



# DRAGON FIRE

Vol. 1, Issue 8

January 2008

## New Year, New Hope

For the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

... leader  
... Staff Sgt.  
... a platoon  
... sales, Fla.,  
... a mission in  
... Risalah region.  
... from Company C,  
... Infantry Regi-  
... Division. "Combat  
... recently attached to  
... (Smith, 4IBCT

# A New Year for the Dragon Brigade

Task Force Dragon Soldiers, families and friends- Happy New Year! 2008 is upon us. This month's DRAGON FIRE magazine is chock full of the brigade's continued progress and excellence throughout the Rashid District.

While our Soldiers keep getting after it every day, we see that violence levels have dropped so significantly from where they were a year ago that we have been able to focus on fixing the infrastructure, repairing schools, improving sanitation and all of the things that combine to make quality of life better for the Iraqis here.

It is in that vein that we look back at 2007 and all of the key events that we undertook as a brigade combat team during our deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as one of the "surge" brigades.

We departed Fort Riley in early February '07 and spent a little time doing final training and pre-combat checks in Kuwait before closing in Iraq by the end of the month. Although we said goodbye to the Rangers of 2-16 IN and the 2-32 FA Proud Americans, who were attached to other brigades elsewhere in Baghdad, we welcomed the 2-12 IN Warriors and 1-18 IN Vanguard into the fold as we conducted transfer of authority on 11 Mar. and initiated combat operations in the Rashid Security District from Forward Operating Base Falcon.

We made our presence known with Operation Dragon Surge, which consisted of the building of our coalition outposts and joint security stations throughout AO Dragon. This phase was critical for us as we established a presence here in Southern Baghdad and sent a message to Al Qaeda and Shia extremists that we were here to stay.

In May and June, we continued our offensive with Operation Dragon Fire, in which we cleared most of the neighborhoods (muhallas) in West and East Rashid, going after the terrorists in their lairs. With the help of the 3/2 Stryker Brigade, we killed or captured a lot of bad guys and found many caches, but it this was only the beginning.

In July and August, Operations Dragon Hammer and Dragon Anvil



Col. Ricky Gibbs and Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Champagne serve Soldiers their Christmas dinner.

continued the pressure on the AQI in East Rashid by denying them sanctuary and keeping pressure on them wherever they tried to operate. We then transitioned to Operations Dragon Talon I and II in September and October, breaking the backs of the extremists thus denying them freedom of maneuver and sanctuary.

At the same time, our units continued their amazing work to rebuild and improve the area through effective projects which have employed Iraqis and boosted the economy. Places like Doura Market and Airplane Road have become economic hubs of stability and progress. As we look ahead to 2008, we expect more of the same in other areas like 60<sup>th</sup> Street in South Doura, Jihad and Amil.

In November and December, we said farewell to the 1-18<sup>th</sup> and 2-12<sup>th</sup> battalions and welcomed the newest units into Task Force Dragon: the 4-64 AR Tuskers, from 3<sup>rd</sup> ID, and 2-4 IN Warriors from the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Div. In addition, 2-2 SCR was added to the task force Dec. 31st. We're glad to have all these units on the team.

I am very encouraged by our progress, but there is still much work to be done. I am extremely proud of Task Force Dragon!! Stay alert and keep getting after it!

I also want to thank all of the families and Family Readiness Groups back home for your terrific support throughout the deployment. We can not do what we do without your outstanding support and unwavering love. Although we love our jobs, our hearts remain with all of you back home... We are counting the days to our reunion!

At the same time, we mourn the 88 Dragon Soldiers who have fallen in this struggle against tyranny. We will never forget their sacrifice in the name of freedom and pray there will be no more names added to the roll of honor.

DUTY FIRST!

Col. Ricky D. Gibbs  
Dragon 6

## GETTING AFTER IT!!

Each month Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Champagne will select a photo of a Dragon Brigade Soldier Getting After It. The Soldier in the photo should cut out the photo and bring it to Dragon 7 to receive a Brigade coin.



Sgt. Siatini Siatini, with Scout Platoon, 2nd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, keeping watch during an Iraqi Police station opening in Saha is this month's Getting After It winner.



*An altar boy eagerly rings a bell to celebrate Christmas at the conclusion of mass held at the St. John's Chaldean Church in Doura. After receiving the sacrament, the congregation's children were treated to a visit by Santa Claus. (Luedeke/4IBCT)*

**Warriors replace Warriors.....4**  
by Spc. Nathaniel Smith

**'Ranger' Families Lift Spirits....5**  
by 2nd Lt. Ryan Wood

**ISV's take over in Saydiyah.....6**  
by Spc. Nathaniel Smith

**In Sector with ComCam.....7**  
by MC2 Greg Pierot

**Movement to Contact.....8-9**  
by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons

**Raiders Have a Ball.....10**  
by Spc. Nathaniel Smith

**INSIDE**

**Keeping STB Rolling.....11**  
by Cpl. Ben Washburn

**Burned Boy gets treated....14-15**  
by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons

**All About Sales.....16-17**  
by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons

**Two Churches, One Spirit....18**  
by Maj. Kirk Luedeke

**Ain't Raining, Ain't Training...19**  
by Spc. Nathaniel Smith

**Rashid Medical Summit.....20**  
by Cpl. Ben Washburn

**Tough Love.....21**  
by 2nd Lt. Ryan Wood

**Remembering a Hero .....22**  
by Sgt. 1st Class Lonnie Powell

**Gambler? Risk-taker?.....23**  
by Mr. Eric Washington

**Fallen Dragons .....23**

Dragon Fire is an authorized publication for members of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division in accordance with AR 360-1 with a circulation of 3,500. Contents of Dragon Fire are not necessarily official views of or endorsed by the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, the U.S. Army, or 4IBCT, 1ID.

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## On the cover

*Sgt. Ryan Zadina, a squad leader from Omaha, Neb., and Staff Sgt. Jonathan Haynsworth, a platoon sergeant from Lake Wales, Fla., pull security while on a mission in southern Baghdad's Risalah region. Both Soldiers are from Company C, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division. "Combat Company" is currently attached to Task Force 4-64. (Smith/4IBCT)*

# 2-4 Inf. welcomed into the Dragons' lair



*Lt. Col. Timothy Watson, resident of Fort Polk, La. And commander of the 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, and Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Montour, the senior noncommissioned officer of 2-4 Inf. who calls San Diego and Amarillo, Texas home, unfurl their battalion's colors during a transfer of authority ceremony at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Dec. 24. The "Warriors" of 2-4 Inf., deployed out of Fort Polk, La., assumed responsibility of the western Doura region of southern Baghdad from the "Warriors" of 2-12 Inf.*

## 'Warriors' take over for 'Warriors'

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

The 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division assumed authority of the western part of Doura from the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division in a transfer of authority ceremony at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Dec. 24.

One battalion of "Warriors," the 2-12 Inf., is returning to Fort Carson, Colo., as another battalion of "Warriors" prepares for full-spectrum operations in the Rashid District after deploying from Fort Polk, La.

The 2-12 Inf. entered Iraq 15 months ago, "Having been led by love of country," and now are going home.

As 2-4 Inf. prepares to battle the insurgency in their corner of Baghdad, they have one message for terrorists: "Don't tread on me."



*Leaders of Task Force Dragon bow their head in prayer prior to the transfer of authority ceremony between 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division of Fort Polk, La., and the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division of Fort Carson, Colo.*



*Lt. Col. Timothy Watson, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division from San Diego, addresses the audience at his unit's transfer of authority ceremony, Dec. 24.*



*Lt. Col. Stephen L.A. Michael, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Inf. Div. from Newark, N.J., and Lt. Col. Timothy Watson, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 4th Inf. Regt., 10th Mountain Division from San Diego, render honors during the transfer of authority ceremony, Dec. 24.*

# Ranger Family Gifts Lift Spirits

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

They come from all over the country, boxes and letters, some with neatly printed names and others written with a child's scrawl in crayon and colored markers. Candy, soap, movies, letters from a kindergarten class, each one is different, each one is meant to show the Rangers of the 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment that they are appreciated by the folks back home.

The Christmas season can be hard for Soldiers as they fight far away from friends and loved ones in a country torn at the seams by violence and unrest. Groups such as Operation Gratitude, Soldier's Angels, the 16th Infantry Regiment Association and numerous churches and civic groups have showered the Rangers with boxes and letters during the holiday months in an effort to show support.

"The busiest day we had prior to this week was during Thanksgiving with 150-200 packages and letters coming in on a single day," said Pvt. Christopher Patterson, a human resources specialist and mail room supervisor for 2-16 Inf. a unit with more than 700 Soldiers. "For the last few weeks we have been receiving anywhere from 500-600 boxes a day, in addition to hundreds of letters."

Patterson smiled looking over the hundreds of packages stacked all around him for delivery while he thought about the Soldiers waiting to receive their packages and mail from home.

"They always tell me who they came from," he said. "'This one's from my Mom. Hey my Sister sent me something.' It's a great thing to watch."

First Sergeant Mathew Bray, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-16 Inf. watches his Soldiers dig through the packages as they hunt for a special treasure or find something to trade another Soldier.

"All Soldiers like to receive mail," Bray said. "Letters and packages are looked at as a connection to home. Something as silly as a Beanie Baby has become a craze with Soldiers trading to get the ones they don't have. I can't tell you how many variations of the Military Mr. Potato head I have seen, but they are all a connection to home and a morale boost each and every time they get to open a box and find a surprise inside."

In a new twist this year, Soldiers received dozens of live pre-decorated Christmas trees. Each tree was approximately 12 inches high and instantly became one of the most requested items in the Battalion.

"It was the smell the Soldiers couldn't get over," said Chap. (Capt.) James Hall 2-12 Inf. "The smell of a pine tree reminded them of Christmas."

5

For those Soldiers who may not have family at home, many groups have taken up the challenge to provide each and every Soldier with



The 2-16th Infantry mailroom is inundated with packages over the holiday season.

necessities and support in the form of packages and letters to be distributed to any Soldier who might need a pick-me-up. Groups such as Operation Gratitude and the 16th Infantry Regiment Association have provided packages, phone cards and gift certificates to 2-16 Inf. for distribution Battalion-wide, their only stipulation that every Soldier be able to receive a package if at all possible.

"There is a difference in the random acts of kindness that require a sacrifice on the part of the people who send them," said Capt. Jeffery Jager, a company commander with 2-16 Inf. "When you open up a letter or box and find a phone card or gift certificate, it has an effect above just the joy of receiving a gift. It shows that someone is behind you enough to take the time and effort to send something special. It's a huge morale boost."

Many Soldiers rarely, if ever, receive mail from home, according to Hall who distributes many of the packages and letters from churches and other groups in the States. Hall pays special attention to those Soldiers who may not have family and those who live in Coalition Outposts in the city and

don't receive mail as often as those Soldiers operating out of the FOBs.

"Soldiers tell me that they look forward to seeing me come to see if I have a box under my arm," said Hall. "It gives them a sense that somebody cares and gives them a little taste of home."

Surprisingly, the benefits aren't all for the Soldiers. Hall related the story of a member of the 16th Infantry regiment who was looking for a way to reach out to the troops.

"There was a 90-year-old man who made beaded Rosaries using the regimental colors," said Hall. "He was a World War II veteran who had lost his wife and he really didn't have anything to do so he made these Rosaries. To be able to make something like that for us and hear back how appreciative the Soldiers were made his week, made his life."

Hall also spoke of a person he had heard about through one of the Soldiers in the unit. A veteran, the man began sending letters and boxes filled with items he wished he had been sent while in Vietnam. The Soldier receiving the gifts inquired through his family about the man and discovered that he had been diagnosed with cancer and had only a short time left to live.

"It touched him deeply that someone looking at the end of his life took the time to send something to a Soldier he had never met," said Hall.

As the Soldiers of 2-16 Inf. continue to accomplish the mission which has been given them, each letter or box or even a Beanie Baby continues to remind them of what they are fighting for and the people who stand behind them every day.

# Volunteers return to Saydiyah duty

By Spc. Nathaniel Smith  
4IBCT Public Affairs

Two months ago, Iraqi Security Volunteers were manning checkpoints in southern Baghdad, market activity was booming, and life was beginning to take on a sense of normalcy in a combat zone. The government of Iraq expressed concern about the guards' duties.

On Dec. 12, Iraqi Security Volunteers were reinstated at checkpoints in southern Baghdad's Saydiyah neighborhood in an effort to ensure the troubled region continues to move forward.

"The residents of Saydiyah have said security was best when the checkpoint guards were out. That was proven by the robust market activity during that period. We hope to return to that type of activity soon, but it's going to take some time for this effort to bear some fruit," said Lt. Col. Johnnie Johnson, commander of 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 64<sup>th</sup> Armored Regiment, 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. "As of today, Iraqi Security Forces, Coalition Forces, and local leaders in Saydiyah have all made an effort to make sure and it's transparent to everyone living in Saydiyah. We hope that this is going to move us forward in security and allow other essential services and government functions to take hold in Saydiyah."

Johnson, a native of Tampa, Fla., said the ISV's are a part of the solution in the region.

"Eventually, we want these ISV's to be included in the permanent security apparatus of Saydiyah so we see this as a very good step," Johnson said. "This is definitely the way ahead in the future for Saydiyah. The volunteers in Saydiyah are necessary at present."

The security volunteers serve two purposes in the area. They provide extra security in a hotly contested area of the Iraqi capital. The second is to provide employment where there would be none.

"By having these individuals earning a paycheck, there's less possibility of them doing other things that are not conducive to security," Johnson said. "That's one of the important factors of having the ISV's: not only the security piece, but it provides jobs for those who otherwise might not have jobs to go to."

The volunteers, who are paid by Coalition Forces, are comparable to a neighborhood watch in the United States except they are armed. They only protect an area they are from, which not

only means they know the area they're guarding, but they also have more of a sense of purpose when they are on duty.

"When you have people from a town or city that are helping to protect that area, they have a vested interest in the security of the people," Johnson said.

"It's very important that we are able to put these ISV's on checkpoints to stem the violence and the criminal activity inside Saydiyah."

To ensure the volunteers were capable and trustworthy to guard the neighborhood, each individual went through a vetting process where they were interviewed by leaders of the Iraqi Security Forces, Coalition Forces, and local leaders.

Once the 200 guards, half Sunni and half Shia, were deemed fit for duty, they underwent a short training period with the Iraqi Army and are scheduled to be inspected by the deputy commander of

Karkh.

While 4-64 Armor has been operating in West Rashid for only a month, Johnson said they are looking to build on the success of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, which occupied the area before the "Tuskers."

"The unit that was here made a lot of progress prior to us getting here. We do see hope in the future for Baghdad and for Iraq, but there's still a lot of work to be done. The ISV's in Saydiyah are a part of that," Johnson said. "There are other areas of Baghdad that have similar problems. We are moving forward with this effort. I believe it will be fruitful."

"I think we'll see over time with the help of the Government of Iraq, and with the assistance of working with the Iraqi Security Forces, Coalition Forces, and the local population, things will improve, and there are sign of that throughout Baghdad. We hope to see this progress in Saydiyah soon."

# In Sector with COMCAM

## TUSKERS IN DOURA

with MC2(SW) Greg Pierot  
NECC DET  
Combat Camera



Above: Cpl. Kyle Jewart from 4th Battalion, 64th Regiment mans the M-240B mount of his Humvee as local Iraqi men line up to apply for the Iraqi Security Volunteers, a citizen's security force, in the Doura Market, Dec. 15.



Above: Pfc. Samuel Bowen from Apache Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor, stands guard at the Iraqi Security Volunteers recruitment office the Doura Market place, Dec. 15.

Left: Youngstown, Ohio, native, Capt. Benjamin Fielding, commander, Company A, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor greets a local Iraqi Sheik at the recruiting office for the Iraqi Security Volunteers in the Doura Market, Dec. 15.



Right: Pfc. Samuel Bowen from Apache Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor, watches applicants enter the Iraqi Security Volunteers recruitment office the Doura Market, Dec. 15.

# Movement to contact

## *2-32 patrol anything but routine*

*Story, photos by Sgt, 1st Class Robert Timmons*  
4IBCT Public Affairs

Chalk it up to bad luck. Or chalk it up to being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

For the Soldiers of Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, currently attached to 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, a routine day turned into anything but Nov 20.

The platoon was returning to Camp Liberty from a presence patrol with their Iraqi Army counterparts when one vehicle in the convoy was hit by a grenade.

Before linking up with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, a driver in the second vehicle in a convoy clipped a barricade breaking a side view mirror.

“That can be seven years bad luck,” joked 1st Lt. Aaron Rubin, a platoon leader from Clovis, Calif.

After arriving at Joint Security Station Torch, nestled between Hateen and Yarmouk, they linked up with the IA and went on a joint dismounted patrol that wound its way near manicured houses that would make other less well-to-do neighborhoods in Baghdad jealous.

So far no jinx, hex or anything out of the normal had happened – just brothers-in-arms patrolling the streets past smiling children, and happy shop owners.

“The Iraqi Security Forces are better,” Rubin said after the patrol. Rubin was once assigned to the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, at Forward Operating Base Falcon, before being sent to the Proud Americans as a platoon leader.

With the level of security improving it makes it easier to train the Iraqis on the proper way to do things, he added.

The joint patrol over, the platoon had one last thing to do – get back to base safely.

With platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Efrin “Smoke” Fuentes guiding the patrol along Route Cardinals passed other American Soldiers, Iraqi Security Forces near a large blue mosque, a loud explosion ripped through the air.

The convoy immediately stopped, pulled security. With the fog of war being what is, Soldiers from other units asked what it was.



*Background: Capt. Jayson Morgan, commander, Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery directs actions after one of his platoons was attacked by a hand grenade, Nov. 20.*

*Left: A soldier with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division glances back at Brooklyn, N.Y. native Pfc. Zhuo Cao, a cannon crew member with Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., during a joint dismounted patrol Nov. 20.*

“It was a controlled detonation,” one said. He said curtly that he thought explosive ordnance disposal personnel had blew something up a few hundred yards down the street.

“Then why didn’t EOD let anyone know?” said another cutting off the first.

Whatever it was, Rubin and the platoon medic, Denver native Cpl. John Manzurek walked back down the street to find the trail vehicle damaged – the front passenger door damaged, its window a spider web of ballistic glass and the occupant, San Diego native, Staff Sgt. Oscar Martinez shaken but OK.

EOD personnel arrived to investigate – a terrorist had tossed a grenade at the trail vehicle and melted away into the nearby town.

Whether or not it was luck, fate or just coincidence the Soldiers arrived safely at base to prepare for the next patrol.

“Every patrol is a movement to contact,” Rubin said after the patrol arrived back at Liberty. “This was no different.”



*San Diego native Staff Sgt. Oscar Martinez, a vehicle commander with 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., stands guard his humvee after a grenade exploded just outside his window Nov. 20 in western Baghdad. The 2-32 is currently attached to the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division.*



*Denver native Cpl. John Manzurek, a medic with Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., keeps a watch out for enemy activity as Explosive Ordnance Disposal personnel search for evidence after a hand grenade attack on a Battery B, convoy Nov. 20 in western Baghdad.*



*Denver native, Cpl. John Manzurek, a medic with Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., checks to make sure no one is injured after a grenade was thrown against a M1151 humvee Nov. 20. No one was injured in the incident.*

# Raiders have a ball in Doura



*The crowd goes wild at the soccer game between the Iraqi National Police and the Doura soccer team in southern Baghdad, Dec. 16. The fans from the neighborhood had plenty to cheer about as their team won, 5-0.*



*The Iraqi National Police soccer team takes the field in southern Baghdad's Doura neighborhood, Dec. 16. The police played a team from the Doura neighborhood in order to build more of a rapport with the people.*

## Locals, Iraqi National Police put aside animosity in friendly game on the pitch

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

The game was only an exhibition. There were no statistics kept, no trophies given out, and nothing on the line.

When a team of 'shurta,' or police, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 2<sup>nd</sup> Iraqi National Police Division faced off against a team from southern Baghdad's Doura neighborhood on Dec. 17, there was little on the line besides bragging rights, but that's not to say the game did not carry a special significance.

"The INP's, who don't interact with the neighborhood very much, interacted with them through a soccer game," said Waterbury, Vt., native Capt. Shane Sandretto, commander of Troop B, 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Inf. Div. "It was a nice,



*Lanark, Ill., native, Pvt. Nathan Hartman, a cavalry scout with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Dragon, lifts an Iraqi child during a soccer game between locals and the Iraqi National Police.*

competition; the game was well-taken on both sides."

The game was proposed by a citizen from the neighborhood, and the commander of the 3-7-2 NP's jumped on board.

Mohammed Abdul Hamir, a player on Doura's team, said a few months ago the game probably wouldn't have taken place, but improvements in security made it possible.

"The main road was very dangerous, but now we're safe," he said. "We have guards, and everything's good."

"I don't think they would have played. It would have been that simple," Sandretto added.

Getting two groups that used to trade gunfire on a nightly basis to cooperate is never easy, but that's what 1-4 Cav. is trying to do in Doura.

Sandretto said the game was an important step in progressing toward not only cooperation between the citizens and the INP's, but it was a sign of the overall progress of the neighborhood.

"As a step toward transition, we have to raise the trust and legitimize the national police in the eyes of the folks," he said. "We've done that through joint patrols, but I don't think it makes as much of an impact as something simple like a soccer game does.

"It's getting the folks in the Muhallah to trust and like the National Police more through sports."

"This is a nice way to get to know each other," Hamir said. "It's a friendly game."

# Mechanics keep STB rolling

## Wolverine motor pool ensures Brigade leadership's vehicles moving.

Story, photos by Cpl. Ben Washburn  
4th IBCT Public Affairs

When Soldiers get into their vehicle there should be no question whether or not it will start. They know the turret works properly, that the gears will shift correctly, and that their vehicle is fully mission capable. What they might not know is that there are Soldiers who work around the clock to make sure that's the case.

The soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4-1 Brigade Special Troops Battalion are some of these Soldiers. In the event that a vehicle does go down, they are always there to assist and get that vehicle back in the fight.

"Our mission out here in the motor pool is to give assistance to all of the supporting units; iron claw, Brigade, HHC, Alpha, Bravo, Charlie (companies), and giving them maintenance support," said Spc. Jairus Ruff, a Team Leader with HHC 4-1 BSTB.

The three year Army veteran, who is on his first deployment, said that there is no schedule for when a vehicle will break down.

*Pfc. Steven Gordon, of Orlando, Fla., and Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4-1 Brigade Special Troops Battalion, checks hoses in the engine of a humvee at Forward Operating Base Falcon in Baghdad Dec. 29. Gordon is on his first deployment to Iraq.*



*Spc. Cody Rennie, of McCune, Kan., drills a hole to attach a piece of equipment to a route-clearance vehicle in the Brigade Special Troops Battalion motor pool Dec. 29. The motor pool serves BSTB as well as Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div.*

"Trucks or vehicles get broken down not necessarily at the best time for you, but you just have to suck it up and drive on

with the mission," Ruff said.

Pfc. Steven Gordon, a mechanic from Orlando, Fla., concurred; emphasizing it could be any hour of the day when you have to get a vehicle up and running.

"Here it's an ongoing process, seven days a week. You've got to make sure the vehicles are ready to go, so you're up all times of the night," the two-year Army veteran said.

Working long hours throughout the night aren't the only challenges that deployment brings these Soldiers.

"Of course there's a higher stress level," Ruff said. "Working around people that you may not know that well for an extended period of time may be difficult. You have to get used to the way they operate, they have to get used to the way you operate."

When people spend a lot of time together, eventually strong bonds are formed. That's exactly the case for the Soldiers of the motor pool. Gordon likens his fellow mechanics to a family.

"I wouldn't be any other place than right here with the people I'm working with. It's like family, they're like my brothers and sisters," he said.

Despite the challenges faced, the Soldiers work hard and enjoy their jobs.

"I like being a mechanic, I like what I do. My job is rewarding when a vehicle comes in and I get it fixed and the vehicle rolls back out," Gordon said. "When you're underneath the vehicle, you're kind of in your own little zone; you're just one with the vehicle."

It's that rewarding feeling that makes it all worthwhile, even when other people don't notice the work these Soldiers do.

"I think maintenance or support in general is underappreciated, but that's just the way it goes," Ruff said. "You don't do this job for the recognition, you do it because you enjoy it."

So, the Soldiers of the motor pool drive on to accomplish their mission without the notoriety that other units get. However, they are no less critical than anyone else, and are an essential asset that allows others to complete their mission.

"Without us a lot of the missions, essential movement, even communications would not be accomplished," Ruff said.

*Priv. George Delgado, a 21-year-old infantryman from Redlands, Calif., with Company A, 4th Battalion, 64th Armored Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, keeps an eye out for anything suspicious outside of the St. George's Church in Doura Dec. 1. The fighters of the 4-64A Armor based at Fort Stewart, Ga., are attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., from Fort Riley, Kan. (Simmons/ABCT)*



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M a y

T A S K F O R C E

# DRAGON

1ST INFANTRY DIVISION



# MEDIC, A HAIRCUT

## IRAQIS, U.S. TREAT BURNED BOY

By Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons  
4 IBCT Public Affairs

For Yousef Kasim living in the Five Farms area of Baghdad is a challenge.

His family lives in a mud brick home, with no running water or electricity; in a place where until recently Al Qaeda terrorists roamed the area generating a swath of destruction.

Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces helped Yousef and his family by first clearing the area of terrorists and again Dec. 13 when they treated the boy's severe burns.

That day, Yousef was chasing the family kitten around the family's outdoor oven when his pants snagged on a grate covering the fire pit; he tripped and landed in the stew his mother was cooking causing severe burns from his right hip down to his right knee.

The terrorists had been forced out by a combination of 30,000 U.S. troops surged into Baghdad, and the Iraqi National Police allowing Yousef to be seen by competent medical personnel.

It was one of those policemen who noticed the badly burned boy while passing out candy and informed American medics who treated Yousef.

Upon arriving at the family's home Dec. 13, Charlotte native,

Staff Sgt. Antonio Ellison, the 1-2-1 National Police Training Team medic squeezed into the small house along with the boy's family, NPs and fellow Soldiers; quickly assessed the boy's burns were major and began immediate treatment. He gave the Yousef some pain medicine and lotion for the burns he characterized as "real bad second degree burns over nine percent of the boys body."

"When we first saw him, he wouldn't eat or sleep, he would just lay there crying," said Ellison, who trained with his training team at Fort Riley, Kan., Dec. 20 when his unit and the national police visited the family a third time.

During the second visit, the boy was much better.

"Four days (after being treated) he got up and was walking around, and yesterday he started to wear clothes over the burn site," he added.

On Dec. 20, the medics and the policemen returned to the family's home for the third time to check the youngster's condition and to give him a much needed haircut.

"It is painful for me to see the people who have suffered so long from Al Qaeda," said Lt. Col. Rassan Gassid, the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi National Police Division commander after seeing the boy, who is much better than the first time they met. "It makes me proud that one of my policemen found him."

On third visit, the burns were largely scabbed over, but he still

**"They are always coming to take care of us"**

needed more lotion to help the area heal properly.

“Put this on him before he goes to bed every night,” Ellison said to his mother.

Yousef’s mother was visibly happy for the attention her son and family were getting and said she couldn’t think of words to describe how she felt.

“Honestly, there are no words I can tell you,” said Saadya Ibrahim with a huge grin. “They are always coming around to take care of us.”

She added that she is always asking God to keep the policemen and their American counterparts safe as they go about their duties.

For one of the American Soldiers witnessing the attention Yousef and his family was getting the scene reminded him of his own family in Germany.

Elgin, Ill. native, Staff Sgt. Joseph Geier, a platoon sergeant with Company D, 2nd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment who is on his second tour in Iraq said he was proud the boy was getting help, but that it makes him proud his children are safe at home.

“I have done many humanitarian missions,” the father of a daughter Katelynn, 4, and son Christopher, 2, said. “These types of missions are good. But I just hope my kids never have to go through this.”

Yousef reminded more than just one person of their family.

Gassid added that Yousef is “like one of my sons” and is a good boy and would have helped him even if he wasn’t a fellow countryman.

“Even if he was not from Iraq we would have helped him,” said the commander, who had moments before given the boy a haircut before playing a little soccer with him. “We all work on the same team.”



*Opposite right: Charlotte native Staff Sgt. Antonio Ellison, center, a medic with the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st National Police Division training team, treats Yousef Kasim (lying down in red shirt) for second degrees the boy suffered after falling onto the fire the family uses to cook at the boy’s home in the Five Farms area of Baghdad, Dec. 13. (U.S. Army photo)*

*Opposite left: Yousef Kasim, gets a haircut from an Iraqi National Policeman from 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st National Police Division as the unit’s commander, Lt. Col. Rassin Gassid watches, in the courtyard of the boy’s home in the Five Farms area of southeastern Rashid District, Dec. 20. (Timmons/4th IBCT)*

*Top: Ellison chats with Yousef Kasim, an Iraqi boy who had suffered from severe burns, in front of the boy’s home in the Five Farms area of southern Baghdad, Dec. 20. (Timmons/4th IBCT)*

*Middle: Elgin, Ill. native Staff Sgt. Joseph Geier, a platoon sergeant for Company D, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, and a group of Iraqi National Policemen with the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st National Police Division, watch as a policeman gives a boy recovering from serious burns a much-needed haircut. (Timmons/4th IBCT)*

*Left: Lt. Col. Rassin Gassid shows off his soccer skills while visiting a family in the Five Farms area of the Rashid District, Dec. 20. (Timmons/4th IBCT)*



# About <sup>all</sup> Sales

Story, photos and graphics by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons  
4IBCT Public Affairs

# Platoon sells itself to get closer to Iraqis

The Iraqi children come up to the Americans with broad smiles on their faces. Some ask for soccer balls like thousands of other kids across the country, but some of these just wanted to talk with the heavily-armored troops who have brought calm to their little corner of the Iraqi capital.

These are the children at the Daklea Market in Baghdad and on Nov. 18 Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment's Civil Military Operations platoon were there to take a census of sorts among the shop owners.

The platoon was finishing up documenting all the shop owners in the area. That day they catalogued the last shops.

"It's all about sales," said 1st Lt. Quinn Robertson, the platoon's leader from Richmond, Va., who sold stocks before joining the Army. "It's all about selling yourself. That's how you talk to them."

Robertson's strong background in the business world and his time as a battery executive officer and battalion intelligence officer have served him well with the platoon he said. He said it gives him the chance to help reintroduce the Iraqis to the process of rebuilding their nation.

"It's all about the relationship building," he said after meeting and greeting various Iraqis at the market. "They don't come from the same backgrounds as we do, so we are reintroducing them to the process – the who and where you get the money from to get things done. The way you talk to them goes a long way."

The CMO platoon, which was created in September was the brainchild of the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Michael J. Lawson, who saw its creation as a way to free up combat power, said Lancaster, Penn. native 1st Lt. Neal Rice, the battalion's civil military operations officer.

"Before we had the platoon, line platoons were escorting us all over the battlefield," the 27-year-old said. "CMO became such a big part of our mission that we were getting inundated. So the commander said, 'Let's get a platoon.' Now CMO has freedom of movement anywhere in the area of operations."

The platoon made up of various military occupational specialties including administrative, medical, infantry and cannon crewmembers has helped calm a once restive market.

The battalion, and the platoon, brought a religious leader over to their side with signs of progress Robertson said.

"He was not exactly on the fence," he said. "But we brought him onto the fence then our actions brought him over. We asked if he was the power in the neighborhood and he said, 'Yes.' So we put him together with the neighborhood council. With the NAC and him together the bad guys could only take him so far."

17 And the neighborhood began to steadily improve, he added.

Besides helping get the Daklea Market back on its feet



*Oshkosh, Wisc. native Spc. John Ackerman, a medic with the Civil Military Operations Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., keeps watch as members of his platoon conduct a census of the Daklea market, Nov. 18 in the Yarmouk neighborhood of Baghdad.*



*Richmond, Va. native 1st Lt. Quinn Robertson, platoon leader for 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment's Civil Military Operations platoon, speaks to a shop owner in the Daklea Market about the state of the neighborhood. Robertson, who was a stockbroker before he joined the Army, said dealing with Iraqis is about selling yourself in order to get them to trust you.*

the platoon is tasked with "getting sewage off the streets, getting the pumping stations working, assessing schools and assisting the Iraqi Police Auxiliary in Yarmouk," said Staff Sgt. Patrick Whaley, an infantryman from Bloomington, Ind. and CMO platoon sergeant.

The platoon also helped with IPA recruitment drives in Hateen and Yarmouk.

But, the success of the platoon goes back to one thing, Robertson said.

"It's all about relationship building," the 33-year-old five-year Army veteran said.

# Two Churches, One Spirit

## Christmas in Doura

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

Although both were filled with people conducting worship services in Doura on Christmas morning, the two churches were a study in contrasts: one opulent and pristine, the other a destroyed shell of its former grand self.

Yet, not even a pair of car bombs detonated outside the St. George's East Assyrian Church's walls in Aug. 2004, nor the intimidation and threats leveled against the Chaldean Christians of Doura which forced the St. John's Church to close in May were enough to suppress the holiday spirit in 2007.

"Your presence here today means that you have not let the terrorists take away your spirit," Lt. Col. Timothy Watson, commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment "Warriors," out of Fort Polk, La, who recently assumed responsibility for the East Rashid neighborhood where both churches reside, said to several local Muslim leaders and Christian parishioners after the church services concluded.

The St. George's Church, which had once been a beautiful shrine to God, according to one officer who served in Doura with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in 2003 before the attack, had more than 300 people in attendance. There were piles of rubble in the corners, and the worshippers stood the entire time, with no pews left in the sanctuary. Brightly colored tapestries were hung up around the building to hide the openings in the walls created by the bomb blasts. The faint outlines of the church's cross were visible high on vestibule, but the cross itself had long ago disappeared.

The service was the first conducted at that church since the attacks that so devastated the facility occurred in 2004. However, with the improved security situation in Doura, the Assyrians decided to hold mass this year. The original plan was to find another location to have the service, but the congregation decided to hold it in their damaged sanctuary instead.

"They're going to rebuild this church," said Capt. Ben Fielding, commander of Apache Company, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 64<sup>th</sup> Armored Regiment "Tuskers," out of Fort Stewart, Ga. attached to Task Force Dragon. "And they want to do it with minimal Coalition assistance. They've decided the time is right, and I'm very happy for them because I know how beautiful it once was."

In the back of the room, a diminutive, smiling man wearing a suit watched the proceedings. One Soldier spoke to him, and the man related that this

was the happiest time for Doura's Christians in roughly five years. As the Soldier continued the conversation, he made the assumption that the man was a Christian.

A short while later, the man touched the Soldier's arm and said, "I am Muslim, but we are all Iraqis here." The man, Mr. Sa'ad, is one of the area's tribal leaders, and a driving force behind the neighborhood's recent efforts to ask their Christian neighbors to return to their homes.

The service was mostly held in Aramaic, the ancient language spoken in Jesus Christ's time. Although the ceremony was a somber one against the backdrop of the extensive damage done, the mass concluded with an Arabic rendition of "O, Come All Ye Faithful," and the congregation's voices soared above the cathedral's heights.

A little while later, at the St. John's Chaldean Church, Auxiliary Bishop Shlemon Warduni conducted Christmas mass in the building's sanctuary. Untouched by the ravages of war, the structure's hand-carved woodwork, trappings and artwork serve as a reminder of what is and what can be for Iraq's Christian population.

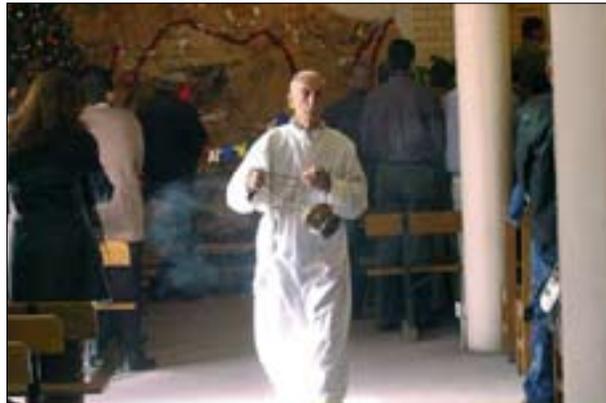
Bishop Warduni read from the scriptures in English, but much of the service was conducted in Arabic. Just before Holy Communion, he addressed the Soldiers in the audience, thanking them for their efforts, wishing their families peace and prosperity and beseeching the Lord to allow them to return safely to their homes when their tours were ended.

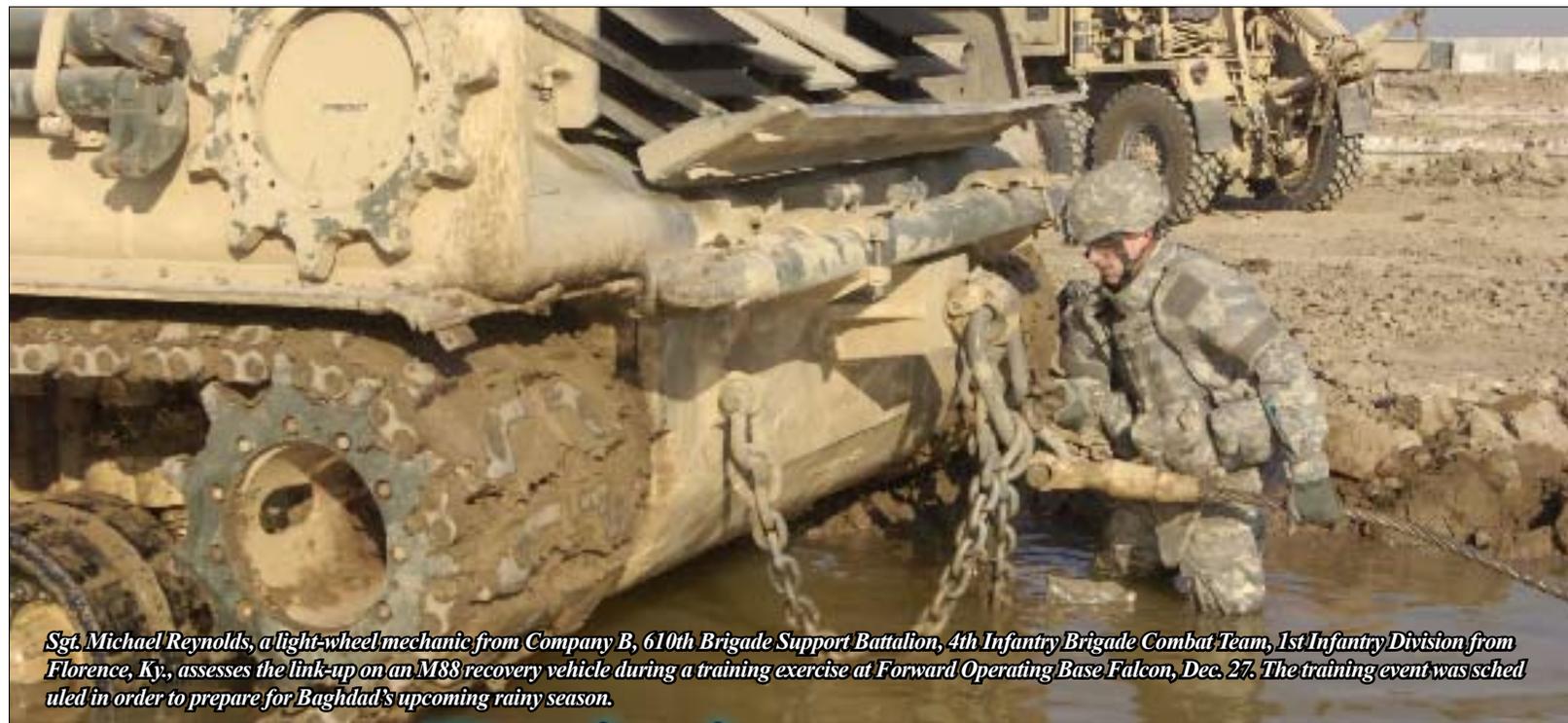
At the service's conclusion, Santa Claus came out from a side room and the congregation's children flooded him with cries of joy. Altar boys and choir girls rang bells and chanted happily as Santa Claus handed out small gifts. Capt. Fielding also donned a Santa hat and handed out candy from a large bag his mother sent him.

A few feet away, a diminutive, smiling man wearing a suit quietly approached and touched the same Soldier's arm he had spoken to at St. George's. "One day, I hope you will come to Iraq as a tourist and brother," Mr. Sa'ad said before stepping aside to let his Christian friends enjoy a moment of peace in their own place on earth.

As the crowd began to disperse, heading to their homes to enjoy their respective Christmas feasts and rituals, one woman broke away and approached a Soldier who stood nearby, taking it all in.

"Merry Christmas," she said with a smile in her thick Arabic accent, grasping his hands in hers, before turning and moving away to rejoin her family.





*Sgt. Michael Reynolds, a light-wheel mechanic from Company B, 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Florence, Ky., assesses the link-up on an M88 recovery vehicle during a training exercise at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Dec. 27. The training event was scheduled in order to prepare for Baghdad's upcoming rainy season.*

# If it ain't Raining we ain't training

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

In the world of sports, analogies are frequently made between the games played and battle. What the witty sportscasters and writers don't take into account is a glaring difference.

War doesn't get called on account of rain or poor field conditions.

With that thought in mind, the vehicle recovery team of the 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division trained for Baghdad's upcoming rainy season at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Dec. 27.

The event consisted of pulling an M88 recovery vehicle stuck in mud past its tracks to stable ground where the 70-ton vehicle was again fully operable, but the task had to be accomplished safely as well as effectively.

Spc. David Waiter, a welder on the crew from 610th BSB's Company B, said while the training wasn't performed under easy conditions, he still enjoyed the event.

"I like getting out in the mud. Even though it's cold, I like it; it's fun," the Houston native said. "It's not easy, but it's not going to be easy work whenever you try to do it."

The Soldiers had to wade out in knee-deep cold water, and sometimes partially submerge themselves to hook up the disabled vehicle. Waiter added that the heavy equipment used, such as the 140-pound snatchblock, which is used to hook the recovery vehicle to its cargo, does not make their lives any easier.

"It's a workout to use," he said.

Master Sgt. Richard Carullo, the 610th BSB support operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge from Orlando, Fla., said due to the Soldiers' taking on additional missions while deployed, the training was vital to Task Force Dragon's success.

**19** "This is not our normal mission; we're a light infantry brigade. We're not normally assigned M88's



*Spc. David Waiter, a welder on the vehicle recovery team of Company B, 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Houston, hooks a cable to an entrenched M88 recovery vehicle during a training event at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Dec. 27.*

or (Heavy Equipment Transports)," Carullo said. "We picked this mission up in theater, and having picked it up in theater, we haven't had the opportunity to train. We felt it was important because of the time of year, and because of the rainy season coming on, we needed to train Soldiers before they had to go into sector to recover vehicles stuck in the mud."

Despite having the extra challenge of adapting to an entirely new set of obstacles while conducting daily operations in a combat zone, Waiter said he takes everything in stride because all Soldiers face their own set of trials.

"We do what we have to do just like anybody else. We have our mission, they have theirs. To me, we're all on the same level," he said. "We all have our own missions; we all do our own thing."

# “Black Lions” Host Rashid Medical Summit

Story, photos by Cpl. Ben Washburn  
4<sup>th</sup> IBCT Public Affairs

Multinational Division-Baghdad Soldiers and the government of Iraq hosted the Rashid Medical Conference at the Furat Hospital to highlight health services and progress made in the district, Dec. 17-18.

In a second floor conference room of the hospital, doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals gathered to hear updates from each other. The Iraqis gathered from across the district to attend the symposium.

The conference, organized in part by Soldiers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, Task Force Dragon, was made possible because Iraqi doctors could travel freely from across the district to the hospital.

“There have been some great improvements in security in Baghdad and Iraq, and that’s allowed us to hold this meeting,” said Ellensburg, Wash., native Maj. Brian Derrick, the brigade surgeon for the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Inf. Div.

The “Black Lions” have worked hard in recent months to implement many changes and improvements to the hospital, which is tucked away in the northwestern part of the Rashid district, including the opening of a new emergency room.

“I think this meeting demonstrates that we are moving ahead, that priorities for the people of Iraq are changing,” Derrick said.

As doctors are feeling safer, they are re-opening their practices throughout the Rashid district.

“More clinics are popping up with the violence being down,” said Colorado Springs, Colo., native Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Brian Starns,



Maj. Brian Derrick, brigade surgeon for the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, addresses the audience at the medical conference held at Furat Hospital Dec. 17 and 18. The conference focused on bringing together Iraqi health care professionals to form a network and conduct training.

the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the 4<sup>th</sup> IBCT Surgeon cell. “We can shift towards the medical services for the population here in Iraq.”

Throughout the district there are a total of 72 clinics open, with more opening each month.

The second day of the event focused on continuing medical advancement in the district, as both Coalition and Iraqi doctors conducted training on various medical topics for those in attendance.

Participation in the conference was the first chance for the Iraqi doctors to take an active role in the revitalization of healthcare across the Rashid district. In doing so, the Iraqi doctors in attendance are ensuring they are part of the resolution to the medical situation in Rashid.

“This is an Iraqi solution with American help, so we have to take this forward for the people of Iraq,” said 4<sup>th</sup> IBCT commander and Harker Heights, Texas, native Col. Ricky Gibbs.

The “Black Lions” work in putting the medical conference together paid off-- health care professionals that attended were able to establish a network with the other doctors in the area; receive quality training; and receive various medical text books to take back to their practices to better serve their patients.

“I think we have gone over the top of the hill for peace and prosperity for Iraq and now we just need to turn on all of the resources we can to keep moving it forward,” Gibbs said.



Doctors and health care professionals from Baghdad’s Rashid district listen during a presentation during the medical conference held at the Furat Hospital Dec. 17 and 18. The two day event brought together doctors from across the district to discuss the state of health in the area.

# Iraqis learn through ... **tough love**

By 2nd Lt. Ryan Wood  
2nd Bn., 16th Infantry

It's not often that someone is praised for something they didn't do, but that was exactly the case on Dec. 26 when members of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment inspected the completed Iraqi refurbishment of the Al Karama School in the Tissa Nissan district of Eastern Bagdad.

What made this moment special wasn't just the close of the project, it was the added accomplishment that Coalition Forces merely advised the local Neighborhood and District Councils on its completion. For the first time since the Rangers of 2-16 Infantry appeared in Baghdad, local leaders have been able to take a project from conception to completion on their own, using only funding provided through Coalition channels.

New doors and windows, plumbing, cold water fountains, bathroom fixtures and water tanks were installed in the school by a local contractor who had submitted the winning bid to local officials. The contractor even identified doors not included in the bid and finished them as well, at his own cost.

"This wasn't even a project we suggested," said 1st Lt. Mathew Neyland, the fire support officer for Company C. "Before, we would go into a town and see a school and decide that was our next project. Now the locals are making the decisions on what they think is important and passing those ideas and bids up to us."

Neyland noted that his company's goal was not specifically to build the structures and facilities Iraqis need, but to assist them in learning the processes and systems for taking care of themselves.

"We were able to work through Dr. Kareem who spearheaded the plan and collected the bids," said Neyland. "He lives in the neighborhood and just wants things to get better. He shows no sectarian bias and even suggested that a Christian church he had identified be the next project for refurbishing."

Insurgents in the past have repeatedly tried to vilify the

projects and achievements of Coalition Forces, said Neyland. The current projects however are planned, resourced and overseen by local Iraqis, leaving very little support for rhetoric as the benefits are felt by the community.

As the war in Iraq approaches its fifth year, training Iraqis to be self sufficient has been a major goal for the Rangers of 2-16 Infantry in an effort to limit local reliance on Coalition support and build trust and knowledge of their

own systems. Increased security and the apprehension of multiple high level anti-coalition fighters now offer Iraq and the Rangers an environment where building can become more important than fighting.

Previously, Company C had spent the majority of its time targeting and attempting to capture the ringleaders of local anti-coalition groups who were working against a stable Iraqi government. The company's incredible success in capturing those targets and developing strong relationships with local leaders has allowed them the freedom to dedicate time and talent to improving the lives of everyday Baghdad citizens.

School projects such as the Al Karama School are just the tip of the iceberg, said Neyland. Local leaders are submitting multiple bids on projects upwards of \$100,000 which are being directed through Iraqi government channels.

"Our funds are limited," Neyland said, "so we help where we can, but the Governor of Baghdad has promised to fund the reconstruction of all the schools in the area so we can assist with some of the other ancillary projects."

With many more projects in development and a growing sense of self reliance in the communities, Company C and the Rangers of 2-16 Inf. will continue to provide both the security and training necessary to ensure that the people of Iraq will soon be guiding their own future.



*A Soldier with 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, stands guard outside a school. (Courtesy photo)*



*Coalition, Iraqi Security Forces and local leaders stand outside prior to the Al Karana School opening. (Courtesy photo)*



**Think about it**  
*Equal opportunity and you*  
 by Sgt. 1st Class Lonnie Powell  
 Brigade EO Advisor



Powell

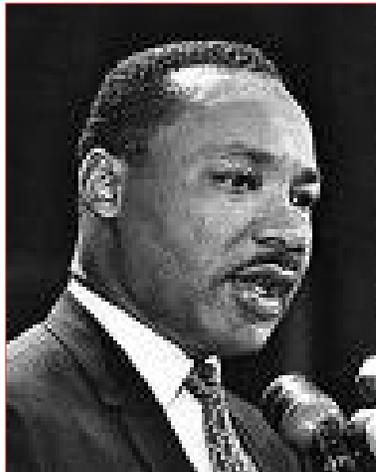
## Remembering an American hero

America has been blessed with heroes throughout our history, men and women of vision and courage who have set our feet firmly on the path of freedom and equality. Some became heroes by leading us in times of struggle; some by shaping our values and challenging us to greatness.

A thoughtful man, and one of deep personal faith, his conscience called him into action for the soul of our Nation.

He mobilized thousands of other brave and principled Americans – black and white, renowned and unknown – and began a crusade for justice that continues today.

In sit-ins, marches, demonstrations, and boycotts, he and many others met violence with nonviolence and ignorance with determination.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

They awakened the conscience of our Nation and succeeded in winning passage of historic civil rights legislation: the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

Pouring out his life in service, Dr. King made enormous and lasting contributions to improve the lives of millions of his fellow Americans.

Almost 45 years have passed since Dr. King challenged us from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to live out the true meaning of our creed – that all men are created equal – an almost 40 years have passed since he was taken from us after an all-to-brief sojourn on this earth.

A generation of young Americans has come of age without experiencing firsthand the power of his vision or the eloquence of his voice. Much has changed for the better in that time, but we still have much to do if we are to finish the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Following his example of service, we must build communities where everyone shares an equal opportunity for a good education and a good job, where our children can grow up without living in the shadow of guns, gangs, and drugs, and where we reject separation and isolation and instead celebrate together the blessing of our diversity.

We must put aside the better refrains of accusation and recrimination and instead discuss and implement new ideas for forging a single Nation out of our ever-increasing racial and ethnic diversity.

By learning to talk to one another, to trust one another, and to work together in hope, we can and will come to the time Dr. King foresaw when “justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.”



## Eye Protection

Even the evil-looking snowman gets it: eye protection is a must at all times when walking around the FOB. Sunglasses from the PX don't count.



## Huh? What?

It may not seem cool, but protecting your hearing while outside the wire is not only smart, but it's required.



# Are you a “Gambler” or a “Bold Risk Taker”?

In the Safety Community there is a widespread story about a person known as the GAMBLER. Everyone loves a Gambler. That is, as long as they are making people above them look good (making money) and not crapping out (stay under the radar). They are known as the “Go to Guy.”

The Gambler is a person that can be counted on to complete any mission. Gamblers usually make it all the way to the top of their organizations by relying on their gut feelings and making very risky decisions.

This is not proper risk management. This is gambling.

Just as if they were at a casino, they may get lucky for a while, but sooner or later like the wind and without warning their luck will change and it usually takes their stellar reputation down with it.

There is one difference between gambling at a casino and gambling in the Army.

When you gamble in a casino and lose, you just walk away broke and your pride will heal in a few hours, but when you gamble in the Army and lose your risky decisions usually impact your subordinates and their families.

The one ironic thing about being a “Gambler” is that the “Gambler” (person who made the bad decision) is usually not the one who is killed or injured).

The Bold Risk Taker also accomplishes the mission, but he uses composite risk management to make sound decisions.

Bold risk taking is a logical systematic approach to mastering denial, instinct, and over-analysis in a way that does not require endless analysis, but helps you confront the facts, assess the impacts, and weigh the options available to you.

It is a skill set that with effort can be learned and continuously approved on.

In the Army it is often hard to tell the difference between the Bold Risk Taker and the Gambler.

It is usually discovered which one the leader was during accident investigation (after the tragedy).

## Questions to Ponder

**Are you a “Gambler” or a “Bold Risk Taker”?**

**Do you know any Gamblers in your organization?**

**If so, what are you doing about it?**

**Are you overlooking a Gambler because they are making you money?**

If you are a Gambler take some advice from Kenny Rogers when it comes to completing missions.

Sometimes you gotta know when to “HOLD-EM” (take a step back and analyze the situation) and sometimes you gotta know when to “FOLD-EM” (delay the mission until you have the proper personnel, equipment, conditions, and support).

## Steel Falcon Chapel Worship Schedule

*Sunday*  
Contemporary Protestant Service  
1030

Gospel Service  
1300

Latter Day Saints Service  
1600

Traditional Protestant Service  
1930

Prayer Service  
2100

*Wednesday*  
Gospel Service  
1900

*Thursday*  
Catholic Mass  
1900

*Friday*  
Jewish Service  
1800

*Saturday*  
Liturgical Worship Service  
2000

### Bible Studies

*Tuesday*  
1900

*Thursday*  
1930

Would you give a burglar the keys to your house?  
Then practice good OPSEC

# FALLEN DRAGONS

NO MISSION TOO DIFFICULT  
NO SACRIFICE TOO GREAT

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

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

*Spc. Brynn Naylor*

2-12 Inf. Dec. 13

# OLD GLORY



*“Old Glory” flutters during a ceremony which saw 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry assume authority over western Doura from the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry, Dec. 23. (Timmons/4IBCT)*