



Task Force Danger

September 20, 2004

# *BRO Progress*

*1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division*

## Gatafan Primary School Opens

BALAD, Iraq – On Sept. 1, Soldiers from Bravo Company, “Regulators,” 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 77<sup>th</sup> Armor Regiment participated in a grand opening ceremony at the Gatafan Primary School in downtown Balad. The grand opening was the most recent event in Operation Tiger Cub, Task Force 1-77’s effort to repair or rebuild local schools in order to help give the Iraqi children a chance at a brighter future.

Gatafan School is attended by nearly 200 students from the surrounding neighborhood, and employs eight teachers and one headmistress.

The school, built in the early 1980s, had become severely damaged after two decades of neglect. The roof was

collapsing in many places, the sewage system was inoperable and there was no clean, safe place for the students to play during the school day. These poor conditions led the Balad City Council and Task Force 1-77 to identify repairing Gatafan School as a priority project.

The grand opening ceremony was attended by members of the Balad City Council, Soldiers from Bravo Company and dozens of local residents and children, many of whom will be students there when school starts in the coming weeks. 1LT John Martin, executive officer of Bravo Company, addressed the gathering, thanking them for their continued support in the area. “This project was made possible through the

hard work of the local community. The children who benefit from this new school will grow up to one day be the leaders of a brighter Iraq,” said Martin.

Following the ceremonial ribbon cutting, guests were given refreshments and took a tour of the new school. Renovations included replacing the old roof, completely rebuilding the restrooms and septic system, and building several courts for the children to safely play on. The project, which cost more than \$31,000, included building a new wall around the school. “Repairing Gatafan School is a tremendous gift to the people of Balad. The children and teachers thank everyone very much for their help,” said the school Headmistress, Mrs. Fatima.



# Civil Affairs donates medical equipment and books

BAQUBAH, Iraq - Soldiers from Alpha Company, 415<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs Battalion donated a portable defibrillator, about 30 medical textbooks and dozens of small stuffed animals during a visit Aug. 19, to two hospitals here.

MAJ Mike Hert, the provisional government liaison officer for the Civil Military Operations Center in Baqubah, spearheaded the donation efforts. A member of the Kalamazoo, Mich.,

Army Reserve unit, Hert works as a business development manager for Aurora Health Care.

"They made a point of asking, 'Hey Mike, what do you need?'" Hert said.

The Oshkosh, Wisc., based-company decided to pool together the donations.

Hert said that he was just fortunate to be "the messenger" in the donations. More medical supplies from his employer and community are

expected in the future.

"They sent the latest and greatest medical journals as well," Hert said of the small mound of donated textbooks which he called "priceless."

"To be able to come into a health care clinic with the most current research is invaluable because the physicians love the information."

Hert said the donations by co-workers back home will go a long way here.



# Mural painter leaves her work for soldiers

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARHORSE, BAQUBAH, Iraq -- Although most Soldiers stationed in Iraq have become accustomed to viewing the colors of daily life in hues of brown and green, troops stationed at this forward operating base were recently treated to a feast for the eyes.

SGT Shannon Thomas, 26, a heavy engineer equipment mechanic with the North Dakota National Guard's 141<sup>st</sup> Engineer Battalion, has splashed colors wherever she can find a canvas, T-barrier,

or piece of plywood.

Thomas's current and largest project to date is the decoration of the T-barrier wall surrounding the post chapel. She has also painted murals in her company area as well as oversized representations of the patch for each unit stationed at FOB Warhorse. The paintings of the patches are displayed in the post dining facility.

Brigade Chaplain (MAJ) Chip Huey decided to have murals resembling stained glass windows painted on the barriers surrounding the

chapel because it was hidden behind them and he wanted to make sure Soldiers knew the chapel was there, he said. So Huey asked his parishioners for names of artists during a worship service.

The chaplain planned to collect names of candidates, view examples of their work and conduct interviews in order to find the right artist. Two Soldiers from Charlie Company, 141<sup>st</sup> Engineer Battalion, recommended Thomas.

Thomas said she loves her work here painting murals and believes it's good for mo-

rale, especially her own. She is even considering transferring to Minot State College, which has an art program for teaching, she said.

Her next project will be to paint a representation of the Army seal at the MWR facility's new fruit and juice bar. Although modest, a bright smile shows the enthusiasm for her new line of work.

When asked about her lack of training, she blushed and said "I'm just a natural, I guess."

