



DRAGON FIRE

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June 2007

Dragons Take to the Streets

For the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

Cover

Specialist
Squad leader for
the 4th Infantry
Brigade Combat Team
attachment glances
back in the Doura
while maintaining security for a
unit (Smith/4th IBCI)

Commander ushers in inaugural issue

FROM THEM TO US TO DRAGONS

Dragon Soldiers, Leaders and Families- welcome to Iraq and our first issue of DRAGON FIRE magazine. We've now been on the ground here in the Rashid District of Southern Baghdad for over 90 days, and I'm absolutely convinced by what I've seen you do that we're making history for our great nation. It is my distinct pleasure to bring those daily events to life in the full-color pages of this magazine



Col. Ricky D. Gibbs shakes the hand of Iraqi boys during a patrol.

The brigade has also welcomed three new maneuver battalions into our fighting formation. To the Soldiers and Families of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment "Vanguards" from Schweinfurt, Germany, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment "Warriors" out of Fort Carson, Colo., and the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment "Tomahawks" from Fort Lewis, Wash.- we are glad to have your Soldiers and Families aboard!

We also recognize and remember our 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment "Rangers" and 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment "Proud Americans," both of whom are doing great work with other brigade combat teams elsewhere in Baghdad. You are not forgotten, and your deeds come to life in this issue.

As has been the case for our Army in Iraq since 2003, this will be a historic year for the Dragon Brigade; it will be a memorable year for each of you for many reasons. For many of us it will be the most demanding, most challenging and perhaps the toughest year of our lives. We are already well aware of that

fact, as we recently remembered our 28 fallen heroes on Memorial Day.

Soldiers, your leaders will demand more of you than ever before; Leaders, your Soldiers will need you more than ever before. You will be challenged mentally, physically and spiritually. Harden yourselves for the challenges ahead and learn to rely on and care for each other. Combat is a team effort and no one that tries to take on all the tests that lie ahead alone will succeed. All Soldiers must know and live the

Dragon Imperatives: Discipline, Physical Fitness, Marksmanship, Medical Training, Battle Drills and Teamwork. Leaders, Your Soldiers will need you! Be the leader they deserve by serving as the living embodiment of those imperatives.

In conclusion I want again to stress how proud I am of the work you are all doing here and at home. Every one of you must remember the Dragon Imperatives and make them the guiding force in your lives while serving here for the next year. While this may be one of the most difficult periods of your lives, it may also be one of the most rewarding, as you are all making a positive difference in the lives of so many, as you take an active role in Iraq's nation-building.

No Mission Too Difficult...No Sacrifice Too Great...Duty First, Dragons First, First Team!

*Col. Ricky D. Gibbs
Dragon 6*

Brigade keeps getting after it

Soldiers and Families of the Dragon Brigade:

I am extremely pleased at the success our Soldiers are having here in the Rashid District of Baghdad. From aggressive combat operations aimed at defeating the various insurgent and militia groups, to essential services projects that are helping to improve the Rashid District's infrastructure, Dragon Soldiers are getting after it! I see this success in the large number of criminals, weapons and munitions our Soldiers are taking off the streets, and I see it in the faces of those Iraqi citizens who want a peaceful life in Iraq and how they appreciate our Soldiers efforts in improving the daily security of Rashid.

To the Soldiers: You are doing incredible work and must continue to be relentless when rooting out the insurgents. Remember you fight for and with the person standing to your left and right. Always move as a fighting element and in support of each other. No one must move around battlefield alone. NCOs you must remain vigilant in enforcing the standards and discipline and ensure you re-look your Techniques Tactics and Procedures as not



Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Champagne and Spc. Ahmed Ahmed keep watch during a patrol.

to get complacent. We are fighting on a fluid battlefield that changes everyday. It is not a sign of weakness to have someone from outside your organization take a look at how you are doing business it will only make you stronger.

To the families: I can't express the gratitude we have for your never ending support and love. Your letters and packages are the hallmark of every Soldiers day. I ask that you keep our Soldiers in your prayers and before you know it we'll be home.

I'm proud of the way our Soldiers have conducted themselves in the first 90 days in Iraq. We have been fighting along side with great units from the likes of Germany (1-18 IN), Fort Carson (2-12 IN), and Fort Lewis (2-23 IN) and they have contributed immensely to our success in our area of operation. As you can see it one team one fight. We have much work to do and many more missions ahead of us stay focused and we'll meet all our objectives.

Get after It!
*Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Champagne
Dragon 7*



Cpl. John McClure, a medic with the personal security detachment of 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, stares out the window of a Bradley Fighting Vehicle while returning from a mission in southern Baghdad's Rashid District April 16. The Harvard, Mass., native had been escorting Gen. David McKiernan, the commanding general of U.S. Army-Europe, on a tour of the Vanguard's area of operations. (Smith, 4th IBCT Public Affairs)

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On the cover

Sgt. Joseph Adkins, squad leader for 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team personal security detachment glances down at some goods in the Doura Market, while providing security for a congressional visit. (Smith/4th IBCT Public Affairs)

Open for Business

Doura Market shows signs of recovery

by Maj. Kirk Luedeke
and

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons

On Sale

December 2006	3 Shops
May 2007	200+



BAGHDAD, Iraq – In December, it was drab, deserted, dirty and a hotbed of crime. Today, the bright color of shoes, shirts and other goods shines in a cleaned up yet still dangerous Doura Market.

Second Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, has led the charge to clean up the market — which has responded with a strong resurgence.

The market has become a beacon of hope to all Iraqis and attracts international media and numerous trips from VIPs from all over — including Gen. David J. Petraeus, Multinational Forces Iraq Commander, and Brig. Gen. John Campbell, the Multi-National Division - Baghdad Deputy Commander for Maneuver. The market has also been visited by the American ambassador to Iraq and a congressional delegation.

Petraeus has tea

“Chai for everyone,” Petraeus exclaimed with a smile as he placed enough money on the counter at a small teashop to buy tea for all who accompanied him on the trip and then some.

Later, as he sipped tea with an Iraqi Army battalion commander, whose unit is responsible for securing the Doura Market area, Petraeus discussed the visible progress in what was, just four months ago, a dangerous cluster of ramshackle buildings full of roaming death squads and criminals.

“This is still not pretty, but it has made substantial strides,” Petraeus said, noting that many of the dilapidated storefronts and houses in and around the market still show signs of the violence that resulted in the once-vibrant economic hub of some 700 stores and kiosks shrinking to just three total on Dec. 23rd.

“There will be challenges here. This is an area that Al-Qaeda continues to go after because it does represent success for the Sunni Arabs, and they (Al-Qaeda) don’t want to see cooperation with the Iraqi Government and Iraqi Security Forces.”

The market now features 201 stores and stands open for business, with room for many more as the situation there improves.

When asked what it meant to have the MNF-I commander’s presence in Doura Market, Lt. Col. Najm Abdul Wahed Motleq replied: “I’m very honored to have the General here today to come and observe the situation on the ground here at the market. This market was dead in the past and brought back



Above: 1st Lt. Joseph Caudel, with the 2-12 personal security detachment keeps a look out during a recent VIP tour of the market.



Right: Lt. Col. Stephen L.A. Michael, 2-12 commander, briefs Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Hammond before walking the Doura

to life with our presence here and with Coalition Forces securing this market.”

Lt. Col. Najm’s 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 3rd Iraqi Army Division has received high marks from its U.S. counterparts for its professionalism and willingness to take on the responsibility of securing the market.

“They’ve done a great job and have taken ownership for the market,” said Capt. Ben Jones, who’s Company Alpha, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment shares responsibility for security with their Iraqi Army counterparts. The Fort Carson, Colo.-based unit is attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division out of Fort Riley, Kan.

Jones, a native of Meridian, Miss., and his rifle company have set up shop in the market, establishing a combat outpost that his unit, nicknamed the Gators, affectionately calls ‘the Swamp.’

“People are coming back,” he said. “You talk to the people here, and a lot of them send their women to the market because they’re afraid to go out.”

Jones described a dynamic that he and his Soldiers, along with the troops of the Iraqi Army, are working diligently to change. By occupying the first such coalition outpost of several for his battalion, the Alpha Gators hope that their daily presence and profes-

sionalism will lead to trust between them and Doura’s population.

Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, the 4th brigade’s commander, said that the Doura Market is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the plan to make inroads of progress in Southern Baghdad.

“We have over 50 projects in the works across the Rashid District with many more on the way,” the Harker Heights, Texas native said. “One of those integral to the Doura Market’s revitalization is a fence that will keep the criminals and violent elements out, while allowing the law-abiding merchants and citizens to conduct their business without interference.”

\$5 for toothpaste?

As Petraeus continued his tour, he stopped at a kiosk and purchased a tube of toothpaste.

“Five dollars for toothpaste?” One bystander asked incredulously.

“Anything to help the economy,” Petraeus replied as he handed the cash to the proprietor and then moved on, toothpaste in hand.

Brig. Gen. John Campbell, Multi-National Division - Baghdad Deputy Commanding General for Maneuver, visited the market March 22 to talk to local citizens and to assess the market’s security.

Accompanied by Gibbs, and Lt. Col. Stephen L. A. Michael, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Inf. Div. commander, Campbell visited Gator COP in the market and walked the streets.

The outpost, a two-story structure nestled behind the market’s main thoroughfare, houses the Co. A troops and is a base of stability in the market.

Sgt. Derek Remaley, a combat medic whose unit has lived at the COP since March 12, said the day-to-day life for the locals has improved.

“It has been pretty good out here,” said Remaley, a combat medic for Co. A. and native of Twin Falls, Idaho. “It has gotten a lot better since being out here.”

But there are still speed bumps to the process of rebuilding the market place. Serious crime still infests the market, but is being systematically rooted out allowing for Iraqi shop owners to return to plying their wares.

Joining the Elite

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

BAGHDAD – Audie Leon Murphy the United States' most decorated service member during World War II, received every medal for valor the Army awards in addition to one Belgian and one French. Today, his memory is carried on through the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club, which requires special induction by a board of senior noncommissioned officers.

The Audie Murphy Board was held by the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division's brigade and battalion sergeants major at Forward Operating Base Falcon April 29.

Command Sgt. Maj. James Foreman, sergeant major of the 4th IBCT's Special Troops Battalion, said the Audie Murphy Board is unique from other boards due to the esteem the accomplishment carries.

"Regular promotion boards are more personal, there's more money and there's more rank," Foreman said. "For this board, there's no money, no rank. It's about prestige."

Command Sgt. Maj. Eddie Fields III, the sergeant major of 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div., said being invited to the Sergeant Audie Leon Murphy Club is a huge compliment to a noncommissioned officer.

"The Sergeant Audie Leon Murphy Board is unique that it separates an average NCO from a superb NCO," Fields said. "A superb NCO goes beyond his regular duties and does them without being asked."

"He is truly the 'Backbone of the Army'."

The board mirrored the fact that Murphy, who was too short and young to join most of the armed services except the Army, had to work diligently to overcome his small stature to become the best.

Sgt. Kevin Dick, a satellite operation and maintenance team leader with Company C, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div., was one of four out of 17 nominees that proved to be a superb NCO. The Henderson, Nev., native said he placed a lot of stress on himself to do well.

"It was without a doubt the most nerve-racking experience I've been in," Dick said. "I put a lot of pressure on myself for it."

Dick said that while he was taken aback when he found out he had gained admittance to the SAMC, the payoff made it worth the time he invested in it.

"It kind of validates all the studying and all the things that I did to prepare because a lot of effort went into it," he said. "It was hard not to smile."

"I studied so hard for it and I wanted the people who supported me to know that I did well, I made it, and their support was justified."

Though it wasn't like Murphy standing aboard a burning tank destroyer and fighting off swarms of German troops enroute to being awarded the Medal of Honor, the board





Dick



Middleton



Schmith



Whitebull



made the
Soldiers think
outside the box.

Sgt. Maj. Richard Cunningham, the operations sergeant-major and acting command sergeant major for the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division attached to the 4th IBCT, said even the way Soldiers are judged in front of the SAMB is different.

"The Soldier is constantly on display," Cunningham said. "He's selling himself the entire time."

Cunningham said things he looks for while judging an aspiring member of the SAMC are the way he carries himself, his tone and enthusiasm while answering questions and the appearance of his uniform.

The 2-12 Inf. sergeant-majors said such things reflect on the amount of pride the individual takes in himself and in his unit.

Even the questions are different from regular boards, Cunningham said. The 2-12 Inf. sergeant-major said the questions are more situational and require more thinking than simple memorization and regurgitation of facts.

"It makes you think," he said.

In addition to Dick, Staff Sgt. Douglas Middleton, Staff Sgt. Andrew Schmith, and Staff Sgt. Ryan Whitebull of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division were invited into the SAMC.

Getting the kids . . .

Back to School



Pfc. Cerrone Anderson and Spe. Dennis Bergstrom, from 1st Platoon, Troop B, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, prepare to return fire on terrorists who opened fire on the Arwan School in the Rashid District of Baghdad April 24.

School withers enemy fire, reopens as scheduled

Story, photos by Maj. Kirk Luedeke
4th IBCT Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – The Rashid District Council and 1st Battalion, 6th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division conducted a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Atwan school for boys April 24, despite insurgent efforts to prevent the event from occurring.

The 1/6/2 NP is partnered with 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team to secure portions of the Rashid District of Baghdad.

“Education is the future for Iraq,” said Mr. Sabeeh Al-Ka’abi, the DC director, who presided over the opening with Col. Ra’ad Eyas Amin, the 1st NP Battalion commander.

The Atwan School is located in the Mechanix neighborhood of the Rashid District in Southern

Baghdad. The renovation of the school included improvements to the outer wall, installment of new doors, electrical wiring, fans, plumbing, 100 new desks and 40 blackboards for the 650 students who attend classes there.

“We will not be stopped by the terrorists,” Ra’ad said to the crowd of boys ranging from elementary school age all the way up through high school. “We will all live in peace together.”

Prior to the ceremony, small arms fire had been directed at the school, but after NP and quarter-horse troopers returned fire, the gunmen fled.

After the event, policemen handed out soccer balls to the students.

As those gathered began to disperse, shots rang out once again, as the insurgents returned for one more unsuccessful attempt to disrupt



Col. Ra’ad Eyas Amin celebrates the ribbon cutting with a group of boys at the school.

the proceedings.

“This just goes to show how little regard these criminals have for human life,” said Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division commander.

“They tried to take what was a celebration of a much-improved learning institution and instead put children in harm’s way. They did not succeed, and now everyone can see the kinds of tactics they employ.”

noor

WEDS

THURS

1-18, ISF deliver supplies, hope to Iraqi schoolchildren

Story, photos by Maj. Kirk Luedeke
4th IBCT Public Affairs

BAGHDAD — Lt. Col. Ahmed, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st National Police Division handed out supplies to a pair of elementary schools in Southwest Rashid during a joint operation with Company A, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment, April 4.

The mission was the first of its kind in the area by the NP battalion and its U.S. counterpart. 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, out of Schweinfurt, Germany. The police commander not only took the opportunity to deliver supplies to the Arbid and Ibn Yakhdan schools, but made an assessment of the facilities and the surrounding communities as well.

“This is a good beginning, but I want you to know that we will make the area safe for the children. We want to help you to clean up the trash in this neighborhood and make the people proud to live here,” he told Ms. Noor, the headmistress of the Arbid school in Southwest Rashid.

As he spoke, members of his battalion, wearing crisp new uniforms, and displaying a professional demeanor, carried boxes of supplies into the building. A new television set, water dispenser, computer and monitor, power supply and office furniture were brought in, all of which represented progress and hope for the children who will be able to make use of these implements to enhance their education.

“Thank you for helping to care for the children,” Noor said to the police commander during their meeting. “They are your key to safety for the future of Iraq.”

He walked into one classroom of young girls and was greeted with a chorus of cheers, as the young ladies serenaded the police commander with a traditional Iraqi greeting of respect. He returned the gesture by asking the students to honor their families and teachers, and to work diligently in their lessons.

Maj. Joe Pierce, the commander’s National Police adviser, said



An Iraqi National Policeman delivers supplies to a school. Reinvigorating the nation’s educational system has been a top priority for Iraqi and Coalition forces.

that the operation was a resounding success, and an indicator of better days ahead as the new NP unit begins operating in the area.

“He assured the administrators that in addition to securing the schools, he was concerned about securing the surrounding areas,” the native of Nashua, N.H. said. “This was a great chance to get to know the population.”

1st Lt. David Evetts, the company fire support officer from San Antonio, Texas, said, “It shows that we have good partnership- the National Police, coalition forces and NPTT teams -- we all work together.”

For other U.S. Soldiers who participated, the successful operation meant a great deal more than just dropping off supplies.

“I think just getting school supplies to the kids shows them that we’re trying to help their education,” said Staff Sgt. Jeremy S. Murtart, a native of Ketchikan, Alaska and a squad leader with 1st platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, whose unit is attached to Company A. “It also shows the American people that we’re not just trying to combat the

terrorists here, but we’re trying to help rebuild Iraq from little kids, all the way up to the top.”

As the Iraqi and U.S. troops drove away from the schools, children waved from the windows, reminding everyone of the where real impact of the day’s activities lay.

“It makes me realize that I’m grateful for what I have and that I can provide for my own family,” said Staff Sgt. Allan Russell of Layton, Utah, another squad leader from 1st platoon, Company C. “At the same time I can see the poverty in other parts of the world, and it’s kind of hard for me as a father to see that the children here don’t have the basic things that we do in America. It makes you grateful for what we have, and that we can leave here today knowing that we made a positive difference for these kids.”



Lt. Col. Ahmed, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st National Police Division, visits with school children in Baghdad while delivering computers, television sets, power supplies, office furniture and a water dispenser to the Ibn Yakhdan elementary school in Baghdad

6-2 NPTT

TAKES



Training to Police

IRAQIS TO

CLASS



STORY, PHOTOS BY
PFC. NATHANIEL SMITH
4TH IBCT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

BAGHDAD – The saying goes “Give a man fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him forever.” U.S. Army trainers have been teaching Iraqi police to ‘fish’ in Baghdad with the idea that they can in turn train other Iraqis.

Recruits of the 3rd Battalion, 6th Brigade, 2nd Division Iraqi National Police graduated from training at Forward Operating Base Falcon March 28, while in April a group of Iraqi noncommissioned officers went through a Warrior Leaders Course.

This is the first group of shurta, Arabic for police, to come onto a U.S. forward operating base and receive complete, 24-hour a day training by a National Police Training Team.

Capt. Scott Hubbard, the operations officer of 3-6 NPTT from Vassar, Mich., said the initial focus of the team was not to train.

“Immediately when we took this mission on, we noticed big-

gest problem was the (Iraqi National Police) were not trained,” Hubbard said. “Training is not what we thought we would do, but we had to put a huge band-aid on the situation so they would not endanger themselves or the Coalition Forces they are working with.

“Our job is to teach them to teach themselves.”

Hubbard said that after noticing the initial deficiencies, the team came up with a two-week training program that would empower the police to perform their primary mission of protecting the neighborhoods.

The training program includes weapons marksmanship, drill and ceremony, physical training and ethics classes. Once the recruits execute those tasks to standard they move on to team exercises such as precision room-clearing and conducting raids.

The trainers, who prepared for their deployment at Fort Riley, Kan., all have some form experience training U.S. Soldiers, from reserve drill sergeants to instructors in advanced individual training. Likewise, many of the recruits have prior experience in the Iraqi Army.

Abd Al-Ameer Kadum, a graduate from the class who also served in the Iraqi Army since the Iran-Iraq War, said he appreciated the training.

“During this time that we spent here on this (base), we got good training,” the Baghdad native said. “They care about us a lot.”

“We want to say thanks for our American brothers,” he added.

Hubbard said instructing the recruits was made easier due to the fact that they em-



braced a key element in training: discipline. Discipline is embraced by the Iraqi people, the operations officer said. This cultural attitude motivated the ‘shurta’ to do their best in training.

“The men were excited and very proud to get formalized training like this.”

One of the key points Hubbard said he wants the new police to take away from their cycle is how to treat the Iraqi people.

“The way they treat them as policemen will decide whether (the locals) go against the Iraqi government or if they come on board,” he said. “These people are here to protect them and they need to understand that.”

Hubbard said police staying involved with their local community is vital to the success of their mission.

“They need to embrace their community, and start doing the right thing from this day forward,” he said. “I believe that they’re ready to do that. They understand this is the key to victory.”

Above: Staff Sgt. Andrew Palmer, a trainer with the 3rd Battalion, 6th Brigade National Police Training Team from Charlotte, N.C., makes adjustments to a recruit’s prone firing position during pre-marksmanship instruction in Baghdad, March 24.

Left: Iraqi Police take an oath to protect and serve the people of Iraq during their graduation ceremony at Forward Operating Base Falcon March 28. The class will stay together as a squad when they get to their battalion.

Opposite Top: Iraqi National Police from the 6th Brigade, 2nd Division National Police train on military operations in urban terrain at Forward Operating Base Falcon in Baghdad’s Rashid District April 25. The police are from the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of 6-2 NP.

Opposite Bottom: An Iraqi National Policeman with the 6th Battalion, 2nd Iraqi National Police prepares to fire at target, March 24.





Four-month Dragon Calendar

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3		4	5	6	7	8	9
10		11	12	13	14	15	16
17		18	19	20	21	22	23
24		25	26	27	28	29	30

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	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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22



"You have no place to hide."

Dragon Fire

WEST

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

Photos courtesy of 982d Combat Camera Company

BAGHDAD — In neighborhoods across the western Rashid District of Baghdad, terrorists, criminals and other unsavory elements trying to disrupt the city's security are feeling the heat as they are rooted out, detained and their weapons found and destroyed.

Multi-National Division-Baghdad forces conducted neighborhood clearing operations in southern Baghdad in May to safeguard the people of the region from insurgent attacks.

The 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, in conjunction with the 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, executed

operation Dragon Fire in the Rashid District, taking a more aggressive stand on terrorism in the Dragon Area of Operations.

Operation Dragon Fire West is part of the MND-B overall strategy to stabilize Baghdad as to facilitate a transfer of security from Coalition Forces to the elected Iraqi government.

"We have cleared 21 muhallas, detaining numerous individuals we suspect are leaders in the anti-coalition movement," said Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, Commander, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., at a press conference. "These are men who we believe are not acting in the best interests of the Iraqi people. We have found and confiscated more than 50 weapons caches.

"Everything from assault rifles, to machineguns to RPGs and mortar systems, along with hundreds of mortar, artillery

shells, and bomb-making materials have been taken out of the hands of thugs and criminals and will no longer be used against the innocent citizens of Rashid,” the Harker Heights, Texas native said. “I can honestly say that a countless number of Rashid’s children have been saved from the dangers of these bombs and explosives, thanks to the efforts of the Iraqi Security Forces and our Soldiers.”

To the terrorists he said, “You have no place to hide.”

The word clearing conjures images of Soldiers battering down doors, driving people before them out of their neighborhoods, but that is far from the case. While lightning raids do occur, one will also see Soldiers talking with Imams, sheiks and playing with children.

Lt. Col. Michael McNally, the 4th IBCT operations officer from Necedah, Wisc., said having the Strykers, who can focus on clearing operations, allows MND-B forces to perform otherwise impossible tasks.

“They have no other requirements,” he said. “They don’t have to operate any particular battle space. They can provide hundreds and hundreds of soldiers to help clear that we can’t possibly surge.”

In addition to the numbers, McNally said the Strykers bring a lot of experience to the fight. Operation Dragon Fire is the tenth clearing operation for the Tomahawks, meaning not only are they more experienced, but the Soldiers of the 4th IBCT can learn from them.

“We’re definitely learning lessons from them as far as clearance techniques,” McNally said.

Clearing operations are not just kicking in doors and surprising the enemy, it also entails talking to imams, sheiks and other community leaders to establish a presence in the area.

By talking to the populace, Soldiers clearing the areas get a good idea where the unsavory elements are hiding. Though a level of mistrust still exists getting closer to the communities increases the cooperation between the secured and those providing security.

He added that the troops are very proficient at what they do.

“This is the tenth time they’ve done this,” he said of the Tomahawks. “These Soldiers are becoming extremely proficient at finding caches -- they’ve improved their techniques, and every time they find more stuff to catch the bad guys. They change stuff up so they’re becoming experts at clearing neighborhoods.”

“Every day, 4th Brigade Soldiers learn a lot in sector, whether it’s from Strykers, from the area, from the enemy. This is a learning and growing battlefield and fight. If you don’t learn, the enemy’s going to learn first, and he’s going to kill you.”



Opposite: “Black Lions” with Company B, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, race up the stairs of a house during Operation Dragon Fire West.

*Top: Cpl. Omar Keys, with Company B, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, shakes the hand of an Iraqi child during a mission in the Black Lion area of operation.
Middle: An Iraqi girl learns to play “Patty Cake” with a Black Lion.*

Bottom: Cpt. Brian Ducote, Company B, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment (Black Lions) shakes the hand of a prominent Iraqi during operations. Dialogue and diplomacy is a major portion to clearing operations.



Rebuilding

The Wall

Soldiers from 1st Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, spread out HESCO barriers to block a hole in the outer wall at a school in the Baghdad neighborhood of Hateen. The Soldiers also coordinated to remove the rubble at the base of the wall.

2-32 repairs School Wall in Hateen

*By 1st Lt. Charles Bloomfield
Photos by 1st Lt. Matthew Nyland
2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery*

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers teamed up with Iraqi Army troops to repair a school in the Hateen neighborhood of the Iraqi capital May 3.

While using a bulldozer to clean up piles of trash around the school, the Iraqi Army accidentally knocked down part of the outer wall around the school.

Soldiers from Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, linked up with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, to deliver temporary barriers in order to block up the hole.

The emplacements, called HESCO barriers, are collapsible wire mesh

containers with a heavy duty plastic liner. Filled with sand or dirt, a 24-inch-thick HESCO barrier will stop rifle bullets and shell fragments.

The Iraqi Army also brought in a team to clear the debris and rubble from the fallen wall.

“We are very concerned for the safety of the children (because of the hole in the wall) and we are very grateful for the help,” the school master told 1st Lt. Matthew Neyland, a native of San Antonio.

“It shows a lot of progress to see the Iraqi Army taking an active role in bettering the community,” said Neyland.

Before Neyland departed, the school master mentioned that they also needed help to fix the windows of the school.



A Soldier from Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, hits fists with a local schoolboy in front of a wall that was repaired by Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers and Iraqi Army troops.

The windows were blown out by an improvised explosive device detonation the week prior.

Despite the work that remains, Neyland said repairing the hole in the wall is a great achievement and will help protect the teachers and the children from possible harm.

“The school master thanked me, repeatedly, and the children were very happy to see us,” Neyland said. “It’s great to see the kids interacting with the Soldiers.”

2-23

Tomahawks

adding Strykers to Dragon power



Soldiers with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, scan their sector for suspicious activity during a security patrol of the Saha area of Baghdad, May 14.

Story by Maj. Kirk Luedeke
4th IBCT, Public Affairs

Photos by Staff Sgt. Bronco Suzuki
982d Combat Camera Company

The Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment "Tomahawks" are the newest members of the Dragon Brigade, arriving in Baghdad last month by way of Fort Lewis, Wash.

The battalion has about 600 Soldiers and more than 60 Stryker combat vehicles, adding a potent and powerful punch to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's mix with its infantrymen and the mobility and versatility their Stryker vehicles provide.

The Tomahawks are part of the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team of the 2nd Infantry Division, and used to be known as the 2nd Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Polk, La., which was moved to the Pacific Northwest, where they exchanged humvees for Strykers.

The Army's newest Stryker brigade conducted a mission readiness exercise at home station, which closely resembled the kind of training troops get at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

"It was pretty good training," said 1st Lt. Anthony Nguyen, a native of San Jose, Calif., and a platoon leader in Company B. "We had a lot



of mission sets with a high op-tempo, pretty similar to what we're doing here in Iraq."

Pfc. Jonathan Daniel Chia, an infantryman on the commander's personal security detachment from Cincinnati, agreed that the unit is well-prepared for its mission here, but offered a veteran's perspective when he said, "You can never train to a T for the stuff you'll encounter until you actually get out and see it."

Since arriving, the Tomahawks have done just that, getting out into their operational area, conducting patrols, getting to know their Iraqi Security Force counterparts and the local populace.

"I think it's about mass at this point," Nguyen said. "Flood the AO (area of operations) and we have the advantage in the number of men we have on the ground and the speed of our vehicles — that's the sort of attitude we bring to the fight."

Nguyen also said that many of the Tomahawk battalion's Noncommissioned Officers have deployments to Iraq of Afghanistan under their belts, and have done outstanding work in preparing the unit's junior Soldiers for the challenges that lie ahead.

"Our unit has trained hard and we have a lot of squared-away guys," Chia said.

The Tomahawks are commanded by Lt. Col. Alfredo Mycue of McAllen, Texas, and Command Sgt. Maj. Gregory Frias.

Top: Spc. Christopher Bailey, left, of Co. C, 2nd Bn., 23rd Inf. Regt., scans his sector for suspicious activity during a security patrol of the Saha area of Baghdad, May 14.

Middle left: Soldiers with Co. C, 2nd Bn., 23rd Inf. Regt., question local residents during a security patrol of the Saha area of Baghdad, May 14.

Middle right: Pfc. Jonathan D. Chia, from Cincinnati, prepares to leave on a mission from Joint Security Station Tomahawk, May 18. Chia is with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-23 Inf. (Photo by Maj. Kirk Luedeke/4IBCT PAO)

Left: Sgt. 1st Class Jamahl Labbe, of Co. C, 2nd Bn. 23rd Inf. Regt., 4th IBCT, scans his sector for suspicious activity during a security patrol of the Saha area of Baghdad, May 14.

2-16 checks kids health

Story, photos by Staff Sgt. W. Wayne Marlow
2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq — Soldiers with the 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division attached 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, enter a Baghdad preschool, and at first glance, frighten the young residents. The helmets and full gear give the Soldiers an otherworldly look, an appearance multiplied by the dark eye protection.

But then the glasses come off, followed by the helmets. They are replaced by coloring books and stuffed animals. Slowly, the frowns are replaced with smiles. When candy is passed around, the transformation is complete.

Convinced the Soldiers are the good guys, the children cheerfully line up for the man with a thermometer and stethoscope.

“We’re doing a medical needs analysis,” explains 2nd Lt. Ryan Wood of Salt Lake City, Utah, medical services officer for 2-16. “When we did a walk through Baghdad, we identified certain schools and clinics where we could come back and do a needs analysis.”

One of the reasons this preschool was chosen was the presence of special-needs children. Although U.S. personnel will do the analysis, any follow-ups will be done by Iraqis.

“We’re bringing IPs with us, and their medics,” Wood said. “They are going to be taking the lead. We will help with the diagnosis, but our main role is to help them figure out what they can do to help their own people. Right now, they’re pretty limited in their medical assets. We want to offer them a venue to use their skills while under supervision.”

Getting out in the community can pay big dividends, according to Wood. “There are two things we hope to transmit to the people,” he said. “Number one, IP medics are taking an interest in the well-being of everyday Iraqis. Number two, Americans are here to make their lives better and to get them the supplies and skills to do their jobs.”



Children in a Baghdad preschool take turns being given a medical checkup. Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment conducted a medical needs analysis to learn if any of the children had health issues.

Wood said the Iraqis have limited resources when it comes to dealing with special-needs children, so part of the U.S. assistance will be to better acquaint them with tools to do the job. For instance, they will seek out Arabic language pamphlets or make sure they know what assets are available at Medical City.

“We want to be able to streamline the process ... and get information in their hands,” Wood said.

First, though, it must be determined what the children’s medical needs are. “They do a really basic look at the kids to identify trends or problems so the administrators can let the parents know if anything is wrong,” Wood said.

Maj. Albert delaGarza, 2-16 battalion surgeon from Los Angeles, oversaw the analysis.

“There had been concerns expressed about a couple of kids,” he said. “We came to see if Coalition Forces could offer assistance.”



Special Awards

Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, commander 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, pins the purple heart on Pfc. William Allen, with 4-1 Brigade Special Troops Battalion, during a ceremony May 15. Allen was wounded during a rocket attack on Forward Operating Base Falcon. (Timmons/4IBCT Public Affairs)



Top: Soldiers of the 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, display their Combat Action Badges while Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, Brigade commander, gives a pep talk, May 11 at Forward Operating Base Falcon.

Middle: Spc. Whitney Young, Company C, 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, gets a combat medic badge pinned on her by Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, 4th IBCT commander, May 11 at Forward Operating Base Falcon.

Right: Soldiers of the 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, shake the hands of Soldiers who received medals at the battalion awards ceremony May 11 at Forward Operating Base Falcon.



Smothering Flames



1-28 fights
fires in
Rashid
photos courtesy
Maya
Alleruzzo/AP



Top : Cpt. Brian Ducote, 30, from Dunwoody, Ga., Company B commander for the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment and his soldiers put out a house fire in the Rasheed neighborhood of Baghdad, May 11.

Middle left: Lt. Daniel Zimmerman, 29, from Phoenix, Az., helps an Iraqi man put out a house fire in the Rasheed neighborhood of Baghdad, May 11.

Middle right: Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division react to one of several house fires in the Bayaa neighborhood of Baghdad, May 8.

Lt. Col. Patrick Frank, right, commander of 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and his soldiers react to one of several house fires in the Bayaa neighborhood of Baghdad, May 8.

Brigade watches insurgents from the ‘Shadows’

by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith
4th IBCT Public Affairs

BAGHDAD — A commander being able to communicate with Soldiers on the ground is vital, but a commander able to communicate and have a bird’s eye view of the battle space is a revolutionary asset that an unmanned aerial vehicle cell can provide.

In Company B, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, the UAV cell is providing just such an advantage to the Dragon Brigade commanders.

First Lt. Ashley Oliver, a UAV platoon leader with Co. B, from Las Vegas, said having a tool like the UAV gives commanders a unique vantage point on the theater.

“It gives all commanders a view of the battlefield,” she said. “Radio comms are one thing, but to actually see what’s going on on the ground, while they’re commanding it is a different story.

“You can actually see the whole picture.”

Missions the UAV performs include reconnaissance, over-watch for infantry fighting on the ground, and lookouts for potentially hostile vehicles.

The standard brigade combat team is allotted a 23-Soldier UAV platoon with four planes. The 4th IBCT platoon operates 24 hours with eight Soldiers, an officer-in-charge, and a warrant officer.

Each plane costs approximately \$1,225 including the camera equipment aboard the craft. The aircraft can fly up to 15,000 feet and as far as 125 kilometers.

During the 4th IBCT’s rotation at the National Training Center of Fort Irwin, Calif., the platoon went through familiarization with the equipment and was ready to deploy by the end of the cycle.

Spc. James Crank, a UAV operator with Company B, 4-1 BSTB from Colorado Springs, Colo., said the UAV is a valuable tool for troops on the ground.

“It’s very important, obviously we’ve won plenty of wars without it,” Crank said, “but now that we do have it, it’s probably one of the best things that the Army has come across so far.”

Crank attributed the UAV’s value to it’s ability to tell the Soldiers on the streets what’s coming before it gets to them.

“We can tell troops on the ground if there’s a sniper on the roof or possible IED’s,” he said. “It works pretty good as long as we have good communication.”



FALLEN DRAGONS

NO MISSION TOO DIFFICULT NO SACRIFICE TO GREAT

Sgt. Robert M. Carr
2-12 IN, March 13

Pfc. Damian Lopez
1-18 IN, April 6

Pfc. Jason Morales
1-28 IN, April 18

Spc. Marieo Guerrero
1-18 IN, March 17

Spc. Ryan Dallam
1-18 IN, April 6

Pfc. Christopher North
1-4 CAV, April 21

Sgt. Wayne Cornell
1-28 IN, March 20

Cpt. Anthony Palermo
1-18 IN, April 6

Spc. Astor Sunsini-Pineda
4-1 BSTB, May 2

Pfc. Stephen Richardson
1-28 IN, March 20

Pfc. Jay S. Cajimat
2-16 IN, April 6

1st Lt. Ryan P. Jones
4-1 BSTB, May 2

Sgt. Curtis E. Glawson, Jr.
610 BSB, March 20

Pfc. Kyle Bohrsen
2-12 IN, April 10

Staff Sgt. Felix Gonzaleziraheta
1-18 IN, May 3

Sgt. Joe Polo
2-12 IN, March 29

Pfc. Steven Walberg
1-4 CAV, April 15

Pfc. John D. Flores
1-18 IN, May 3

Pfc. Derek A. Gibson
2-12 IN, April 4

Sgt. Mario Deleon
1-18 IN, April 16

Spc. Robert Dixon
1-4 CAV, May 3

Pfc. Walter Freeman, Jr.
2-12 IN, April 4

Pfc. Aaron Genevie
1-4 CAV, April 16

Pfc. Aaron Gautier
2-23 IN, May 17

23 Spc. Daniel A. Fuentes
1-28 IN, April 6

Pfc. Lucas Starcevich
1-18 IN, April 16

Spc. Jonathon Hamm
2-23 IN, May 17

FREEDOM IS NOT FREE



ON THE LOOK OUT

Spc. Anthony Salazar, 22, from Victorville, Calif., stands guard as Soldiers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division search for a weapons cache in the Jihad Pines neighborhood in Baghdad, May 8. (Maya Aleruzzo/AP)