSB.

In a company of about 200 Soldiers, almost 700 awards have been submitted and more than 500 have been approved. Many of the awards have been combat-related awards such as Combat Action Badges, Purple Hearts, Eagle Eyes, and Army Commendation Medals with “V” devices for valor.

The Soldiers in the unit have also earned many non-combat related awards such as Mechanics Badges, Drivers Badges, achievement awards for high scores on physical fitness tests, good conduct medals, and other service awards.

“To me, this 656 (awards) is all about what the Soldiers did and it’s my job to make sure that those Soldiers are



**Checking the winch**

awarded for their efforts and their sacrifices that they make everyday out here on that road,” said Staff Sgt. Shamiska Reese, the administrative noncommissioned officer in charge.

“The mission is the big picture, but it’s also awarding Soldiers for their efforts, whether it’s combat or personal achievements that they do on their own like drivers badges for being safe out on the road or qualifying expert with their weapons,” added Reese. “Those are still noteworthy things Soldiers should be recognized for, and it’s all about putting forth the effort to make sure Soldiers are recognized for those achievements.”

“Our actions and awards speak for themselves. This unit has probably had more awards, more Purple Hearts than any other organization in a theater of operation, and I’m not scared to say that. On a company level, I don’t think anyone is more decorated than we are or has been through what we’ve been through,” said Whiteville, Tenn., native 1st Sgt. Barnell Herron, the 24th Trans. Co. first sergeant.

Unfortunately, the awards did not come without sacrifices. During the time of heightened insurgent activity, about 40 Soldiers were released from theater for combat and non-combat related injuries.

A few of the Soldiers who were sent back home to recover from their injuries were key leaders within the unit including the initial company commander, two platoon sergeants, two squad leaders and four Staff Sergeants.

“We have lost a lot of senior leaders, but we haven’t stopped doing a mission,” said Herron.

Although this blow would have been a hard hit to most units, the 24th Trans. Co. handled the loss of higher-ranking leaders by having their junior noncommissioned officers step up to the plate to fill the void.

“When the senior leaders went home, the next person in line stepped



**Pre-combat checks**

up and took charge and took care of everything that needed taking care of,” said Sgt. Chris Vendevert, a Carrollton, Mo., native and truck driver with the 24th Trans. Co.

Although the unit dealt effectively with the loss of senior leaders, the 24th Trans. Co. still needed replacement Soldiers to add to their personnel strength.

In January, the organization received about 40 new personnel to replace the Soldiers they lost; but unlike the seasoned Soldiers who had left, many of the Soldiers who came to the unit were new recruits straight out of Advanced Individual Training. For many of them, it was their first time away from home and their first deployment.

Before the unit even deployed to Iraq, it received 53 new privates averaging between the ages of 19 and 21, who needed to be trained, and nine months into their deployment, they had to repeat the training process with another 40 brand new Soldiers.

“This (deployment) was different because we have a lot of Soldiers straight out of AIT to start off with that came to the unit and deployed

and didn't do any type of training >> >> with the unit," said Mercer. "Our first two months was just training Soldiers just to be Soldiers and to be transporters. We all learned together and grew together."

In addition to training, the veteran Soldiers also used some of their past experiences as guidance for the young Soldiers.

"I try to use my past deployments to give them an idea of what to expect, but I also tell them that each time I went over here it's been different... I just give them a basic idea of what to expect, but just be flexible and adjust to whatever is thrown at them. For the most part, they did a pretty good job," said Vendeventer, who is currently serving his third tour-of-duty in Iraq.

Despite the lack of experience the new Soldiers had, they learned quickly and adjusted well to an environment they had never known.

"When we first got here it was really stressful because we were going on missions every other day, but it was kind of nice because the tempo was so fast paced that before we knew it, six months had passed," said Pfc. Brandon Murray, a



Turning a wrench

Shakopee, Minn., native and truck driver with the 24th Trans. Co.

With new recruits making up almost half of the unit, there were worries about their ability to adapt to a combat situation, but these young heroes have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that they can.

"They've matured a lot. They went through a lot. Not knowing if their battle buddy was going to be next to them tomorrow changes a person inside," said Mercer. "If the

leaders were lost in the convoy, the convoy would still roll on. They'd know exactly what to do without the leaders. It makes me proud to know that one day down the road that they will be in charge of somebody and I could go, "That was one of my Soldiers.""

In all, the 24th Trans. Co. has earned the right to feel proud about all they have accomplished during this deployment.

They went up against insurgents and IEDs on the road, faced losing senior leaders to combat and non-combat related injuries, and tackled the challenge of training young Soldiers for combat operations while deployed in a combat environment.

They have been able to handle every curveball that was thrown in their direction during this deployment, which will soon come to an end. The unit is scheduled to return to Fort Riley in July and they will have their heads held high when they get there.

"Without a doubt, they have very much earned their combat patch. They should wear it with pride. They have sacrificed more than a lot of other units, so we're very proud of what they've been able to accomplish with all of the challenges they faced. They have exceeded my expectations," said Fogg. **STF**



Leaving the yard



## SOLDIERS SEEK FINANCIAL FREEDOM

By Major Lowell Howard

“Live like no one else,” says the man on the stage dressed casually in an unassuming buttoned-down shirt and blue jeans. “So you can live like no one else!” he continues as the crowd joins in. The man, Dave Ramsey, is talking to an audience of attendees of his Financial Peace University, alternately called FPU. Watching a DVD of Ramsey’s lecture is a class of students from the Special Troops Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade.

Every Thursday night at 1900 in the Cantigny Dining Facility on Camp Taji, about twenty Soldiers gather inside the Shadley Room to watch Ramsey teach about how to save money, live on a budget, eliminate debt, find bargains, and “experience the joy of giving.” The participants have a multitude of reasons for coming.

“I have been listening to Dave for several years and value his approach to money. I made a lot of mistakes early on, and I am now committed to the tortoise approach,” said Staff Sgt. Bryant Maude, a Woodstock, Ga., native, and the non-commissioned officer in charge of the 1st SB Public Affairs Office. Maude is also a

facilitator for the class, which started on May 15th.

“Every little piece of advice helps. Personally, I am very blessed with the financial situation I am in,” commented Capt. Mike Pagel, a Miami native, and officer in charge of the Easy Red Clinic. “Nevertheless, I understand things can always change and the better prepared we are for those changes, the better we are.”

Ramsey is the creator of Financial Peace University, a Biblically-based 13-week video training series for adults. Topics covered in the series are cash flow planning, investing, saving, credit, retirement, and giving. Ramsey also hosts a radio show, *The Dave Ramsey Show*, which is syndicated across the United States.

“I like that the course is not centered on the fake notion of how to get rich or become a millionaire. Instead it focuses on the basic principles of money management,” stated Maj. Thomas Buchholz, a Pensacola, Fla., native, and the financial management support operations officer, for the STB. “I enjoy the dialogue and

sharing of tips as a group.”

“Dave Ramsey’s way of teaching is not dull,” Warrant Officer One Andres F. Toledo, a Cali, Colombia, native, and supply systems officer for the 1st SB, said, “Some of the lessons are based on real experiences of people like me or you.”

“I saw the value in it for myself, but also for young soldiers,” Sgt. Michael Theubet, a Redding, Calif., native, and 1st SB chaplain assistant, said. Theubet is also serving as one of the group’s facilitators.

Ramsey’s website says that his seven-step system is a “proven success” with more than “500,000 Families” who have paid off an average of \$5,300 in debt and saved \$2,700 in 13 weeks. However, Ramsey has been criticized for offering simplistic solutions to “complex” financial issues. Many financial advisers don’t appreciate his caution for investments like single stocks.

In 2003, Ramsey said in an interview with Failure Magazine, “I think if you look up ‘moron’ in the dictionary you’ll find a day trader’s picture next to it.” In the same interview he added, “Seventy-five percent of the Forbes 400, when asked, ‘What’s the key to building wealth?’ said it’s getting out of debt and staying out of debt. Old, rich people tell you to get out of debt. Only young, broke finance professors tell you to use debt.”

“I have bills - credit cards and loans to pay off - I do not have anything,” said 1st Lt. Aja Roberts, a Springfield Township, Pa., native, and medical platoon leader, for the STB, adding, “I hit a rough time in my life before OBC [Officer Basic Course].”

Ramsey’s seven step system is designed to be a road map to help people get out of debt and move toward financial freedom. His seven tips for financial peace are:

1 – Put \$1,000 in an emergency ➤➤



» fund.

2 – Pay off all debt using a “[debt snowball](#).”

3 – Put three to six months of expenses in savings.

4 – Invest 15% of your household income into Roth IRAs and pre-tax retirement.

5 – Save for your children’s college funding using tax-favored plans.

6 – Pay off your home early.

7 – Build wealth and give! (Invest in mutual funds and real estate).

Buchholz, who is also serving as a group facilitator, said his goals with the course are, “To learn how to better save money, invest my money, pay off debt, and gain base finance knowledge in order to share the info with soldiers.”

1st Lt. Cory Burnett, a, Plymouth, N.C., native, and postal platoon leader for the 2nd Platoon, 22nd Human Resources Company out of Ft. Lewis, Wash., said that he’s learned how to be “careful” with his money. “If you don’t make your money behave, then it will go where you really don’t want it to go,” Burnett said.

Major Ira Baldwin, a Laurinburg, N.C., native, and mobility chief for the 1st SB, echoed these sentiments. “I just figured out that I’ve been throwing a lot of money away that I can use for investments,” Baldwin said.

**STF**



The class meets Thursday night



The “Warbirds”

## FUN IN THE SUN

*Story by 1st Lt. Justin Haug*

The Signal Company “Warbirds”, Special Troops Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade has been holding a company sports day every month since their arrival last October as a way of building cohesion during their 15-month deployment.

“With such a small company, it’s difficult to bring everyone together for any kind of event when the vast majority of us are pulling shift for 24-hour operations,” explains 1st Lt. Justin D. Haug, an Aurora, Colo., native, and executive officer, for the company. Sgt 1st Class Clifton Norrid, an Alvarado, Texas, native, and the “Range” Platoon, platoon sergeant, agrees, “I was in charge of this month’s sports day. Volleyball was a popular sport last time we played it, even despite the significantly cooler weather of the winter months. And this time I think everyone enjoyed playing even more than before. People were really having a lot of fun; a relaxing break for the day-to-day bore.”

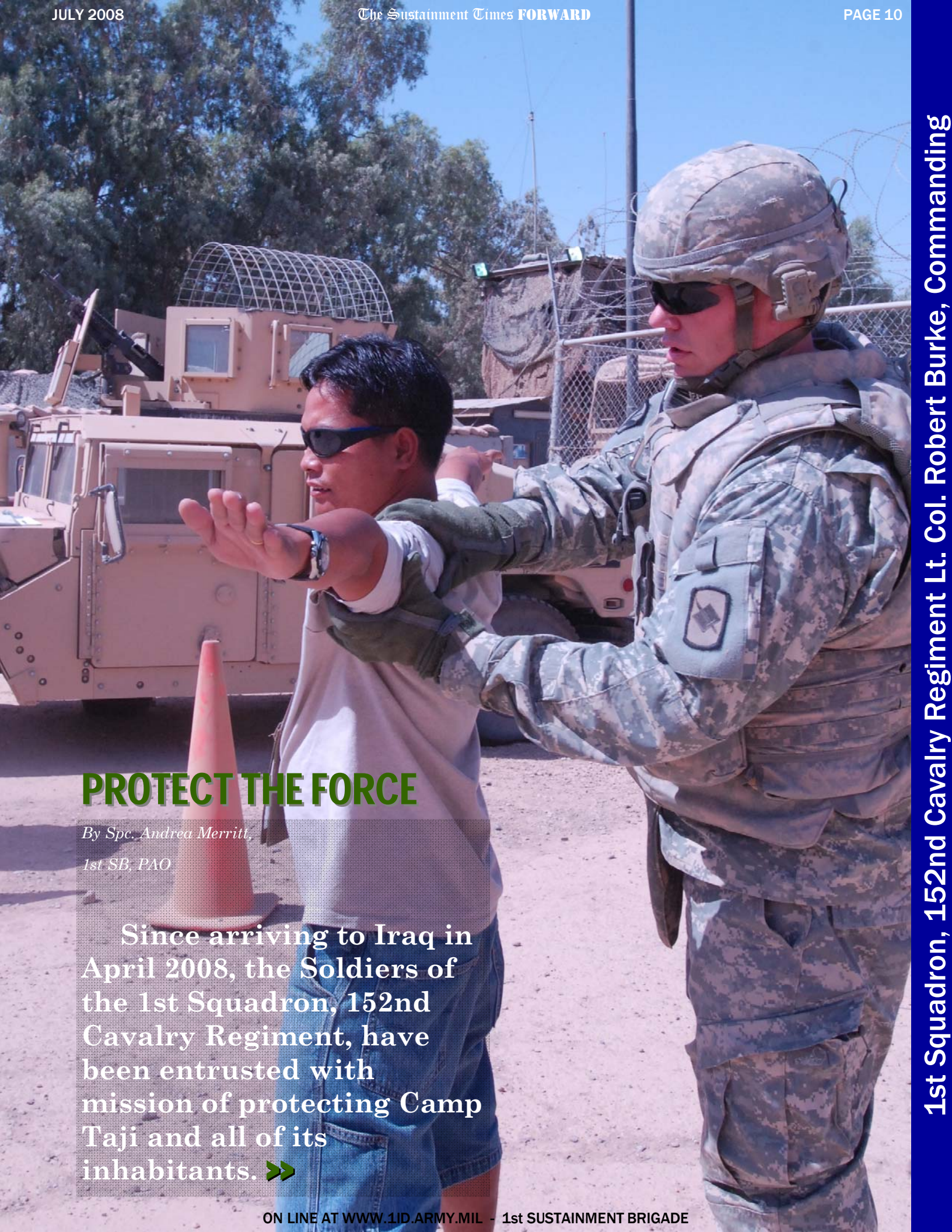
Norrid was right - the Soldiers and leaders alike were out playing hard and having fun, especially because of the warm weather that June morning. The company set up a double elimination tournament at the Durable Gym on Camp Taji. There were four teams battling head-to-head for the top spot and the ultimate

prize: free Green Beans Coffee, compliments of the company leaders.

The teams were led by individual team captains: 1st Lt. Justin Haug, 1st Lt. Scott Sweeney, 2nd Lt. Dan Hosaka, and Sgt 1st Class Eric McNight. Ultimately, it was McNight’s team who won the tournament. He played along side Sgt. Vanessa Wright, Spc. Brandon Johnson, Sgt. Christopher Johnson, Spc. David Brosowsky, and 1st Sgt Terence Carroll. The tournament was not easily won; every match could have gone either way.

Signal Company uses sports day as a means of building camaraderie and cohesion. The physical activity in the form of a sport allows an easy way to relieve stress while having fun. In the past, the company has played other sports such as basketball, football, softball, and ultimate Frisbee. Though, despite having already played volleyball twice, they’re trying to avoid redundancy during the deployment and are now looking at new options such as old-school classics like kickball or even dodge ball.

Regardless of the chosen sport or activity, the Warbirds continue to emphasize the importance of morale and team building. They capitalize on the opportunity to bring Soldiers together and enjoy as much of the deployment as they can. It appears they are on top of their game. **STF**



## PROTECT THE FORCE

*By Spc. Andrea Merritt,*

*1st SB, PAO*

Since arriving to Iraq in April 2008, the Soldiers of the 1st Squadron, 152nd Cavalry Regiment, have been entrusted with mission of protecting Camp Taji and all of its inhabitants. >>

» Since they are charged with the safety of more than 20,000 Soldiers, civilians, and Airmen who live on the camp, the Soldiers know the importance of the mission at hand.

Those who man the gates and towers are the base's first line of defense in preventing terrorist actions on Camp Taji.

**“The only thing you can do is stay busy the whole time. We run two lanes out here and keep it constantly moving.”**

The Soldiers who man the gates work in eight-hour shifts to check IDs, registrations, and the validity of passes for vehicles that want to get on post. The whole time they are at the gates, they stand in all of their protective gear, which adds about 30 pounds to their load in heat that at times averages 115 degrees and above.

“The only thing we can do is just stay busy the whole time. We run two lanes out here and keep it constantly moving. You don't really think about it, but you feel it



**Vehicle search**

afterwards,” said Spc. Kyle Moss, a Blytheville, Ark., native and 1123rd Transportation Company Soldier who serves as a gate guard at Icehouse Gate. Icehouse Gate got its name several years back because Soldiers would travel back and forth to get ice from an ice plant on the Iraqi side of Taji.

As gate guards, the Soldiers also have to look for possible IEDs by checking the undercarriage of vehicles with a mirror and looking under the hood before the vehicles can pass through. They also conduct random vehicle and personnel searches.

In the towers, the Soldiers work 12-hour shifts. They stand and keep watch on the activity outside of the camp's perimeter, which runs along Main Supply Route Tampa, one of the most dangerous military supply routes in Iraq.

“Our main objective here is just to watch for patterns in traffic and any suspicious activity,” said Spc. Seth Cheek, a Stuttgart, Ark., native and tower guard with the 1123rd Trans. Co.

For the tower guards, suspicious activity can be a vehicle that is pulled over too long outside of the wall or anything else that seems out of the ordinary.

“We look for vehicles that pull over because some will attempt to make it seem like their vehicle is broken, but you have to pay attention to see if they have cameras and taking pictures or writing things down,” said Sgt. Michael Vargas, a Kennesaw, Ga., native and tower guard with the 1123rd Trans. Co.

Since they keep watch over the wall for 12-hours a day, every day, the Soldiers have gotten to know what is ordinary and what isn't.

“We look for any suspicious activity and (try to) figure out which (ones) are out of the normal ones (not) seen on a regular basis,” said Vargas, who performed convoy

operations with a California National Guard unit before he extended his tour of duty in Iraq.

If being a tower guard sounds like an easy job, imagine standing in a room barely big enough for two people and staring out of a window for 12 hours a day. There are no real breaks, and the only time they leave their post during their shift is to use the restroom.

“When we first got here and found out we were going to be doing towers, we thought, ‘Oh, how easy.’ To be honest, it's harder to be up here 12 hours than it is to be out there,” said Spc. Lorenzo Boatman, a Blytheville, Ark., native and tower guard with 1123rd Trans. Co.

**“To be honest, it's harder to be up here 12 hours than it is to be out there.”**

Although the force protection mission can be repetitive, these Soldiers realize the importance of it. “What we do is make sure everyone in our area is safe. It's something that needs to be done,” said Spc. Joshua Tinsley, a Jonesboro, Ark., native who is also a tower guard with the 1123rd Trans. Co.

In fairy tales, beautiful princesses were locked away in towers and waited for the day a handsome prince would rescue them.

For the Soldiers who man the gates and towers on the base, there is no champion to rescue them because they are the champions in Camp Taji's force protection story.

They are the boots on the ground and the eyes in the skies that keep watch over the camp to make sure everyone inside is safe; and so far, they have been successful in their mission.

**STF**



1,215 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines

# MAKING HISTORY

## 1,215 Service Members reenlist en mass

*Story by Sgt. Aaron LeBlanc*

*165th CSSB, UPAR*

The temperature here approached 120° Fahrenheit Friday, but the blistering heat couldn't deter more than 1,200 U.S. Service members from re-affirming their oaths of enlistment in a ceremony held in Al Faw Palace on July 4th, the 232nd birthday of the United States.

The mass reenlistment ceremony, touted by organizers as "The largest of its kind in history," was headed up by the Multi-National Force-Iraq Commanding General, Gen. David Petraeus, who administered the oath of enlistment. "Volunteering to continue to serve our nation while deployed is both noble and inspiring," he said.

"There's no place I'd rather be to celebrate America's birthday than here in Iraq." He also described the troops as America's new Greatest Generation. "Your commitment and sacrifice have given the Iraqi people the most precious gift...freedom," he added.

The general compared the re-enlistees' raising of their right hands to the language on most award citations: "In keeping with the finest traditions of our military services." He said the combined total of their additional service amounted to 5,500 years.

"The millions of dollars" they receive was certainly one motive, said Petraeus, "but no bonus, no matter the size, can compare with the sacrifices you make in Iraq >>



Gen. David Petraeus

» or the sacrifices your loved ones make back home."

Among the 1,215 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines that made their way here from all over Iraq and Afghanistan were included 74 members of the Army's 1st Sustainment Brigade, based out of Camp Taji, Iraq in Support of Multi-National Division—Baghdad. Out of these, 35 were members of the 165th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, a subordinate unit of the 1st SB.

"I chose to reenlist because my son is still in the Army, serving in Kuwait with the 10th Mountain. As long as he chooses to remain in the Army, I will be by his side," said Sgt. 1st Class Sam Bankester of Carville, La. He is currently serving a 400-day combat tour with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 165th as the battalion intelligence noncommissioned officer in charge.

Because their originally scheduled flight was cancelled due to weather, the Soldiers of the 1st Sustainment Brigade had to instead ride to their destination in a heavy equipment transporter (HET) convoy planned as a contingency for just such a case.

The logistical effort was undertaken by the 165th's 377th



Entrance to the Al Faw Palace



Checking for names

HETT Company, an active duty unit out of Fort Bliss, Texas currently stationed at Camp Taji. Convoy security was provided by Battery B, 1st Battalion, 206th Field Artillery, another subordinate unit of the 165th also stationed at Taji.

Al Faw Palace, where the ceremony was held, is one of 99 palaces constructed under Saddam Hussein, and was used primarily as a resort for loyal Baathists. It is surrounded by an artificial lake and sits in the center of a complex which contains numerous other smaller palaces and villas.

Al Faw now serves as the Headquarters of Multi-National Corps-Iraq, with the majority of its 62 rooms now carved up into cubicles and devoted to office space for the hundreds of Coalition troops stationed there. It is also home to the Joint Operations Center (JOC) which serves as mission control for Multi-National Corps-Iraq, and handles all operational aspects of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Of the men and women that took part in the ceremony, the Commanding General of Multi-National Corps-Iraq, Lt. Gen. Lloyd Austin, said that "The strength of our forces is the men and women that make up our all-volunteer

military. We have the best weapons and equipment in the world, but they are useless without our professional and competent Service members. These remarkable Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines are a direct reflection of the quality of our leaders." **STF**



Soldiers check in prior to entry

# STAGE RIGHT: *Changing the game forever*



Seduced by the beauty of his teammate, Jill Taylor, played by Kate Bosworth (*Superman Returns*), and the brains of his Professor, Micky Rosa, played by Kevin Spacey (*Pay it Forward*), our young golden boy caves in under all the pressures that come with “living the good life.”

Just as Campbell seems to be approaching true high-roller status, he finds himself – and the rest of the team – seemingly tumbling down the mountain. Suddenly their under-the-radar code signs and secret language aren’t enough to keep their scam from going unnoticed. Predictably, a grumpy, gruff casino security guard by the name of Cole Williams, played by Laurence Fishburne (*The Matrix*), latches on to the team’s operation, determined to bring them all to rock bottom.

*“Winner, winner, chicken dinner!”*

Even if the format is slightly predictable (innocent hero gives into temptation, gets the girl, falls from grace, battles a nemesis, bottoms out, cleans up, backslides, battles again, and ultimately comes out triumphant), “21” is quirkier than your typical ‘casino scheme’ movie for a few reasons.

Incredibly, the movie is based on a true story! If one were to watch, for example, “*Ocean’s 11*” or “*Rounders*”, it’s obvious how gutsy and intelligent anyone attempting to dupe the gambling industry must be. Of course, though, director Robert Luketic (*Monster-in-Law*) definitely “Hollywood-ized” the flick by casting hip, good-looking, young actors and embellishing plenty of dramatic effect to keep viewers’ attention.

Luketic also employed a good amount of spiffy camera tricks – during one scene, he shows Campbell racking up chips at one table for what seems like hours. As other gamblers come and go in a sped-up motion blur, ►►



*Movie review by Pfc. Samantha Schutz*

Sometimes truth seems to come to the old aphorism, ‘Money makes the world go round.’

Unfortunately, money also has the power to turn the world upside down for those of us who chase it too greedily.

That is the moral we are reminded of in the recent film “21”, which tells the true story of five M.I.T. students and their teacher as they become masters of blackjack card-counting and take several Las Vegas casinos for millions of dollars.

Ben Campbell, played by Jim Sturgess (*Across the Universe*), is the charismatically shy hero who reluctantly joins the team of card sharks so he can earn \$300,000 worth of tuition for Harvard Medical School. Initially, he intends to abandon the operation once his funds are sufficient.

However, a short amount of time and a lot of money later, Campbell predictably falls prey to the glamorous life of room service, expensive clothes, and other excess.



**Kate Bosworth in the movie "21"**

» Campbell's actions are in real-time, so he appears calm and indifferent to the Las Vegas chaos. Without this brand of creative cinematography, the story might seem a little too bland.

Another creative addition to the storyline is that it is told with periodic narration by Sturgess's character. He isn't just narrating, however; he is reading from his admissions essay for Harvard. It adds an overlying feeling of retrospection that, in turn, brings a sense of maturity to the mess Campbell and friends got themselves into.

And, finally, thanks to superb acting by Spacey and Fishburne, the ending twist is extremely satisfying. I won't spoil the ending for my readers, but I must say it was contrary to expectations of predictability.

*"Always account for variable change."*

Well, I might as well be honest – I reviewed this movie because I was skeptical about it. My coworker, an avid poker enthusiast, convinced me to try my luck (no pun intended) with "21", and I must admit I was pleasantly surprised.

M.I.T. is well-known for its alumni and student body of genius-level thinkers, so it was only fitting that there was plenty of witty and

philosophical dialogue. That's what drew me in from the start. Plus, I'm a sucker for engaging cinematography.

Nonetheless, there were a couple of bothersome elements of the movie for me.

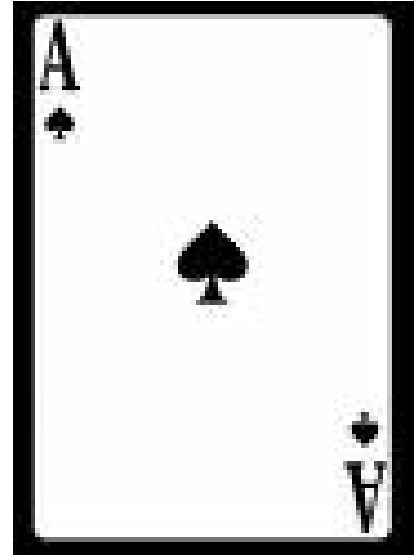
I won't argue that aesthetics are important, but good grief – why were all the characters so charismatic and good-looking? Aren't they supposed to be nerdy engineering students? Okay, I'm mostly kidding here. But I did find a lot of the shameless innuendo to be tacky and detrimental to the storyline.

In addition, I thought the characters were sometimes too stereotypical to be true. They weren't well-rounded enough. Besides the hero and the mentor, there was also the alluring love interest, the reckless bad-boy, the unpredictable and independent kleptomaniac and the aloof girl. This is somewhat excusable since the movie wasn't really dialogue-driven, but I am one for character development and depth.

At least Spacey did a good job with his intellectual, moody portrayal of Prof. Rosa. I don't think that guy can make a bad movie.

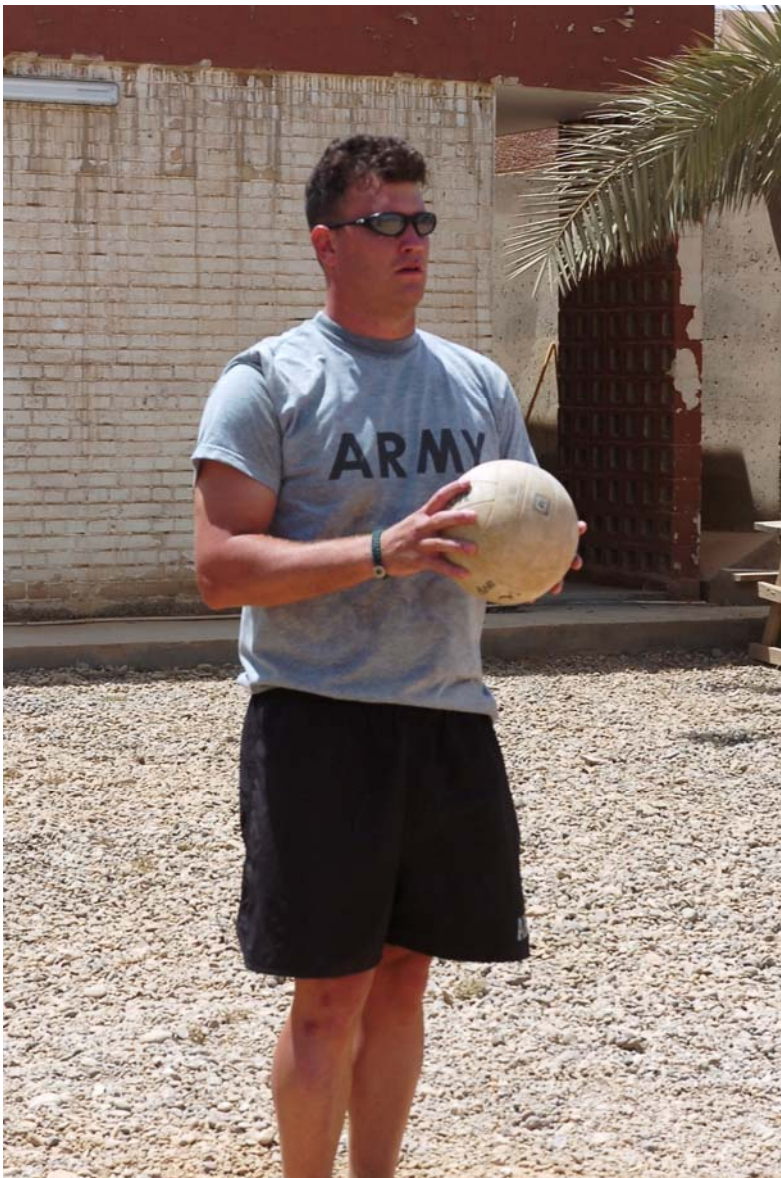
All things considered, "21" offers a sharp, skillfully made tale of risk, retribution, and redemption. I wouldn't own it or urge anyone to see it, but I'd consider watching it again if my friends asked me to.

I give "21" 3.5 stars out of 5. **STF**



**Jim Sturgess and Kate Bosworth in the movie "21"**

# SOLDIERS CELEBRATE THE 4TH OF JULY



## UNIT ORG. DAY









# Review



**X-Box 360**

**Scene it?**

**Lights, camera, action**

*By Sgt. Jason Thompson  
MND-B PAO*



## Games

**M**ovie buffs, the game for you has arrived.

I'm somewhat of a movie buff, always have been, always will be.

My DVD collection is well more than 100 titles and ranges from chick flicks (yeah, I know) to the goriest of horror movies.

Needless to say, the original "Scene It?" game on DVD was right up my alley.

Now the title that pioneered the combination of a DVD with a board game is making its way to Xbox 360, complete with four newly crafted controllers. The real question with "Scene It?" isn't whether it's fun, because it is, but instead it's whether or not you should spend the extra \$20 on converting to the Xbox 360 alternative, when there is a bevy of board game options available.

My answer is yes.

It's obvious that the non-gaming demographic was pegged as having unusually large and cumbersome digits, as the "Scene It? Lights, Camera, Action" retail copy comes equipped with a dumbed-down peripheral, otherwise known as the Big Button Pad.

The four included peripherals are a perfect fit for this bundle. The unusually large main button is meant to replicate the buzzer from TV game shows, and the four vertically aligned face buttons were designed to make answer selections quick, positive, and more reflex-like. These Big Button controllers also feature a solid ergonomic design, Navigation, Start and Back buttons for easy U.I. work and have been brightly color-coded for a fun, Viva Piñata-esqe animal party atmosphere.

But does the Big Button Pad actually push "Scene It?" on Xbox 360 forward from what the DVD game



offers? Surprisingly yes, it does. It's fun to have something different than a standard DVD remote in your hands, passing it between players, and will definitely make the game more accessible to those who have never played an Xbox 360 game before.

Not only do the controllers function just as they should, but the game play within "Scene It?" is actually pretty fun. For as much ridicule as I've taken for defending this game over the last few days, everyone who has actually picked up a controller and given the game an honest chance has come away with at least a small grin on their faces.

There are three basic modes: short play, long play, and party play. Short and long play are essentially the same game, but short play will run you around 25 minutes, whereas long play is around an hour depending on how good you and your posse are. Short play contains three rounds, with three different puzzle types (five questions per type) per round, whereas long play has five puzzle types per round.

Party play is the most disappointing of the modes as it's the one that requires you to have four players taking part. You can play with three people, but the computer will assume that there is a fourth so you'll be sitting idle as the clock ticks down waiting for someone to buzz in on the fourth controller.

Granted, if you're at a party, you'll likely have at least four people to play with; but if you aren't the most popular kid on the block, it would be nice to have the option to play with fewer. >>

» The short and long play are where you'll spend most of your time, and both perform extremely well once you factor out the annoying announcer and the unneeded cut-scenes that are intended to set up the game.

One of the features that separate the Xbox 360 version from what you've been playing since 2001 is the fact that Microsoft's system keeps track of which of the 1,800 questions you've seen already. That means that you won't have a repeat for quite some time. When you do get a repeat, and I have, it'll likely be in the movie clips section of the game. "Scene It?" is constantly taking you into the "screening room" and showing off the different movie clips that it holds – far more often than any other game mode.

Luckily, there's no set cycle of questions, so just because you get one repeat set of questions doesn't mean that you'll have already played the subsequent bunch.

Even though the game play won't blow anyone's hat off, there are plenty of puzzle types that stay fun throughout the experience, which is exactly why "Scene It?" can be looked at as an overall success. It doesn't try to be more than it is. It's a party game through and through, and you and your movie buff friends – or even casual fans – will have a blast yelling at each other and obsessing over every question that comes along. Time factors into the score you get for each correct answer, and games do come down to 30 or 40 points, out of a total of around 40,000. On occasion, you can imagine the amount of tension that can bring to a household.

The game designers also did a good job of crafting questions and puzzle types for different types of players. Some types are geared towards more creative thinkers, others are geared towards analytics, and then there are strictly memory-based games. That means that you could play with four friends, through four games, and it's entirely within the realm of possibility that there could be a different winner each time.

**The game designers also did a good job of crafting questions and puzzle types for different types of players.**

Once again, this game is not revolutionizing the way you play games, nor will it pack any kind of visual punch, but that doesn't take anything away from the undeniable fact that it's a very fun game to play with a group of friends. Is it worth the \$60 entry fee? Given that a regular game of "Scene It?" is going to run you \$40 from a retail store, I'd say, yes. You get hundreds more questions, four controllers, and the real kicker is that the Xbox 360 varies the 1,800 questions much better than a standard DVD player.

The biggest downside to the game is that there is essentially no Xbox Live integration. This game would have been perfect to play with friends or random people from across the country or at least have the ability to download new questions for a fee from Microsoft's online service. As it stands, there does not seem to be anything of the sort, but that's not to say that they couldn't release a patch that opens up online functionality later on.

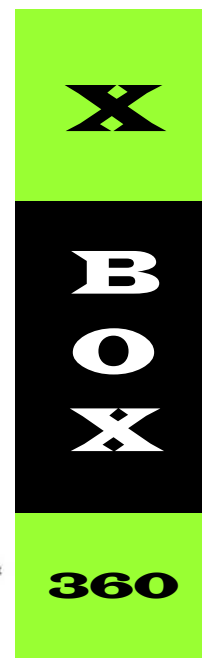
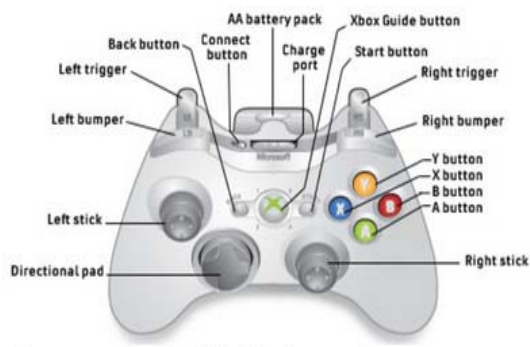
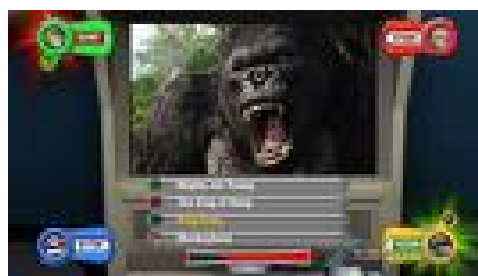
Check that last paragraph, the biggest downside to "Scene It?" is actually the abhorrent production values that have been instilled in the announcer and the cheese-ridden cut-scenes that play during each puzzle type change. I understand that they need to set up the point for each puzzle, and they do their job in that regard, but the visuals are just painful to look at and the voice acting doesn't exactly help things.

In terms of a stand-alone party game, the "Scene It? Lights, Camera, Action" bundle ranks up there with the better few titles released for Microsoft systems. "Scene It? Lights, Camera, Action" also trumps its hybrid board/DVD game brethren and not just for those considered avid gamers.

Nearly anyone can plop down on a couch and get enjoyment out of "Scene It? Lights, Camera, Action" in a party setting, which makes this Microsoft/Screen life collaborative a success. But for the game and franchise to have any legs on the Xbox 360, downloadable content and some form of Live tie-in is a must.

With no signs of either Live support or downloadable content, there's a chance that the game disc will be a cutting room floor remnant, and the Big Button Pads will be reduced to infrared doorstoppers once that inaugural "Scene It? Lights, Camera, Action" party has ended.

For myself, I give "Scene It? Lights, Camera, Action" 4 movie reels out of 5. **STF**





Laundry renovations on FOB Dragon

# Laundry Service in high demand

Story by Staff Sgt. Bryant Maude

As more and more units move into smaller and smaller outposts throughout Iraq, the need for shower, laundry, and clothing repair (SLCR) teams is on the rise. The Soldiers with the 590th Quartermaster Company, 553rd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion have seen their missions surge from a few sites to eight in under a year.

“Right now, I have eight SLCR teams out on mission in Dragon, Meade, Dolby, Iskan, Murray, War Eagle, Sparrow Hawk, (and) JSS Ur,” said Capt. Robert Holscher, a Hamburg, N.Y., native, and the commander of the 590th QM Co.

For Holscher and his Soldiers, being deployed allows them the opportunity to do the mission they were trained to do. The hours are long and the amenities on the small outposts are few; however, they manage to stay positive anyway.

“Life in Patrol Base Dragon is not bad thanks to Soldiers that have skills and had built up the base to make it look the way it looks today,” stated Staff Sgt. Ramon Umpierre-

gonzalez, a Levittown, Puerto Rico, native, and the noncommissioned officer in charge of the SLCR mission on Patrol Base Dragon. “We do not have too much of MWR, but we manage to do what we can to make time go by.”

Umpierre-gonzalez has the

“Our main concern is the morale and welfare of the warriors we support.”

basic 15-Soldier SLCR team and operates 24-hours a day; seven days a week, with a 24-hour turn around for laundry and clothing repair. His team processes over 2,800 laundry orders a week and 100 uniform renovations a week. This includes Soldiers on PB Dragon and four smaller sites nearby.

“Our main concern is the morale and welfare of the warriors we support. They do their part of patrolling, and we do ours by providing clean laundry and renovations,” said Umpierre-gonzalez. “Also, we are saving the Army a lot of money by doing our jobs in these kind of conditions,” concluded Umpierre-

**STF**



Setting up shop



## THIRST QUENCHER

*Story by 1st Lt. Mustafa Kamalreza*

Water resources in and around the Baghdad area are becoming increasingly precious as temperatures continue to rise. Fortunately, the 553rd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Gregory W. Koller, has a unique weapon in its arsenal to combat the withering effects of 120 degree days in the desert: the largest bottled water plant in Southwest Asia. Capt. Deshaunda Allen and the 62nd Quartermaster Company, 553rd CSSB, are responsible for oversight of the Oasis Bottled Water Plant in Camp Liberty, Iraq, and arguably the most critical mission in Baghdad. After all, what other mission can continue without water?

Over the last 13 months, the plant has produced an estimated 12.6 million cases of bottled water, with over 12.4 million of those cases going out in support of Coalition Forces. So where does all of this water come from? First, water is pumped out of Zee Lake inside Victory Base Camp, Iraq. Next, the water is treated with chlorine and

filtered to remove particles as small as one micron (most viruses are twice as large). After that, the water undergoes reverse osmosis and then passes through a carbon filter. The filter uses carbon particles with a positive charge to pull negatively charged particles from the water. Finally, the water passes through an ultraviolet light filter, which disables the reproductive processes of any remaining microscopic organisms. The water is tested every two hours throughout the purification process to ensure its pH level - a measure of how acidic or alkaline a liquid is - remains balanced.

Upon completion of the sterilization process, the water is pumped into a sterilized tank and infused with ozone. This last step removes anything which may have survived the previous filters and also removes any odors. The ozone completely diffuses into the water after two to four hours, leaving behind nothing but the pure drinking water you see in every Coalition Force refrigerator.

The one liter plastic bottles that fill the CF refrigerators are made in the Oasis Bottled Water Plant as well. Tiny beads of plastic resin are inserted into one of two machines that melt down and blow the plastic into a bottle. Combined, the two machines have produced nearly 250 million bottles since the facility began production in May 2005. After the bottles are filled and sealed, a laser inscribes the water's date of production and the code for which water purification system produced it. All bottles produced on Camp Liberty have the code, "WPS-06." Take a closer look at your bottled water the next time you take a drink and you will see both when and where it was produced...in code.

Currently, 181 customers have open accounts with the facility, and the 62nd QM CO is responsible for the issue of bottled water to those customers. The 62nd QM CO coordinates materiel handling equipment (MHE) assets from the West Liberty KBR MHE Yard, monitors the loading process, maintains accountability of each case, and supervises the quality of the operation. Approximately 500 pallets of water are distributed across the Baghdad operational environment every day. Under 62nd's watch, several improvements have been made to the plant, including grating and graveling the storage yard and the implementation of new phone and internet lines. These enhancements add to the efficiency of the operation, improving overall customer support.

The Oasis Bottled Water Plant on Camp Liberty is the largest of six such facilities in theater—at full capacity the plant produces over 450,000 one liter bottles per day. The 553rd CSSB is responsible for maintaining overall accountability of that stock and ensuring it is delivered to Soldiers on the battlefield. Not only is the Oasis Bottled Water Plant a necessity for Coalition Forces in Iraq, it is also a weapon. It is a weapon of a different kind that sustains our Soldiers. **STF**



**Col. Kevin O'Connell inspects the water**



North to FOB Sykes

## THIRTY-TWO DAYS IN A HET

*Story by Staff Sgt. Bryant Maude*

The 32-day journey was long, complicated, grueling, both hot and cold at times, but according to several members of the Heavy Equipment Transporter Platoon, it was totally worth it.

"I had a blast," stated Staff Sgt. David Jenkins, a New London, Ohio, native, and squad leader for the HET Platoon, 416th Transportation Company, 168th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade. "I'd give just about anything to do it again."

"It was a good break," said Sgt. Isidro Sanchez, a Midland, Texas, native, and truck driver. "I wish more of these jobs came down."

They were tasked to pick up dozens of heavy vehicles like the M1A2 Abrams tank from Camp Buehring in Kuwait and deliver them to multiple destinations throughout Iraq.

The mission was just one of many this platoon of 54 Soldiers has embarked on since their arrival in

Iraq in July 2007, but it may very well have been their most memorable.

Their leader is a young officer from Sultan, Washington, 1st Lt. Erik Solberg. Solberg, a graduate of Gonzaga University, with a degree in Criminal Justice, who believes in the abilities of his noncommissioned officers and prefers to delegate rather than micro-manage.

"I trust them to make the right decisions and if they make mistakes, I'll back them up," said Solberg.

The journey was broken up into four legs that took the platoon across large expanses of desert roads throughout Iraq and Kuwait, and since they would be away from their home base it would mean little to no life support. They would need to anticipate all their needs ahead of time and carry as much as they could.

"We put our stuff in tuff boxes and duffle bags," recalls Jenkins. "Every now and then we'd pull into a place with washers and dryers and then we'd wash our clothes."

They spent all day or night

driving and they would sleep in the cabs of their truck. They ate in a dining facility when they could, otherwise there were meals-ready-to-eat or MREs, snacks, water and Gatorade on ice, and sandwiches they saved from the last location they stopped at.

"We never went hungry. I mean you might miss lunch by an hour, but there was always the dinner meal," recalled Jenkins.

On leg two of their journey, about two hours south of Forward Operating Base Sykes, the clouds opened up and poured rain on the crew something fierce.

"We rolled into a check point, couldn't see ten feet in front of our face, and as a result, blew a few tires rubbing up against the barriers" recalled Jenkins. "So we stopped long enough to change the tires and finished our journey up to Sykes."

Spc. Lonnie Woodard, a Cleveland, Al., native, and a driver with the HET Platoon along with Sgt. Glenn Rice, a Milton, Florida, native, also a driver, went to work changing the tires.

"We were fortunate to have a few truck drivers with mechanical experience of their own," said Sgt 1st Class Andrew Durant, a McCormick, S.C., native, and platoon sergeant.

**"These guys can fix just about anything," stated Jenkins.**

Rice has 20 years of military service and a degree in automotive and diesel mechanics while Woodard studied diesel engine repair at a vocational school for four years. Both Soldiers volunteered to assist the maintenance crew in keeping the HETs on the road.

"There's not much we can't do," said Rice

The unit has three maintenance technicians that are organic to them, but are attached to the 57th Transportation Company. And although they do the majority of ➤

» the work on the HET's, Durant felt they should get the drivers more involved with the day-to-day maintenance; and it was a good thing.

“We had tires blowing left and right due to the weight of the tanks,” recalled Woodard. “So we figured out that if we just increased the tire pressure to 100 percent it cut down on that problem.”

About three-quarters of the way into the mission, Solberg had to hand over the convoy leader position to Durant, his right hand man, but he didn't lose much sleep over it.

“I wasn't worried,” recalled Solberg.

Durant is no stranger to deployments. In 18 years of service, he's deployed to a half dozen countries including Iraq three times. “I was in Somalia, Rwanda, Kenya, Haiti, and Iraq,” said Durant. “Oh, and I forgot about Kosovo.”

He's also a highly motivated NCO with a passion for the mission and a desire to see Soldiers excel.

“All of my Soldiers are maxed out on their correspondence courses,” stated Durant. “I required each one of them to complete a hundred hours a month.”

“He expects the best from his men,” said Jenkins.

The 32-day mission was long, support was limited, the roads were dangerous, and after adding 83,446 miles to the odometers on their vehicles, they drove into their motor pool with no injuries.

“Considering the time we were on the road – we had no incidents – this was a good thing,” declared Solberg.

The unit has now logged over 210,000 miles, they've changed locations three times, increased the readiness of their vehicles, and managed to promote seven Soldiers to staff sergeant, a good number of Soldiers to sergeant, made sure they all passed their physical fitness tests, and kept a can do attitude.

“It's been fun. And now I can go on R&R,” smiled Jenkins. **STF**



A few thousand tons of cargo



HET Platoon, 416th Transportation



A camel convoy





# Chaplain's Thoughts

Chaplain Terrence E. Hayes, Brigade Chaplain



Lt. Col. McCurry

## A SOLDIER'S FAITH

By Staff Sgt. Bryant Maude

Every Sunday morning at 9:15 a.m., without fail, you can hear a gospel song emanating down the hall of the 1st Sustainment Brigade headquarters building. For those faithful Sunday school members making their way down the hall into the conference room, it's not the music that draws them, but the spiritual lesson they are about to receive.

"I trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior in January 1989 while I was a Second Lieutenant in Korea," says Lt. Col. Chris McCurry, a Weaverville, N.C., native, and the Deputy Commander of the 1st SB, as he goes about teaching the class. "And if God wanted to, he could have called me home right then; but instead, I'm here to tell as many people as I can about Christ."

As McCurry continued to grow as a Christian, he looked for opportunities to serve the Lord, and

the Lord gave him a burden to serve in a full-time capacity.

"In spite of His calling, He has allowed me the privilege to continue to serve in the U.S. Army while I simultaneously serve in the Lord's Army," McCurry stated.

McCurry is very active in his local church in Manhattan, Kan., and as a result, did not want to take a 15-month break in his service for God. Upon joining the 1st SB, McCurry knew the Lord placed him there for a reason.

"I continued praying about how I could serve the Lord while deployed," recalled McCurry. "Before our deployment in September 2007, my wife, Ruth, and I talked about the possibility of me starting a Bible study (or) Sunday school class in Iraq. After we deployed, I shared my burden with our brigade chaplain. He supported the idea of a Sunday school class that we could schedule to precede our traditional Protestant service each Sunday morning," shared McCurry.

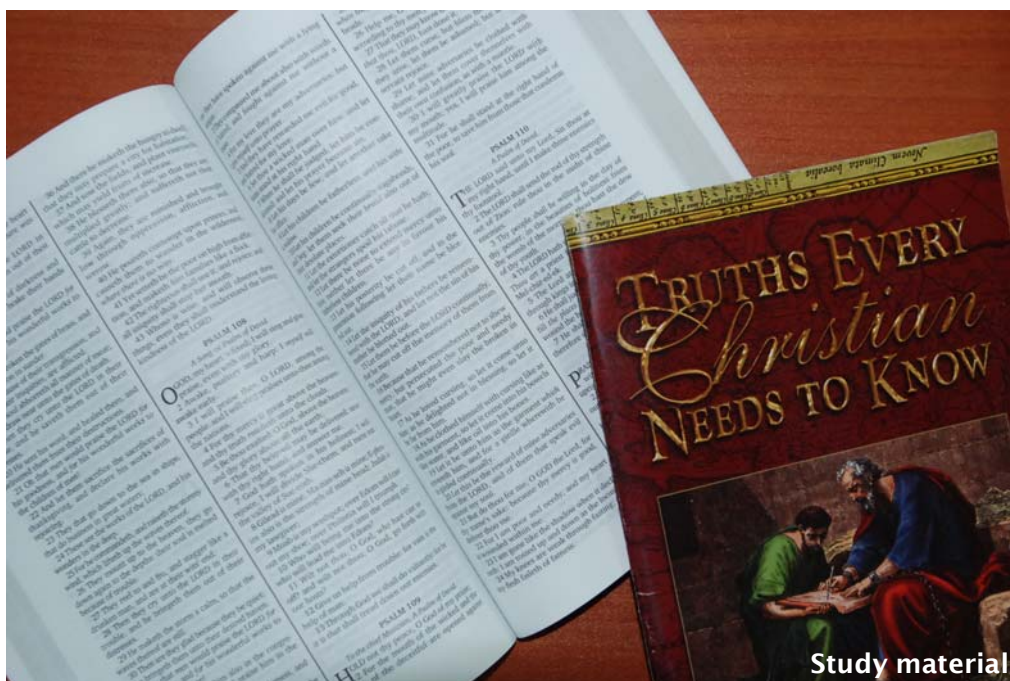
However, before he committed fully, he felt that he needed his boss' approval.

"When I asked Col. O'Connell if I could pursue the class, he fully supported the plan. We conducted our first session on 18 November 2007."

"I've been attending since the first day it started," said Maj. Susan Arnett, an Oklahoma native, and the deputy operations officer for the 1st SB. "I come for the fellowship with other Christians. Our class is a combination of people in all ranks, different and varied backgrounds, but we all share a love for the Lord. We are not all at the same place in our maturity as a Christian, so there is always the opportunity to learn from one another."

McCurry has two primary goals for the class.

"First, and most importantly, I want every student to have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their >>



Study material

» personal Savior, thus ensuring their eternal destination is heaven. Secondly, for those students that are already Christians, I desire for them to have a closer, daily walk with the Lord. This walk should include reading, studying, and memorizing Bible scriptures, a consistent prayer life, and a burden to share their testimony of Christ with others,” states McCurry.

The material used in the class is written by several pastors in the states who prepare and publish Bible study curriculums for classes like this. Each of the curriculums has 13 lessons, which makes 13 weeks of material.

“So far, we have studied about having a victorious Christian life and about the life of Joseph (from Genesis); we are currently learning about the truths that every Christian needs to know.

“I have learned a lot about new ways to get closer to God, the Holy Spirit and how it dwells within us,” said 1st Lt. Cory Burnett, a, Plymouth, N.C., native, and postal officer for the 2nd Platoon, 22nd Human Resources Company out of Ft. Lewis, Wash.

For Sp. Bryan Fadely, a Raymondville, Texas, native, and gunner on the brigade’s personal security detail, the class is something he looks forward to and is proud to be a part of. “This has truly helped ease the burden of the deployment (and) helped show me that this is just where God wants me right now,” stated Fadely.

Each class runs about one hour and the class’ average attendance is about 11 students. The highest attendance has been 17 on one Sunday, which was exciting. With occasional work commitments, emergency leave situations, and R&R, the attendance fluctuates a little. The class has been blessed with a good core group that tries to be as faithful as possible.

Since all of the material costs money, McCurry and Maj. Terrence



Some of the students

Hayes, a Grants Pass, Ore., native, and the brigade chaplain, prayed about how they could fund the Sunday school class. About the same time as they were praying for finances, McCurry communicated with his Pastor in Kansas, Stephen Henderson, about the idea for the Sunday school class.

“Pastor Henderson graciously offered for our local church, Harvest Baptist Church, to buy the needed curriculums. In addition to the support we have received from my church, several missionaries that have ministries to the military offered to help. Mr. Bob Ingram, from the Christian Service Center at Fort Benning, and Col. Tyler Ryberg, from Worldwide Military Baptist Missions, both sent us other material, to include free Bibles, for the class,” recalled McCurry.

As the weeks go by and the end of the deployment draws near, Soldiers will be reunited with their families soon. With that in mind, McCurry has decided his final series will be a study about having a household built

on faith.

“I think this will be very helpful for all of us as we reunite with our Families after this period of separation,” concluded McCurry.

**STF**



Sp. Fadely

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Sgt. Dennisur Thompson, is the supply non commissioned officer for Signal Company, Special Troops Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade, and a Cumming, Ga., native, who has served six and a half years in the Army and is currently working on an associates in business management.