LONG HARD ROAD II

NCO EXPERIENCES IN THE SURGE

Long Hard Road: Volume II

NCO EXPERIENCES IN THE SURGE

US ARMY SERGEANTS MAJOR ACADEMY

October 2009

"The president has said from the very beginning that this would be a long, hard task that we have set ourselves upon. He said it right after 9/11, when he made it clear to the American people, it wasn't just a matter of dealing with al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, but that this was a global war that would be fought on many fronts in many ways, using all of the tools at our disposal: military, law enforcement, diplomacy, financial controls -- you name it. And he told the American people to get ready for a long, hard road ahead."

— Secretary of State Colin Powell, on CNN's Larry King Live show, October 26, 2003

FORWARD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Forward	XX
Introduction	XX
THE SITUATION 06-07	
MSG David J. Schumacher, “Situation in Sadr City”	XX
1SG Richard O. Fisk, “Operation Iron Hammer”	XX
1SG James D. Beller, “The Patrol in Radwaniyah”	XX
1SG Clark J. Charpentier, “Leatherneck DUSTOFF 07”	XX
1SG Lenora Johnson, “Convoy Security Company 1SG”	XX
1SG William D. Lohmeyer, “116 Days of Summer on Route Harley”	XX
MSG Rhonda G. King, “Mosul”	XX
MSG David S. Lance, “Special Forces Operational Detachment”	XX
TROOP SUPPORT	
SGM Luis H. Freyre, “Preparing a Battalion Tactical Operation Center”	XX
1SG Matthew J. Stevens, “Building a Brigade”	XX
SGM Swilley Clark, “Food Service Sergeant Major”	XX
SGM Jose M. Piconavila, “Every Soldier is an Asset in Theater”	XX
1SG Anthony Smith, “834th AG Postal Co.”	XX
1SG Alicia Castillo, “297th First Sergeant in Iraq”	XX
CHANGING THE TIDE	
1SG Mia S. Barnes, “Hospital to Support Medical Care for Detainees”	XX
1SG Yolanda M. Tate, “320th Engineer Company (Topo)”	XX
SGM Bruce A. Sirois, Duty in the Desert”	XX
1SG Mickey R. Rutledge, “Full Spectrum Operations”	
1SG Robert A. Payne, “My Experience as First Sergeant of C/492”	XX
1SG David W. Bass, “96 Hours of Hell”	XX
1SG Michael Contreras, “Truce in Western Baghdad”	XX
1SG Luke C. Guerin, “Soldier Adaptation”	XX
1SG John W. Etter, Jr. “510th Sapper Company”	XX
SUPPORTING IRAQ	
1SG Eric B. Littlejohn, “Advisor: Iraqi National Special Forces in Iraq”	XX

MSG Warren D. Soeldner, “The 2/2 MOI Commandos” XX
1SG Michael L. Cosper, “Training the Iraqi Police” XX
MSG James T. Coleman, “Military Transition Team Process Experience” XX
MSG Marc A. Roderick, “Intelligence Transition Team” XX
MSG Sean P. Kelly, “Lending a Helping Hand” XX
1SG Keith DeVos, “Shia Uprising” XX

Conclusion XX
GLOSSARY **XX**

In 2007, the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy produced Long Hard Road: NCO Experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq. That work centered on the actions of the US Army senior NCOs in the opening phases of Afghanistan and Iraq. Since that time, both wars have continued. In Iraq, the situation has been stabilized largely due to "the Surge" of 2007. This work attempts to depict importance of the role of the senior noncommissioned officer in "the Surge" and to highlight a few of the elements that allowed that action to prove successful. The stories were provided by students of the United States Army Sergeants Major Course.

The work is covered in four sections: The Situation 06-07; Troop Support; Changing the Tide; and Supporting Iraq. The four sections break-down "the Surge" to allow the reader to understand the situation in the early stages and how it was transformed to the point where Iraqi Soldiers became the key element for the American success. The work is prepared so that each story has a brief introduction to establish a background and setting for the story.

To help readers understand the many acronyms used by the US Army and special units, a Glossary is made available as well; it is by no means inclusive of all Army acronyms.

The US Army Sergeants Major Academy's Commandant, Command Sergeant Major Raymond Chandler charged three members of the Academy staff to put this work together: Jesse McKinney (SGM Retired), Director S-1; David Crozier, Editor-in-Chief of the NCO Journal; and L.R. Arms, Curator of the US Army Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer and a Marine Corps Vietnam veteran. They were assisted in their efforts by Ms. Melissa Cooper, Museum Specialist, Donna Johnson, Administrative Assistant, and Ms. Jeannie Tapia, Academic Records Technician. Many of the stories were shortened and edited for clarity; however every attempt was made to remain true to the author's original intent. In the future, the US Army Sergeants Major Academy will continue to produce works of this nature, ultimately retaining the knowledge and experience gained in warfare by Noncommissioned Officers.

L.R. Arms
Curator
US Army Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer

INTRODUCTION

The belief in a nation or nationality is nothing more than the belief in a unity of purpose. The fragile nature of nations is often not apparent during "good times." A variety of ethnic and religious communities may live side-by-side in peace and harmony or at least acceptance for many years. Then a catalyst occurs; an event or situation that plunges the nation into chaos and may result in the nation being torn apart. In recent times we have witnessed how fragile nations are in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Iraq.

After crushing the Iraqi Army, the United States hoped that Iraq could be rebuilt as a peaceful and prosperous nation. National elections at the end of 2005 further brightened the hope for Iraq's future. However, the breakdown of Iraqi society along ethnic and religious lines made this hope seem nearly implausible by the end of 2006. Baghdad witnessed ethnic cleansing of neighborhoods and numerous killings of innocent civilians by both Sunni and Shiite extremist. In al-Anbar Province, Sunni insurgents lead a guerilla campaign against both Iraq and American forces and Al-Qaeda operated openly urging sectarian violence. It seemed the ethnic and sectarian divisions in Iraq would tear the country apart in numerous pieces.

Amid the carnage and violence, Noncommissioned Officers held their units together and maintained an effective fighting force. They accomplished this by training their Soldiers as cohesive units to cope and deal with the changing situation of the battlefield. NCOs made sure they maintained moral by ensuring the Soldiers were supported in the field and in base camp.

There were those who said the war could not be won and called for immediate withdrawal. However, the US decided on a more prudent course of action. On January 10, 2007, President George Bush announced "The New Way Forward" (which would be shortened to "the Surge"). For Soldiers this meant longer and additional tours in Iraq. It also required adaptability to new and changing duties and situations. "The Surge" was more than just adding more Soldiers to the numbers of troops in Iraq, it was a commitment to train and prepare the Iraqi Security Forces to protect and defend the Iraqi nation.

THE SITUATION 06-07

During 2006, Iraq descended into chaos. Open insurrection flared in al-Anbar Province and IEDs killed numerous American Soldiers and Iraqi civilians. The Iraqi Security Forces, plagued by ethnic and religious divisions lacked the training and discipline to hold the country together. The allegiance of the Iraqi Soldier and the Iraqi civilian population was always questionable for the American Forces. However, the American Soldier proved more than ready to meet the task of defeating the insurgents in open confrontation. Their major problem was that after defeating insurgents they lacked the numbers to hold an area for long periods of time.

The following stories focus on the period prior to "the Surge," and emphasize the importance of training Soldiers to react during combat. Patrols and convoys proved essential to maintenance of the US Army in Iraq. Senior NCOs, many of them first sergeants, tell how they trained their troops to survive both Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and insurgent attacks. They also tell of the importance of relying on the junior NCO as the key to combat success.

MSG David J. Schumacher describes the situation in Baghdad's Sadr City, where it was often hard to tell friend from foe. Insurgents sought to inflict heavy casualties on American troops and the roadside bomb was a Soldier's worst enemy. The absence of women and the presence of few men often triggered the imagination to look for the IED.

MSG David J. Schumacher
"Situation in Sadr City"
Platoon Sergeant, Bravo 2-14 Infantry Battalion

On the 16th of August 2004 I was serving as Platoon Sergeant for 2ND PLT, B CO 2/14 IN in Sadr City, Iraq. It was our Platoon's second night mission. Our patrol started at 1900 and went until 0900 on the 17th. Our mission was to patrol MSR (main supply route) Predators from south (check pt alpha) to north (check pt 9), about a 5-mile stretch. We started out patrolling in our up-armored HMMWV vehicles (highly mobile military wheeled vehicle 2 tons) making two passes along the MSR then decided to pull into a three story building; which was actually an unfinished skeleton of a building. On that patrol the locals seemed to be acting normal, or what we thought was normal. We were there from 2000 to 2045 when we decided to move back onto the MSR because we began to notice something strange about the local populace.

What we had noticed that had made us all concerned was the absence of women and children. There was nothing but men in the area and not very many of them either. Right before we began our patrol again I got a call from one of

my squad leaders, Sgt James Sanford, who we all called Fred, saying, "I see a man squatting about 20 meters from the road and about 75 meters in front of us." Fred also said another man had a spool of wire. Due to the fact that IEDs are one of the main killers of US Forces and the local population in this war, Fred's sighting was of obvious concern to us. My platoon leader, 2LT Dennis Grinde, was young in rank only but, not in age or military experience. He was prior enlisted; reaching the rank of Sergeant within the Aviation Branch. He served for eight years as Chinook Crew Chief prior to becoming an Officer.

2LT Grinde called to the Company Commander, CPT Chuck Slegal, to explain the situation and to seek permission to engage these individuals. CPT Slegal explains to the Lieutenant, "If he looks like he is emplacing an IED you can open fire." So the Lieutenant yells, "Open fire!" I immediately yelled, "No! Don't open up, this doesn't look right." I was thinking out loud, "Who in their right mind would put an IED that far off the road knowing we were here?" We were only 75 meters from the two men we were observing and there was no way they would be setting up an IED with us so close to them. So I told LT Grinde, "We need to go and take a closer look."

So, I took five others with me and we walked over to the individuals to see exactly what they were doing. Low and behold the two were trying to fix their water pump. Those poor individuals didn't know how close they had come to dying. That really would have helped us win their hearts and minds.

At 2045, we started out down the MSR; this time from north to south. After turning around to come back north, Sgt Fred noticed a guy place a box on the side of the road and walk away. He tried to stop the individual but he quickly darted into a crowd of people standing by a local market. We stopped about 150 meters from the box and assessed the situation. We decided not to take any chances and we called EOD (Explosive and Ordinance Disposal). When we contacted EOD they advised it was going to take them about an hour or so to get to us. So, we blocked off the road to all military traffic and tried stopping local traffic but they wanted no part of that. They are very impatient people.

I was positioned at the south end of the roadblock controlling traffic while waiting for the link-up with EOD. Because we had to wait for EOD it was fortunate for us that it was late in the day and the hot August sun wasn't beating down on us. There is nothing worse than standing on the paved road in 110 degrees of pure sun with no shade while dressed in full battle gear. After about an hour of waiting, night came and local traffic slowed down. Even all the locals that were stopping everything they were doing to watch us the entire time finally got tired and went home.

We got a call from EOD saying they had departed Camp Cuervo and would be at our position in approximately 15 minutes. Camp Cuervo was named after a Private First Class that had paid the ultimate sacrifice early in the war. Camp Cuervo was a small compound that contained a five story Iraqi hospital, which was now housing US Soldiers, and a couple of smaller buildings that were used

for rehabilitation purposes. It was only a ten minute drive down the main MSR until you reached MSR Predators; eight miles tops. Ten minutes later, I could hear the roar of the M113 APCs, Armored Personnel Carriers, approaching from the south. Once I heard them coming I could make them out my with night vision goggles (NVG).

They were only about 200 meters from my location and coming in fast. All of a sudden, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), small arms fire, and machine gun fire began to rain down upon the EOD as they moved down MSR Predators. It seemed like a wall of lead and explosions were hitting them. I remember thinking that this was the end of that EOD element. The firing came from in between buildings and rooftops. It was obviously an ambush waiting for them. The insurgents must have planned for this to take place because we had been standing there for some time. EOD's battle drill for this is to fight through it and keep moving. They know that no matter what happens to them along the way to their mission, they have Soldiers waiting on them who could be going through the same thing. EOD fought their way through it as if they get this kind of greeting from the insurgents daily. Once EOD reached my position all the firing stopped and there was an eerie calm about the place. It was as if the insurgents knew that EOD was a "soft target" and didn't want to try and match what we had on our vehicles. Their platoon sergeant dismounted and walked to my position, as calm as could be and said, "Are you the unit that called?" I kind of laughed and shook my head then directed him to the site we were over-watching.

Once EOD arrived we blocked off all traffic; this time letting no one through, no matter what. EOD has a very strict but simple rule, "No one in or we pack up." We understood especially after what had just happened. EOD took a look at what we thought was an IED and went to work. This group of EOD Soldiers had served in country for about a year and were about to redeploy home. They were taking no chances and blew up anything that resembled an IED. I had a chance to see what the process was when they deployed the robot to identify the box and watched them secure the explosives to the possible IED. The reason I could see this was they had placed their vehicles inside our perimeter and the command vehicle was right next to mine. These guys are like poetry in motion. They are so smooth at what they do that it's unreal. Playing with explosives is not something just anyone can do. It's an art that requires a steady hand.

About 25 minutes had passed since EOD had arrived and nobody was on the street. It was kind of different because in the past when something occurred at least one or two vehicles would come close to the roadblock before finding another route.

Out of nowhere, a car with three locals turned on their head lights and ran my end of the roadblock, on the opposite side of the road going 40 to 50 miles an hour. I yelled as loud as I could, "We have a runner!" No sooner had I said that, we all opened up with everything we had; .50 cal. machine guns, M240B

machine guns, and M249 Squad automatic machine guns. The firing lasted about 4 minutes; that's longer than most engagements.

Before we stopped firing at the car with the three locals it erupted into flames. I have no idea what they were thinking or even if they were part of the ambush. I personally think they were testing the Americans to see if they could get away with it. We killed the driver instantly and the two passengers subsequently died of wounds. After all the firing was completed, EOD continued their mission as if nothing had happened and blew the IED. We made the right call that night because it was an IED with a 155 mm artillery round. Once the site was cleared by EOD we had to go clear the car and see what damage we had really caused. I have never seen a car burst into flames like that except in the movies. When I got to the car I saw that the driver's body was a burned mess. Only half of him was there and the other half was burned beyond recognition. That is a sight that will be in my mind forever. We saw blood trails from the second and third guy. We recovered both of the bodies and sent them to the local Iraqi Police (IP) station for the families to identify and recover.

After the scene was cleaned up and all personnel and equipment were accounted for, we secured EOD's departure and continued the mission. We went to the place where EOD was ambushed earlier but could find no evidence of the engagement. This was a huge shock to us considering the amount of rounds and ordinance we had seen expended during the attack.

The next morning, when the sun came up about 0600, and all the locals had started their day they all gathered around the once-burning vehicle. We hadn't been able to recover the remains of the driver because the car had burned for a couple hours afterward and we couldn't sit on it because of the security of the MSR. By the time of our switch out with the next platoon a huge crowd had formed around the car and all eyes were on us. It was as if the crowd was blaming us for this engagement that had resulted in the three locals being killed. We did a smooth transition with the next platoon and throughout the day the crowd finally dispersed. The unfortunate thing that happened two days later, at that very site, an IED had gone off and killed one of our Soldiers.

1SG Richard O. Fisk describes the mission to clear Route Cobras and limit insurgent movements. His unit worked with a poorly trained Iraqi Army, whose

allegiance was unclear. They encountered both IEDs and insurgents as the mission proceeded.

1SG Richard O. Fisk
"Operation Iron Hammer"
1SG, Dagger Troop 1/7 CAV

To deny and impede insurgent movement north and south on Route Cobras, the Air Force was scheduled to drop four 1,000 pound bombs on the Grand Canal Bridge and destroy the north side of the bridge. The mission was simple: from Camp Taji clear Route Cobras 6 km south to the Grand Canal Bridge, clear the houses around the bridge, and establish a blocking position on the north side. Comanche Troop 1/7 CAV would do the same mission on the south side of the bridge and Blackhawk Troop 1/7 CAV was to establish a blocking position along Route Tampa to the west. Dagger troop 1/7 CAV was to depart the FOB from the east gate of Camp Taji at 0030 on 3 January 2006. To ensure that our mission wasn't compromised at the gate, we confiscated the cell phones from the Iraqi Army Soldiers guarding the gate and put the Soldiers in the guard shack until all Garyowen elements arrived at the bridge.

The troops departed the gate shortly after midnight and began the route clearance portion of our mission. The element consisted of four M1 tanks, four Bradleys, seventeen M1114s, and three engineer vehicles. The lead vehicle was a Meerkat followed by a buffalo, a tank, a Bradley, nine M1114s, two Bradleys, eight M1114s, a Bradley, and three M1 tanks. I was in the third M1114 in the convoy along with one of the troop medics and the communications specialist. The two M1114s in front of my vehicle were tasked to provide dismounts to clear historical hot spots along the route.

The convoy began the slow movement south and by 0115 we had only traveled 1 km. At 0120 we were hit by the first IED it was two 155mm artillery rounds buried on the side of the road. The triggerman let the first four vehicles pass by and then detonated the IED on the second M1114 in the convoy. The IED knocked out the gunner and cracked the side glass on the vehicle but didn't cause any major damage or injuries to the crew. While the medic evaluated the crew, we dismounted and ran the command wire but the triggerman was gone. A UAV was covering our movement from the air and was able to pick up movement in the palm grove 300 meters west of our position. I moved the dismounts back to the road and requested air support from squadron. An air weapons team arrived on station and engaged the triggermen with 30mm machine-gun fire.

The convoy traveled two more kilometers south and at 0400 the lead vehicle in the element was hit by the second IED. It was some type of hard case projectile and approximately 50 pounds of home made explosives placed inside an electrical junction box 10m off the ground on an electrical pole. The explosion disabled the meerkat and gave the driver a concussion. I called squadron and

requested the recovery elements move out with the other meerkat. Because of the history of IEDs on the route, we were able to secure three meerkats for the mission; they were on stand-by back at the gate along with Darkhorse Troop 1/7 CAV. The lead tank caught the triggermen trying to flee the firing position and engaged them with the coax machine gun. The gunner on the tank reported three to four insurgents in the area but was only able to confirm three dead. The dismount teams moved into the palm grove and confirmed three dead insurgents and a blood trail heading south to a group of houses. The dismount team followed the blood trail into a house and found the fourth insurgent dead under a bed. They tested all the people in the house with x-spray, all the men tested positive for TNT. The decision was made to detain all military age males that were in that group of houses so the S-2 could question them back at the FOB. The dismount teams continued to search houses in the area but were unable to find any weapons or explosives. The older men in the village told us they hadn't seen Americans in that area in over two years.

We got accountability of all personal and equipment and by 0530 we were slowly moving south again. We had no contact and made good time for 2 km and by 0800 we were a kilometer north of the bridge. There were several stores along this area of the route and they were already busy with people until we got closer and the people began to leave the area. We knew that we were not in the clear yet and the place turning into a ghost town right in front of us only assured us that there was something waiting for us. At 0815 the lead tank was hit by the third IED of the day. None of the gunners were able to get eyes on any movement or anyone that looked suspicious so we only stopped long enough to make sure the blast didn't damage the road wheels or hubs on the tank. With no major damage found on the tank we mounted up and made the final move to the bridge; at 0900 we were finally at the bridge.

We immediately began clearing houses and moving the locals out of the blast area, the first bomb was scheduled to be dropped at 1100 and with over 50 houses in the area we had to hurry. We split the area up first and second platoon cleared the houses to the east of Cobras and third and fourth platoon cleared the houses on the west side. Clearing the houses was completed without contact or much trouble from the locals. Of course the Air Force was running behind that day and the bomb drop was rescheduled for 1300. We used the extra time to do a more thorough search of the area; we found several 50 and 100 gallon water containers buried along the Tigris River and in the palm groves, the containers looked like they had been emptied a few days earlier. We knew that the insurgents were hiding their stuff like this a week before. Comanche Troop found several containers south of the bridge full of weapons, IEDs, explosives and other contraband. In order to keep the route clear we had two tanks and two Bradleys conducting patrols north and south from the FOB to the bridge.

At 1100, five tanks from the 2/9 Iraqi Army showed up and we positioned them along the route in over watch positions. The Iraqi Army element was sup-

pose to leave the FOB with our element at 0030, it had taken the MITT guys that long to convince the Iraqi Soldiers that they would be safe on the route. I think they knew what was on the route and just wanted to make sure we found it first. By this time my tanks were running low on fuel and the driver of the fuel tanker that was suppose to be sitting at the east gate decided he would go back to the squadron area to eat at the DFAC. We rotated the tanks back to the American side of the FOB two at a time along with the Bradleys and the M1114s.

The first trip back to the FOB went good, we didn't get shot at and nothing blew up. The second run didn't go so well and at 1230 we got hit with our fourth IED of the mission. It was a lot bigger than the other ones; luckily it went off between two M1114s and not directly beside them. This time both gunners got their bells rung and had to be evacuated back to the FOB for concussions, both trucks lost the tires on the side of the explosion. The IED went off exactly where I had positioned one of the Iraqi T-72 tanks earlier and of course when they moved they moved far enough away to be out of the blast area. I didn't have proof that the tank commander knew something was going to happen I just had a feeling the crew was dirty. I found out later that when that tank returned from the mission he was missing his coax, crew served weapon and was detained along with his crew. A few months later we found the weapons from the tank during a raid about 50m from where the tank was sitting that day.

The first bombs didn't get dropped until around 1500 but instead of the 1,000 pound bombs they only dropped four 500 pound bombs. We had to wait another two hours for the aircraft to reload and do another run. The final bombs were dropped just after 1700; the bombs didn't destroy as much of the bridge as the SCO wanted but we were cut off and not getting any more bombs.

Dagger Troop was going to be the last element off the route behind all the Squadron elements that came out to watch the show, the route clearance team would lead them out. Of course they didn't move fast enough for me and we were losing daylight fast. I realized that we pushed the guys too hard early in the mission and by now they were burned out. The commander and I just wanted to get the guys off the route before it got dark so we decided that any contact we received we would just return fire and push through it. We figured that by now we had used up every one of our nine lives and the likely hood was pretty good that we were going to lose someone on the way out. Dagger Troop started moving north around 1900, only one of the T-72s was still on the route with us and that was because the MITT guys stayed with them. We began to receive small arms fire from the west almost immediately, the lead Bradley and the three lead trucks engaged the shooters and the fire stopped. It was a clear run until we were about two clicks south of the FOB. They opened up on us from the palm groves on both sides of the road, all the gunners were engaging muzzle flashes and once again we made it through without casualties and only a few shot out tires. The troop arrived back at the east gate of Camp Taji around 2100. Finally the mission was over and 21 hours later we were all back safe. I had several guys

out of the fight for a few days but everyone would make it to fight another day. This mission was only the beginning of Dagger Troop's runs up and down Route Cobras, not counting this day the troop was hit 23 times on that road between January and March.

1SG James D. Beller depicts the importance of NCO leadership in during combat operations. His story tells of the death of three Soldiers and how his response to their deaths enabled his Soldiers to accomplish their mission despite the loss of their comrades. He goes on to describe how combat changes a Soldier, but does allow him to train and prepare others for combat.

1SG James D. Beller
"The Patrol in Radwaniyah"
1SG, HHC/1-18 IN

On March 21, 2006, the Second Brigade Combat Team (2BCT) of the First Infantry Division located in Schweinfurt, Germany into the Stop-Loss/Stop-Move program for deployment to OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM VI (OIF VI). Up to this point, I had served over four years with this Brigade. Previously, I had deployed with the Brigade for Operation Iraqi Freedom II (OIF II) from February 2004 through February 2005 as the Personnel Officer and Mortuary Affairs Officer of the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry "Blue Spaders."

During this point and time, I was now the First Sergeant of Company C, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry having taken that position in July 2005. We spent most of our summer preparing for deployment with packing and Mission Readiness Exercises. We deployed to OIF VI on 1 September 2006 and would spend the next 45 days in Camp Buerhing Kuwait acclimating to desert conditions and awaiting our turn to deploy into sector. Our time there consisted mostly of going to the range and many operations and intelligence briefings. The leaders of the company were very resourceful and developed many training scenarios and activities that related with our current mission set. We deployed to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Falcon in the West Rashid district of Baghdad, Iraq on 16 October 2007. I would spend almost four months deployed as a rifle company First Sergeant and then my life was changed.

The Battalion Command Sergeant Major (CSM), Israr Choudhri, informed me that I would be the Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) First Sergeant in ten days, on 10 February 2007. This was a shock after leading an infantry company for almost two years, and at first, I was very apprehensive about taking this job. The CSM told me to make a list and gather my thoughts and come back to him in two days. After two days, I went back and briefed him on all the reasons that I should stay the Company C First Sergeant. Upon hearing

this, he said “all the reason for you to be the HHC First Sergeant.” Therefore, my adventure started.

When I arrived at my new company, the commander was pleased to see me. I had been his First Sergeant earlier when he commanded Company C. I quickly had to take over my new assignment, get accustomed to the different responsibilities of a HHC First Sergeant, and also get acquainted with the Forward Operating Base Mayor position that I was expected to hold. I also continued to go on as many patrols as I could manage to learn the capabilities of all of my 14 sections.

During assumption of my duties, my battalion was starting its operations to develop Combat Out-Posts (COP) throughout the sector. Due to heavy sectarian violence in the north and west and the steadily growing Al-Qaeda networks in the south, the rapid build-up of these COPs was essential. Each company had been assigned a COP and my company was responsible for the daily logistical needs of these four out-posts. The build-up continued at a steady pace, the battalion’s Soldiers performed amazing work, building and operating these out-posts. The bulk of the work was finished in the first part of April.

As the buildup finished, the company was given the task to build a Joint Security Site (JSS) in the northeast of our sector. This JSS was to be tied into the security of COP Carter, which was already established at this site, and it could benefit from the security forces already stationed there. As the commander, support platoon leader, and I planned for this JSS, we realized that a larger than expected number of jersey barriers were going to be needed to complete this mission. Because the majority of the concrete jersey barriers were allocated to other areas in sector, we formulated plans to scour the already built COPs to find any extra barriers. Through cooperation from the other units we were able to secure a number of these needed barriers.

The plan was to take a combat support patrol with the hauling assets needed to COP Ellis in the south of our sector in Radwaniyah. The patrol security element would consist of 4 Highly Mobile, Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWV). The cargo section of the patrol would consist of two Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Trucks (HEMTTs) and one Pallet Loading System (PLS) vehicle. The support platoon was the patrol section selected to lead the operation. The support platoon leader was a highly respected young Captain, already very knowledgeable about this sector and this specific route. I was asked by the Captain to go along and command one of the security vehicles. This was welcome news to me, as I was beginning to feel like I would never get to leave the FOB again. The operation was to begin in the early morning hours on 6 April 2007 and end later that same night. Our plan was to leave in the early morning to surprise the locals and decrease the chances of being ambushed along our route. We were to load the barriers at our designated spot inside the confines of the COP, proceed to the JSS, emplace the barriers, and follow the route clearance team as it made its way back to FOB Falcon arriving later the same evening.

First call was at 0330 hours and we began mission preparations at 0430 hours. Our schedule was to leave FOB Falcon at 0630 hours and be at our destination in Radwaniyah by 0800 hours. We conducted our mission brief and discussed all the danger areas outlined in our Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). After the briefing, we gathered and said a prayer, as was customary to the support platoon before every mission, and then we departed.

The operation began smoothly, and we pulled into the COP Ellis 15 minutes before our expected time. Morale was high as we began to load our cargo of jersey barriers. The platoon leader, section sergeants, and I had a brief After Action Review (AAR) of the morning's events and discussed our plan for the trip to the JSS. After some brief coordination with the unit commanding COP Ellis, the platoon leader and I ate breakfast on the hood of his HMMWV and we mounted our vehicles and prepared to move to our next location.

As soon as we had traveled out of the gate about 1,000 meters, the patrol stopped. The third vehicle was having radio problems. I should have known it was not going to be a pleasant trip back. The sergeants fixed the radio problem and the patrol began to move again. The time was 0930 hours, 15 minutes past our designated start time. We passed the normal checkpoint and everyone was on high alert since this section of road was a specific danger area that we had just discussed in the AAR prior to leaving COP Ellis. As we proceeded along the assigned route, I looked at my watch and the time was 0943 hours. I distinctly remember that time because what happened next would haunt me forever.

No sooner had I looked at my watch, the most surreal moment of life happened. The lead vehicle, commanded by the platoon leader Captain Anthony Palermo, disappeared right before my eyes. I do not remember hearing any explosion. What I saw was much worse. A huge cloud of grey smoke followed right after by the largest fireball I have ever witnessed. Then I saw the HMMWV flying through the air and landing over 30 meters away in a canal, which bordered the road on the left-hand side. The mine roller that was affixed to the front of the vehicle went flying about 50 meters and landed in the canal. I remember that the last thing I saw was a burning HMMWV tire flying toward my vehicle, landing right in front of me. The vision was horrifying and seemed to happen in slow motion.

After about 10 seconds, the initial shock wore off and I yelled to my gunner and driver saying "fives and twenty-fives." They yelled "clear," and I dismounted the vehicle. My thoughts were to follow the canal side of the road, staying as close to the canal as possible in order to avoid secondary devices that could still be threatening the road. I cleared the road to the blast site and looked for the HMMWV but was unable to locate it. I continued my sweep, making my way toward the canal and then I saw it. The HMMWV was on its top, belly up in the canal. This was an awful feeling. I knew by the size of the explosion that all three passengers were probably dead. Nevertheless, the feeling that they could still be alive and trapped under the water was, at the time, more frightening and

terrible than I could have ever imagined. I continued my search and crossed the canal to look for any survivors. To my dismay, but also my relief, I found the driver, Specialist Ryan Dallam about 100 meters from the explosion site. His body had landed on the other side of the canal and was laying on a berm. I checked his vitals and determined that he was deceased. I continued my search and was making my way back to the vehicles when I realized that I was alone!

I made link-up with the platoon sergeant after seven to ten minutes of being alone in the wake of this explosion. Everyone had frozen and did not move until I was on my way back to the rest of the element to coordinate the search further. I remember that the platoon sergeant came running up to me and I told him "Dallam is dead." As he looked at me I saw him deflate in stature. I grabbed him and told him "there will be time for that later; we have to find the rest of them". He shook his head, picked himself up mentally, and began the recovery of Specialist Dallam's body.

Recovery of the vehicle became first priority due to the fear that the others were trapped inside. I gathered and issued the security plan, coordinated the vehicle recovery, and identified a search pattern did not exceed 150 meters from the explosion to the east, west and south. I did not want anyone forward north of the explosion site as it had not been cleared and I could not afford any more casualties. As soon as we began movement on recovery, the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) from COP Ellis arrived. I assigned the QRF the task of securing 150 meters north of the explosion site. At this point, I got on the radio and made one of the hardest radio calls that I have ever had to make. "Vanguard X-ray this is Highlander Seven", "One Killed in Action (KIA) and two Missing in Action (MIA)". I then gave the roster numbers for the corresponding reports my location, and the time that they occurred. I then ended my report with "continuing recovery and search efforts, I will advise again in 10 minutes."

Within ten minutes, several things had transpired. As the Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC) helicopter arrived, the HMMWV was being pulled out of the canal, and my Mortar platoon arrived to assist in the search efforts. As Specialist Dallam's body was loaded onto the helicopter, the MEDEVAC crew chief told me he would stay. I informed him we had not yet found the other two Soldiers yet and it was too dangerous for him to stay. He continued to insist that he would stay, but I thanked him and told him to be on his way. He finally accepted and lifted off with Specialist Dallam. As he flew away, he called me on the radio and told me that he was sorry for my loss. I will never forget that act of kindness. He said he would be waiting for my call when I found the others.

While the MEDEVAC was happening, the HMMWV was recovered from its resting place in the canal and it was discovered that the two MIA Soldiers were not in the vehicle. Although there was nothing left of the vehicle but a frame, I was still under the impression that the Soldiers were in the canal. I then made two decisions. The first was for the mortar section sergeant to get his people in the canal and look for the other Soldiers. Secondly, I ordered one of the

support platoon sergeants to organize another search party and push the security and search efforts out another 150 meters. I am glad that I made that decision as it proved to be the one that located the other two Soldiers.

As I made my rounds to check on the search parties and the mortar platoon, the Tactical Operations Center (TOC) called for an update. As I was talking on the radio, I watched in awe as mortar platoons without regard for their own safety, stripped off their personal protective equipment and started wading in the water of the canal. No sooner had I finished my update to the TOC and began walking to the canal, one of the sergeants ran up and said "TOP, I found them!" I immediately told the mortar section sergeant to get out of the water and gear up to help with the recovery of my other two Soldiers. Then I went to the location where they were discovered.

We walked for quite awhile, crossed two canals, and were walking through a field to the left of the canal, and I saw them. If I had not extended the perimeter, we probably would not have even spotted them. They had landed in a low spot over the scene horizon. We walked to the location of the first Soldier and it was the gunner PFC Damien Lopez. His body was found about 275 meters from the explosion site, lying beside his turret, which had also been blown off the vehicle. I then proceeded to the other location, almost 300 meters away from the blast site, where we found remains of CPT Tony Palermo. After I made positive identification, I walked back to the truck to call in and finalize the report of three KIAs. I was relieved to know that these Soldiers did not drown in that horrible canal, and knew that everyone else was relieved as well. The company commander, CPT Andrew Lyman and Command Sergeant Major came to the site with the Explosive Ordnance Team (EOD) and tried to console as many as they could, it would be a long day still to come.

Coordination with all the elements on the ground was a daunting task. However, recovery of our Soldiers was foremost in my mind. I told everyone to not leave anything for the enemy to exploit. I walked around the recovery site checking on the Soldiers. This recovery was a particularly gruesome task, although an honorable one and it brought out the best and worst in the Soldiers'emotions. It was a hard day for all of us. As far as I was concerned, there was a time for mourning and sorrow, but out in sector was not one of these times. As I made my rounds, I am sure some of the Soldiers thought I was devoid of feelings. While walking around, I would grab Soldiers if their emotions were running riot; tell them to get a hold of themselves, and that there would be time for that later. I had to make sure that they did their very best to recover our fallen Soldiers. At one point, I saw a sergeant on the ground crying and others were starting to follow his lead. I had to detain this sergeant and get him away from the site, which almost crippled my security. I was mad about this because times like these are when I need that sergeant to accept the facts and complete his mission. We completed recovery of our Soldiers' remains and loaded them onto our trucks. I felt it would be safer if we transported the Soldiers' remains

for two reasons. We had been in that particular section of the sector for a long time, and I felt the Insurgents would try to stage another event like shooting down the MEDEVAC helicopter.

After we loaded up our Soldiers, we made our way to the Baghdad International Airport (BAIP) Mortuary Affairs Office. After the company commander and I identified the remains and signed the accompanying forms, we made our way back to FOB Falcon, which was a 30-minute trip. This trip, although normally a routine patrol, was a particular hard one to make. The emotions of the day's events were slowing starting to manifest and it was hard holding them back. It was the longest patrol that I have ever had.

Comforting any Soldier following a loss is never easy. Comforting a platoon of Soldiers that just lost three of their own is an even harder task. We coordinated with the chaplain, CPT Seth George to conduct group counseling following this event. For those who needed it, we additionally found mental health professionals for them to talk with. My own grief was particularly hard to cope with. As senior leaders, we do not want to show our emotions in front of the Soldiers. We try to be the solid object in an ocean of hate, regret, and sorrow and we do not want to add an additional burden to the emotional distress that some Soldiers feel. In the end, I found solace in the fact that I had some very good friends that helped me grieve and it seemed to help tremendously. As my grief slowly subsided, the reality of the memorial service was something I still had to face. I did my best to cope and the battalion had a wonderful service, which allowed us all to begin to get closure from this event.

I have taken many things away from this event. The first is that Non-commissioned Officers have to be able to complete their mission. This event is an example of why NCOs need to restrain their emotions and display the personal courage needed to complete their tasks in the most horrible conditions. I am sure that some Soldiers did not believe that I had a heart that day, which I can live with. I live with it by knowing that by staying calm amidst all of the chaos helped calm many of them. By calming them, it allowed them to accomplish the mission of finding our Soldiers and leaving no one on the battlefield. By remaining calm, it also helped those in the TOC to know that I had the situation under control.

Secondly, the loss of your Soldiers is a hard thing to face. During the few months that I had been the First Sergeant of Headquarters Company, I had grown fond of CPT Palermo. He had served as the commander at the time ours was on Rest and Recuperation (R&R) leave. We had formed a bond that most first sergeants and commanders form. Loosing Soldiers is hard; when that Soldier is also your friend, it can be a particularly difficult and emotional time. CPT Palermo's death was very hard on me and seeing all three of them killed right in front of me, knowing there was nothing that I could do to save them, left an impression that will never be removed. However, we must carry on and celebrate their lives whenever we can. We always will remember them in the best of times

and will honor their deaths by always acting honorably throughout the rest of our careers.

Lastly, war changes Soldiers forever. No Soldier who has been in a conflict will return the same person they were before they left. They may look the same, walk the same, and talk the same; but the core of their being has changed by what they have experienced. We must use these events to educate all of the Soldiers and additionally make our own character stronger. We must use these events to inform and educate our leaders and subordinates and help prepare our Soldiers for the terrible events that happen in our lives, and use them as a signpost alerting us to the need for mental and emotional support. We must always carry the weight of setting the right example for our Soldiers, and guide them through trying times. We must ensure that in the most difficult times, the most unimaginable circumstances, when you may feel that you have reached your limit, you as a leader….lead!

Joint operations are a fact in today's Army. 1SG Clark J. Charpentier tells of his duties at Al Asad Airbase in Anbar Province. He served as the first sergeant of an aero-medical evacuation team supporting the Marine Expeditionary Force as they fought al-Qaeda and insurgent forces.

1SG Clark J. Charpentier
"Leatherneck DUSTOFF 07"
1SG, 82nd Medical Company (Air Ambulance)

In early November 2005, I deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as the First Sergeant of the 82nd Medical Company (Air Ambulance) to Al Asad Airbase in the Anbar Province. Our mission was direct support of the 2nd Marine Division until they were relieved of mission responsibilities by 1st Marine Division in March 2006. Due to the unique nature of our mission and physical location, we were under the tactical, operational, and administrative control of the Marine Air Group, a subordinate element of the Marine Expeditionary Force. With no Army units in our higher chain of command, our company command team decided early in the deployment the importance of establishing a strong relationship with the Marine Corps. The first visible sign of our commitment to the Corps was the choice of Leatherneck for our tactical radio call sign to demonstrate our knowledge of and respect for the Marine heritage. This decision immediately resulted in respect and confidence from our higher command and fostered a strong bond, which would be tested many times throughout the following year.

A decade and a half ago, I joined a brotherhood of a profession of arms having little understanding of the sacrifices or the choices associated with that decision. As a young adult after college, I never planned to accept responsibil-

ity for the lives of nearly 200 Soldiers or to volunteer to take an aero-medical evacuation unit into a combat zone. As many others, my original goal was to join the Army for four years with no long-term thoughts. It is truly amazing how people and experiences, both important and insignificant, affect future actions and give direction to the aimless. After arriving at my first duty station and seeing the First Sergeant, I focused my efforts on reaching that position, even though I really had no idea what he did or the spectrum of his responsibilities. Later I would learn the true meaning of the saying, "be careful what you ask for, you just might get it."

Skipping ahead through time to August 8, 2006, I found myself wearing first sergeant rank and serving as the senior enlisted Soldier in a deployed UH-60 Air Ambulance Company. We completed our ninth month of the deployment to Iraq, and the Soldiers' morale was increasing as each day passed. I had recently returned from Rest and Relaxation leave and was rapidly getting back into the battle rhythm because my commanding officer's leave was scheduled to start within the next week. As this day started, neither my commander nor I could have foreseen the turn of events that would ultimately change and intertwine our lives forever.

We attended the morning intelligence brief at our company headquarters as we had done every other day since arriving at Al Asad Airbase. There was nothing out of the ordinary reported: new airspace coded as black (no fly areas except for medical evacuation missions) due to suspected and observed insurgent surface to air missile systems, increased operational tempo for 1st Marine Division maneuver elements in our area of responsibility, weather data, downed aircrew procedures, and other miscellaneous information. Flight Operations briefed the flight schedule for the day, reminding us of proficiency and training flights that would take place later that day. My commander would complete his annual daytime standardization evaluation as a pilot in command while flying in the lead aircraft in a flight of two. Simultaneously, I would perform crewmember duties on the trail aircraft as part of my re-integration as a flight medic in the combat zone.

A couple of hours later, after completing preflight inspections of our aircraft, gathering updated intelligence reports, finalizing flight routes, and packing supplies for our forward teams, we departed on our mission. Flying low over the vast expanses of rolling hills and deep canyons in western Anbar Province proved to be uneventful. First stop was Camp Korean Village. Our Soldiers greeted the aircraft with excitement due to the lack of amenities at this outpost. We brought them necessary repair parts, but more importantly at the time, mail and other requested items of comfort. After spending a limited amount of time talking with our Soldiers, we continued our mission to the next destination, Al Qaim. During the one-hour flight, I had a feeling that something was not right but was unable to pinpoint the cause. Hindsight now reveals that I should have spent more time talking with my Soldiers, although I had no way to know that

afternoon would be the last time I would ever be able to talk with two of them.

Once we met with the teams stationed at Al Qaim and unloaded their supplies, my commander wanted to continue with our next flight leg. As I thought about my uneasy feelings during the previous flight, I strongly expressed a desire to stay longer with my Soldiers. The commander knew that something was bothering me and quickly agreed with my request. Days later, he told me that he wished I would have made the same request at Camp Korean Village. Very few days go by that I have not wished for the same thing.

As we began the next leg of our journey, I attempted to convince myself that I had made amends for not giving more of my time and myself to the Soldiers. I cannot recall whether it worked because I was shocked back into reality during our approach to Al Taqaddum Airbase. Caution lights and audio alerts informed us of impending disaster. Crews in both aircraft scanned the area to find the cause of the alarms. Several corkscrews of smoke appeared directly below our aircraft. Insurgents were firing on us in an attempt to bring us down. Time almost stopped, and imbedded training took over our actions. Some of the missiles were far off target while others contacted flares dispensed by the counter missile warning system and detonated. The gravity of the situation did not take hold of any of us until after we landed and began discussing what had occurred.

After the event debrief, we completed the same activities with our Soldiers at Al Taqaddum and stressed the increased threat of enemy actions at their location. During the return trip to Al Asad, I continued to review the events of the day and wondered if the earlier aerial engagement was the source of my uneasy feelings. Had my time at home with my family awakened an increased level of concern after being dulled by three-fourths of a year in combat? Was I experiencing a moment of clairvoyance of things yet to come? Regardless of the cause, I realized the need to focus on the task-at-hand and complete our flight mission.

It was nearing nightfall as we landed at Al Asad. There was just enough daylight to conduct post flight inspections and secure the aircraft without the use of flashlights. My commander and I parted ways for the evening but not before a short discussion of the day's events. Something about the day still felt wrong. We both sensed it.

Later that evening after stopping at the dining facility to get a small meal, I returned to the company living area. Many thoughts still flowed through my mind about everything that had occurred earlier in the day. I attempted to unwind with a novel as I had done nearly everyday for the previous year. Just as sleep was beginning to take hold, the Soldier on communications duty approached my room and said that the commander was on the radio. I jumped up, half-dazed, and wandered to the desk. The familiar sound of my commander's voice was somehow different as he spoke the words, "come to operations." A simple message, but so strong. I knew that it was something very serious, as we had never had a conversation with the same underlying tone or urgency. Within

ten minutes, I donned my uniform and made my way to flight operations all the while wondering what had happened. I had no idea that the next words I would hear would change my life forever.

Upon entering the control center at flight operations at about 2245, I spotted the commander, executive officer, operations officer, safety officer, standardization instructor pilot, and flight platoon leader gathered around the blue force tracker monitor. This gathering was not an uncommon sight as most of these officers lived in the operations building and congregated in the operations cell anytime patient extraction missions were occurring. However, this time was anything but normal, and all eyes looked up as the flight operations specialist announced my presence. With a tired, uncertainty in his voice, my commander said, "Top, Leatherneck 21 is down."

Within seconds, my worst fear was realized. I always knew the possibility existed, but thought it would not happen to my Soldiers, my unit. I accepted the peril that aircrews were exposed to at any given time. Much of the day had been spent contemplating the near misses during my last flight mission. Throughout the deployment, the timeless words of Major Charles L. Kelly, the father of DUSTOFF, always remained in my thoughts. In 1964, after being advised over the radio by a landing zone controller in Vietnam to turn back and return to home station because of heavy enemy fire, Major Kelly responded with "when I have your wounded." Moments later, during the final approach to load casualties, a single bullet fatally wounded Major Kelly. My Soldiers operated with the same intensity and spirit of Major Kelly on a daily basis, but had they made that same ultimate sacrifice?

The reality of the situation set in, and a multitude of ideas and questions flooded my mind. There must be a mistake. Who was on the crew? Has the search and rescue aircraft arrived on scene? How many survivors? How did it happen? Where did it happen? What is the current enemy situation? Do we need to scramble additional crews and aircraft for the recovery mission? I want to be on one of the recovery crews. My Soldiers are out there in trouble and need my help.

The look of shock and disbelief must have showed clearly on my face because my commander took me aside and began the process of working through this terrible event. He let me know that information was sketchy, at best, but shared everything he knew about the situation. We both accepted the fact that the best thing for us at this point was to not make any hasty decisions. The following eight hours seemed to last eight years. Information trickled in piecemeal. By sunrise, some questions were answered: four crewmembers and two passengers aboard at take off, aircraft was inverted in a lake, area around the aircraft free of enemy activity, the aircraft was down near Camp Korean Village, and two crewmembers still unaccounted for. At 0700, the commander and I briefed the Soldiers at Al Asad about the events that occurred and provided facts without speculation. Simultaneously, officers and noncommissioned officers in

charge of our team sites at Al Qaim and Al Taqaddum delivered the same information to their Soldiers.

As consuming as the mission of recovery and rescue of our own would become, Leatherneck DUSTOFF did not have an opportunity to scale back operations to deal with this tragedy. The twenty-four hour period that followed the command team's announcement of the downed aircraft became the highest operational tempo time of the deployment. More aircraft hours were logged and more casualties were evacuated than on any other single day. This proved the resonance of the Soldiers and their desire to save lives regardless of external factors. They personified the DUSTOFF motto "when I have your wounded."

It was not until 1900 that we received word that divers recovered the remains of our two crewmembers. Those that lived through the crash were fortunate, and we were very thankful for their good luck. At the same time, the survivors began their own internal battles of why not me. Of course, I could not help but wonder what more should I have done to avoid this loss of life.

Regardless of what we, as leaders, do to prepare our Soldiers for combat, the unknown and unprepared for will always exist. It is impossible to train for every possible scenario, but focusing on basic skills may increase the probability of survival. Leaders should always be willing to do whatever they expect their subordinates to do. We must also remember our own limitations and realize that we cannot personally rectify every adverse situation. Keeping Soldiers informed of both good and bad information will enable them to complete assigned missions without distractions of rumors. There is a very delicate balance between remembering our fallen comrades and allowing our second thoughts as leaders to become all encompassing. We must use every situation and experience as a learning opportunity to build more effective leadership skills for the future.

Many questions may never be answered about the aircraft crash on that day, but I will hold true to my personal vow to never forget Sergeant Jeffery S. Brown, Crew Chief and Sergeant Steven P. Mennemeyer, Flight Medic.

Serving as a first sergeant is a difficult task at anytime. Serving as a first sergeant during combat operations can be even more daunting. 1SG Lenora Johnson became the First Sergeant for the 565th Quartermaster Company in the middle of her deployment. She matured as a leader and a Soldier, learning to rely on her junior NCOs to ensure mission accomplishment in a combat situation.

1SG Lenora Johnson
"Convoy Security Company 1SG"
1SG, 565th Quartermaster Company

On 5 May 2007, my role drastically changed, I was no longer working in G3, I was now a First Sergeant. When I landed in Tallil, Iraq, as I stepped out of the plane and walked towards the terminal, I notice two individuals standing at the gate with big smiles on their faces. One of the individuals was my commander, CPT S and SFC(P) M, who was sitting in as the First Sergeant until I came. They both extended their hands to me, and stated, "Boy, are we very happy to see you……..we didn't think you were going to make it for another week." I didn't know what to expect, but at that moment, I knew I was welcomed and a part of a team.

On 6 May 2007, I assumed the duties and responsibilities as the First Sergeant of 565th Quartermaster Company, which was pulling the duties as a Convoy Security Company. This was one of my toughest challenges in the military, because I took over a company in disarray. The First Sergeant had been relieved, and there was no doubt that he still had his supporters. When I sat down with the 260th CSSB CSM, he told me everything that was going on with the company and that I had a tough job ahead of me. He told me that my first priority was going to Convoy Commanders training and to the live fire range. He said I needed to know everything my Convoy Commanders knew, so that I could ensure they were following procedures. SFC(P) M showed me the ropes and taught me everything I needed to know as the First Sergeant of a Convoy Security Company. Two weeks later, I finished the course and was on the ground running. I sat down with my commander, CPT S and he told me about certain aspects in the company that he felt needed to be fixed. He told me, that he did not have any confidence in the NCO Corps in the company. I told him if he let me do the job that I was sent to do, his confidence in the Corps would change.

Well, my first challenge came on 12 May, it was around 0025, I was preparing to go to bed when I heard a knock on my trailer door, it was SGT S, my night OPS NCO, telling me I was needed at the JOC as soon as possible. When my commander and I got there, we were asked, "Do you have a SPC Lopez in our unit?" I asked, "What was Soldier's first name?" the Major told us, the name. I responded "yes" the Soldier was in my unit. He then handed me the Soldier's M16A2, stating that a SGM from one of the other units found it lying on the gravel, as if someone had just thrown it there.

I called up all the platoon sergeants on their radios and told them to meet me at the company as soon as possible. Once, all four of my platoon sergeants showed up to my office, I told them what happened that we needed to locate this Soldier. SPC Lopez could not be located, and what I soon found out, is the pla-

toon sergeants did not have good accountability of their Soldiers in the evening. At 0130, we had an accountability formation, because they could not locate this Soldier. By this time, I thought maybe this Soldier had done something to himself. His platoon sergeant stated he had gotten upset earlier, because he was told he was going out on the next mission and he did not want to go. When we finally located this Soldier, and asked him where his weapon was, he stated, "I don't know where my weapon is, SSG L pissed me off earlier, so I threw it away!" Of course, I was shocked by this response from SPC Lopez, I could not believe what I was hearing. The commander then read him his rights, before he continued. No doubt, he received UCMJ for his actions, and he was sent back to the States to finish his chapter process.

Now, it was time for me to go out on the road with my NCOs and Soldiers. I did not know what to expect, my adredline was pumping and my NCOs and Soldiers were excited that I was going out on the road with them. As we sit in the convoy brief, I looked around at all my young NCOs and Soldiers, I was like "Wow". I had female Soldiers that were about 4 feet, 8 inches, handling the M2, like a champ. I told one of my young female Soldiers, SPC S, "That weapon is almost bigger than you and you are handling it, like it weighs 5 pounds." She stated, while smiling, "1SG, I am used to it, I enjoy going out on the road." That pumped me up even more, and made me so proud of how my NCOs and Soldiers handled themselves on the road. The night before, we did our Rock Drills and I listened to Soldiers answer questions as the young Convoy Commander, SSG J briefed them on procedures and while the Commander and I, inspected their gear. That night, I realized that training truly pays off when you are in combat. As we went over one of the battle drills, React to IED, I thought about nothing but the safety of my Soldiers and them completely executing these battle drills properly. For some of my NCO's and Soldiers this was their first deployment, and they did not find out until they got to Kuwait that they were going to be pulling a convoy security mission. So, it wasn't combat experience that made this unit successful, it was training.

As, I stood there, I thought back to the in-brief I gave each group, I stated to them, that I know that there was a lot going on in the company before I came, but the one thing, that stood out to most of them was that I stressed discipline, and my job was to take care of them. This meant, by ensuring they were properly trained and to bring them back home to their families. I told them "Standards and discipline saves lives, an undisciplined NCOs or Soldier can get a whole crew killed, because of complacency. If you follow procedures and do everything right, your crew will come back from every mission."

Our mission was to escort multi-class from FOB Cedar to Scania then to Kalsu. As we departed at 2300 from FOB Adder (Tallil), our convoy consisted of six security vehicles, one wrecker, and 25 vehicles carrying multi-class. Kalsu was in the black on Class I and we needed to get these supplies to them as soon as possible. SGT(P) L, the scout truck commander, led the convoy,

ensuring that we did not run up on any IEDs or EFPs. The gunners of each vehicle were very alert as they scanned the MSR along with everyone else in the convoy. It was pitch dark out there and all you could see were lights from other convoys. As we entered 7B, one of the most dangerous areas on the MSR Tampa, the convoy slowed down, completely. Everyone's alertness went up, we were all scanning the side of the road for EFPs, because this was the area where our unit lost an NCO and two Soldiers were injured. We remained with our weapons at our ready and continued the mission.

At this point, I got a reality check, that this was for real, we were out in the fight, pushing multi-class to different FOBs, driving through unknown dangers, not knowing if we were going to make it back to Camp Adder, safely. I was so proud of my NCOs and Soldiers, because they were mulit-functional Soldiers, not only were they on the road pulling convoy security missions every other day, some of my NCOs and Soldiers continued to go to quarters boards and were winning them. I had three of my NCOs win battalion and brigade boards, while deployed and three of my Soldiers did the same. 565th Quartermaster Company was kicking butts, when it came to these boards, and following the TTP's. We were in a battalion with a high speed MP Company, aggressive Cavalry Scouts, and a Field Artillery Company. The pace was fast and our battalion had five casualties during my first month in the battalion. The first NCO and Soldiers killed, happened on my birthday, this was truly an eye opener for me, and a day I will not forget. It was a day of sorrow for the Soldiers in that unit and the battalion, but we leaders still had to send our troops back out on the road, to ensure mission was accomplished.

Once our mission was complete in Iraq, 565th Quartermaster Company had matured tremendously as a Convoy Security Company. The unit conducted route clearance and provided convoy security for over 200 missions comprised of over 2,000 separate combat logistics patrols, moving across more than 300,000 miles in Iraq. The 565th QM Company played a vital role in ensuring that Soldiers throughout the country had the supplies they needed to conduct their mission.

In conclusion, my deployment to Iraq was a very challenging and successful mission. I am very happy with the way things went on this deployment. Because all my NCO's and Soldiers who stayed discipline and continued to keep situational awareness, while on the road, came back from Iraq alive. This was one of my toughest and most memorable moments in the military. When I became a First Sergeant in the middle of a deployment, it was a hard task, I didn't know what to expect or what I was going into. Especially, as a First Sergeant of a Quartermaster Company which pulled a Convoy Security Mission. In today's Army, we have to understand that it doesn't matter what your MOS is, when the Army calls your company to deploy, you have to be ready for the mission. Today's NCOs and Soldiers have to be multi-functional; they can either be doing admin duties in an S1 on a FOB or out on MSR Tampa pulling a convoy security

mission. My NCOs and Soldiers made me proud, because they were flexible; we were told our mission would be running a warehouse. However, with this changing Army, things changed, mission changed, and we became a convoy security company during OIF 06-08.

1SG William D. Lohmeyer tells of hunting IED and EFP (Explosively Formed Projectile) bomb makers, while performing counter insurgency operations in Iraq. He draws the reader to recognize the problems that existed in the early stages of the counter insurgency in areas where the population was largely Sunni and the Iraqi Soldiers were 99% Shia.

1SG William D. Lohmeyer
"116 Days of Summer on Route Harley"
1SG. Charlie Battery, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery

5 May 2007-the first day of the right seat ride between Charlie Battery, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery and Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery. Both units were assigned to 2nd Infantry Division out of Fort Lewis, Washington. 1-37 FA had been in Iraq for 14 of their 15 month deployment at the time and they were ready to begin redeployment operations with the rest of 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) Spearhead, back to Fort Lewis. 2-12 FA had been in country for less than a month, and we were assuming control of the battle space with the rest of the 4th SBCT Raiders. This was my third deployment to Iraq in the four years that the conflict had been going on. The mission looked the same as the other deployments. Counter Insurgency Operations (COIN). Winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people, so they can assume control of their country, and we could go home.

Charlie Battery was just your typical artillery unit doing a non-standard mission. After you stripped away the howitzers, the battery consisted of three maneuver platoons with four up-armored M1114 Hummers per platoon outfitted with M240Bs, 50 caliber machine guns, and 25 men per platoon. The finest assembly of men I had ever had the privilege to work with. America's finest.

Everything started out as usual. We met up with our counterpart and talked about what they do. We looked at some maps, inquired about past operations, and talked about who the power players in the area were. We listened to the good and the bad. We took it all in. Bravo Battery had been operating in this area for the past three months. They had suffered their only casualties of the entire deployment just one month prior. Three Soldiers in an up armored M1114 where killed while driving down an unimproved dirt road by a deep buried Improvised Explosive Device (IED). They were the lead vehicle in a four vehicle convoy. Other than that, the area had been relatively quiet. The Battalion

Commanders response to the incident was no one in the battalion was authorized to drive on unimproved dirt roads without permission from the Battalion S3. Needless to say, they were elated to be turning the operating area over to us.

On 7 May 2007, one of my platoon sergeants, SFC Walker, was taking his vehicle out with a platoon from B/1-37 FA. His was the only vehicle we were sending out that day, so I decided to jump in the back seat and ride around since their 1SG was not scheduled to go on patrol that day. I was anxious. This was my first trip outside the wire since June 2005, my previous and second deployment. We rode to the village of Al Noor, which is located on the banks of the Tigris River, approximately five miles east of Taji, Iraq. We were going to pay a visit to the family of Qasim Al-Dietch. Qasim was involved with some local smuggling of IED making materials. B/1-37 FA had been pursuing him, but could never get close enough. We went to the house and the family knew the routine. The B/1-37 FA platoon leader asked questions, showed pictures, and wrote down some stuff the younger brother was saying. We loaded up in our vehicles and drove down the road. The road was narrow, two-lane asphalt, elevated hardball road that curved through the jungle along the river front of the Tigris. It was surrounded by the jungle canopy on either side, which took about 10 degrees off the 125 degree heat of the Summer. The road was called Route Harley.

Route Harley was the only hardball road that connected the villages that sprawled along the river with the rest of the region. Nearly 99% of the villagers were Sunni, which was an area of concern, you could say, because the composition of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) was entirely Shia, and came from the more urban towns such as Hussaynia and Al Sham. The ISF would not even travel to the villages along Route Harley, without Coalition Forces (CF) in the lead.

After leaving the village of Al Noor, our convoy was headed back to our Forward Operating Base (FOB) located in Taji, Iraq. Smoke Walker's vehicle was the fourth vehicle in the five vehicle convoy. As we approached a dirt road that ran into the palm grove there was a violent shake and the rear drivers side of the M1114 lifted off the ground. First day out, and we were just hit with an IED. No one was hurt because of bad timing on the insurgent's part. We performed the battle drills as rehearsed and found the command wire, but no insurgent. The IED was like the others I had seen up to this point. On the side of the road, bad timing, very little damage. Those M1114s were built pretty tough. I turned to SFC Walker and said, "Looks like you earned your CAB the first day out". Little did I know that was the first of many for the Soldiers of Chief Battery

After reconnoitering the area of operation, the battery commander, CPT Jason Tolbert and I decided to break the area up into two smaller areas. 1st Platoon would get the jungle groves along the river and Route Harley, 2nd Platoon would get the more open farmland to the south. 1st Platoon leadership was seen as the stronger of the two platoons. 1LT Ross and SFC Scheibner had been to-

gether for over a year. 1LT LeCedre and SFC Walker had only been together for three months. SFC Walker arrived to the unit just prior to deployment and after our Mission Readiness Exercise (MRE). The third maneuver element was the HQ Platoon, led by the battery commander and myself. The area of operations was now ours. The platoons worked their areas, talked to local villagers, drank Chai Tea, and participated in "Goat Grabs", that is what the Soldiers called the dinner invites we would have at the local Sheiks houses. Things were coming together just fine. The intelligence being gathered from the local police and the Shia Sheik were not turning up agents of Al Qaeda, but we were winning the hearts and minds, so we thought.

16 June 2007-Operation Arrowhead Ripper was set to begin in 24 hours. Charlie Battery had only a small part to play in the operation. Secure two critical Tier One IED hotspots, so 3rd Brigade could pass through without delay and secure the city of Bacqoba, Iraq located in the heart of the Diyala Province. Prior to starting the mission, 1st Platoon had to conduct a mounted patrol in the vicinity of Al Noor. The patrol was to last two hours.

At approximately 1030 on 16 June 2007, I was standing in the CP when the call from Chief 17 (SFC Scheibner) came across the radio. The fourth vehicle of 1st Platoon's convoy had just been struck with an IED. SFC Scheibner's voiced crackled, but he stated firmly, that the vehicle had suffered a catastrophic hit, two were dead, one was wounded, and one somehow had made it out unscathed. There was an eerie silence in the CP, I summoned SSG Demott, the NCOIC of the HQ Platoon element, and informed him we were leaving in five minutes.

I remember the ride to that location like it was yesterday. I had already looked up the names of the mortally wounded Soldiers from the battle roster numbers given over the radio, SGT Danny Soto of Houston, Texas and CPL Zachary Grass of Columbus, Ohio. The wounded Soldier, PFC Jeffrey Moore of Charlotte, North Carolina was stable, but injuries were severe. As I arrived at the location, it was silent. Almost every platoon member was pulling security. They didn't want to be in the perimeter near the bodies of their friends. I stared at the M1114 that was nothing but a charred frame. I looked at SGT Garbe, the Squad Leader, covered in black soot. Not a scratch. A distant stare at first, but when he saw me, he reported to me and briefed me on the situation. Then he told me that all equipment and personal effects had been accounted for, and handed me two sets of ID tags belonging to SGT Soto and CPL Grass. I walked over to the two body bags that were in the center of the road. I had been a First Sergeant for four years and been deployed to Iraq twice before. This was the first time I had to stand over a Soldier that was one of mine. I could feel a weakness in my knees. But I knew that all the Soldiers from two platoons were watching me. I held myself upright and walked to PFC Moore who was wounded in the back of an M1114. He had been thrown from the gunner's turret and sustained multiple injuries. I looked in the TC seat of the M1114 and saw SFC Scheibner on the radio talking to the MEDEVAC. He looked at me with teary

eyes and said “Sorry Top” and then he put his head down. I asked him “How far away is the helicopter?” and he responded “Five minutes”. I told everyone to get Moore ready for EVAC. “Let’s get our boys and go home”.

After taking our fallen brothers to mortuary affairs and returning to the Battalion Headquarters, I talked to 1st Platoon. I told them that their brothers made the ultimate sacrifice. I told them that Zach and Danny were proud to be American Soldiers. They would be missed. I was telling them how we would move on, the battery commander came up to me and informed me that 1st Platoon would not be relieved of their duties involved with Operation Arrowhead Ripper. Five hours later, they rolled out to their blocking positions. On 24 June 2007, we conducted a memorial service for the fallen. 24 June 2007 was also my 39th birthday. The next day Charlie Battery seized an entire village where we detained 45 men between ages 17 and 30 for questioning. Answers were out there, we just needed to find them.

4 July 2007-For weeks we had planned a unit barbeque planned for Independence Day. The BN S3 authorized the battery to stand down. The guys really needed a day off. They had been going at it hard in the three weeks since their brothers were killed, they conducted raids up and down the Tigris River villages looking for anyone or anything that might have had anything to do with Grass and Soto’s deaths. We knew who had set the IED and who had detonated it on 1st Platoon’s vehicle. Qasim Al Dietch and Ra’ad Karim were the alleged insurgents. We knew where their families lived. We went to their houses twice a week. The guys were getting frustrated and they needed the day off. So we were standing down and had a picnic. The guys played volleyball, laid in kiddy pools sent to them by their parents. We even let the Iraqi Policemen that lived within the confines of the Combat Outpost attend. The Soldiers harbored no ill will toward their Iraqi hosts. My team which consisted of the Battery Commander, the XO, and the 2nd Platoon Leader, lost in the finals of the volleyball tournament. SPC Larive was on the winning team. It was nice to see him coming out of his shell again after SGT Soto was killed.

12 July 2007-Acting off intelligence from a source, we were planning a raid on the house of Ra’ad Karhim. The rock drill and rehearsal went well and the guys knew their tasks. They conducted their PCCs and PCIs, and were geared up and ready. We rolled out the gate at approximately 2200 hours. I was in the sixth vehicle of the convoy as we rolled down Route Dover to our objective, the village of Asafa. The guys were feeling good because this was a pretty easy cordon and clear mission. At 2212, the 4th vehicle in the convoy was disabled by an Explosively Formed Projectile (EFP) and it rolled slowly to the side of the road and stopped. The radio was silent and then all the chatter started. I exited my vehicle and ran up to the 4th vehicle sitting on the side of the road. I remember the night being very dark and silent and what seemed like a thick fog added to the eerie feeling. There wasn’t any fog--it was the smoke from the EFP. When I got to the vehicle, the Platoon Leader 1LT Ross was holding his

arm crunched over, and SPC Larive laid on the ground with two medics working on him feverishly. SPC Larive's hand had been blown off his right arm. 1LT Ross' arm had been broken from the blast and the vehicle was inoperable. As the MEDEVAC landed in the middle of the Route, I thought to myself, we are getting awfully good at MEDEVAC. Not something I wanted to achieve due to repetitive practice. The EFP by all accounts, produces more casualties of all the IEDs employed due to the fact that they penetrate all armor with the molten copper slug that is fired. Their only weakness for employment is that the target must be within three to six meters to provide absolute effectiveness. 1LT Ross' M1114 was only one meter away when it detonated which meant the molten copper slug had not shaped itself the way it needed to penetrate. 1st Platoon did not complete its mission that night. They had now lost five guys in four weeks.

The rest of July went by pretty fast. Not much to get excited about. 1st Platoon had a new Platoon Leader, a young 1LT Kuhlman. Along with that 1st Platoon also received a fresh crop of new guys, four guys straight from Fort Lewis. Brand new PVTs, funny thing is they shipped them to us with M16A2s. I didn't even think there were any of those left in the Army. I had our armorer equip them with M4s and all the optics. They were eager and motivated.

The next day, I talked to SFC Scheibner about the new guys. I told him that they had been cleared by Battalion and had completed all the prerequisite training to leave the wire. By late morning, the Soldiers were at our makeshift range between the Iraqi Police Station and the Iraqi Army Barracks zeroing their newly assigned M4s. Once that was completed, the platoon rolled out to Asafa, not to conduct a raid, but to conduct a patrol. As the platoon was patrolling near Asafa, vicinity Route Harley, a deep buried IED exploded right in front of SGT Jones' vehicle. It was a massive explosion that had it been timed right, would have destroyed the vehicle. PVT Kindling was in that vehicle on his first day outside the wire. No one was hurt, but I could see between the laughs that the tension was getting high in 1st Platoon. SFC Scheibner was not the same "Smoke Man" I deployed with. The wrapper was getting too tight. PVT Kindling thought it was the most amazing thing ever. He had not been with us on 16 June or 12 July.

In an attempt to circumvent the enemy and deny him his early warning system that alerted him to our arrival, the first two weeks of August 2007, had Charlie Battery taking to the skies. Much like the old helicopter Soldiers of Vietnam, the Chiefs would put 40 to 60 pax in the air land in some field east of the jungle, infiltrate the jungle and converge on a village in the middle of the night. The hunt was on for the IED makers. They were winning in their efforts to deny my unit the unabated use of Route Harley. We were getting the assets we needed and now we needed to utilize them and bring this area back under our control. The Air Assaults were having success in finding enemy caches, and sneaking up on someone's house and pulling them out of the bed. Still no Ra'ad Kahrim, and still no Qasim Al Dietch.

As the days went on, I could tell that my friend, SFC Scheibner was beginning to wear down. The casualties his platoon had racked up over the summer, was taking its toll on him. I'm not sure if one believes in fate, but I really couldn't sum it up any other way. The Battalion CSM sent an email asking if there was anyone down on the line that any of the batteries could think of that needed a break. Seems there was a brand new SFC in the Battalion, and he wanted a Platoon. I called the CSM and told him to hold that position until I talked to the commander. I approached CPT Tolbert and laid it out for him. The commander stated he had seen the same things going on with SFC Scheibner, so he gave his consent. I approached my good friend, Dan Scheibner, about the proposition. He stated that he didn't want me to think bad of him, but he felt he had carried his guys as far as his rucksack would carry them. He accepted and it was a done deal. The CSM agreed and SFC Rosario would come to the battery the next day to begin a right seat ride with Smoke Scheibner. One request that I did make was that since I was to go on leave 1 September 2007, could SFC Scheibner remain with us as 1SG until I returned. CSM concurred and everything was going well. SFC Scheibner was a 20-year veteran who had requested retirement prior to deployment, but due to stop loss, was declined. This move was the best thing for the unit, although SFC Scheibner had been in the unit from its conception, being there an entire year before me. The guys would miss him, but it was for the best.

29 August 2007, started like any other day. The sun came up and the guys went on patrol. I had been working with SFC Scheibner showing what I needed him to cover down while I was gone and he was finishing up his right seat ride with SFC Rosario. After the patrol that night he would take over as 1SG while I packed up and moved back to FOB Taji. I was ready to see my family. It had been a hard summer and I just wanted to hold my wife. I was going to have a nice day to myself getting my stuff packed and tying up some loose ends. I even took the opportunity to take some confiscated weapons, AK-47s, out to our little makeshift range and fired up some rounds.

The Combat Outpost was always busy with Iraqi Army and Police guys. They were the Police but they always deferred to the US Soldiers for decisions. Even on simple police matters that they are trained to handle. I was finishing up with some local issues, when SGT Terryl, the night shift CP NCOIC came out and said Top, we need you in here. I could tell by the look on his face it wasn't good. 1st Platoon had hit an IED on Route Harley. The radio reception from the north end of Harley to our CP had always had a lot of static, tonight was no exception. As the Battle Damage Assessment came over the radio, there was a crackle and then "One wounded, and one possible KIA" I closed my eyes and wanted to sit down. I held the radio in my hand and asked for battle roster numbers. The M240B gunner SPC Birkner was wounded and then the response I didn't want to hear was that SFC Daniel E. Scheibner of Muskeegon, Michigan had been killed. With that word my knees got weak and I sat in the chair, I cared

about all my Soldiers in the same way, but Dan was a close friend. His wife was the leader of our FRG. He was the first pillar of NCO the battery was built on. This was a devastating blow to the unit.

Recovery operations went on through the night and the Soldiers executed all tasks flawlessly. The battery commander and I stood there and watched as the wrecker secured the vehicle. SFC Dan Scheibner's body was laid across the back seat of the Commander's M1114, and we drove back to FOB Taji. The Battalion Commander met us in front of the HQ after we completed what had to be done at mortuary affairs. He was as shaken as any of us, because that was the affect Dan had on people. I will never forget him. The men of Charlie Battery, 2-12 FAR will never forget their comrades.

In the spirit of the reconciliation between the Shia and the Sunni, we made one demand to the Sunnis that had to be met before any reconciliation could go forward. We wanted Ra'ad Kahrim and Qasim Al Dietch. After some intense deliberations and promises made, but not entirely delivered, they brought the men to us. Now, the area around Taji is still cooperating with Coalition Forces and the Sunni/Shia reconciliation is still holding strong. The unit that relieved my guys claims that you can drive Route Harley without any incident any time day or night. That peace was paid for by Charlie Battery, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment.

MSG Rhonda G. King served as the NCOIC of the Joint Operations Center in Mosul. During her deployment, she developed a convoy tracking system that became the model for the 45th Sustainment Brigade, oversaw combat logistics patrols, and ensured the delivery of 1.5 million gallons of fuel and 1 million gallons of water.

MSG Rhonda G. King
"Mosul"
S2/3 Operation NCOIC, 352nd CSSB

My personal experience as the Operations NCOIC of the Joint Operations Center which we call the JOC was remarkable. The 352nd CSSB, a 59 person unit, was commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel who had the tenacity to lead a Battalion that he was assigned to only two months prior to deploying. The 352nd CSSB experienced several problems during our pre- deployment phase. We experienced issues with ensuring our battle roster had qualified personnel for the positions that were not filled. The positions that were not filled were at least thirty-eight. We were short Senior NCOs and Officers. The battalion was made up of seventy percent cross leveled Soldiers and the rest were Soldiers who were already in place. The main concern of mine was that the S-3 had no experienced S-3 Officer.

Prior to an S-3 Officer being assigned, I was the only experienced S-3 personnel in the Battalion. This posed a major problem for the Battalion because it would take more than one Soldier to sustain the heart beat of the Battalion which is the S-3 section. We got a Major that was cross leveled into the unit prior to moving to the mob station. This was a relief because I could only imagine the issues that we were going to face especially knowing we were to deploy to Mosul, Iraq to take over a Combat Logistic Patrols (CLPs). This Major entered the situation with a great deal of enthusiasm and knowledge to lead. We finally got the battle roster filled with the cross leveled Soldiers a few days prior to moving to the mob station. Even then, we still had four Soldiers that would meet us at the mob station.

Once all our staff and Soldiers were in place it was finally time to put a plan in place to make this mission and deployment a success. Once at the mob station, we started the training phase to ensure our Soldiers were trained in areas that were needed to sustain and ultimately help the Battalion succeed in Iraq. We conducted Convoy Operations, Weapons Qualification, CPX Training, and clearing a house. We trained on computer systems such as: Battle Command S-3, Movement Tracking Systems, and Blue Force Tracker. We fine tuned the mission plan that would be the key to any success we hoped to have. Our mission statement was on order, the 352nd CSSB would mobilize and deploy to a theater of operations. We would plan and provide responsive, multifunctional logistical support, ensuring the continuous provision of critical supplies and services to customer units as far forward as possible, and in the quantities required to sustain operations. We completed our training at Camp Shelby Mississippi and deployed to Kuwait.

Once in Kuwait, we attended key briefs to ensure we understood our upcoming mission. As stated earlier our Battalion would manage Combat Logistic Patrols (CLP's). As the S-3 Operations NCOIC, my tasks were the key to our success. My major and I were able to choose the Soldiers that would work in the JOC. We chose the brightest and most energetic Soldiers possible to ensure we had a diverse team. Ten of us moved into Iraq just after three days of being in theater. We were the advance party to move forward. We arrived in Mosul on a day where things were pretty calm. During its first months in theater the 352nd CSB executed Relief in Place and Transfer of Authority (RIP/TOA) with dissimilar legacy units while maintaining continuous operations and establishing new capabilities supporting the 45th Sustainment Brigade and other combat forces within MND-North. The battalion integrated itself into CLP operation immediately, establishing a Joint Operation Center consolidating the command and control (C2) for all CLP and recovery elements outside the wire. This greatly improved the efficiency and standardization of Tactics Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), battle drills, and inspection procedures. Special emphasis was focused on maintenance operations in regards to all vehicles utilized during CLP operations and support functions resulting in an operational readiness rating of

95% the highest in the 45th Sustainment Brigade. This resulted in over 967,000 miles driven encompassing 1058 CLP and recovery missions throughout the deployment operating from FOB Spiecher to the Turkish border. The battalion also provided oversight of the Logistics Support Center (LSC) which was responsible for DS level maintenance support throughout the units AOR. Our Battalion replaced an Active Duty Battalion that had made monumental strives while in theater. Immediately, the advance party personnel were taken and introduced to our counterparts. I was introduced to the S-3 Operation NCOIC of the Battalion we replaced. The difference was that his role was not defined as mine would be.

I was essentially acting as an Operations NCO/Battle Captain because even though we had picked our team we were still short Battle Captains. I was taken out on CLPs by the Battalion we were replacing Battle Captain to ensure I was familiar with the routes and the tactics, techniques and procedures. On one particular route we were stopped for five hours awaiting EOD to come and clear an IED that was spotted by our gunner. This was the moment when I finally felt the fear that you hear everyone speak of. My heart raced and my palms got very sweaty. Sitting out in the middle of nowhere with eight up armored vehicles waiting for the route to be cleared was unbearable. We were surrounded by rubbish on both sides of the road. This made all of us think that it was an ambush site. I prayed the entire time that I would make it out alive. When we returned that night from the convoy I surely had a different perspective of the importance of knowing your role and staying alive in a foreign land. My role in the JOC changed from being an Operations NCO, one who was expected to manage Soldiers in the JOC and oversee all activities in the JOC, to Battle Captain. I supervised the mid-shift and prepared 1,000 CLPs for their escort missions. I coordinated with the 111th Engineers to ensure Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) were found and removed as a threat mitigation device.

Another responsibility was to work a schedule with the Electronic Warfare Officer (EWO) to coordinate inspection of Dukes systems prior to the convoy brief. This was critical to the reduction of IED effect on vehicles. My shifts prepared an IPB brief of friendly forces to the convoy commanders and provided them with a smart sheet and map of the routes to be traveled. We prepared over 1,000 missions that successfully navigated the roads of Northern Iraq, distributing 1,500,000 gallons of fuel; 1,000,000 cases of water; and traveled 1,100,000 miles. I successfully assisted in 20 Recovery operations and 35 EOD support calls for the reduction of IEDs on the roads. My experience and insight was proven exceptional in calling for support and assisting our Convoy Commanders or War-Fighters when in need of recovery or QRF support. I provided a sense of continuity and situational awareness that only one that has been on the road can understand. I was tasked to provide training and operational guidance to subordinate units. I developed and instructed classes on ROE, Driving in Hazardous conditions, and Cultural Awareness to 150 members of the CLP operations.

My ability to instruct and provide clear informative information was para-

mount in maintaining the disciplined units under the 352nd CSB. I was one of the primary links in communicating with the operation sections of units to our left and right and the battle space owners. I was also responsible for the USR turn in for the Battalion. I collected and condensed information into the standard format provided by the Brigade; my final product was rarely questioned or returned. I possessed a strong administrative acumen that provided continuity in the JOC and allowed the staff to remain active in its support and operation. I ensured that convoys were prepared to meet their SP times designated on the CLP matrix. I was responsible for ensuring the Battle Space had been swept by the Engineers and that air support was online as a threat mitigation tool coordinating 1,000 Air Movement Requests (AMRs) through 1/17th Aviation Battalion. I also provided the Battle Space owners who provided patrols, QRF, and aviation support to our CLPs, a clear concise description in the event when we need their assistance. The JOC requested 75 recoveries, 55 medical evacuation support actions, 65 EOD requests, and over 100 calls for support of the Battle Space owners.

I developed and implemented a convoy tracking system that became the model for the 45th Sustainment Brigade (SB). This system is utilized by every Battalion and tracks the SP and RP times of every CLP in the 45th SB and reported to the battle desk for qualitative data collection. I was able to enhance the working relationship between the 352nd and the 1/17th Attack Aviation Battalion and the 4-1 Cavalry Brigade. I ensured that we remained in constant communication with these units while traveling in their battle space. I enhanced the reporting process that reduced the amount of time convoys are in the MCT yard by having them provide 40 line information prior to departing the S 2/3 briefing.

This deployment was my second deployment to Iraq and much different from my first deployment. I received a Combat Action Badge for my involvement in a horrific mortar attack on 12 October 2006. I had just left the JOC to go get some personal supplies from the PX. I was finished getting my supplies and was headed back to my vehicle when all of the sudden I heard sirens ringing and a large explosion hit around me approximately two feet away. I hit the ground and crawled closer to my vehicle when another mortar hit and this time it burst out all my windows on my vehicle; my tires were flattened. I was extremely scared but I managed to radio back to the JOC to let them know we were under mortar attack on the far side of the FOB. This day, we were hit on our FOB with thirty mortars within a span of twenty minutes. It was very scary and people were running for their lives. We had many wounded on our FOB that day. When it seemed as though the attacks had stopped for a moment, I ran back to the JOC. The JOC was on the other side of the FOB.

The JOC personnel and I immediately started accountability of our units' personnel to inform the Battalion Commander of his Battle Damage Assessment. We knew that where the mortars were being reported was in the direct vicinity of our units. These two incidents were just two of many close calls on my life

during my deployment to Mosul. I must admit I did not expect to return alive because of the extreme danger that our unit was in. We all worked very hard to ensure the success of our mission and accomplished that and much more.

1SG David S. Lance provides tale of the Special Forces Soldier with many years of experience. He provides some useful lessons, such as, "Never run straight to or from the enemy." It will appear to the enemy as if you are standing still and you will be an easy target.

1SG David S. Lance
"Special Forces Operational Detachment"
Co A, 3rd Bn, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne)

This paper is a snapshot of a night in the life of a Special Forces Detachment. I was, for the last three and a half years, the Detachment Operations Sergeant (Team Sergeant) of Special Forces Operational Detachment A572 (Mountain). I have served on the same detachment for eight years and during that time have served four tours in Iraq, one tour in Afghanistan (the initial invasion), one tour in Lebanon, and a host of shorter deployments throughout the CENTCOM AOR. I have served ten years now in the Special Forces and prior to that was an Infantryman. In my years in the Infantry, I served as a Sniper, Fire Team Leader, and Squad Leader. I served with the United Nations Protection Forces in Macedonia, with the Nordic Battalion (the Finnish Army), and with the NATO Implementation Forces in Bosnia-Herzogovina after the Dayton Peace Accords. Much of my experiences in the last ten years are classified and therefore this paper must necessarily remain vague on many aspects that were asked to be considered in the guidelines. In order to honor non-disclosure policies and more importantly to protect those currently fighting I must leave out the exact locations, dates, units, and identities of those involved as well as the specific tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) used. It must suffice to say that the following events occurred in the Iraqi Theater of Operations sometime in 2007.

The bird takes off with a jump, another night, another target. Its 0100 and we have a 45- minute flight to insertion. Quickly the men settle in and some began to doze. I sit behind the crew and have the headset to monitor our progress and relay target updates from the command bird where the Captain is with the other half of the Strike Force. There have been so many nights like this. So many places and targets that they begin to blur together over the years. There are some nights that can't be forgotten though. Always I will carry the memory of the night that Big John stood there and said farewell and good luck to the team as they loaded. I will always remember him saying that the hardest thing

he ever does is to stand out here in the night and watch as his detachments go in, not going with them and the long wait to see what becomes of them. Another war, another night and the scene is repeated. These teams will go hundreds of miles into enemy territory and seek their destiny. My thoughts turn to all of the men who will never know another insertion: JD and Dan, Kevin and Bill, it goes on and on. Always we remember them. The list is too long; the memorial walls in team houses across the world are covered with plaques. Their destiny came to them there in some God forsaken place that without the target would never have been worth a thought. I look at the men around me, sitting in two rows on the floor one on each side of the MH53. There are four Americans here and 12 of our fighters, some sleep, some stare past the tail gunner out the ramp. Some check and recheck their weapons and equipment and some are lost in their own thoughts.

The time warnings began coming in. Ten minutes, six, two, one…..the men are standing now and the bird drops to the ground. They quickly and silently file out away from the tail rotor and form a perimeter as the bird lifts off. The rotor wash will nearly blow over a fully kitted fighter on his knee. One hundred meters away the other team has been inserted and quickly the two teams linked up and moved into the village. Outer and inner cordons established, the assaulters scale the wall and stack at the breach point. A thousand times, we have done this. Almost always it begins the same. But then the Breachers charge goes off and everything after is different every time.

The gun trucks are occasionally used also. They are armored and mount 50 caliber machine guns, SMAW-D missiles, and the occasional mini-gun. The crew compartment is full of electronics. It is much different than in the beginning when the vehicles were designed for long range patrolling, reconnaissance, and fighting in the desert. There was no armor then, no doors, no back compartment, and a quarter of the electronics. They could go for days without being supplied though and were able to go places no other vehicles could. In those days, every spare space was converted to carry fuel, water, and ammunition. Now it was all armor and electronics. These nights the 45-minute insertion by air would become a three-hour mounted insertion. Sometimes it would be eight hours round trip. The gun trucks bringing armor and more firepower to the fight. They are not used as often because the enemy often is warned of their movement. The thoughts are the same as the hours drone on. But now there is the constant need for watchfulness, for security. We must see the ambush or the IED before it is initiated. The FBCB2 is turned to its lowest setting and turned on only intermittently to check the progress. Finally, the objective comes in sight. It goes quick now. The speed increases as each makes the turn into the objective and moves to its assigned point. The gun trucks come to a quick halt and the assaulters dismount and move to the breach point with the 50's in over watch. The breach is initiated.

From this point, the choice is the enemies. Now is when we will find out if

the target will fight. The assaulters rapidly clear the breach point and then there is a pop, pop from the one who is a true fanatic followed by the barrage of return fire. The scene is illuminated through the Nods with flashes of green lightning flaring in and out. The assaulters are well trained and the target is killed instantly without any of the other six terrorists around him being hit. They raise their hands in surrender unlike the target who raised a pistol. He lays there in a pool of blood with steam rising from the body. He was 28 years old. In his brief life, he had killed hundreds, torturing and executing civilians on video over and over to spread the message of fear his kind needs. He had become so good that he was given the title Prince of Assassins. Now he was nothing; a target on the wall with a line through it.

The securing of the prisoners and consolidation goes quickly. One of the assaulters has lost a chunk of meat to a grazing wound on his arm and one has a through and through to the shoulder. The homemade steel plate of the man with the grazing wound has the tell tale splashes of two hits on the chest leaving only a bruise. The through and through of the other is low enough that there is concern about the bullet having hit the lung and a CASEVAC is called for. The medics are packaging him and assaulters have brought blankets from the objective to cover him with. He is cold and in shock but conscious. We have marked the LZ with an IR strobe and wait for the bird. The waiting is always the same. Rough humor and bad jokes are told to cheer up the assaulter and mask the worries of the rest for their brother while we wait. Inevitably, someone will say something serious about what he means to us and then the jokes return to hide the unease.

The first thing is the distant sound of rotors, and then the radio crackles, as the birds get closer. They circle once and check the LZ then one landed on the strobe while the other orbits. The crew chief meets the litter team halfway and escorts them to the litter rack. There is again the blowing rotor wash, the sudden lifting of the bird, and then he is gone. The night returns and the mission continued. The ex-filtration or extraction is always the same. The satisfaction of having taken down another target, the worry about the wounded and the relief at each that has survived yet again. It has been so many years now, so much fighting and dying. It seems that it has become a craps game. The odds will catch you in the end. Every time you roll the dice, the chance of crapping out is higher. The training and years of fighting have made the odds longer but they will have their turn. It always happens in the end if you keep rolling; then it will be your turn on the litter or in the bag. Until then…..the bird is slowing now and the oil fires are visible. There is the familiar bump as we touch-down and walk off the ramp back to the team house to reset the force. The day will bring the next target to hunt. He will be put on the wall and his destiny will come for him one night soon. He will hear the breach initiate and choose to live or die.

A million lessons I have learned in the years I have been fighting. They are not new; much of what we know has been painfully relearned because so much

knowledge and experience is lost in the years between conflicts. The little things will keep you alive. Never run straight toward or away from the enemy because it appears in the sights that you are standing still. Never fight in the streets, instead fight from building to building. You can only really plan up to the breach point, after that what happens is up to the enemy. You must be trained to act or react no matter what he does. Rehearse every contingency over and over. Training is everything. In every firefight, no matter the odds or situation, once action was required by individuals or teams they resorted to doing things the way they trained. Violence and aggressiveness saves lives. Sadly, the biggest lesson of all is that you can do everything right and still die.

TROOP SUPPORT

Troop support provides a vital element in achieving victory and ensuring the welfare both physical and mental to every Soldier. The following group of stories emphasizes the importance of different aspects of the support element found in the American Army in Iraq. Support elements provide food, letters from home, medical care, and many other services that are important for the Soldiers' well being, morale, and esprit de corps.

Included in this section are stories which highlight how to build a brigade and how to prepare a Battalion Tactical Operation Center. These are not considered support elements, except that they provide the Solider with the administra-

tive element needed for success on the battlefield.

SGM Luis H. Freyre describes the adjustment from being a first sergeant to an Operations Sergeant Major. He points out that one of the keys to being a successful leader is to rely on the NCOs below you to accomplish their tasks.

SGM Luis H. Freyre
"Preparing a Battalion Tactical Operation Center"
Operation SGM, 2-8 CAV, 1CD, 1BCT

I was the Operation Sergeant Major for 2-8 CAV, 1CD from Fort Hood, Texas deployed to Iraq for 15 months. 2-8 CAV was a combined arms Battalion with two Tank Companies, two Infantry Companies, an Engineer Company, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, and a Forward Support Company with 900 Soldiers assigned to the Battalion. The Battalion was stationed in Taji, Iraq in Northern Baghdad. The Battalion controlled three outposts, operated by three separate companies, and rotated their Soldiers on a three-day rotation.

The month is March of 2006-the promotion list was out for a couple of months. One of the senior Sergeant First Class made the promotion list and the Battalion Sergeant Major wanted to give him one of the Infantry Companies so he could deploy to Iraq with them. The only way that was possible, if I would step down from being the Headquarters Company First Sergeant, move to the S-3 shop, and assume the position of the Operations Sergeant. On March 15, I reported to the Operation Sergeant for duty.

My primary function was to assist the Sergeant Major on all mission request orders tasked from Brigade and then assigned from the Battalion to the company. My secondary function was to prepare the Tactical Operation Center for our pre-deployment mission readiness exercise to JRTC in early June 2006. As I sat there trying to figure out how to get the TOC ready I could recall walking in the TOC and never paying attention on what it took to run or man a TOC. I was in charge to stand one and to ensure that it was mission ready to deploy to Iraq. To make this happen I sat down with the Soldiers that were assigned to the S-3 shop. Some of those Soldiers had experience from our last deployment during OIF II. We all got together and came up with a list of things that we needed to get before the TOC would be ready for deployment. A priority of work list and a list of items that would be needed to be acquired for the up and coming exercises was developed. First thing was to make sure that we had all the tenting that was needed to support the Battalion staff and all the other equipment for inside the TOC like radios, printers, laptops, tables, chairs, dry erase boards, and to purchase any more equipment that would be needed but wasn't readily available.

Our Battalion had scheduled multiple field exercises that would prepare the Battalion for the deployment in October of that same year. Here was our test to

see if the TOC was ready to deploy to JRTC and Iraq. One of our major down fall was not enough personnel to manage three shifts. We were so short of Soldiers and Officers that my duty during the train-up was night battle captain. The exercises helped in finding out what our short fall were and allowed us to correct them before our mission readiness exercise in early June.

Our JRTC rotation started by preloading all our equipment on the railhead, but also our Battalion was put in charge of all railhead operation on the Fort Hood side of the deployment for JRTC and the move to Iraq. The tasked of managing railhead operations was to make sure all equipment for the Battalions were properly staged and ready for the loading onto the trains. Railhead Operation was very hectic, but I heavily relied on the few NCOs that I had available to assist me on controlling, moving, and loading over 400 pieces of military equipment. The only way that I was able to make loading operation run smoothly, was that I talked to the Battalion's Operation Sergeants Major to ensure that they had plenty of Soldiers during loading of their equipment.

During our rotation at JRTC we were able to refine the working draft of the Battalion Standard Operating Procedure for the Tactical Operation Center from the Lesson Learned from our Battalion and Brigade field training exercises. One major lesson learned was the Battalion could not be one-minded by just trying to be digital, we also had to be analog just in case power outage. We had to adapt to new equipment, methods, and formats that Brigade wanted us to report. This changed numerous times but they were also trying to fix their mistakes. My Battalion Commander was a sound tactician who always challenged the S-3 shop to improve how we fought as a team. The solution for that was to place the Planner, Engineer, Intelligence, and fires officers in one office in one location.

One month after our railhead and JRTC rotation, we were manifesting to get on the planes to deploy to Iraq. Prior to leaving I was talking with the Operation Sergeant Major and the Operations Sergeant from 1/66 AR 4th ID from Fort Hood, Texas, to see what type of equipment they were going to leave as stay behind that we were going to sign from them. The reason I contacted them was to ensure that my Battalion staff packed enough equipment to maintain operations until the supply system was operational under our unit identification code.

The Battalion sent an Advon party seven days prior to the main body to set up operations in Kuwait. Their main functions was to set up, assign living quarters, schedule training, and ranges that would be required prior to our move forward into Iraq. Once the Battalion arrived with all Soldiers on the ground the TOC was established to maintain contact with Brigade Headquarters and to maintain a daily tracking on how we are doing with training and to track personnel moving forward to Iraq.

On October 5, two supply Sergeants, the S-4 Officer, Operation Sergeant Major and myself boarded a plane to Iraq. Our final destination in Iraq was FOB Taji about 80k northeast of Baghdad. This FOB was located between six cities and large farm areas with the main highway going parallel with one of the outer

fence line. Once we arrived we were greeted by the 1/66 AR night Battle NCO who assigned us temporary quarters. The Battalion started arriving on FOB Taji about 15 days after we arrived. This allowed the Supply Sergeants to assign living spaces to each company.

Transfer of authority was on November 22 at 0001. I had a total of nine Soldiers assigned to the S-3 shop. The night TOC crew was a Battle captain, Battle NCO, Radio operator, and a Command Post of the Future Operator (CPOF). The day shift was different with the addition of one radio operator and one Soldier for maintaining all the equipment assigned to the TOC. Not until four months in to the deployment did we receive more Soldiers into the TOC because they were either hurt or recuperating some type of injury. The Battalion Command Sergeant Major was aware of the lack of having Soldiers to fill the position of Battle Captain in the TOC. To fix that he pulled three Platoon Sergeants from the companies and assigned them as Battle Captains. 1/66 AR operated different from how 2-8 CAV TOC operated, so we started reorganizing and configuring the TOC layout to our standard operating procedures.

The TOC was equipped with four 32" monitors that connected to the radio operator computer. He has able to display all the patrols out in sector and the daily log for his shift. The CPOF operator was able to display his screen on one of the monitors which showed the significant activities that happened in the Division Area of Operation and another screen was connected to MCS/FBCB2 so we were able to track movement of our forces, as well. The last screen was used for our daily BUB and also for the unmanned aerial vehicle. One of our major problems was the ability to maintain electricity all the time. The TOC was connected to the main FOBs 220-volt main power grid, so if the FOB power would go down our TOC would lose power also. To solve this, I had my maintenance Soldier and the S-6 shop reconfigure most of the major components that operate the TOC to 110 volts. KBR added another generator to support the 110-volt generator that ran what was not connected to the 220-volt grid.

The Battalion commander asked me to establish an intelligence cell somewhere near our TOC. He wanted it right outside the TOC so when a patrol arrived back from zone that would be the first place the leaders would go to do his debrief. Building the intelligence cell was hard to do because there was no building space available within the Battalion footprint. I remembered that we used expando vans in our Forward Support Company, a logistical operations center. I was able to sign for two expando vans. One that was to be used as the tiger-net/debrief room and the other was going to be where all the intelligence analysis's Soldiers would work. I placed both vanside by side and my engineers built a platform almost like a bridge that would allow Soldiers could walk from one van to the next. This allowed the Battle captain to have one interpreter nearby for any possible tips that were called in. During our 15-month deployment, the Battalion TOC reported around 3,500 significant activities.

Upon returning on 14 January 2008, the Battalion had our ten day reinte-

gration training after the four day pass. In March, the Battalion reported back to duty after our 30 day block leave. Upon returning, the S-3 shop had to be completely revamped. All policies had to be printed and tracking methods for all garrison missions had to be reproduced. The staff also had to coordinate and set up for four changes of responsibilities, two change of commands, the Battalion Command Sergeant Major change of responsibility, and the Division and Brigade Commanders change of command.

One of the major lessons that I learned as an Operation Sergeant Major is that you need to think outside the box. You cannot just think in traditional ways that normal Tactical Operations consider. Any type of additions that will improve the flow of reports and analysis from the Commander in the field, implement them to assist the commander in analyzing what is happening in his area of operation. Another lesson learned is search out Soldiers that can assist you in developing operational procedures. Do not think that you, as the Operation Sergeant Major has to do everything.

Adaptability is always a key element in any Soldiers life. 1SG Matthew J. Stevens tells of the changes in the 4th BCT, 1st Cavalry Division. The unit became part of the 1st Armored Division and 1SG Stevens went from being the Plans Sergeant Major for the Brigade to the position of first sergeant by the time of deployment.

1SG Matthew J. Stevens
"Building a Brigade"
1SG, HHC, 4th BCT, 1st Cavalry Division (reflagged 1st Armored Div.)

Upon arriving at the Fort Bliss Reception Center, the Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) in charge informed me that it was rumored my new unit would deploy sometime around August of the same year. I asked several other Soldiers if they had heard the same thing about the deployment. Mixed answers were heard from officers, NCOs, and Soldiers alike. No one really had a good idea of what was happening. Still, questions and rumors loomed of how a Brigade Combat Team (BCT) could deploy to war without being in existence for even a year. Arriving to the unit a few months after it stood up opened my eyes to organized chaos. Yet, through everything, the BCT eventually deployed to Iraq one year from the day it was activated.

The BCT stood up from virtually nothing but the colors. Temporary trailers were being emplaced out in the desert to facilitate offices and housing for the four thousand and then some Soldiers who were in-bound. Until then, Soldiers that had already arrived were scattered all over the post. Many of the single Soldiers that would normally live in barracks lived in Army lodging in and

around the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA). The old USASMA housing area housed junior NCOs, accommodating two to three to a house. Senior NCO and officer housing was limited, to say the least. Many were forced to live off post.

Standing up a new unit is not without its challenges. If it had only been a re-flagging (an established brigade simply changing left shoulder patches and swapping flags) things would have been much simpler. The entire unit from Brigade Commander to the most junior private had to be assigned to the unit. Equipment needed to be brought or sent from all over the country to facilitate equipment requirements. Soldiers arrived in random order with no precedence of rank or experience. No one, not even Fort Bliss officials, seemed to be prepared for what was to come. Although not initially prepared, post officials reacted quickly and attempted to manage the growing number of arrivals. More personnel were added to the Welcome Center for in-processing. Older buildings on Biggs Army Airfield were turned over to the BCT to be used as temporary offices until the temporary trailer offices were ready further out in the desert.

After signing in with the BCT S1, I went to report to the Command Sergeant Major for my assignment. To say the least, he was surprised to see me because I was not on his gains roster for inbounds. Nearly all positions were filled for my Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and skill level. He assigned me as the Plans Sergeant Major for the Brigade. No one could clearly define the role because it was so new. Eventually, the role was defined by me with input from the operations officer. We will discuss this in more detail later. Across the BCT, units were conducting training on gunnery, i.e. small arms gunnery, Bradley gunnery, and Tank gunnery. Small unit tactics training continued as more Soldiers arrived and were integrated in teams. Not all equipment had arrived at this time and many units went out and borrowed it from wherever they could find it. I observed a First Sergeant during training as he rolled up in a HMMWV. I asked him where he got the HMMWV he was training in and he told me he had borrowed it from the New Mexico National Guard. Rolling stock was scarce and the NCOs continued to adapt, improvise and overcome the little things. When it did arrive, we were hard pressed to find Soldiers qualified to operate it. Again, the NCOs continued to be resourceful and found the time and expertise to train the Soldiers on the new equipment.

New equipment also began to arrive within the operations section. MCS and CPOF computers were being wheeled in all the time. Even as the new equipment arrived, updates had to be installed with the latest technology. This was not the only new equipment to arrive. Many new and unfamiliar pieces of equipment arrived that no one knew much about. Field representatives were integrated into the unit to train those that did not have any knowledge of the systems or equipment. Several Soldiers in the operations section, mostly the junior enlisted, were trained on the equipment. This would have been fine if nothing ever changed. As things change in the Army frequently, they do so in the

operations section, too. Many of the Soldiers trained on equipment or computer systems had to be moved to line units for one reason or another. This left a huge gap for trained personnel in the section. The company grade officers and I had to maintain the systems until we trained more Soldiers. This took away from other responsibilities required, i.e. writing operations orders for upcoming missions and events. On several occasions, I noticed the BCT operations officer and I were still working way after dark. However, this was alleviated as time went on and more Soldiers arrived to the unit to fill key positions.

Moving into the relatively new position had its own challenges. First of all, I had to convince the operations Sergeant Major that I was there to work with him and that our roles should be mutually supportive. I also had to convince the officers working in the plans section that I was there to assist and advise and not there to tell them how I wanted things done. Although never fully reaching my ultimate objectives, I defined the plans sergeant major role as future operations sergeant, beyond the thirty day window. My thought was that a large part of my responsibility was to review orders during the military decision making process and again prior to distribution to give it the sanity check. I envisioned the operations Sergeant Major taking the fight and executing the plan via the tactical command post. This worked most of the time. On rare occasion, the Command Sergeant Major asked us to step behind closed doors to give us his opinion and to set us straight.

Manning in the operations section included the engineer cell, the air defense and airspace management section, and the lethal and non-lethal fires and effects coordination cell. No MTOE positions of battle captains, NCOs, or radio telephone operators (RTO) existed. These positions were pulled from other sections and subordinate battalions, trained and then assigned to the section permanently. We felt they were key essential positions necessary to run extended twenty-four hour operations. During our field training exercise and later during the National Training Center rotation, we set up three shifts. This proved to work and we kept the setup though our deployment. During the deployment, we rotated others in to provide relief for a day off now and then.

After announcing that the BCT was going to participate in the III Corps CPX, we had to decide who would go to Fort Hood and who was going to stay at Fort Bliss and continue receiving the inbound equipment and Soldiers. The decision was made that the BCT Executive Officer would stay behind and the operations officer would go to Hood. The Plans Sergeant Major went and the Operations Sergeant Major stayed behind. The entire staff was nearly cut into two sections and asked to perform simultaneous missions at both Fort Bliss and Hood. More confusion erupted because nearly everything that was being managed at Fort Bliss by those that went had to be passed off with short suspense.

From the very beginning of my arrival to the BCT, no one seemed certain that we were going to deploy. That is, no one except for the BCT Commander. On many occasions, he called the BCT together to tell the Soldiers to get their

affairs in order because he knew we were about to deploy. He was right. No official indication of deployment had ever been presented until the BCT was at the National Training Center. Several of the senior leadership left early from California to conduct their orientation in Iraq. Although this was the first official notice that the BCT would actually deploy, it again left the BCT with limited leadership in place to move the BCT back to home station.

We arrived back to Fort Bliss during September 2006. The month consisted of BCT Soldiers returning on flights, recovering their gear, and conducted railhead operations to receive some of the equipment back from the National Training Center. The official word that the BCT would deploy also came in September. The orders specified that the boots on ground date would not be later than the first of November. Again the BCT reacted as professionals, albeit, with extremely short notice. Railhead operations were conducted again. It went very quick and smooth as the Soldiers had become experts by then. We also had to send Soldiers to conduct port operations. If time permitted, Soldiers were also afforded the opportunity to take leave.

During the month of October, the deployment month, I was informed that I would be taking over as the First Sergeant of BCT Headquarters Company. Although I knew many of the Soldiers and the company commander, I did not know the personalities of the Soldiers nor the personal issues faced within the company. This would be my fourth opportunity to serve Soldiers as a First Sergeant and I was looking forward to it. But, I had some quick lessons as many issues popped up, as they often do, from Soldiers the week prior of the deployment. None of the Soldiers knew me as their First Sergeant nor did the Company Commander. Everyone had to adapt to the different personalities. I served as the First Sergeant for the duration of the deployment.

The rush to build the BCT and deploy to combat did not seem to foster esprit de corps among battalions or in the BCT headquarters. Throughout the many challenges and adversity, esprit de corps was held at battalion level and lower. Soldiers of the BCT had intensely built, trained and deployed the brigade to combat. The BCT did not follow the three year life-cycle deployment timeline. That is, the BCT should have built combat power the first year, trained its forces the second year, and deployed and returned from combat the third. This would follow closely the Unit of Action life-cycle. Had we done this, I felt the BCT would have been better served overall. The Soldiers would be better trained, cohesion and esprit de corps among all teams would be developed and the unit would have been more successful during its mission in Iraq. However, the American Soldiers will to succeed will never fall. If placed in this situation again, I would do the best that I could. I am proud of my time and service in this unit and would willingly serve with many of the officers and Soldiers if called upon to do so again.

Feeding Soldiers consist of one of the greatest challenges and needs for any Army. SGM Swilley Clark tells of how he assumed the role of Food Service Sergeant Major and met the challenges of that position. He concludes with the lesson that teamwork, loyalty, integrity, hard work, respect, and dedication start from the top and filters down.

SGM Swilley Clark
"Food Service Sergeant Major"
G-4 Food Service Sergeant Major, 1TSC

When a Soldier in today's Army hears the phrase "An Army of One" mixed emotions arise. This was definitely the case in my previous unit. In my last unit, my sole responsibility was to feed Soldiers. As the Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) of running the dining facility (DFAC), we prepared food ordered supplies and kept account of how many Soldiers were fed on a daily basis. I have been an Army Cook for many years and I love the profession that I have chosen. The last year before I left my unit, we went from an Active Component (AC) unit to a Multi-Component unit. The Multi-Compo, as it was called, was very new to me as well as to many of my Soldiers. This meant we would be working with Reserve Component (RC) Soldiers. I must admit initially, we were very apprehensive and did not look forward to the change. As the RC Soldiers began to report to the unit we noticed that our duties and responsibilities were changing. The changes were due to the fact that the unit that was previously a COSCOM unit had now become a Theater Support Unit. Most Soldiers blamed the changes in duties on the addition of the RC Soldiers. Even in every day operations, our tasks changed. I went from a "hands-on" role to a managerial role in the DFAC. Again, this was due to the unit changing to a Multi-Compo and the individual personnel components within the unit. However, many Soldiers did not know this.

My role as a leader was to ensure a smooth transition and support the Army's change. I must admit that I am more of a worker than a manager, therefore this change was challenging to me, as well. As the AC and RC Soldiers began to work together, I noticed that it seemed to be a division between the two components. I had to incorporate training that would require input and demand teamwork. We were preparing to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and there was no way that I could allow division within my section when we were headed to war. Initially, we were briefed that we would go to South West Asia for one year, then return to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and rotate every six months. We had just recently adjusted to the change in mission and the change in the unit but we continued to march.

I was promoted from MSG to SGM during this deployment. The promotion caused a major shift in both my Soldiers responsibilities and me. I was

moved from the DFAC and became the G4 Food Service Sergeant Major. This position placed me in roles and responsibilities that I was not familiar with, such as reporting to the General weekly on the statistics of meals and quality of food. I was no longer actually working as DFAC NCOIC.

As the G4 Food Service Sergeant Major, my role became more apparent to everyone. I was no longer the Soldier running the DFAC, greeting Soldiers, and ensuring all meals were prepared to standard. Now, I was the senior enlisted food service Soldier in the division that required me to track paperwork and keep numbers. My Soldiers were required to prepare food, count the personnel fed, as well as visit other dining facilities in the theater Areas of Operations (AOO). The task of allowing Soldiers to leave our primary camp to do quality control checks on other dining facilities was also included in my new role.

Many Soldiers was less than enthused about leaving camp for fear of harm. They put aside their personal fears and completed the mission. We received our mission weekly as far as which dining facilities we had to inspect. The Soldiers never complained or whined. They made up traveling teams that created great organization and teamwork that ultimately allowed for great mission success and accomplishment. The teamwork and the motivation they displayed made me proud to be their leader. We received many accolades for our professionalism. The Commanding General commended my team for being the best team in the unit. No longer did my section have division, but we were a team, an Army of One.

With the change in structure of my unit and the recent promotion, it caused a dramatic shift in my military career. I embraced the changes in my career and the responsibility of leading my Soldiers. I decided to have a meeting of all DFAC personnel to get the feel of the section and inform them that I would still be in the area despite my advancement. The Soldiers welcomed the meeting and had lots of questions. We discussed the change in my previous responsibilities, along with my current and future responsibilities. We could feel the team coming together. I constantly reminded them that we all wear the same uniform and we are an Army of One. They shared their inner feelings about the different components and we agreed to put aside personal differences and commit to make the team successful. It's amazing to see a transformation with your very own eyes.

With the success and feeling of accomplishment I encountered during the transformation, I also experienced disappointment. Almost immediately after I was selected as NCOIC, I encountered my first of many unpleasant confrontations with the Battalion Commander (BC). According to my staff and I, it seemed as though the BC believed we were fabricators and completely dishonest. For example, one of my Master Sergeants on my staff had received written consent from one of the medical staff personnel with the Troops Medical Center (TMC) on Camp Arifijan to depart from theater. The physician felt as though it was in the best medical interest of the Soldier to be cleared and evacuated out of theater. Of course, because of his concern, he brought it to my attention im-

mediately. He briefed me on his medical condition. With the information I was presented I agreed it was in the best interest of the Soldier and his family to be sent back to Rear Detachment. I informed my OIC of the situation and started processing the paperwork through the proper channels starting with the company. The Company Commander reviewed the paperwork that my Soldier and I had given to the unit that we received from the TMC. He recommended approval and routed it to the Battalion for processing and approval. Once the packet reached the Battalion Commander's desk, she called both my Soldier and I in for what seemed to be an interrogation. We briefed her on the situation and the circumstances of the case. After the briefing, she informed my Master Sergeant that she did not believe that he was that ill. She also suggested that he should become more of a team player and endure difficult situations more effectively.

Approximately a week later, he received a Red Cross message from one of his family members. The message read that his wife would soon have surgery and that it was under the request of the treating doctor that the spouse be present for the procedure. Because of our last battle with the Battalion, we directed the emergency leave packet straight to the BC. Without hesitation, she told my Soldier that she did not believe that there was a Red Cross message or an emergency at home. She also believed the Soldier was looking for an escape route to leave country. The BC instructed us both to stand fast while she directed her executive officer to verify the Red Cross message and the condition of his wife.

The information came back not only verified but in a more life threatening condition than when it had first arrived. Even with the condition of his spouse getting worse, she still refused to release my Soldier. During all the back and forth with this officer, my Command Sergeant Major just stood on the sidelines with no assistance to his Soldiers. When asked why he was letting this happen, he stated that he always backs up his boss. Both my Soldier and I went to the Inspectors General (IG) office. We presented the IG with the problem and all the supporting documents. In less than 48 hours, we had a meeting with the Commanding General.

Again, my Soldier briefed the situation and the circumstances surrounding his case. Almost immediately, the General overturned the BC decision and released the Soldier from theater. He also felt in was in the best interest of the Soldier and his family if he was home.

In the midst of this story, I was trying to draw out a message. A theory that is recognized but rarely practiced; teamwork, loyalty, integrity, hard work, respect, and dedication start from the head and filters down. Your troops will work as hard for you as you work for them. Actually, in most cases, they work harder. If you cannot put faith in your leadership, it makes it extremely hard to have faith in the mission. As Soldiers mission should always come first. As leaders, we are appointed over Soldiers to ensure the mission is accomplished both efficiently and effectively and to take care of Soldiers. In my career, I have experience both great leadership and extremely bad leadership along with everything

in between. I will never forget the impact that a Multi-Compo unit made on my life and my process of thinking. As I think back on my Soldiers today and all the changes I have endured in a short amount of time, it truly taught me the true meaning of an Army of One.

SGM Jose M. Piconavila provides an account of the critical element played by those who stay in the rear providing logistical support to those who go outside the wire. He introduces a new word for most; "Fobbits." They are the people who provide "a haven for safety, rest, and refreshment in an unforgiving environment."

SGM Jose M. Piconavila
"Every Soldier is an Asset in Theater"
Senior Maintenance Supervisor, 217th TC (HET) CBT

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have added numerous acronyms to our military lingo. For the purposes of brevity and clarity, this paper will focus on one: Forward Operating Base (FOB), and its relationship to the deployed Soldiers who never get to go "outside the wire," often referred to as leaving the FOB to perform patrols and other dangerous missions. In their study of the effects of the FOB, Wong and Gerras describe it as a haven for safety, rest, and refreshment in an unforgiving environment. Its significance is the effect it has on the Soldiers' combat effectiveness by giving them the ability to recover from the stresses of the battlefield. The proliferation of FOBs, more than 100 in Iraq alone housing over 150,000 troops rekindled the old differences between the Soldiers who must face the stark reality of encountering the enemy, and those who must remain inside the FOB performing the different logistical duties that their Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) require. Soldiers who routinely go outside the wire derisively refer to those who remain on base as "fobbits," a derivation of FOB, and a play on hobbits, in mocking reference to the homebound hobbits of the fantasy series The Lord of the Rings.

To that effect, my experience is congruent with that of the many fobbits I met while in theater. Moreover, the vicissitudes leading to unit deployments, in spite of the differences in mission and size, are remarkably similar.

I belong to the 217th TC (HET). My MOS is 63Z50 with an official title of Senior Maintenance Supervisor and I have been with this company for about six years. The 217th TC is a Heavy Equipment Transporter (HET) unit. This reserve unit is part of the 90th Regional Readiness Command (RRC) and is heavily populated by Hispanics due to its geographical location. This RRC is known as "Tough Ombres (sic)" and our motto is "Rollin' (sic) Thunder," suspiciously matching that of many other transportation units. We drive and maintain Heavy

Equipment Transporters (HETs), massive pieces of equipment designed primarily to transport and evacuate M-1 Abrams tanks. A HET consists mainly of an M1070 tractor and an M100 semi trailer. It can deploy and evacuate 70-ton payloads on highways and unimproved roads, and unlike its predecessors, it has room for five M-1 crew members in its cab.

My job title as defined on page 307 of Department of the Army Pamphlet 611-21 (1999) states "…the Senior Maintenance Supervisor is the chief assistant to the Maintenance Officer and is responsible for the proper maintenance of unit vehicles…" Other semi-official titles include Motor Pool Sergeant, Motor Daddy, and in this unit, El Jefe de las Trokas, or The Boss of the Trucks.

The 217th TC receives its deployment warning order around January 2006. A great deal of secrecy is kept until April 2006, when it is painfully obvious the unit is on the verge of deployment. The unit receives its deployment order dated May 11, 2006, to the chagrin of many Soldiers in school and new jobs. The company is woefully understaffed in every required MOS and lacks the training necessary to conduct its war time mission. In an effort to mitigate those needs and to bring the unit to its required readiness level, the RRC starts filling slots by cross-leveling Soldiers from the contiguous states that fall under its command.

The unit moves to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, for deployment training with the hope to obtain validation. Still lacking personnel, the unit starts losing Soldiers for a variety of reasons. The RRC is alerted and it decides to cross-level the 39th Chemical Company and other individuals to fill the vacancies. The 39th CC is sent to Alabama for a quick two-week familiarization with their new MOS, 88M. A disjointed 217th TC continues on with its training as Soldiers start to complain that the training lacks one important ingredient: war time mission relevance. We receive a break when the Post Commander allows the unit to move training to Fort Hood, Texas, a post this unit knows and where it feels completely comfortable. The unit finally receives the training required to be successful in theater, and remains there until it must return to Indiana to fly to its destination.

The clock starts ticking on August 28th, 2006, when we finally leave toward our destination, Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, where we arrive in suffocating 120 degree heat. We are replacing B1-77th FA from Oklahoma, an active duty artillery unit transformed into a transportation outfit. We fall under the 24th Logistics Task Force (LTF), a battalion hailing from Virginia. Our reception is less than welcoming because we are a reserve unit and we are deemed unprepared for our mission. The Motor Pool Sergeant I am replacing is SFC Willard Reynolds, an autocratic figure according to the Soldiers in his maintenance platoon. The handoff is less than stellar since I have to verbally warn SFC Reynolds about his demeanor and vocabulary with our maintenance Soldiers.

When the dust finally settles and the right and left seat rides are over, the 217th is finally ready to accomplish its mission. To the astonishment of all the naysayers, critics, doubters, and even some of us, we rapidly become the unit everyone can rely upon. At around the same time, all senior leaders are summoned

to a battalion meeting where expectations, musts, job duties, reports, deadlines, and other issues are discussed. The Maintenance Officer, WO2 Vazquez, and I are separated from the rest of the group and are told not to expect to leave the FOB for any convoys. We are ordered to remain on-post at all times to ensure the battalion's Operational Readiness (OR) remains over the ubiquitous 90 percent rate. This means I will be inside this post for a year. And thus, along with WO2 Vazquez, I am about to become a fobbit. I then realize there will be four more fobbits in the maintenance section, the four maintenance clerks are not MOS qualified to travel with the convoys, and hence, will be spending their time inside this camp.

The majority of deployed Soldiers do not leave the gates, or go outside the wire of the heavily fortified FOBs the United States maintains in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and other theaters where we maintain troops (Fobbits seek outside-the-wire duty). Unlike the FOBs in combat zones, the FOBs in Kuwait are generally safe. Camp Arifjan is located about thirty miles south of Kuwait City. It is a massive FOB where thousands of civilians work and tens of thousands of troops live and move through on their way elsewhere. I met many other fobbits while at this camp, too many to mention by MOS or job description. Our lives besieged by the daily demands and politics of this camp and our units, and like every large unit, the 217th TC has numerous logistical needs that demand immediate attention.

The need for logistical support for a unit with almost 300 Service Members is overwhelming. There exists the need to keep all the personnel records updated, unit updates submitted daily to battalion, and a whole slew of other reports and paperwork required. All this is possible due to the tireless work and dedication of the Human Resource Specialists, MOS 42A, who must remain at the Tactical Operations Center (TOC) briefing and keeping the unit Commander and First Sergeant informed constantly. If one owns a 42A MOS, expect to become a fobbit.

The company's supply needs are a constant headache. The Unit Supply Specialists must re-stock, order, and keep control of all the necessary supply requirements from us and the battalion. They must remain inside the compound with us as well. So if one's MOS is 92Y, becoming a fobbit is in one's future.

Soldiers require constant nourishment, so the mess halls are a twenty-four hour business. For reasons unbeknown to most of us, we have deployed six cooks, MOS 92G. They are quickly assigned to the different dining facilities around the camp with almost zero chance of ever going elsewhere.

In the end, our unit has around 20 bona fide fobbits, or about seven percent of our strength, and thus, with our hopes to see Iraq banished, we settle to perform the task at hand. We do not know it yet, but we are about to become the backbone and solid foundation this unit so desperately needs.

My task is daunting. I am in charge of 41 mechanics, four fuel handlers, four maintenance clerks, and eight cross-leveled drivers. I must also keep 250

pieces of equipment over the 90 percent or our battalion requires.

The maintenance platoon's day starts at three a.m. I conduct a 15 minute briefing with the section leaders before the start of our activities to review our equipment status and to set the goals for the day. This means I have to be up around 0145 every day for personal hygiene and to prepare for this briefing. A typical day may include receiving and inspecting convoys, turning in recoverable parts, acquiring tires, ordering parts, obtaining fuel, turning in Non-Mission Capable (NMC), convoy tracker, and maintenance personnel reports, attending two company and one battalion meetings, escorting inspectors, procuring parts from the warehouses, delivering M1000 trailers for five-year services, retrieving M1070 tractors from the direct support civilian contractors, scheduling maintenance personnel for convoys, ensuring all M1114s comply with the new fragmentary-five kit requirements, supervising the installation of the never ending, new up-armor equipment for all vehicles, managing the installation of fire suppression systems, updating annual, semi-annual and quarterly services, rotating Soldiers through meals so the work continues uninterrupted, and working at tandem with the platoon sergeant to ensure all maintenance personnel administrative requirements are up to date. The last company meeting is held at around 1600 hours and typically ends after retreat; about 16 hours after my wake up call. Seven days a week.

The administrative personnel work in shifts around the clock at the TOC to maintain continuity. Their office is steps away from the battalion headquarters and just a block from our group's office. Their cramped building includes the Commander and First Sergeant's cubicles, the Executive Officer's desk, a tracking map of convoys, and about four desks where they perform their work. Their desks are inundated with paperwork as they attempt to answer phones, wait on SMs, respond to the Commander and First Sergeant, schedule emergency and rest and relaxation leaves (R&R), submit due noncommissioned officers reports (NCOERs), prepare and submit awards, keep track of the location of convoys, reserve locations for ceremonies, process line of duty submissions, requisition supplies, and review every document to verify its validity. It is a chaotic scene at best. The ability to maintain their composure is admirable. It is a 12-hour shift of pure hell.

The food specialists work 12-hour shifts, as well. The dining facilities are contracted to civilians, but are augmented by Soldiers. They typically start their shifts at 0200 to prepare breakfast for the thousands of SMs and civilian personnel in the camp. It is a non-stop 12-hour shift on their feet. In addition to cooking, baking, frying, braising, boiling, serving, cleaning, replenishing, and maintaining a sanitary kitchen and dining area, they must also prepare menus in accordance to Army standards. They also assist in the preparation of special menus for visiting dignitaries, which is an almost daily occurrence in this camp. In addition, special menus and decorations for every conceivable holiday are expected. They also have to adjust to the far location and security of the camp,

which makes ordering food and supplies a nightmare. It is not uncommon for these individuals to work a shift and a half due to the shortage of food service personnel.

The maintenance clerks and supply personnel must ensure that all location surveys and supplies are ordered and accounted for in accordance to Army standards, too. They share the same hours and frustrations of the rest of the fobbits. They must work in unison because their jobs intertwine in the establishment and maintenance of supply and inventory control management functions, according to page 345 of Department of the Army Pamphlet 611-21. Their work is actually the least appreciated because they normally work behind the scenes, and to add insult to injury they are usually stuck in some un-air-conditioned conex turned into an office.

The stigma of the fobbit is still hard to comprehend for some deployed Soldiers. Some opinions and views are often derisive and condescending while others, like mine, attempt to explain the importance of every Soldier in theater, regardless of their MOS. In not so scholarly writing, danhendysr expresses his opinion of the fobbit critics on "Fobbit" definition from double-tongue dictionary:

Fobbit? Who do you think provides the fuel, water, electrons, essential services, food, and other necessities you "non-fobbits" need to accomplish the mission? Let's see, why don't the Commanders just put everyone in patrol outside of the wire and let's see how things are when you "non-fobbits" return. I can hear you bellyaching 10k away. Why don't we have this or that available and so on, so forth? So in short, shut up because we are all in the same team and while you have the mission of going outside the wire, we have the mission of ensuring you are resourced to do so.

The importance of letters from home has existed from the earliest days of the American Revolution. 1SG Anthony Smith describes how in today's high speed internet environment, a letter is still a precious thing to receive for any Solider.

1SG Anthony Smith
"834th AG Postal Co."
1SG, 834th AG Postal Co.

From September 2006 – September 2007, I was deployed in Iraq. This was my second 365-day tour there. On the fifth of June 2006, I reported to my unit in Miami, Florida. From there we flew to Fort McCoy, Wisconsin where we stayed for 3 months. There was much to be done in order to prepare us for our mission in Iraq.

I've been in the military for 26 years and have served as Squad Leader, Section Sergeant, Platoon Sergeant and First Sergeant. I have training in Combat Arms, Administration, and Postal, and Communications. My operational and tactical situations have been: 912th AG Postal Co. 6 months in Bosnia 01 as the Postal NCOIC, and 912th AG Postal Co.12 months in Operation Enduring Freedom in 04 as the Postal NCOIC.

Arriving at Fort McCoy, my unit consisted of five platoons. The platoons each had 18 Soldiers. Our headquarters consisted of five Soldiers. Due to the fact that they were from different areas with different backgrounds and lifestyles, arguments and fights broke out. We were a cross-level unit of Soldiers learning how to build a team in the unit.

As the First Sergeant I realized that we had to come together in camaraderie. My superiors and I gathered the Soldiers for a movie night. We watched, Remember the Titans. After the movie, we did an AAR and the Soldiers started coming together as a unit. This was the first group effort to mend things within the ranks. The strategy proved effective and we continued moving in this direction and within a few weeks the cohesion between them improved tremendously. Everyone began working together ensuring their fellow Soldier passed the trainings. During our downtime we had barbecues. This further increased the camaraderie amongst us.

Meanwhile for the next three months, we did SRP training. This training also included updating our medical and personnel records. We had combat and postal training to help prepare us for Operation Iraqi Freedom. This was the official military name of our mission. There were 95 Soldiers in our units with 90 percent cross-level. Of the 95 Soldiers only five percent of the original Soldiers in the unit were deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom. We received postal superior training. This consisted of showing the Soldiers how to run the postal finance and operations in a combative environment. Daily route, we would rise at 5 a.m., go to physical fitness and train for an hour, after which we would do personal hygiene, and then report to classes, staying there till around 1630. The MOS 42AF5 Postal Training was needed to qualify most of the Soldiers, because they didn't have prior postal experience. This training consisted of learning postal operations and finance clerk, and the daily operations of a post office. The MOS 42AF4 training was for Staff Sergeants and above. My Soldiers were well-trained in their field, but fell short of combat training.

We received our assignments to Iraq during the last week at Fort McCoy. Headquarters platoon eventually received assignment to Taji, Iraq. We flew into Kuwait and while in Kuwait our assignment changed again to Tallil, Iraq. We stayed in Kuwait for two weeks, and during this two-week period we had more combat training.

This was my second tour of duty in Kuwait. I had been there in 2004. The living conditions back then were substandard, but now conditions were greatly improved, we had AC and better dining facilities. During our downtime we

could go to the USO, computer labs or phone labs. Also, we had a chapel that was available for everyone.

Our unit was then deployed on September 30th to Tallil Airbase. We flew there on a military airplane. This was my first tour in Tallil. The living conditions were good.

My first tour we slept in an abandoned theatre. This time we slept in trailers. When we arrived the temperature was 115 degrees. We had to adapt to the weather quickly. There was no AC in the warehouse where the mail was processed. Dehydration was a constant concern.

I was the First Sergeant for the platoon that was rotating out of Iraq back to Germany. Then my Soldiers came in and replaced this platoon. Some platoons had to remodel the post office to better serve the Soldiers. Three platoons had to go in and start from scratch and construct the post office. Often times we had to come in and change the way the operations were performed in order to handle the large volume of incoming and outgoing mail.

The post office that we used was already intact, but, we had to set up postal operations. The headquarters consisted of five Soldiers: Commander, First Sergeant, XO, Supply Sergeant and the Administration Clerk.

In the operations section of the building we would receive mail (daily mission). The mail trucks would come in at night and unload, on average, two 20-foot or 40-foot containers. Each 20-foot container could hold 3,500-4,500 pieces of mail. At 8 a.m. the containers would be dropped at the side of the post office's warehouse. Then the Soldiers would unload the mail and sort it by units. Around 10:00 a.m. there would be mail call. Two or three representatives would pick up their unit's mail which consisted of large packages, small boxes, and letters, and distribute it for their unit.

Then the outgoing mail had to be loaded back into the containers. Around 1400 to 1700 the truck drivers would pick up the mail and take it back to Kuwait where it would be further processed and delivered. We processed out 20 million pounds of mail and 2.5 million dollars in finance of transactions servicing over 70,000.

We received commendation from our change of command and from other higher command. We processed more mail than any other unit in the country with fewer problems.

Around the holidays things became more hectic. We had a large amount of incoming mail. This taxed the Soldiers to keep up with the demand. At Christmas we would get two to three 20-foot containers. We needed more Soldiers to go through this amount of mail and prepare it for distribution.

We were in Tallil about two weeks into our rotation when we were hit by six rockets while sitting in the headquarters' office. No one was hurt, but it affected everyone. When the rockets hit it shook the building's foundation. The rockets struck right outside the gate. We felt that we were prepared because we keep our weapons with us at all times. Also our flight jacket is kept, at all times, in our

work area. Another time, one of our convoys got hit by mortars while delivering the mail to us. The driver was killed.

As First Sergeant, both the Commander and I had to fly to other FOB to visit our troops stationed in Iraq. We had Soldiers in eight separate locations: Camp Al-Sad, Camp Taji, Camp Warhorse, FOB Delta, FOB Echo, FOB Scania, FOB Kalsu, and FOB REO Embassy. We had to perform command visits. On one of my visits around the Christmas holiday, three of my Soldiers and I were at the Embassy eating when three rockets hit right outside the dining facility. The sharp metal destroyed the pump station. Two of the rockets had hit four SUVs, blowing their windows and tires out. This was 40-meters from where we were eating. Everyone dropped to the floor. Then we quickly left the dining facility and entered the hard-structured building.

On another FOB visit, I was in our headquarters in Baghdad when we were hit by several rockets. Again, no one was hurt, but the reality of war was continuously heightened.

On most of my FOB visits I flew on a C1-30 airplane. When an airplane wasn't practical, I flew on the Blackhawk helicopter. Two of my command visits I drove, in a convoy, for two to three hours on dangerous highways. When you're out on the highways you have to stay on your toes because the roads are known to IED. The convoys usually had three to four Soldiers. There was one incident when a vehicle, on the side of the road, and its occupants were taking pictures of the convoy. The gun truck traveling in my convoy pulled over and apprehended the cameras.

During my tour of duty at Tallil, one of my female Soldiers, an NCO became a member of the Audie Murphy Club. A number of my other Soldiers were promoted to Sergeant and to Staff Sergeant. One Soldier made the Master Sergeant list. I was recommended for promotion to Sergeant Major.

One of the hardest things that happened in Iraq was the death of one of my Soldiers. She had gone to Baghdad for an award ceremony and was killed going to the dining facility. This happened three days before she was to come back to the States. I received a phone call on the 11 October 2007. The Casualty Officer asked me to go and escort my Soldier's body back to Florida. My first reaction: I said, "No" because I had never done that before. Then I conceded because she was my clerk.

I flew up to Fort McCoy to talk to her platoon. Later that day I flew to Delaware. Then the next morning I went to Dover Air Force Base to pick up my Soldier's body. Coming back, on the plane, was the pilot, my fallen Soldier, and me. We flew to Miami Airport where the plane was greeted by dignitaries, fire department, and a motorcycle brigade. She was honored as the first reserved female killed in 81st RRC.

Maintaining supplies to a number of forward operating bases requires hard work and dedication to duty. 1SG Alicia Castillo learned how to handle her Soldiers to accomplish their mission. She also learned humility often is the best path and that the key to success for any First Sergeant is the Platoon Sergeants that serve under him or her.

1SG Alicia Castillo
"297th First Sergeant in Iraq"
1SG, 297th ICTC

.

Arriving at the 180th Transportation Battalion, I entered the building as if I owned it, trying to make a good impression with the Command Sergeant Major, CSM Richard Adams, who by the way is currently serving here at the Sergeants Major Academy as a Senior Faculty Advisor. Well, entering the building was easy; soon I found out that CSM Adams was not in his office, I waited patiently for about five minutes and then excused myself leaving a message for the Sergeant Major, letting him know I had stopped by. I went out of the front door and walked around to back of the building towards the parking lot, when I hear my name being called out from behind the building, Sergeant Castillo! I turned around with a stun look in my face, and thinking who could it be? It must be somebody I has previously known. To my surprise it was CSM Adams, standing at the back of the building smoking a cigarette, I immediately walked towards him and introduced myself, only to have him lock my heels and commence to chewing my butt for wearing the diamond representing my then current rank, without him appointing me to the First Sergeant position. The first impression was out! After you might say the ice was broken.

As the days came closer to my Change of Responsibility, I found myself being more humble, I was not as familiar with the unit and I would also soon be deploying to Iraq.

The Road to War became very different from anything I had ever experienced in my career. Taking a Transportation company across the waters was not going to be easy. The training started immediately, the original date for departure was June 2007, and I had just taken over the unit in February 2007. The commander and I hit it off right away; as we began to talk, I learned that he had been raised around NCOs. His father was a retired Command Sergeant Major, and his brother was a Sergeant First Class serving as the Equal Opportunity Advisor in Homestead Florida. His father wanted my commander to serve in the military as a commissioned officer, so he send him to college at West Point and was given the best advice that any father could give, "listen to your NCOs" I was honored that I had the opportunity to serve with him, he will make a great General some day.

My company began to grow with the new arrival of Soldiers, Command Sergeant Major Bartee was the Battalion Command Sergeant Major, and just

like any good CSM he began filling my unit with the new incoming Soldiers. I appreciated this, but unfortunately, that is when the Soldier issues began. I was being sent Soldiers from all lifestyles; Soldiers with profiles, overweight, finance issues, medical conditions, and, many more Soldier issues that I had never experienced. The commander and I immediately began the elimination process, of who could deploy and who would be ineligible to deploy. The unit immediately grew from 140 Soldiers to 260 Soldiers. Of course, we only deployed 215 Soldiers, leaving the rest as non-deployable for one reason or another.

The unexpected happened, we were called in for a meeting with the BN Commander, BN CSM and the S3, and as much as we were hoping that our departure dates wouldn't change, well needless to say our dates where pushed back three months. The Department of Defense changed the Iraq tour from 12 months to 15 months! Although it gave us the command more time to prepare, it was not good news for the Soldiers and their families. The time seemed to drag as we waited anxiously for our departure date, and sure enough, we had more Soldier issues.

October finally came and days seem to run into one another, we finalized the days of block leave. The commander and I rotated weeks off to ensure at least one of us was there with the Soldiers at all times. The planned worked well, the commander and I had really built a good working relationship, and I considered myself blessed to have him as my commander. He trusted me as much as I trusted him. Together we where untouchable and there were not many things that the Soldiers could pull on us.

Platoon Sergeants are the money makers, I had four. All of them were older than me, and all of them had more time in service. As NCOs, we all had a job to do! I made it a point to immediately express my philosophy. I was very strict and very demanding. I found myself micro managing them for the first two months. It appeared that the previous First Sergeant let them do whatever they wanted. It worked for him, but it was not going to work with me. We were on the verge of deployment and I did not need any dumb mistakes to be made.

SFC Kunz was the second Platoon Sergeant and second in command, he outranked the Truck Master but did not want the position. I had no problems with that, I needed him on line. I could always count on him even when I had to make the hard decisions.

SFC Putman, a newly promoted SFC with twenty-two years in service. He was my most experienced in the unit. He was part of the opening ceremony when the unit was stood up, he became a great asset on how the organization worked, and the changes I needed to make.

SFC Goldman also a newly promoted SFC with fourteen years in service. SFC Goldman was my most challenging Platoon Sergeant; he had potential and was willing to learn. My mentoring skills where immediately tested with this young NCO. I was more than willing to set him in the right direction, and that I did!

All the Platoon Sergeants in my company, including the Truck Master served as (88H) Cargo Specialist. Our mission was different from anything I had ever experienced, so it became a challenge, as I mentioned before I was ready for the task. I figured as a First Sergeant, my concerns would be Soldier issues, as for the mission, I had a Truck Master or Operations Sergeant as they called them in this type of units.

The flight was as expected, long and tiring. CPT Patterson and I didn't mind, we had two hundred plus Soldiers in a commercial flight all to ourselves. No Colonels or Sergeants Major to tell us what to do! We arrived in Kuwait, three days after our departure, the day was hot and dry, and it seemed like we could reach up and touch the sun.

We spent 14 days in Kuwait before moving forward into Iraq. We arrived in Baghdad, Iraq at approximately 1800 hrs. Our escort was already waiting on us; of course, our escort was the same unit that we were replacing. It took us about 45 minutes to get in-processed into theatre but we were happy to be on ground. The motivation of the Soldiers seemed to elevate, they too were just as happy to finally start our 15-month tour.

It did not take long for the higher command to start tasking us out for Soldiers. Within the first two weeks, I was asked to give up two platoons to other Battalions. The platoons where immediately attached out and send out of Camp Liberty; 2nd Platoon was sent to Taji, and 3rd Platoon was send to Camp Speicher. I was left with two line platoons and the Headquarters platoon. With the two lines platoon left, our mission decreased and so did our tasking. It was good and bad, I did not mind the mission being less demanding, but I would have preferred to have my entire unit with me and endure the harshness of our original mission. Our primary mission was our "Soldiers of the road" mission. The intent was to fly as much cargo by fixed or rotary wing. The mission was to palletize as much equipment or cargo and load as much of it into aircrafts or helicopters. That was a task by itself. I had a small group of dedicated Soldiers at the Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group (ADACG) that worked right out of Sather AFB, Baghdad Airport. It was a 24-hour operation; the Soldiers worked around the clock 24/7. If the birds could fly, we were loading as many as 45 pallets a day. When air restrictions where hot, we continued making pallets and preparing them for the next available flight.

Cargo arrived into Sather AFB and immediately needed breaking-down, large pallets could not be left on the side runway for more than a few hours. The Soldiers went to work, breaking down each individual pallet, packaging them into 96 in tall and up to 10,000 lbs. The categories of palletized cargo were, mixed, pure, and miscellaneous. Mixed pallet went to multiple locations, pure pallets went to one location, and miscellaneous pallets stayed on base or stored due to those flights conducted only once or twice a week.

Our secondary mission was running the Victory Base Complex (VBC), Cargo Receiving and Shipping Point yard (CRSP). We touched everything that

came in and out of Baghdad, Iraq. Military to Local National vehicles would enter and exit our CRSP yard, with incoming and outgoing cargo from one Forward Operating Base (FOB) to another. Anything from vehicles arriving in theatre to Christmas trees in December, it if was coming into Baghdad, Iraq we put hands on. The tracking system was the hardest, due to a convoy being hit with and IED and rerouting its destination. The cargo sometimes took up to 30 days to arrive at its destination, but once it left our CRSP yard, the responsibility of cargo was no longer ours.

Operations ran 24 hours. My CRSP ran two shifts from 1200 -2400, and my ADACG personnel had three shifts from 0500-1300, 1300-2000, 2000 -0500. The job was very demanding, but because of the serious and realistic training conducted prior to arrival, the troops were very confident.

The mission and my Soldiers was the most important task, I was determined to bring them back from Iraq in one piece and in full force.

The news that I would be leaving to attend the Sergeants Major Academy arrived in late March, I was going to be given the opportunity to attend the Academy and leave Iraq early. I was not ready to leave theatre; I had eight more months to go. My Soldiers and my Commander would be staying back with a new first sergeant. That one hit me in my heart, the idea of leaving Iraq, and passing my colors to another first sergeant did not set in good with me. The Brigade Commander was trying hard to get all selectees for the Academy out of theatre by May.

My Change of Responsibility was overwhelming, I could not stand to look at my Soldiers face and say good-bye. I cried at the end of my speech, as I signed off “Ghostrider 7 out.”

My experience as a First Sergeant in Iraq was memorable. I will never forget my before, during, and after experience. Not every day was a good day, but I had more good days than bad.

CHANGING THE TIDE

During 2007, insurrection and ethnic cleansing continued in Iraq. However, with the additional of more Soldiers came signs of change and sign that the tide would turn and Iraq would stabilize. The effort to give the Iraqi government adequate time to create a stable situation in Iraq and gain the upper hand over the insurgents proved difficult and required an active presents by US forces.

The following stories tell of how on one hand NCOs continued to lead their men in combat and adapt to operations against the insurgents and IEDs. At the same time, they assisted the Iraqi people in rebuilding the nation. They built buildings, drainage ditches, health care facilities, and improved the lives of Iraqi citizens.

1SG Mia S. Barnes describes how she helped prepare the Soldiers of the 21st Combat Support Hospital for deployment to Iraq. She further describes the efforts taken to ensure that insurgent Iraqi detainees received first rate care. Overcoming limited resources and long hours, 1SG Barnes and her Soldiers succeeded in providing the detainees with the best care possible.

1SG Mia S. Barnes
"Hospital to Support Medical Care for Detainees"
1SG, 21st Combat Support Hospital

January 5, 2005 was our first day back to work at the 21st CSH after the Christmas holiday break. The Soldiers already knew that they were going to be broken into teams for deployment training. Everyone was rejuvenated from the break and happy to see unit friends. They were in the platoon rooms talking about what they got for Christmas and what they did during the holiday break. Newly arrived Soldiers, which came in during the holiday break, looked dazed and confused over the events that were taking place. They heard the rumors about deploying during unit in-processing and were awaiting the real story from the Soldiers that were absent when they signed into the "infamous 21st CSH". We started the commanders briefing for newly arrived Soldiers promptly at 0930 in the company's conference room and they received the information directly from the chain of command that the hospital was deploying. The bewildered look on their faces gave me a feeling of anxiety but it was also a feeling of relief because now they knew what was going to happen without doubt.

The hospital commander, COL Jeffrey B. Clark, scheduled a briefing for the command teams and staff to meet at 1330 to welcome us back from the holiday break. However, the command suite's secretary notified us the meeting changed to 1100. Despite our efforts not to speculate about the change, we could not help but to wonder. All of the First Sergeants immediately began to call each other. We decided to meet 30 minutes before the scheduled meeting took place to discuss deployment possibilities. We thought, "This is it." This is the information that we have been waiting for since the return from the last deployment.

Sergeant First Class Geneda Graddick, the operations Noncommissioned Officer In-Charge, walked into the conference room where we were sitting and started smiling. She busily set up the area without saying a word. In unison, we began to ask if she knew any information concerning our speculation. SFC Graddick's only reply was "The Colonel will be here in a few minutes." Along with the hospital and company commanders, the Command Sergeant Major, Gerald Solis, entered the conference room. Everyone took his or her respective seat as the hospital commander looked around as if to ensure that we were all present. After his welcome back from the holidays greeting he stated, that he knew what was on our minds. The commander confirmed what we already assumed. We had orders to deploy. We all released a sigh of relief but I felt a bit of tension inside because I knew that now I had to do the hard part of confirming to Soldiers that we were deploying in the Spring. Before we left the conference room, the command teams decided how to disseminate the information to the Soldiers. Since we all worked effectively together, we decided the best approach was a hospital formation so that all of the Soldiers would receive the same information at the same time from our leadership.

The hospital command called for a formation at 1330 with the intent of telling the Soldiers of the deployment, answering questions and releasing everyone so they would be able to prepare their families for the long days of preparation ahead of them. All of the Soldiers were at lunch when we finished the meeting so the company command teams ate together at their companies. As formation time neared, I was ready to get this moment over. As we went to our formation area, Soldiers began to whisper among themselves at the possibility of this hospital formation. The Soldiers seemed cheerful, but it soon changed once the deployment confirmation moment came. COL Clark and CSM Solis began answering a host of question regarding deployment dates, unit mission and location. As I stood with my Soldiers listening to our leaders, I looked around sharply to see the various facial expressions when the Commander said that we would provide medical care for detainees. Seeing the look of surprise and fear in the Soldiers' eyes, the Commander tried to ensure us that we possessed the necessary skills and professionalism for this mission. Since the 21st CSH had already completed a similar mission two years earlier during OIF-I, we had leaders with experience and knowledge to get us on track. When he finished his speech the Solider were more cheerful than in the beginning. I felt relieved as I left that day but I knew that after the news sank in when Soldiers told their families, real issues would surface.

The Soldiers returned to work the next day full of questions but ready to get started. My Training NCO, SGT Robinson, had stayed late the night before preparing the training outlines for the company commander and me. When I got to my office, I assigned each NCO a training task with a group of Soldiers to track. The Soldiers were eager to find out the task they would train first. The tasks were broken down into six events. These were the tasks the CSM deemed necessary for our mission and the welfare of the Soldiers.

I had served in various staff positions in the 21st (CSH); however, none of those adequately prepared me for the challenges that lie ahead while dealing with detainee medical care. For the group of young men and women assigned the daunting task of training medical doctors, nurses and medical staff for patient care in a combat environment. The schedule left no doubt that there was much work to do. Nevertheless, we were determined to prepare medical professionals and ourselves to become more proficient in both medical and combat skills.

We separated the Soldiers of the hospital into teams by deployment location. We had two teams, Team Bucca and Team Abu Ghraib. My team was Bucca and the majority of the Soldiers came from A Company. We sent half of the Soldiers from the CSH to hospitals for training in three events and the other half stayed at the unit for combat skills training in the remaining three events. Hospital skills training included specific MOS training, trauma response, certification and refresher courses. Combat skills training encompassed convoy live-fire, Warriors Task and weapons training. The training rotation for hospital

operations was at Darnall Army Medical Center, Miami-Dade County Trauma Center and Brooke Army Medical Center; our own NCOs, 1st Cavalry Division and 89th Military Police Battalion, would train us in combat skills in various Fort Hood Training areas. Everyone trained on these tasks and after six weeks, they all rotated.

The date finally came and for PROFIS arrival in March. We ensured that everything was set up in order to minimize distractions. Have you ever seen anyone herd cats? Integrating senior Soldiers from around the globe into pre-deployment training 30 days prior to leaving is as challenging. However, within 10 days they were getting the hang of the way we did things.

The days and nights were long and arduous because we not only trained our Soldiers but also the family members. The schedule accommodated Soldiers and families with young children and those who could not attend briefings until late evenings. We held briefings as late as 1900 hours during the weekday and 1700 hours on the weekends in order to accommodate everyone. Thirty days after the PROFIS arrival, we completed our pre-deployment training mission and were ready for the next step.

Our team development training took us to Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. Coming from sunny Texas at 70 degrees was a shock to our bodies as we arrived in Wisconsin to a lovely 50 degrees. Nevertheless, we knew that it would only be 14 short days before we were on our mission. During or training at Fort McCoy, we reemphasized the training we did at Fort Hood and worked on making each team cohesive. We met the training intent of Fort McCoy as Soldiers began to develop bonds and care about the success of their teams.

Finally, after completing the extensive training we could put it into action. We arrived in Kuwait and were anxious about getting to our hospital locations. There was a catch to the scenario. We had to go through some team building, convoy and medical training again. None of the Soldiers seemed interested in doing any more training. By this time, everyone was tired of the word "training." Our hospital Commander promised that we would get to our missions in enough time. After about 10 more days of busy work, it was time to move forward to Iraq. The Soldiers headed to Abu Ghraib (later moved to Camp Cropper) left first and we were right behind them headed to Camp Bucca.

We arrived to our camps by 15 May with a few minor hiccups. Team Abu Ghraib was caught in a sand storm and could not fly to their destination and Team Bucca did not have enough space to send everyone altogether on one flight. We waited around for almost two days at the flight staging areas. However, we did make it and we were exhausted.

Once we arrived at Camp Bucca, we set up billeting, in-processed and got some rest before the outgoing unit, the 115th CSH received us. They were happy to see us because that meant that they could go home in 14 days. We completed our left seat-right seat ride to include hospital inventories and snatched the reigns. I was amazed at the magnitude of medical the detainees re-

ceived. The 115th CSH had completed a tough mission. The detainees received medical care comparable to that of any military medical treatment facility and it was up to us to continue.

The challenges came approximately 30 days after being in theatre and the outgoing unit was well at home. We needed medical supplies that were critical however; we had limited resources to get what we needed. No one said that it would be easy but no one said that we would be in dire need so soon either. Our hospital beds were filling with detainee patients with complicated wounds. The medical staff used supplies on the detainees the same way they would on an American patient because it was important to give them first-rate medical care as well as our own Soldiers. The worst thing that you can tell a doctor is, "We are out of that…" The worst news of all was when we requested certain medications there was lots of bureaucracy to go along with the request. We had to justify the use of a various medications to our higher headquarters time after time. This does not make doctors happy and my goal was to keep them happy so that they could perform.

Despite the limitations, the medical staff never displayed discouragement. They knew that they were there to complete a mission and they were not going to let anything stand in the way of that. They found out rather quickly that the hardest thing they would have to face was time and not drug request. They worked 12-14 hour days many times in the blistering sun with all of their gear in overcoming 140-degree temperature. They were professional about their conduct and most never complained because they love how helping others makes them feel.

Completing a 12-month tour on a camp in the middle of the desert is enough to make you lose your wits but we seemed to have found a way to make it work. The one thing that I take away from this experience is if you train your Soldiers to standards and trust them to complete the mission, they will give more than you could ever expect. I found a team of professionals that I can always trust and Soldiers that will not be defeated. We started our mission from separate units, with garrison tasks and treating patients in conventional hospitals. However, by 24 April 2007, we were not just teams-we were also a family.

1SG Yolanda M. Tate prepared her unit for deployment in Iraq by ensuring extensive training included company level tactical and technical field exercises. Once deployed, the unit supported the Multi-National Forces/Multi-National Corps in Iraq. They separated from the Brigade and moved to Camp Victory where they surveyed multiple sites for drainage, site construction, artillery, and topographical surveys.

1SG Yolanda M. Tate

"320th Engineer Company (Topo)"
1SG, 320th Engineer Company (Topographic)

In September 2004, I arrived to 320th Engineer Company (Topographic) located in Hanau, Germany as the new first sergeant. Prior to my arrival, I had already received background information from the acting first sergeant and had several conversations with the brigade command sergeant major. Through our talks, I knew I had some disciplinary and leadership challenges that needed correcting in the unit. I was ready to face these challenges head on and provide mentorship and motivation to the Soldiers. In addition, I was very familiar with the unit and the Hanau area, because I was a squad leader in the 320th from February 94-Februrary 97.

The structure of the 320th was very unique because it fell directly under 130th Engineer Brigade (Combat) as a separate company. The personnel in the company consist of 4 officers, 19 NCOs and 84 Soldiers within four platoons. The four platoons included the support platoon that had nine different MOS, the production platoon, survey platoon, and the terrain platoon, which was located in Heidelberg under V Corps. The unit provided topographic information through terrain and geospatial analysis, map reproduction, and topographic survey support to all USAREUR units. The unit had just returned from supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) I and just received notification for a second rotation in support of OIF 05-07. Since I knew that the unit was deploying, my family and I decided it was best that I come to Germany unaccompanied. We definitely made the best decision because I was extremely busy shaping the unit to a strong cohesive team ready for another deployment. Furthermore, we found out that once we returned from deployment, the unit would inactivate and the 130th Engineer Brigade would move to Hawaii.

My first challenge as first sergeant was to provide strong effective leadership to engage my NCOs as leaders, motivate my Soldiers to live the Army values, and empower everyone to take initiative and exceed standards. I also wanted to build a strong cohesive relationship with my commander, and as a command team set the example for the unit. Since my career field is rather small, many of the Soldiers already knew of me. Some had worked for me when I was a squad leader and platoon sergeant; some I trained as a drill sergeant in Advanced Individual Training (AIT). Quickly across the unit, word got around that I was strict but fair and would develop discipline in the unit to get everyone up to standard.

During the first couple of months, I spent much of my time mentoring my NCOs to engage in all aspects of training and the well-being of their Soldiers and families, while placing emphasis on the value of a well-disciplined organization in garrison and in combat. The commander and I also incorporated several initiatives and awards to recognize achievements as well as company activities to raise morale and develop a sense of pride in our organization. Additionally, I

was responsible for several different MOS outside my career management field. My support platoon consisted of supply, administration, food service, maintenance, and communications Soldiers. This was not a challenge, but more so a valuable learning experience that really enlightened me as a senior leader. By the end of the year, I could proudly say that we had built a cohesive and disciplined unit that set the example throughout the brigade.

During our preparation for deployment, we conducted several company-level tactical and technical field exercises that prepared us for our pre-deployment training with V Corps. From July through August 2005, we participated in V Corps exercises, Urgent Victory and Unified Endeavor in Grafenwoehr, Germany. These exercises allowed me to see how my unit and our separate terrain teams would function and support different V Corps units once we deployed. Our unit provided over 1,500 high quality digital and hard copy topographic products to V Corps, 3rd COSCOM, 130th Engineer Brigade and the 49th MP Brigade. We also successfully completed all mandatory USAREUR Annex-T, pre-deployment tasks, weapons marksmanship training, first aid, convoy tactics and procedures, and IED recognition and response training.

After we returned from training, we placed emphasis on ensuring that all Soldiers and family members received adequate time to take care of personal issues. Our FRG and rear-detachment worked diligently with the chain of command to keep all family members informed and provided an outstanding going away for the Soldiers. Through all of our pre-deployment training and preparation, I can gladly say we experienced no major issues and I felt confident in our abilities to deploy as a properly trained, combat ready unit.

Upon arrival to Camp Victory, Iraq in September 2005, we received news that 130th Engineer Brigade would move to LSA Anaconda in Balad, Iraq. This allowed our unit to remain a separate company away from our brigade headquarters. Though somewhat challenging, we did receive outstanding personnel and logistical support from units within both XVIII Airborne Corps and V Corps. At Camp Victory, we had several mayor-cell directed taskings while providing first-class topographic support to the Multi-National Force/Multi-National Corps Iraq (MNF/MNC-I). I managed and supervised taskings in support of KBR, the AL Faw Palace maintenance office, and the Iraqi Ground Forces Command (IGFC), dining facility (DFAC) and quickly earned recognition as a go-to unit on Victory Base Complex. We also provided experienced topographic instruction in support of MNC-I and the Iraqi Assistance Group (IAG) for the Phoenix Academy based in Camp Taji. With this tasking, our Soldiers developed a highly efficient, user friendly Falcon View topographic engineering program to train over 500 personnel, assigned to more than 50 transition teams throughout the theater. This support enabled transition team members to better visualize and maneuver across the battlefield contributing to their success of handing responsibility over to the Iraqi Army and Police.

Our terrain platoon provided top-notch Corps level support for MNF/

MNC-I in Baghdad, while we fielded teams across theater for the 3rd COSCOM and 130th Engineer Brigade in Balad and Task Force Freedom in Mosul. Our C2 terrain team in Baghdad, pulled 24-hour shifts producing terrain products that served as "Combat Multipliers" and used for countless missions, increasing awareness of locations and events on the battlefield. They also created weekly IED attack products to keep pace with the changing tactics and trends of the Anti Iraqi Forces (AIF).

As the first topographic detachment with COSCOM intelligence operations, our 3rd COSCOM G2 terrain team gave our company more recognition and opportunity for a wide customer base of specialty terrain products. They provided critical products that helped to improve LSA Anaconda security; an important task for the most often mortared forward operating base (FOB) throughout Iraq. They also developed quick reaction force recon books, which allowed the recon forces to apply a more direct approach while searching for and engaging AIF.

Another great experience for my unit and I involved safely deploying 18 members of our survey platoon throughout Iraq on multiple missions. They conducted a wide range of surveys ranging from comprehensive drainage, site, construction, artillery, and topographic surveys. Their missions spanned across Victory Base Complex (VBC), COB Speicher, COB Al Asad, and numerous FOBs. Each mission provided the coalition forces operating throughout Iraq with the information and data necessary for the future planning, design, development, and progression of FOBs throughout country. On several missions, I travelled with the platoon providing leadership, guidance, and support, which the Soldiers greatly appreciated.

In addition, our survey platoon and C2 terrain team provided expert knowledge in documentation and site mapping for a crime scene under investigation at FOB Danger. They provided precision mapping and surveying to the US Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID) that helped to piece together an accurate representation of the events and timeline in question.

Around the middle of July 2006, my commander and I received approval from higher to return non-essential personnel back to the rear in Germany. This mainly consisted of our production and support platoons and a few Soldiers from the terrain and survey platoons. The challenge that we faced occurred with finding air support and clearance to manifest 55 personnel back to Ramstein Air Base, Germany ahead of schedule. We were able to get the Soldiers to Kuwait immediately; however, they had to stay in Kuwait for almost two weeks until they finally got a flight to Germany. For the rest of us, we remained at Camp Victory for our relief in place (RIP) and transfer of authority (TOA) with the 70th Engineer Company from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Our RIP/TOA with the 70th Engineer Company was unique because the geospatial mission had changed for our unit as well as the personnel "boots on ground" requirement. The 70th Engineer Company only deployed a terrain platoon with 28 personnel to support V Corps and 3rd COSCOM. This made our RIP/TOA much easier

and we had a smooth transition. On 18 September 2006, we left Camp Victory and stayed in Kuwait for three days before arriving back to Germany. Throughout our entire experience, everything went extremely well and our command had no major issues.

Almost seven months after our redeployment, we conducted our inactivation ceremony, which focused on the unit's significant achievements and contributions to the United States Army from 1994 to 2007. Prior to the ceremony, everyone worked extremely hard to turn in all organization property and assigned unit buildings to the USAG Hessen Department of Public Works in a timely matter. My number one priority was to ensure a smooth PCS or ETS transition for all Soldiers and their families. To accomplish this, I worked many long hours taking care of administrative issues and ensuring that each Soldier received an assignment furthering their career progression. On 5 April 2007, many people in the Hanau community came to witness our inactivation ceremony. Besides the commander and I, we only had 19 Soldiers still in the company. Surprisingly, even with a small amount of Soldiers, we managed to have an outstanding ceremony that was very memorable and special.

Overall, my first sergeant experience in 320th Engineer Company (Topographic) was very special with a few challenges. I learned that engaging leaders and empowering Soldiers created a positive command climate and has a great impact on unit success. When I first arrived to the unit, I had to go back to basics with developing discipline, enforcing standards, and mentoring NCOs to lead by example. Shortly afterwards, my NCOs started to become more engaged with their Soldiers and cohesive teams began to form. This helped us to successfully prepare for technical and tactical operations in support of OIF 05-07.

During our deployment, our Soldiers demonstrated extraordinary dedication, initiative, and superb skill in providing topographic engineer support to coalition forces throughout the combat zone. We forward deployed terrain analysis and survey teams to countless locations throughout theater. Our terrain analysis teams developed numerous digital and hard copy topographic products that proved invaluable to battlefield analysis and mission planning. Our survey platoon successfully completed numerous and various types of surveys at 16 different forward operating bases throughout Iraq. Their efforts greatly enhanced base security and assisted design teams with future construction and development. At Camp Victory, our company was responsible for a number of high profile taskings that quickly gave our Soldiers and the unit great recognition. Even though I had never deployed before, I did not encounter any challenges that I could not handle through strong effective leadership and occasional guidance from higher.

Overall, I served in the unit for 32 months as first sergeant and I am very proud of my unit's accomplishments. My experiences truly prepared me for my next assignment as a first sergeant in a TRADOC unit and ultimately set me up for success and selection to sergeant major. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve in such an outstanding unit with great Soldiers and family

members who truly made a positive lasting impact on my life.

SGM Bruce A. Sirois served as the Operations Sergeant Major in the Tactical Operations Center for the 705th MP Battalion. The Tactical Operations Center consisted of eighteen compounds housing over 13,500 detainees. Unruly and lacking discipline, these detainees posed a threat to themselves and to the guard force. The movement toward a conventional correction model and the Counter-insurgency Work Incentive Program changed the situation for the better.

SGM Bruce A. Sirois
"Duty in the Desert"
S-3 Operations Sergeant Major, 705th MP Battalion

I arrived in Kuwait on 28 January 2007. After the completion of several mandatory training requirements in Kuwait, I was finally on my way to Camp Bucca, which is located in southern Iraq. Soldiers usually travel to Camp Bucca from Kuwait by air, but because there were no flights available for the next couple of days, I made arrangements to travel with a military convoy. I arrived at Camp Bucca on 30 January 2007. Upon my arrival, I was met by Major Barbi L. Aleandre, S-3 Operations Officer, for the 705th Military Police Battalion (Internment/Resettlement). She escorted me to the Housing Office where I received my room assignment. My room was a single POD that was located in an area known as the "Boardwalk". The room was small, but the accommodations were better than I expected.

The following morning I proceeded to the Theater Internment Facility (TIF) where I was introduced to the Battalion Command Sergeant Major, CSM Weeks, the Battalion Commander, LTC Williams, and numerous other personnel working in the Tactical Operations Center (TOC). The first thing on my agenda was to take a tour of the TIF and meet all the Compound Commanders and NCOICs. The TIF consisted of 18 compounds which housed over 13,500 detainees. Each compound had approximately 700 to 800 detainees. Detainees lived and slept in caravans. Each caravan held up to 15 to 20 detainees. Compounds 1 thru 12 were guarded by Air Force personnel and Compounds 14 thru 18 were guarded by Navy personnel. The 705th Military Police Battalion had operational control of all compounds. They also provided the guard force for the Special Housing Unit (SHU).

Over the next couple of months, we would spend many long sleepless nights at the TIF attempting to gain control of the rioting detainees. Because on lack of releases and uncertainty of their case status, detainee violence began to rise. At times the TIF was a literal battlefield as the guard force had to defend

itself against detainees. With time on their hands, detainees found the resources to make numerous creative weapons. They made "Chai Rocks" by mixing sand and Chai Tea, formed the sand into a ball, and allowed them to dry in the sun until they were as hard as concrete. Mautav cocktails, feces, urine, and rocks were also weapons of choice. All of these items were for the sole purpose of wounding or potentially killing the guard force. Throughout the day and night, detainees planned escape attempts. Numerous tunnel structures were located under and leading to the outside of the compound and perimeter fence line. Often times, the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) would discover the tunnels during random searches of the compounds. Detainees concealed sand from the man made tunnels in trash bags. They then placed the "sandbags" in the ceilings of the caravans. During the periodic searches, the "sandbags" were discovered by the guard force. This alerted the QRF that tunnels were being constructed under the compounds. Sometimes the whole roof would literally be lined with sandbags. This was not the only way to conceal the sand. Detainees would also disperse it around the compound or dispose of it in the outgoing trash. During my time there over 28 tunnels were discovered. Tunnels were not the only way detainees attempted to escape. They would cut through fences, or "pop the fence" using a tool constructed of rebar or a sturdy piece of metal. These tools could create a man size hole within seconds. I have to admit they were very inventive.

Throughout my tour at Camp Bucca there were approximately 50 riots or disturbances that at times involved up to 5,000 detainees. The riots would be in multiple compounds and could last for several days. During these riots, numerous caravans were destroyed by fire. During these disturbances the guard force sustained cracked skulls, eye injuries and even stab wounds inflicted by shanks. Again, the riots were usually over the lack of detainee releases and status of detainee cases.

In late February 2007, General Petraeus visited Camp Bucca and informed LTC Williams that we needed to move detainee operations towards a traditional corrections model. This essentially translated to Camp Bucca moving towards a correction environment. We would need to implement programs to help detainees reconcile with their government and reintegrate back into their communities. We would have to maintain custody and control but also earn the detainees' trust as well as their families. We would attempt this by implementing several programs that would help detainees communicate with their families and learn essential skills to help then reintegrate back into their communities.

If detainees met certain criteria through S-2, they were then allowed to live with other detained family members in the same compound. This was so they could not only communicate with each other but to also relieve their anxiety of knowing of other family member's welfare within the TIF. New techniques for facilitating communication between family members and detainees were implemented. The Salamat Message System was accomplished with the help of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The Salamat Message Sys-

tem allowed detainees to complete a preformatted message. The ICRC would then contact the family members, relay the message, record a response, and then relay the message back to the detainee. This system worked much better than delivering a paper message that was at times slow, dangerous and uncertain. This new system allowed detainees to know that the family members received the message. Also, virtual visitations and authorized cell phone calls to family members were implemented. In March 2007, the "Funds for Families" program was implemented at Camp Bucca. This allowed detainees to transfer the funds they were captured with to family members.

In order for the detainee to have the necessary skills to provide for his family when released, Camp Bucca started the Counter-Insurgency Work Incentive Program. This allowed detainees to work around the TIF doing authorized work; in turn they were credited with a pay rate. They could either give the money to family members or cash it out when released. This valuable program taught detainees marketable vocational skills such as flooring, painting, tiling, or carpentry. It also allowed them to provide for their family while detained.

To gain the trust of the detainees, we needed to add credibility to the Combined Review and Release Board (CRRB). The CRRB, a file review process, determined if a detainee should be released or remain in detention. It consisted of a panel of Iraqi and Coalition Forces personnel. Because it was not a due process, detainees did not know if their cases were being reviewed or the status of their possible release date. This caused feelings of resentment and ultimately resulted in the behavior which led up to the rioting. Therefore, the Multi-National Forces Review Committee (MNFRC) was formed. It consisted of 3 Collation Force Members, 1 Field Grade Officer, 1 Company Grade Officer, and 1 Senior Noncommissioned Officer. This program allowed detainees to stand before a board and give testimony or evidence. The detainees were also given a recommendation on their case within 45 days. The MNFRC could recommend interment, release, or continued internment with opportunity to participate in Counter-Insurgency Work Incentive Program. The MNFRC gained credibility which resulted in a significant change in the detainee's behavior.

The advance party for the 400th Military Police Battalion arrived on 21 January 2008. Within the next couple of weeks, I would begin the battle hand off with the new S-3 Operations Sergeant Major. We were basically inseparable for the next two weeks. On 10 February 2008, the Transfer of Authority (TOA) Ceremony was conducted at the Bucca Stage. The ceremony was presided over by Task Force 134 Commander, Marine Major General Douglas Stone, and the 300th Military Police Brigade Commander, Brigadier General Robert Hipwell. At 0100 hours on 13 February 2008, the 705th Military Police Battalion departed Camp Bucca, Iraq, enroute to Camp Virginia, Kuwait. There were several units in Camp Virginia awaiting transportation back to the States. We finally left Kuwait on 19 February 2008 and landed in the United States on 20 February 2008. On 22 February 2008, Fort Leavenworth held a Welcome Home ceremo-

ny for the 705th Military Police Battalion. At the Welcome Home ceremony, LTG William Caldwell IV, Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth Commander, praised the Soldiers of the battalion for their exceptional performance during the 14 month deployment to Iraq. LTG Caldwell and LTC Williams placed the Iraq Campaign Streamer on the battalion colors. Further, during the Welcome Home ceremony, HHC, 705th Military Police Battalion was presented with the BG H. Stem Award. The Stem Award is awarded annually to the most outstanding MP Company in TRADOC. In addition to earning the Stem Award, I, along with 32 other Soldiers, earned the Bronze Star Medal, 70 earned the Army Commendation Medal, and 34 earned the Joint Service Commendation Medal. Upon completion of the ceremony, we were released on a 4-day pass.

Upon returning from our 4-day pass, we boarded buses and traveled to Fort Riley, Kansas, to begin the reverse SRP process. By the end of that day we finished our reverse SRP and traveled back to Fort Leavenworth. The next couple of days, Soldiers in the battalion got their vehicles out of storage, received their household goods, and completed all necessary requirements prior to going on 3 weeks of block leave. I out processed Fort Leavenworth and proceeded back to Fort Leonard Wood to be reunited with my family. I was still assigned to the 705th Military Police Battalion, but I was attached to Fort Leonard Wood, in order to prepare my family for our move to Fort Bliss, Texas.

Although I was only deployed to Iraq for 13 months, I witnessed a drastic change in the environment and attitudes of the detainees and forces alike. By giving them respect and enabling them to improve their future, I feel that the state of the country and our presence in Iraq will greatly change in the future.

Amid an insurrection, it is often hard to tell friend from foe. A smiling face may only hide the intentions of an individual. 1SG Mickey R. Rutledge tells how his NCOs adapted to the situation. On one hand helping the Iraqis build communities, organize, and establish health care for individuals. On the other, they employed combat ambushes and observations positions to limit IEDs and insurgent activity.

1SG Mickey R. Rutledge
"Full Spectrum Operations"
1SG, 1st Battalion, 501st PIR, 4th BCT 25 ID

I held the position of First Sergeant (1SG), for two companies while assigned to 1-501 IN, ABN during Operation Iraqi Freedom. I was the heavy weapons (Delaware Company) 1SG for 24 months, eight months served in Iraq, and Headquarters Company 1SG for 12 months, seven months served in Iraq. Prior to deployment, my pure weapons company with four, eighteen-men pla-

toons got broken down to one weapons platoon, and two infantry platoons from two other companies within the battalion. I gave up three weapons platoons; one to Apache, Blackfoot, and Comanche companies. Blackfoot and Comanche gave up one platoon each to Delaware Company. Each rifle platoon within the companies had to redistribute Soldiers to the weapons platoon to even out the manpower. This task organization put every company with the same amount of Soldiers, vehicles, and weaponry. There was one extra rifle platoon that belonged to Apache Company. That platoon served as a quick reaction force for the battalion.

Task Force (TF) Geronimo supplied security for the Iskandariyah power plant. TF Geronimo also managed projects and assisted the local mayors and Sheiks in getting assistance in building the economy and infrastructure using the civil affairs teams.

Each company had an area of responsibility. Delaware Company was responsible for Musayyib, Iraq; Apache was responsible for Jurf a Sukur, Iraq. Blackfoot was responsible for Babahann, Iraq; and Comanche was responsible for Tiere, Iraq. Each company was responsible for mentoring the police force in their areas and helping to establish the city council, unite the surrounding communities and defeat insurgency.

In December 2006, Blackfoot company was attached to 3-509 IN, ABN and relocated to Fallujah, Iraq. Dog Company 3-509 IN ABN had to move their equipment from Forward Operating Base (FOB) Kalsu and relocate to FOB Iskan, but they didn't take the area of responsibility that Blackfoot had. That area stayed unsecure until Blackfoot returned in June 2007. Dog Company (79-Men Company) had responsibility for an area the size of a battalion's size area of operation. Dog Company established continuity in that area so the Brigade (BDE) Commander decided to leave them in place, and attach one of Task Force (TF) Geronimo's companies to 3-509 IN ABN, and relocate to Fallujah, Iraq for the surge.

This operation was a ground breaking experience for all Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) in my unit. All NCOs, and myself were expecting to have an enemy we could directly identify and destroy. The enemy was hard to identify, unless they fired shots. The NCOs played the role of peacemaker, and community organizer between the Shia and Sunni Muslims that lived within miles of each other. The NCOs had no formal training of building communities, organizing governments, and establishing health care plans.

The doctrinal lesson learned from this operation is to increase forces, and refocus the leaders train-up for deployment. Leaders need to be well aware of how to set up government structure.

My unit dealt with Soldier depression, loss of life, mission exhaustion, breakdown, Absent Without Leave (AWOL)/desertion, infidelity, divorce, conscientious objector, apathy, and murder. My unit dealt with these problems with counseling, using the combat stress team, the chaplain, CID, and the rear detach-

ment. You must leave a rear detachment officer and NCO that have patience, and communication skills.

I left Delaware Company and got reassigned to Headquarters Company (HHC) 1 April 2007. I was in the company for one month before going on leave. Several days after I departed on leave SSG Hensley returned from leave and got reassigned to HHC. He was a squad leader in Alpha Company. He was a trained sniper and the scout platoon needed his expertise in training, and employing our sniper teams. SSG Hensley came from Alpha Company whose area of responsibility was called Jurf a Sukur Iraq. He employed his squad in many combat ambushes and observation positions. SSG Hensley and his squad reduced numerous insurgents from those observation positions. SSG Hensley and his squad members were very productive in preventing insurgents from employing Improvised Explosives Devices (IED's) and conducting deliberate attacks on the Jurf a Sukur patrol base.

Since SSG Hensley moved to the scout platoon, the sniper teams were effective in killing insurgents. SSG Hensley, another SGT, and one SPC from the scout platoon were brought-up on charges of murdering three innocent Iraqi civilians. SSG Hensley went on emergency leave to bury his girlfriend that overdosed on drugs. Everyone assumed he was on his regular two week leave from combat. No one knew this except SSG Hensley's chain of command, the Battalion Commander (BC) and Command Sergeant Major (CSM). SSG Hensley and the SPC were cleared of murder charges, but the SGT wasn't.

The mental state of Soldiers during combat operations is very critical. Leaders have a powerful influence on the building of a Soldiers' character. First line leaders need to get involved in every Soldier's personal life before, during, and after deployments, especially during deployments. Senior leaders need to be aware of any issues that may affect Soldiers' mentality, and their moral standards. Utilize the combat stress teams; these teams are very capable of helping Soldiers cope with internal issues. They also help the chain of command in dealing with the Soldiers that have issues.

Some of the biggest success stories from my perspective were the organizing of the Concerned Citizen Program (CCP). This program allowed local communities to hire concerned citizens of the community, and it authorized the citizens to carry weapons to secure their communities from the insurgents. This program prevented the emplacement of IEDs and prevented the insurgents from using local communities as safe havens. This program also helped build the community economics. It provided the local populace with finances to support their families.

NCOs participated in many different roles. Even though they were in combat they still had to do counseling, NCOERs, and train. My organization was not in direct contact with the insurgents all the time, so we still had to train. Once every two weeks we had to re-confirm our weapon system zero. Keller Brown & Root (KBR) built my unit a small arms range. The range was used for

course C qualification, zeroing small arms weapons, and night vision devices. To re-confirm zero, and re-familiarize our Soldiers on the heavy weapon systems, my unit was sent to an area that was free of civilians, and could support our heavy weapons systems effective ranges. We didn't just put a patrol together to go re-confirm the zero on our heavy weapons systems; we implemented the training into a patrol.

My unit went to a place Northeast of Baghdad called Besamaya. This was a training complex for the Iraqi Army. American civilians ran the complex. The complex had unlimited ranges for every weapon system in my unit and a five million dollar, 360 degree mount site. Each platoon in the battalion rotated on a three day basis. Some platoons stayed there for five days, because of the aircraft not being able to fly. I was skeptical about training while conducting combat operations. Once the training started, I realized how critical and necessary it was to conduct traning. I was the HHC 1SG with a field artillery platoon attached to my company. The field artillery platoon escorted the Civil Affairs team, pulled tower guard, and augmented the mortars and HHC headquarters section during mounted and dismounted combat patrols. I was responsible for certifying the platoon on the clearing techniques, marksmanship, and convey TTPs. They performed well, because they had very optimistic and motivated NCOs. As you can see we had a Field Artillery platoon conducting out of the norm combat operations.

Overall my unit accomplished its mission, and my Soldiers performed well. I believe every Soldier contributed to the advancement of another Soldier or Iraqi civilian in some form. As senior NCOs, we need to capture the experiences of the NCOs in our units and pass it on. Once you return from deployment all of the knowledge and experience departs to another organization. We need to capture the experience before the Soldiers leave our unit.

The Combined Arms Lessons Learned (CALL) newsletters are an excellent document for lessons learned. Each unit needs to read the CALL newsletters thoroughly, study them intensely, and apply the lessons learned prior to deployment.

As the first sergeant of a Civil Affairs Company, 1SG Robert A. Payne sought to help the Iraqi people rebuild the Iraqi nation. His unit provided medical attention to the sick, improved sanitary conditions, and distributed over 300 oil heaters. He learned how to work with humanitarian assistance agencies, interpreters, and foreign contractors. He knew that providing jobs to the average Iraqi prevented them from joining the insurrection.

1SG Robert A. Payne
"My Experience as First Sergeant of C/492"

1SG, Company C, 492nd Civil Affairs Battalion

Early 2006, I had my name added to every volunteer list that I could possibly find within the Army Reserves. My unit assignment at that time was with 818th Maintenance Company, located at Fort Meade, Maryland. I received orders late October 2006 to report to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, on 9 December 2006. Upon arrival to Fort Bragg, I noticed that we were all sergeant first class or master sergeants. We received our assigned barracks, settled in, and then received our information brief on what to expect. This was the start of the first phases of mobilization, which would later be the creation of three civil affairs battalions.

As training started, we formed into four large platoons. I was the third squad leader of the fourth platoon. The weather at Fort Bragg in December was miserably cold and rainy. It seemed like all we did was go to different small arms or machine gun ranges. We adjusted to the adverse conditions and teamwork improved, as did our morale. Everyone was always talking about what was going on in Iraq and Afghanistan, and were anxious to know exactly where we would end up. Everyone was glad that we were able to spend the Christmas holidays with our family and friends. As we returned, the mood was solemn, and you could tell that everyone was feeling a bit nervous.

Early January 2007, we went to Fort Dix, New Jersey, for a six-week course in civil affairs doctrine. During this period, the weather in New Jersey was very windy and frigid; however, we definitely needed the training. A few months earlier, I did not know what the function of civil affairs was, and I was not by myself. I was amazed to find out how broad of a field that was covered by civil affairs, and their purpose on the modern battlefield. This also included how to work with other host nation governments, local governments, and coalition forces. The term, "Winning the hearts and minds" now had a purpose. I learned that it meant utilizing many different humanitarian assistance agencies to help a war torn nation stand, and help put an end to the human suffering. We also learned how to work with interpreters and foreign contractors. This would put the local population to work and allow the everyday civilian to support their families and help stimulate their economy. On the other side of the coin, providing jobs to the average citizen would keep them from helping the insurgents. Most of our time would be conducting assessments for the construction and or repair of schools, hospitals, and many other infrastructure needs such as electrical power, sewage, and trash removal. We would also conduct medical operations to help end suffering, promote good health and prevent the spread of disease.

Early February 2007, we returned back to Fort Bragg. I can remember arriving late that evening, and picking up my duffle bags from the buses, when two majors approached me. They explained to me that I was the last one to join Charlie Company as their first sergeant. Our company consisted of 32 Soldiers, half were officers and most of the rest were senior noncommissioned officers.

At this time, we learned that the composition of our company consisted of one third Inactive Ready Reserve, one third volunteers, like myself, who wanted to deploy, and the final third called to duty involuntarily. I was surprised to see within our battalion ranks, a small percentage of other branches of our armed forces to include our Air Force and Navy. Our company had six teams and a small headquarters section. The teams usually consisted of an officer in charge, a senior noncommissioned officer as the team sergeant, and two junior sergeants working as a gunner and/or a driver.

Once we developed our teams, training started on different types of communication and electronic devices to include SINCGARs radios, Blue Force Tracker (which is a global positioning device), and DUKE jammers. After we received all of this information, we started crew drills, convoy operations, improvised explosive device (IED) training, vehicle gunnery, and first aid. We trained over half of the Soldiers on combat lifesaver skills; I was one of these Soldiers.

On 1 March 2007, the whole 492nd Civil Affairs Battalion flew to Ali Al Salem Air Base. The Kuwait desert was cold at night and very hot during the day. We had very little down time. We were always honing our skills, or going to different ranges. We even received training in a roll over trainer, which completely turned the vehicle upside down and gave us experience on how to evacuate an overturned vehicle in case of an emergency. Still, everyone was anxious on when we would fly to Iraq and our location in country. Finally, the battalion received the word that we would fly into Baghdad on the evening on 10 March 2007. Our company would be in east Baghdad, just below Sadr City, we would have four teams at FOB Loyalty and two teams at FOB Rustamiyah. FOB Rustamiyah was about three miles southeast of Loyalty.

Our arrival at Baghdad International Airport was my first experience of coming under fire. After we disembarked the aircraft and unloaded our duffle bags, the airport came under mortar fire. All I could hear was the explosions and the helicopters leaving and arriving. I had never seen such controlled chaos. A little past midnight, we all loaded on two CH-47 Chinook helicopters, on our way to FOB Loyalty. The flight was only a few minutes in length, though it was cool, and windy, the slow moving helicopters rumbled through the night. Everyone was very quiet and alert, not knowing what to expect. The company that we were replacing was another Army Reserve unit, and they had lost two Soldiers due to a sniper attack. Their morale was somewhat low and they just wanted to go home. The very next morning as we were conducting our relief in place, we experienced another mortar attack. This would only be a prelude for what we were to expect in the coming months. During the next couple days, we finished up the exchanging of equipment, and with the property book straight, we would now concentrate on the team placement and which battalion they would be supporting. Our company, C/492 Civil Affairs Battalion would support the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. Due to the area that

we had to cover and the number of battalions within the 2 BCT, 2 ID, the unit received another team from our headquarters company to help support us. This gave us seven teams; three went to FOB Rustamiyah and the remainder stayed at FOB Loyalty.

Once our teams arrived at their assigned battalions, they quickly started their mission. As time passed, our battle rhythm started to fall into place. Each battalion that our teams supported utilized civil affairs in a different fashion, according to that battalion commander's intent. First, we concentrated on sewage pumping stations to plot locations, create a grid then see if they are operating properly. Our medic accompanied other medical personnel on many medical operations that included administering vaccinations and taking care of the sick and elderly. Trash removal had a two-fold mission. First, it put Iraqi men to work and helped to improve sanitary conditions. Second, it denied the bad guys the ability to hide bombs in which they did not care whom they killed, or wounded. Hospitals received wheel chairs, and the children received soccer balls, candy, and stuffed animals. We also handed out over 300 oil heaters to local families. I lost count of how many blankets and wheel chairs that we were able to give to the less fortunate. Our civil affair teams were able to build trust with the local Sheiks, which brought down the level of sectarian violence, and allowed the Iraqi and United States Army to secure key check points. This all added to a more secure area for us and the Iraqis to operate from. In addition, markets had concrete barriers installed to channel traffic towards local checkpoint, which greatly slowed the use of suicide bombers, and allowed local farmers to bring their produce to market.

Life on the FOB was almost the same daily, except for Sunday, when I attended church service and even this felt a little odd by wearing or bringing you weapons into church with you. Our teams usually completed three missions per week, except when they stayed outside the wire for more than two days. These missions were usually larger scaled medical operations that involved many Soldiers. When a team returned from mission, they had the next day off for refit, laundry, and whatever else they might need. Kellogg Brown and Root staffed our dining facility (DFAC). Even though the meals were not bad, I tried not to stay near the DFAC any longer than I had to, because it was a key aiming point for the local mortar crews. We had a total of 455 incoming during our stay at Club Loyalty. The incoming consisted mostly of 60 mm mortars, or 107 mm rockets, but they usually spiced it up with an assortment of small arms and rocket propelled grenades. We also had a pool available; however, due to the fact that it did not have any overhead cover, it was a risky choice to use. Most of us went to the gym to exercise on the treadmill or the elliptical machine.

I volunteered my service to my country for several reasons. The main one was that I could not lead as a senior noncommissioned officer, and not have served in combat, knowing that some of our younger Soldiers already served on two or three tours. This was my duty to my service and country. My unit started

out at a disadvantage due to the fact we were activated, and thrown together. We had to build unit cohesion in a very short time. On the positive side, I could not tell the difference from active Army, Army Reserve or National Guard. I now have the utmost respect for any Soldier that had worn the rank of first sergeant. This was definitely one of my most challenging, but also rewarding jobs within my career. Even though we were in harm's way on many occasions during our deployment, the good Lord allowed us all to return home to our loved ones, all in one piece.

1SG David W. Bass served as First Sergeant of C Company, part of a light infantry brigade that transitioned into a Stryker brigade combat team. They were tasked with supporting units attempting to gain control of Sadr City, one of the key sections of Baghdad. Gaining control of the area was an extremely difficult task. 1SG David W. Bass tells of his actions and the actions of his Soldiers as they encountered insurgent small arms fire and IEDs.

1SG David W. Bass
"96 Hours of Hell"
1SG C Company, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry

After being assigned as the First Sergeant (1SG) of Charlie Company (C Co), 1st Battalion 27th Infantry (1/27), 2nd Brigade Combat Team (2nd BCT), 25th Infantry Division (25thID) on 1 June 2005, I knew I was getting a unit with great Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) and Soldiers. The brigade was beginning to transition from a light infantry brigade to a Stryker brigade combat team. We worked hard at everything we did. The most important thing to my men and I was to be the best at everything we did no matter what it was. We knew that we were going to deploy in support of the global war on terror as a brigade combat team. We also knew that the Stryker units were highly sought after in theatre due to their rapid response and quick strike capability. On 25 March 2008, C Company 1/27 received the order to move south of Camp Taji, Iraq for ninety-six hours to support friendly forces in response to the uprising of insurgent activities in Sadr City, Iraq. It would be the longest ninety-six hours most of us would ever experience.

C Company 1/27 had set itself apart from the other infantry companies within the brigade during the rotation to the National Training Center (NTC) in August/September 2007. Through communicating with the unit we were going to relieve in Iraq, the Brigade Commander decided that he would use one of his infantry companies as the brigade's action force. The land owning unit in Iraq

at the time had been having great success utilizing such a force. Our Brigade Commander chose C Company 1/27 as the company that he would utilize as the brigade action force.

While in Kuwait, we continued to train as a company on as many task as we could in order to ensure mission success. Meanwhile, the Brigade Staff received more and more information from the land owning unit. The Brigade Staff began to realize that they had not task each subordinate unit enough to cover down on all the forces of the current land owning unit. The Brigade S-3 advised the Brigade Commander to utilize C Company 1/27 for the different task and not take away anymore combat power from the battalions. So, that meant that my Company Commander (CO) and I had to establish a new task organization for our company. We had one platoon (-) serving as the Downed Aircraft Recovery Team (DART). Two platoons (-) were serving as the brigade action force, along with the company head-quarters. We had a platoon (+), which consisted of our Mobile Gun System (MGS) platoon, company mortar section, and one infantry squad, serving as the provincial reconstruction team security. Finally, we had two infantry squads serving as the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) security.

On 25 March 2008, we received the warning order to move to support units in Sadr City for no less than ninety-six hours in order to suppress the uprising of insurgent activity. Immediately upon getting this order, I told my CO that we needed our people back from the security task they were executing. We simply didn't have enough men to do the job with the brigade action force and company head-quarters. My CO began to plan with what he had as I went to the Brigade S-3 to see if we could get some of our people back. Meanwhile, the NCOs started their troop leading procedures (TLPs) focusing on packing for a ninety-six hour mission that required the company to move to Sadr City on the 26th of March 2008 at 1200. I managed to convince the Brigade S-3 to give me the platoon (-) that was on the DART mission. That platoon immediately began their TLPs. The NCOs and Soldiers wasted no time getting bags packed, preparing vehicles, and conducting rehearsals.

At 1200, 26 March 2008, we began our convoy from Camp Taji, Iraq to combat outpost (COP) Ford. We left with thirteen Stryker vehicles and one hundred and five men. We linked up with C Co 1st Battalion 68th Infantry (1/68) from 4th Infantry Division (4thID). My CO wanted to get the intelligence reports and get out into our sector as soon as possible on his leaders reconnaissance. He wanted me to work with the other C Company 1SG on living space and the standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the COP. By now, nightfall was upon us but we still had work to do. Living conditions were so tight that we had Soldiers sleeping outside and we had to do what I called "hot cot". Two people would use the same cot but obviously not at the same time. Once the CO returned from his patrol, he confirmed the Battalion Commander's intent and finalized our plan. We were to conduct constant patrols in our sector in order to deny the enemy the ability to fire rockets into "the green zone". We had to main-

tain at least two platoons in sector at all times. This was going to be difficult with only three platoons, each of which was minus a squad. None the less, we had one platoon resting at the COP while the other two were out. The company headquarters element was also out in sector ensuring that we were on the ground for any change over of the platoons.

The platoon rotations lasted until about 1000, 27 March 2008. Third platoon had received contact from small arms fire and one of my NCO team leaders was shot. He was urgent surgical with a gunshot to the left side of his groin that exited from his right hip. The platoon executed just as they had been trained. They suppressed the enemy, treated the wounded NCO, and began evacuation procedures. Meanwhile, the company headquarters element moved from the area we were patrolling to where third platoon was located so the CO could provide assistance to the Platoon Leader in the fight and so I could assist with casualty evacuation. My CO moved first platoon to a position where they could basically flank the enemy, but by the time they got there the enemy had run away. We got our wounded Soldier out of the fight and to the level II treatment facility within seven minutes according to Battalion who was monitoring our radio communications. After casualty evacuation was complete, the CO decided to rotate third platoon back to the COP for a few hours.

First and second platoons were now patrolling our sector. After a few hours in sector, the company headquarters element moved back to the COP. At about 1900, first platoon reported that they had been hit by an improvised explosive device (IED) and they had a wounded Soldier as well as a disabled Stryker. My CO alerted the company headquarters element and third platoon to get ready to respond. Meanwhile, first platoon was executing their react to contact/IED drill flawlessly. The NCOs and Soldiers on the scene had to move quickly because the driver of the Stryker was seriously wounded with shrapnel to his legs. The Stryker was burning and the platoon was receiving small arms fire. The squad leader on the burning vehicle ordered his gunner to return fire while he and another Soldier began pulling the driver out of his seat. They had to move quickly because the fire from the vehicle was getting out of control. While this was happening, the Platoon Leader began positioning the other two squads to assault the enemy. The squad that was with the burning vehicle continued to provide suppressive fire until the flanking squads called for them to shift their fire. They also moved the casualty to a covered position in order for the medic to treat him. Once those squads got to where the enemy had been located, they only found expended brass. The enemy had run away again. Now that the enemy was no longer firing at the platoon, the Platoon Sergeant and Squad Leader could execute the casualty evacuation. The medic, a young corporal, had already treated the wounds and had the Soldier ready for evacuation as soon as the Platoon Leader and Platoon Sergeant were ready. First platoon managed to get him to the level III treatment center in less than thirty minutes, which included the amount of time they were in contact. It all happened so fast that the commander only

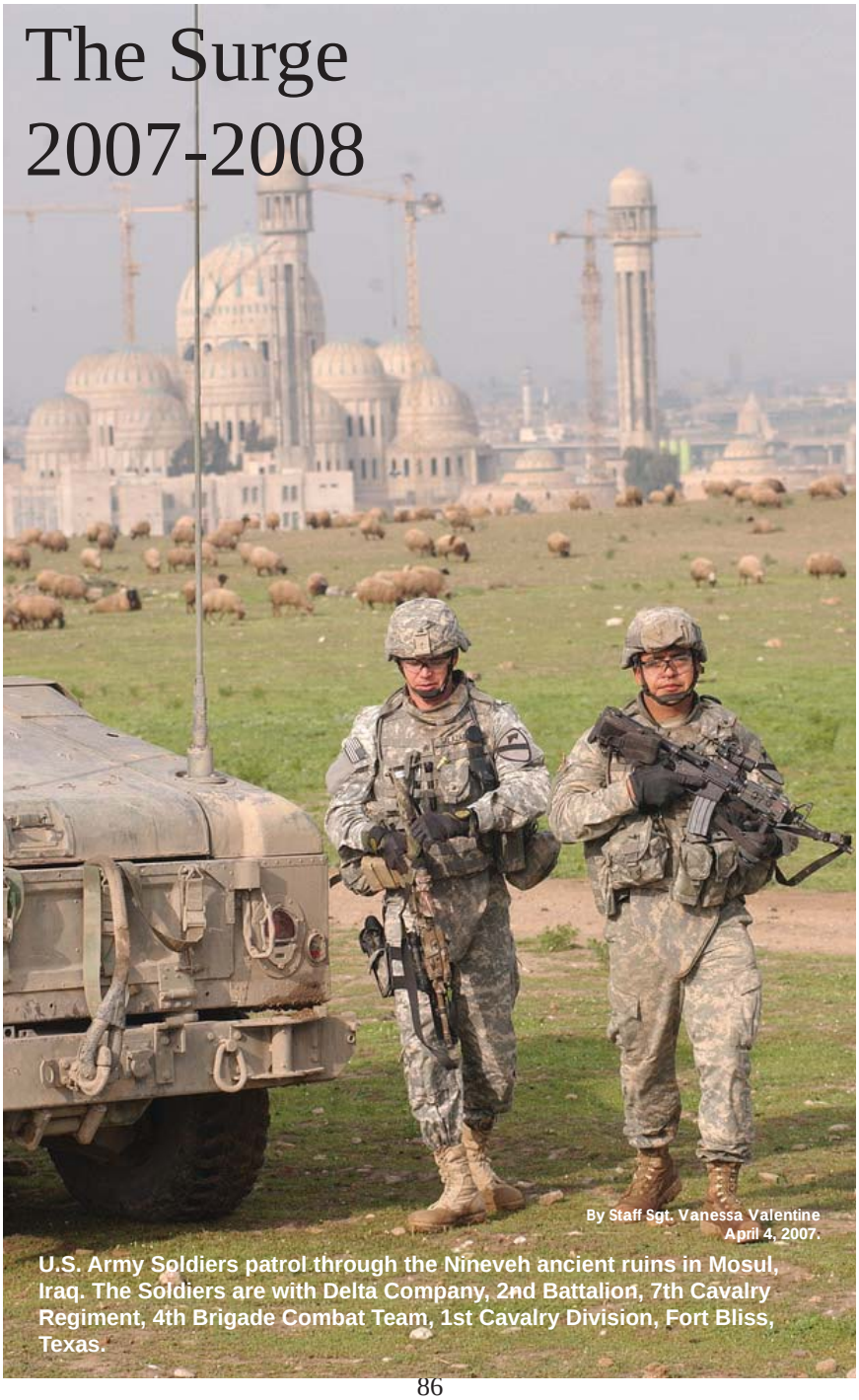
"After all that has just passed -- all the lives taken, and all the possibilities and hopes that died with them -- it is natural to wonder if America's future is one of fear. Some speak of an age of terror. I know there are struggles ahead, and dangers to face. But this country will define our times, not be defined by them. As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world. Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom -- the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time -- now depends on us. Our nation -- this generation -- will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail."

President George W. Bush, in an address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People at the U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C., Sept. 20, 2001

"We will not judge fellow Americans by appearance, ethnic background, or religious faith. We will defend the values of our country, and we will live by them. We will persevere in this struggle, no matter how long it takes to prevail.
Above all, we will live in a spirit of courage and optimism. Our nation was born in that spirit, as immigrants yearning for freedom courageously risked their lives in search of greater opportunity. That spirit of optimism and courage still beckons people across the world who want to come here. And that spirit of optimism and courage must guide those of us fortunate enough to live here.
Courage and optimism led the passengers on Flight 93 to rush their murderers to save lives on the ground.
Led by a young man whose last known words were the Lord's Prayer and "Let's roll." He didn't know he had signed on for heroism when he boarded the plane that day. Some of our greatest moments have been acts of courage for which no one could have ever prepared.
We will always remember the words of that brave man, expressing the spirit of a great country. We will never forget all we have lost, and all we are fighting for. Ours is the cause of freedom. We've defeated freedom's enemies before, and we will defeat them again.
We cannot know every turn this battle will take. Yet we know our cause is just and our ultimate victory is assured. We will, no doubt, face new challenges. But we have our marching orders: My fellow Americans, let's roll."

President George W. Bush, in Address to the Nation, World Congress Center, Atlanta Nov. 8, 2001.

The Surge 2007-2008



By Staff Sgt. Vanessa Valentine
April 4, 2007.

U.S. Army Soldiers patrol through the Nineveh ancient ruins in Mosul, Iraq. The Soldiers are with Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Bliss, Texas.

By Sgt. Curt Cashour
April 5, 2007

U.S. Army Soldiers with the 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division stand guard at a market in Al Doura in Baghdad, Iraq, providing security for Ryan Crocker, U.S. ambassador to Iraq.

By Staff Sgt. Stacy L. Pearsall
Feb. 26, 2007

U.S. Army Soldiers with the Military Transition Team provide overhead security for Iraqi army soldiers from 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division as they conduct house raids in Tahrir, Iraq, during a three-day operation. The purpose of operation is to eliminate Tahrir as an operating base for improvised explosive device building cells and key leaders of the Al-Qaeda forces in Iraq.

By Staff Sgt. Stacy L. Pearsall
March 14, 2007

A U.S. Army Soldier from the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team kicks in the door of a building during a cordon and search in Buhriz, Iraq. Soldiers from the 5th Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division are conducting their first mission in the Diyala province.

Two U.S. Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters blow up clouds of dust as they come into a landing zone in Samarra, Iraq, to pick up U.S. Army soldiers. The soldiers are from Delta Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division.

By Tech. Sgt. Molly Dzitko
March 3, 2007

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Alec Rubenstein and Spc. Kyle Laney watch for the enemy during a cordon and search for weapons caches and insurgents in Old Baqubah, Iraq. The Soldiers are from the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

By Staff Sgt. Stacy L. Pearsall
April 2, 2007

By Staff Sgt. Stacy L. Pearsall
April 5, 2007

U.S. Army Spc. Kon Im and his squad move through an open-air market during a foot patrol in Baqubah, Iraq. The Soldiers are with the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment.

By Staff Sgt. Bronco Suzuki
April 23, 2007

U.S. Army Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division provide security at the Abu Nuwas fish market area in the Rusafa security district in East Baghdad, Iraq. The Soldiers are providing security to revitalize the market area.

By Staff Sgt. Bronco Suzuki
April 23, 2007

A U.S. Army Soldier with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division kicks a door in to an abandoned house in order to search it during a combined cordon and search with the Iraqi police in the West Rashid district of Baghdad, Iraq.

By Spc. Olanrewaju Akinwunmi
May 17, 2007

Iraqi policemen train on building clearing procudures with the a U.S. Army Soldier at the Tunis Iraqi police station in Hasua, Iraq. The training is being conducted by U.S. Army Soldiers with the 127th Military Police Company and international police advisors.

By Spc. Elisha Dawkins
June 2, 2007

U.S. Army Soldiers with Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment greet Iraqi children during a clearing mission with Iraqi army soldiers in Rashid, Iraq.

By Sgt. Jeffrey Alexander
April 10, 2007

U.S. Army Soldiers halt during a patrol in Adhamiya, Iraq. The Soldiers are with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division.

By Staff Sgt. Curt Cashour
June 20, 2007

SHAKARAT, Iraq - Sgt. 1st Class Adin Salkanovic points out gunner positions to Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, commander of Multi-National Corps - Iraq, on the roof of Patrol Base Shakarat in Iraq's Diyala Province. Salkanovic, of Troop B, 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, volunteered to rejoin his unit in Iraq after recovering from multiple gunshot wounds suffered in March.

By Petty Officer 1st Class Sean Mulligan
Feb. 10, 2008

U.S. Army Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment conduct a clearing mission in Duwebb, Iraq.

By Petty Officer 1st Class Sean Mulligan
Feb. 10, 2008

Iraqi National Police and U.S. Army Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment conduct a clearing mission in Duwebb, Iraq.

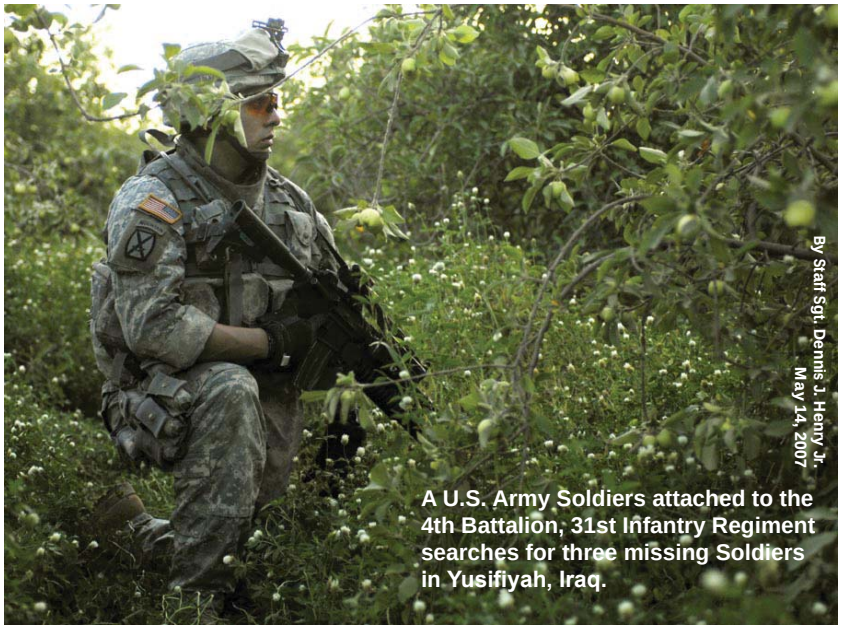
By Staff Sgt. Dallas Edwards
June 16, 2007

CH-47 Chinook helicopters land outside of the village of Abd al Hasan, Iraq, to take U.S. and Iraqi Army Soldiers back to Forward Operating Base McHenry, Iraq, after the completion of their part in a combat operation. During the operation, U.S. and Iraqi Army soldiers deliver humanitarian relief supplies and search houses to clear the area for future operations.

By Spc. Kieran Cuddihy
Jan. 23, 2008

By Spc. Kieran Cuddihy
Jan. 23, 2008

U.S. Army Soldiers from the military transition team assigned to 2nd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division take cover behind a car as they return fire during a smalls arms engagement in Mosul, Iraq. The Soldiers work side by side with the Iraqi Army to provide assistance and advice.



By Staff Sgt. Dennis J. Henry Jr.
May 14, 2007

A U.S. Army Soldiers attached to the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment searches for three missing Soldiers in Yusifiyah, Iraq.

By Spc. Olanrewaju Akinwunmi
June 25, 2007

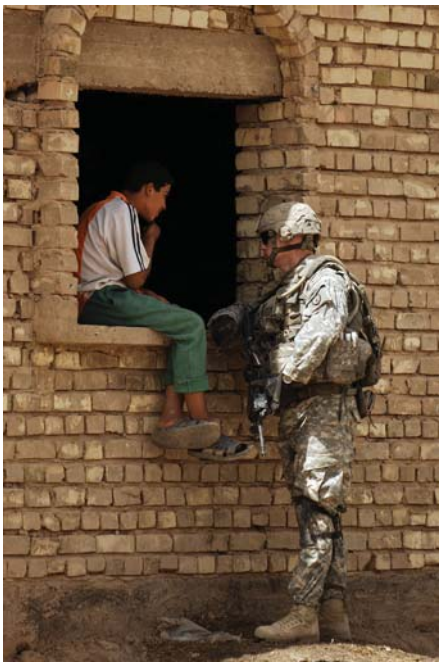
A U.S. Army Soldier attached to 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division and an Iraqi army soldier prepare to clear a building in Arab Jabour, Iraq. The Soldiers are conducting a joint sweeping operation through Arab Jabour as part of an effort to halt the movement of weapons and explosives into the capital.

By Senior Airman Steve Czyz
July 12, 2007.

U.S. Army Capt. Salvatore Candela and other Soldiers of Bravo Troop, 5th Squadron, 73rd Calvary Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division take a knee while patrolling the streets on a mission in Al Haymer, Iraq

A U.S. Army Soldier from 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, talks with a local boy in Abayachi, Iraq.

By Tech. Sgt. William Greer
March 30, 2008



By Petty Officer 1st Class Sean Mulligan
Feb. 13, 2008

U.S. Army Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 12th Artillery Regiment conduct a mission in Diyala, Iraq. The mission is designed to return displaced Iraqis to their homes.

By Staff Sgt. Dennis J. Henry Jr.
May 14, 2007

U.S. Army Soldiers attached to the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment search for three missing Soldiers in Yusifiyah, Iraq.

By Spc. Daniel Herrera
March 27, 2008

U.S. Army Soldiers from Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery, 3rd Infantry Division hand out supplies to villagers during a medical operation in Sabah Nissan, Iraq.

By Staff Sgt. Manuel J. Martinez
May 1, 2008

U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers conduct an information gathering patrol in Amariyah, Iraq. The U.S. Soldiers are from Charlie Troop, 2nd Platoon, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment.

By Staff Sgt. Bronco Suzuki

An Iraqi soldier leads the way during a combined cordon and search of the Rusafa area of Baghdad with Soldiers assigned to Company C, 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

By Spc. Richard Del Vecchio
March 30, 2008

U.S. Army Sgt. Nathaniel Patterson, of 320th Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, helps secure a street with other U.S. Soldiers during a mission in Mahmudiyah, Iraq.

By Sgt. Jeffrey Alexander
March 6, 2007

U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers clear the Baghdad neighborhood of Adhamiya. The U.S. Soldiers are from Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment.

By Sgt. Tierney P. Nowland
May 16,2007

Spc. A.J. Jackson looks for snipers during a cordon and search in Baghdad. Spc. Jackson is assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

By Sgt. Tierney P. Nowland
May 16,2007

U.S. Army Soldiers and members of Sons of Iraq move to their next checkpoint during a checkpoint establishment operation in the Rashid district of Baghdad, Iraq. The Soldiers are from 2nd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

By Sgt. Sharhonda R. McCoy
Feb. 24, 2008.

U.S. Army Sgt. Miguel Rodriguez, from Alpha Battery, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, helps an Iraqi army soldiers jump a wall in Hateen, Iraq.

By Sgt. Timothy Kingston
Feb. 15, 2008

U.S. Army Soldiers from Baker Company, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division cover each other as they scan for enemy personnel during a patrol through a village southeast of Salman Pak, Iraq. Al-Qaeda members had recently occupied the village so the Soldiers are working with sheiks in the area to improve security.

By Spc. Richard Del Vecchio
April 1, 2008.

U.S. Army Soldiers from 320th Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division walk ahead of thier squad during a mission in Mahmudiyah, Iraq.

By Petty Officer 1st Class Sean Mulligan
Feb. 13, 2008

Iraqi army soldiers and U.S. Army Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 12th Artillery Regiment conduct a mission in Diyala, Iraq. The mission is designed to return displaced Iraqis to their homes.

By Spc. Richard Del Vecchio
April 1, 2008.

U.S. Army Maj. Charles Massaracchia, from 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, provides security for Soldiers with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division as they conduct a patrol in Adhamiya, Iraq.

By Airman 1st Class Christopher Hubenthal
June 19, 2007

U.S. Army Sgt. James Bowlby reports the current situation as Pfc. Benjamin Cunningham scans his sector on a rooftop located in Baqubah, Iraq. Both soldiers are from Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

A U.S. Army Soldier from Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, and a U.S. Army Interpreter, question an Iraqi Civilian at her home during a Cordon and Search in the town of Al Intisar, Mosul, Iraq, on. A Cordon and Search is conducted to find explosive paraphernalia and weapons. Local residents are questioned for information regarding Improvised Explosive Device placement in their town.

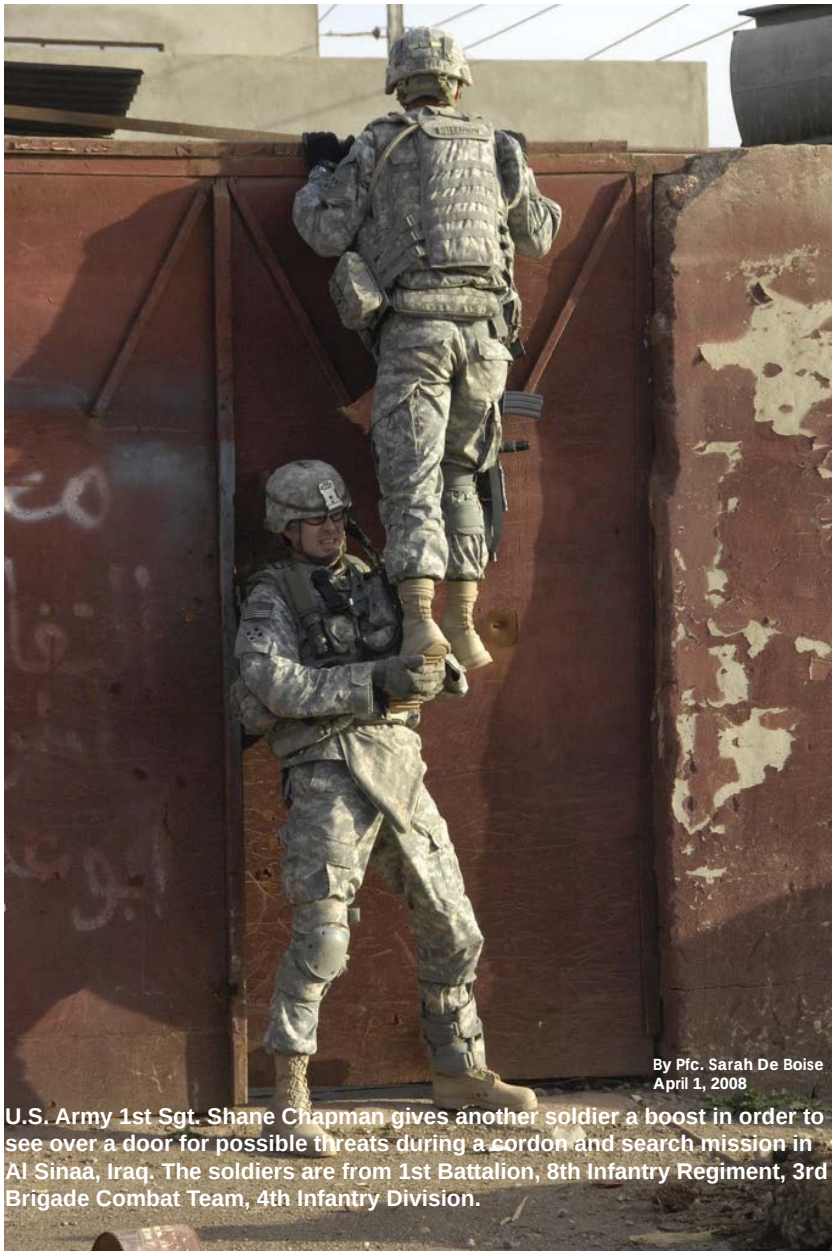
By Pfc. Sarah De Boise
May 1, 2008

By Sgt. Timothy Kingston
Feb. 15, 2008

U.S. Army Soldiers from Baker Company, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division scan for enemy personnel during a patrol through a village southeast of Salman Pak, Iraq. Al-Qaeda members had recently occupied the village so the Soldiers are working with sheiks in the area to improve security.

By Petty Officer 1st Class Sean Mulligan
Feb. 8, 2008

Members of Iraqi Security Forces and U.S. Army Soldiers conduct a clearing mission in Windia, Iraq.



U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Shane Chapman gives another soldier a boost in order to see over a door for possible threats during a cordon and search mission in Al Sinaa, Iraq. The soldiers are from 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

By Pfc. Sarah De Boise
April 29, 2008

U.S. Soldiers from Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment provide security while a Soldier and his military working dog prepare to search for explosive devices in a school during a ordon and search in the Intisar neighborhood of Mosul, Iraq.

By 1st Lt. Meg Harvey
April 4, 2008

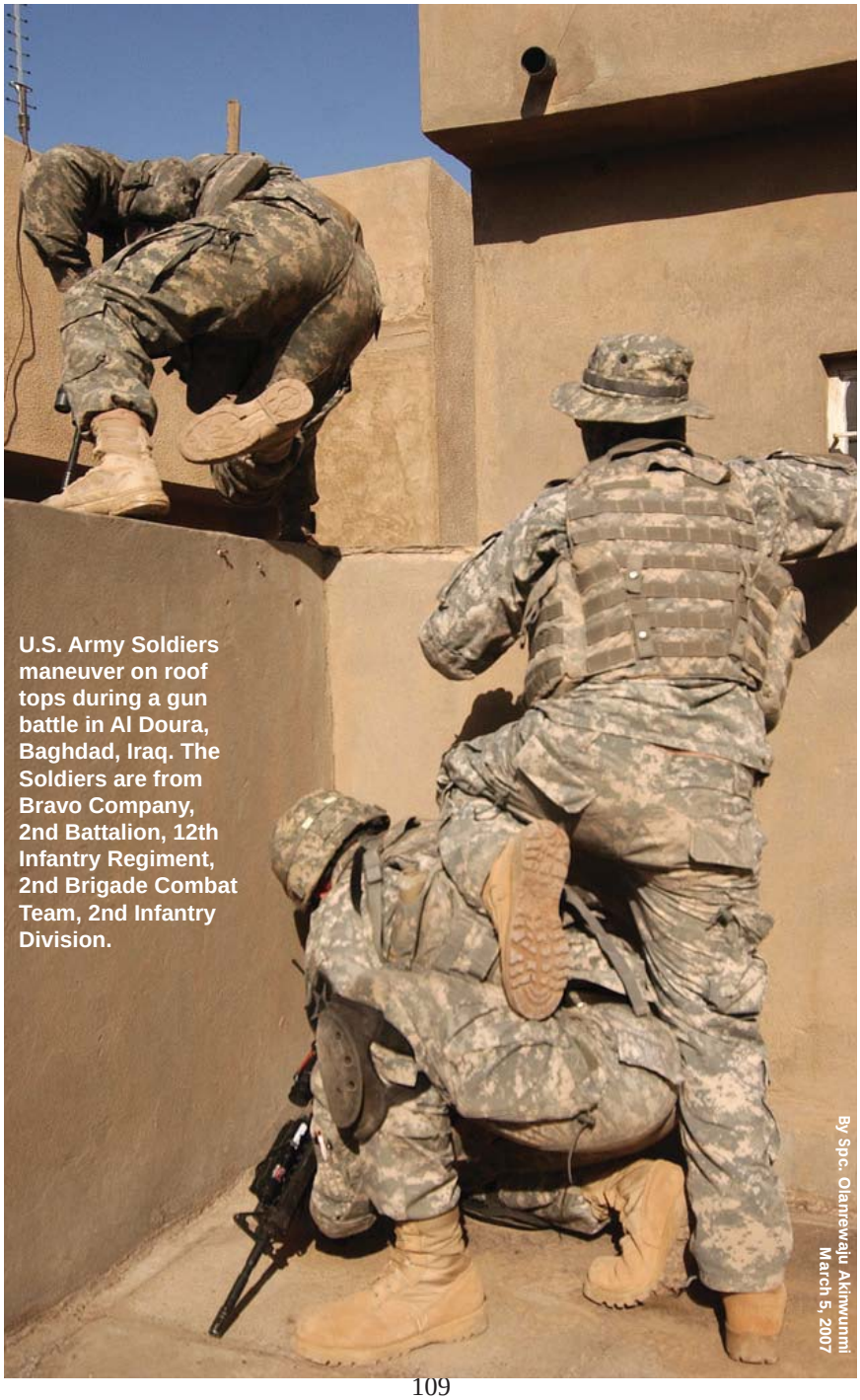
U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Vilma Cantu, a combat camera videographer with 37th Communications Squadron, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, documents U.S. Army Soldiers from Charlie Troop, 4th Battalion, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division as they conduct a patrol in Amiriyah, Iraq. Soldiers are in the area to seek information from family members of detainees and to assess security checkpoints.

By Sgt. Mike Pryor
May 10,2007

Spc. Antonio Garcia, a paratrooper with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, pulls security while his platoon leader talks to the owner of a house during a cordon and search operation in east Baghdad's Sha'ab neighborhood.

By Sgt. Mike Pryor
May 8,2007

Sgt. John Reed (right) doesn't get the reaction he was hoping for while playing with a baby boy during a stop at an Iraqi family home while on patrol in east Baghdad's Sha'ab neighborhood. Sgt. Reed and Sgt. Unberto Espinoza (left) are both with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regimen.



By Spc. Olamrewaju Akinwunmi
March 5, 2007

U.S. Army Soldiers maneuver on roof tops during a gun battle in Al Doura, Baghdad, Iraq. The Soldiers are from Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

"It may take a long time, but no matter how long it takes, those who killed thousands of Americans and citizens from over 80 other nations will be brought to justice, and the misuse of Afghanistan as a training ground for terror will end. As I've said from the start, this is a difficult struggle, of uncertain duration. We hunt an enemy that hides in shadows and caves. We are at the beginning of our efforts in Afghanistan. And Afghanistan is the beginning of our efforts in the world. No group or nation should mistake America's intentions: We will not rest until terrorist groups of global reach have been found, have been stopped, and have been defeated. And this goal will not be achieved until all the world's nations stop harboring and supporting such terrorists within their borders."

President George W. Bush, to the Warsaw Conference on Combating Terrorism, Nov. 6, 2001

launched third platoon to go and secure the vehicle until we could recover it.

By now I was thinking, “I have two casualties and a vehicle that is totaled out in a little over twenty-four hours.” I was hoping that it would get better and it did in a way. We didn’t lose anymore personnel or vehicles during this mission. However, not only did we continue to make contact throughout the next forty-eight hours; we also received the orders that we were going to stay an additional ninety-six hours. My CO and I immediately requested another platoon. There was no way we could continue to sustain the pace without at least one more platoon. We had also been ordered to establish two patrol bases/safe houses in our sector. The need for a fourth platoon was imperative and the Battalion Commander gave us one from Alpha Company, 1st Battalion 21st Infantry, another Stryker company that was task organized to 1/68 for this mission. Now we could have two platoons in the patrol bases/safe houses and two platoons resting at the COP. This would also give us the opportunities needed to rotate platoons back to Camp Taji, Iraq for resupplies and vehicle maintenance. We established the patrol bases/safe houses and began our rotations ensuring never to change over at the same time and trying not to set any patrol patterns. Every day between 1500 and 1900, we received small arms contact at the patrol bases/safe houses. Every day our NCOs and Soldiers would repeal the enemy attacks many times killing numerous insurgents. Seventy-two hours later we are told “another ninety- six hours”.

Our mission continued over the next two weeks. We were being attacked each day by insurgents and each day we would repel and kill a few more. Every seventy-two hours we were being told another ninety-six hours. After a while, even the most disciplined units begin to show signs of weakness. However, other than the occasional question, like, “How much longer do you think we will be here,” my NCOs and Soldiers continued to press on and take the fight to the enemy. I could not have been more proud of them than I was during that mission. My Battalion Commander and Battalion Command Sergeant Major would tell me when they saw me that “We are hearing nothing but great things about what you guys are doing down there in Sadr City.” My Brigade Commander and Brigade Command Sergeant Major would tell me that “Everyone we talk to tells us that C Company is the most disciplined unit they have seen in a long time.” Of course I was proud and I tried to use that to motivate my men. However, it was getting difficult because ninety-six hours would ultimately turn into forty-two days. We received a change of mission and moved back to Camp Taji, Iraq on 5 May 2008.

I knew from my previous experiences in the Army that nothing was absolute. I knew that ninety-six hours was a time line that was subject to change and it did over and over again. I learned what my company was made of and I was proud to have served with such a great group of young men. I was able to see the rewards of trying to make training harder at home station than what they would see in combat. I wasn’t being asked to provide this list or that list. I was

surprised at how much insignificant stuff that normally consumed my day just wasn't being asked of me anymore. I was not surprised by what the men of C Company 1/27 had accomplished in just ninety-six hours.

In Western Baghdad, during 2007, the US Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces battled both the Madi Militia and Sunni insurgents. Putting an end to the Sunni insurgency became a major goal for US Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces. 1SG Michael Contreras describes meeting with insurgent Sunni leaders and the efforts of his unit to try to get them to lay down their arms.

1SG Michael Contreras
"Truce in Western Baghdad"
First Sergeant, B Co, 87th INF

Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would be in a face to face conversation with an insurgent leader. I was the 1SG for Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry, 10th MTN DIV. My unit had been engaged in kenotic operations in Western Baghdad for the past nine months. We had suffered numerous casualties to IEDs and small arms fire. Morale was slowly going down and something had to be done.

The Commander and I knew we had to find a way to neutralize this insurgency we were fighting. Late in May, luck came our way, one of our sources who was working in the worst part of our AO informed our Commander that he had urgent information.

Our informant told us that he met a man named Saleh who was the spokesperson for the head Sunni insurgent leader we were fighting. The leader of the group wanted to talk to the Commander in regards to a truce within the AO. Over the past nine months, we had killed and captured numerous members of his Sunni insurgent cell. We were frustrated because we were taking so many casualties and being engaged by the enemy on a daily basis.

The meeting was set up and was being held at the local NAC building. As you can imagine, security was at an all time high. We took no unnecessary risks for this meeting. Once informal introductions took place, there were a few moments of silence as we both took time to stare each other. I guess you can say this was happening because we had been fighting each other for the past nine

months and finally we came face to face.

We started first with our topics of concern. The Commander demanded that all attacks on Coalition and Iraqi Forces stop immediately. No truce would be upheld unless the Sunni insurgent leader Amed put down his weapons and stopped fighting the Coalition.

Amed, the Sunni leader, demanded that we release numerous members of his insurgent cell that were in prison for crimes against Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces. He was adamant about this request and insisted that the men we had captured were innocent. My Commander made it clear to Amed that we cannot release prisoners that have been convicted in the Iraqi court for crimes against the Coalition. There was much evidence on all his men that proved they were guilty.

Saleh and Amed were convinced that the US Coalition was only targeting the Sunni insurgency. He wanted the US Coalition, our company to target the Madi militia.

He insisted the Madi militia was stronger and more active in our AO than his insurgent group. Once again we made it clear to Saleh and Amed that we target all groups that attack Coalition Forces and ISF.

Before the meeting was over we finally came to an agreement. Amed assured us that for the next two weeks there would be no attacks against the US Forces and ISF. He wanted us to look into the legitimacy of the men we had captured and were being held in prison. He was convinced that many of them were innocent and falsely accused by ISF.

Once the meeting was over we went back to our base camp to conduct an AAR on the meeting that had just taken place. I vividly remember sitting on the porch smoking a cigar reminiscing on what had just taken place earlier in the day. I still couldn't believe that I was in the same room with the Sunni leader in the most dangerous part of Iraq at that time. I can still see the dark look in his eyes, never a worried facial expression. He had the look as if death didn't bother him whatsoever. He had the demeanor as if he had been fighting all his life and was prepared to fight the US Coalition for as long as it took to win this battle and regain control of the people and towns of Western Baghdad.

To our surprise the next two weeks were extremely quiet. There were no attacks on our Soldiers and Iraqi Security Forces. There were leaders at all levels that were amazed at what was taking place in our Area of Operation. For the most part, the most dangerous part of Iraq was all of a sudden more calm than some of the richest suburbs of Los Angeles. We knew that we had to meet Saleh and Amed soon after the two weeks were up. We knew that once Amed was given the news of his men that were in prison and told they would not be released because they were guilty for crimes against the US Coalition. We then knew the possibility of attacks against us would continue.

During these two weeks, we used much of Saleh and Ameds information about the Madi Militia to conduct raids, kill and capture members of this terror-

ist network. Much to our surprise, Saleh and Amed's information was extremely accurate.

We knew we could use the two weeks of success against the Madi Militia to show the Sunni leader that we could not only target his cell, but all insurgents that attack Coalition Forces. On the first day after the two week truce had expired, the phone rang and it was Saleh. He informed us that Amed wanted to meet up and talk about the past two weeks. He wanted to know what we had found out about the men that were being held in prison. We gave Saleh a brief update on our recent success against the

Madi Militia. The meeting was for the following week which gave us one more week of this truce we had in place.

At this point, BDE and some parts of DIV were getting involved. This was becoming the biggest show in town. Everyone was amazed that for the past three weeks there was little to no enemy activity on the Western streets of Baghdad.

Three days before our scheduled meeting we were informed by another one of our informants that Saleh had been killed early that morning by members of the Madi Militia.

Once the Commander and I confirmed Saleh's death, we knew this could possibly have a negative impact on our upcoming meeting and the progress that was being made up to this point. Later that night we received a call from an anonymous person stating that even though Saleh had been killed the meeting would go on. Also he wanted reassurance that the Sunni leader Amed was not and would not be targeted by Coalition Forces. Going off the information we had we were not going to target Amed at this point in time. Too much progress was being made in such a short amount of time. Bottom line is we were saving Soldiers lives and protecting our men and women from attacks.

On the morning of the scheduled meeting we had members of the BDE and DIV staff that were going to attend. We had all sorts of people come out of the woodworks for this meeting that could have been the turning point for our Battalion and Western Baghdad. Things took a turn for the worst hours before the meeting. As Amed and his security were driving up from Abu Ghraib, they were apprehended and captured by Task Force 16. Amed was taken into custody as he was being tracked by US Army Special Operation Forces for the last two years. He was on their HVI list as their number one terrorist. We got the confirmation of Task Force 16 capture 30 minutes before the meeting. For obvious reasons the meeting was called off and we immediately went into the squat and hold mode for the next 48 hours.

On the third day our unit was engaged in all out fire fight in the same streets that for the past three weeks had been as calm as an early Colorado morning. For the next two weeks it was back to the way it was the previous nine months. IEDs, rocket propelled grenade attacks, sniper fire and small arms fire attacks on US and Iraqi Security Forces were once again occurring daily.

Our Commander contacted Amed's new spokesperson, so we could schedule another meeting to try and defuse the situation. We made it clear to him that we would aggressively target, kill or capture members of his cell immediately if attacks did not stop. There was no response after a dial tone was heard. At that point it was obvious that all bets were off and that things were definitely going back to the way they previously were.

For the last three months of our deployment, we fought the Madi Militia and AQI until the day we redeployed. I'm convinced that if we had been in a direct communication with SOF in regards to Amed and Saleh we could have changed the outcome and the killing of many members of the Madi militia and AQI that were operating in Western Baghdad. What we learned in this three week endeavor dealing with a Sunni insurgent leader was that conventional forces can operate much like SOF with much success.

The Soldiers of Blacksheep Company performed their duties remarkably. In the toughest times and hardest days, the men of Blacksheep Company never faltered, or waivered, and were always ready for the next challenge. They serve with honor and dignity and demonstrated time and time again intestinal fortitude and the will to fight and win against a hardened and determined enemy.

Al Anbar Province was the heart of the Sunni insurgency during 2007. It became clear that if the Sunni insurgency was to be broken it must happen in Al Anbar. 1SG Luke C. Guerin and his company of PSYOP Soldiers were tasked to support the Marine Expeditionary Force as it sought to break the insurgency. They had to make a series of adjustments to a continually changing situation.

1SG Luke C. Guerin
"Soldier Adaptation"
1SG C Company, 9th Psychological Operations Battalion (Airborne)

I took over as First Sergeant for C Company, 9th Psychological (PSYOP) Operations Battalion (Airborne) in January 2006. The assignment was a great honor to me not only because of the 1SG Position but because I was returning to the unit where I spent my time as a Detachment Sergeant and because we were tasked to support the 1St Marine Expeditionary Force where my father and his three brothers served during the Vietnam War. My previous assignments were three years as the Senior Instructor for PSYOP Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course (ANCOC) and one year as the Assistant Commandant for the United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare and School followed by one year as 1SG for HSC 8th PSYOP BN(A).

At the time I took over the Company the unit had only a few of the incoming compliments. Most of the Company's Soldiers would not arrive in the unit

until February with some of the leadership, especially officers, not arriving until thirty days prior to the deployment. An initial concern I had was a lack of experience in the incoming NCOs both general military and especially in PSYOP. Of my four detachment Sergeants only one had operational PSYOP experience and he was the only one with platoon level leadership experience. Of the twelve team Sergeants only four had operational PSYOP experience. Another concern was that of the NCOs and Soldiers filling the Company nearly eighty percent were right out of Advanced Individual Training for PSYOP including about one half of the NCOs going through reclassification.

A benefit to all the new Soldiers and NCOs into the Company was the myriad of experience they brought to the unit. Nearly all of the reclassified NCOs were combat veterans with leadership experience and brought much-needed credibility to help assure junior Soldiers who had not been in a combat zone.

The deployment went as expected, both the advanced party (ADVON), who deployed in June and the main body, deploying in July, got a little down time in Rhota, Spain and managed to get through the short times there without causing an international incident. Arrival in Iraq was relatively simple also, the ADVON entered through Balad with the main body arriving in Al Asad. With the arrival of the main body in theater movement out to the FOBs began, but went relatively smoothly with the headquarters element pushing to the I MEF headquarters in Al Fallujah the first night and the rest of the company comfortably at the main bases within twenty-four hours. Pushing the teams out from the regimental headquarters in Fallujah, Ramadi, and Al Asad was done quite swiftly due to the hard work and planning by the ADVON elements. The experience of the Detachment Sergeants came into play right away with management of the change of command inventories and management of forces to fill the mission requirements. The most experienced detachment sergeant, MSG Repischak, quickly had inventories in hand and was able to make a good assessment of the tactical situation and request additional forces to meet the mission requirements of his mission. The other three detachment sergeants took more time depending on their experiences and integration into the planning process of the supported regiment.

The first big adjustment the Company had to make was to the composition of the detachments to meet the needs of the missions. The Company C/9 PSYOP BN (A) replaced, A/9 PSYOP BN, our sister BN (A) who had been covering the regimental areas of responsibility with three PSYOP teams each. When we arrived in theater we reconsidered the operational situation with each regiment controlling not three, but five to six combat maneuver battalions. After analysis of the mission needs, the Commander, Major Brian Yarbrough, and I relooked the company manning and mission support and decided to move manpower and equipment to further support the MEF's main efforts and make available more combat support elements. In the reorganization, we moved Soldiers and NCOs from the product production element and made a tactical team

and drew down PSYOP Soldiers on some teams from two to three asking the supported units to provide one Soldier or Marine to fill in the team.

The addition of the new team was a big adjustment for Soldiers who were expecting to remain on a FOB to start going out on operations on a daily basis. These three Soldiers though made the adjustment easily and with great success throughout the entire deployment without complaint. The Soldiers, and especially the Team Sergeants, had to make adjustments to incorporate untrained teams into their elements. The team sergeants took on the task of integrating the new Soldier or Marine, training them and building a productive effective combat support element.

Making the situation even more difficult during the long deployment was the rotation of the supported elements. The Marine Battalions who were directly supported by a PSYOP team rotated out every six months effectively changing the makeup and personality of the team on a regular basis and making team building very difficult. Some teams had to overcome even more adversity in that they were not given "permanent" filler, but forced to take out a new member of the team on nearly every mission depending on the company that was the battalion main effort for that particular mission.

Personnel adjustments, training, and team building were not the only difficulties faced by the teams. Unlike the detachments and the company headquarters who enjoyed a relatively changeless working relationship, the team sergeants had to integrate with two, three and even four new battalion staffs making planning and operations a new task every time. Also, as a combat support element, the teams had to continually integrate and plan with a changing battalion main effort on a daily basis. Some teams would go out with one company element, return to the FOB and immediately go out with another two or three times a day further increasing the difficulty in planning and integrating into the operational process of the supported unit.

Other difficulties faced by the PSYOP teams was the PSYOP process itself and product production and availability. The PSYOP process can be very cumbersome because of the nature of producing products that convey the correct meaning in the proper cultural and linguistic forms. The initial problem is getting products that address the specific needs of the AOR and the specific target audience. To accomplish support to units and the specifics of the mission require research and development along with proper translation. Added to this difficulty initially during the deployment was the approval process. Not only does the product need to be properly developed but it must be approved at the division level. This was partially overcome in the latter stages of the deployment when the corps released the approval for PSYOP products down to the brigade level with approval of the division. In our case II MEF approved the delegation of authority.

Even with the approval down at the brigade level, PSYOP products were difficult to produce and get into the hands of the teams. The size of the Al Anbar

province played against us in this regard as well as difficulty in getting supplies. The distances, although in relative terms short, twenty to sixty miles became a problem. All products had to be piggy backed on convoys or air-lifted to the detachments and then moved out to the battalion areas. This was especially difficult in the western part of the AOR where the transport was not as timely as between the larger bases and areas such as Ramadi where the distances were shorter and more traveled. It is in this area where the two detachment sergeants with prior experience, MSG Holden and MSG Repischak showed. These two NCOs used networking and knowledge of systems to overcome all obstacles and get the product to the teams sometimes from the MEF to the brigade to the battalion in a single day.

The extension and consequent uncertainty of replacement became a definite distractor and leadership challenge for the company NCOs, possibly the biggest challenge of the entire deployment. The initial inklings of an extension began in December 2006 when the replacement company, A/9th PSYOP BN (A) was notified that they may be redirected to support the surge in Baghdad. The uncertainty continued until March when we received definitive word that we would remain as long as a year. While waiting for the definitive decision the company return advanced party (RADVON) was twice removed from transportation on their way out of the AOR. Although the final word did not come down until A Company deployed the fact was that the deployment had already exceeded the initial planned return date of 19 March. Soon afterward the Company received word we would be there at least until July 2007, a one-year deployment.

This extension turned out to be less of a leadership challenge than we had expected. It was amazing how the Soldiers and NCOs of the Company accepted the news and continued with the mission without missing a beat. I attribute this to the strong team leadership and camaraderie. I went around to the detachments and as many teams as I could upon receipt of the news and found god spirits throughout the company.

It was only in June when A/9th actually deployed in support of the surge that we were sure that they would not be our replacement. Then came the waiting to find out who would replace us and when we could expect them in country. The uncertainty about whom and when replacement would happen weighed heavily on the Company and would remain so until we actually departed. Our replacement was a difficult decision for higher since much of the PSYOP force was either deployed or just recently returned. The other issue was that the majority of the PSYOP forces are Reservists. PSYOP forces that used to be part of one command, United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (USACAPOC) were now split between reserve component under Forces Command and active duty under Special Operations Command (SOCOM). Making coordination and decisions more difficult was that the Reserve component had just been moved from under SOCOM to the reserve command and there was lingering bitterness about the move. The decision was finally

made in June for the 307th PSYOP Company (POC) to replace us, but problems with this plan started as soon as the announcement was made.

Problems with the 307th, our replacement center on shortages of both men and equipment. At the time of the call-up, the 307th POC many of the Soldiers, NCOs and officers had just returned or were currently in theater with other units. This number included the Company Commander and nearly all of the senior NCOs. The other issue was that the unit had been stripped of equipment to fill other units who has losses from current of previous deployments. It seemed like it was a daily phone conversation with elements of the 307th that they did not have enough of either to fill the deployments. To make matters worse contact was made between the deployed and replacing detachments and the company level elements all giving conflicting statuses of mission readiness. Final Relief in Place (RIP) dates and equipment decisions were never certain due to all the uncertainty about the 307th.

All of the indecision about the date of replacement, what equipment would remain or return and even who would return weighed heavily on the Company and made matters difficult especially on the teams. As the time for the RIP came closer the more difficult it became to maintain discipline and composure. Soldiers who had taken the twelve and fifteen month extensions became increasingly agitated as the sixteenth month wore on. Teams that had worked so well together for over a year began to splinter. The Commander and I started moving Soldiers from established teams at around the year mark if there were issues starting. Again as the time went on even personnel changes began to lose their effectiveness. Teams who had been going out daily started to pull back on missions a little. Instead of pushing and volunteering, teams began to go out only when commanders requested their support.

During this time, I went tout as much as possible to the teams to try to confront their uncertainties and assure them we would not be extended again. I was always well received by the detachments and teams and this was my favorite part of the job. As a 1SG there is not a better mission than sharing the uncertainties and dangers of the combat zone with Soldiers. My time was limited though as the majority of my time was spent making arrangements to bring in the 307th POC, finalize equipment needs, replace equipment battle losses, and make arrangements to get us out of theater. Added to my difficulties was dealing with adultery by one of the detachment Sergeants, also a good friend.

I underestimated the professionalism, drive and dedication of the Soldiers and NCOs assigned to the company. I made assumptions based on lack of experience and training and perceived inferiority of NCOs who were recent re-classes. In reality the United States Army Soldier is adaptable to almost any situation with the smallest amount of training and guidance. All that is required is the will, motivation, physical ability and intelligence.

Soldiers can adapt to long deployments and need a reason and motivation. This was evident as we were extended twice, but there is a limit. Soldiers will

accept hardship as a consequence of elements beyond control, but there is a breaking point if the reasons are not good. NCOs and Soldiers will cope with adversity using various techniques but have a point they cannot go beyond without intervention by leadership to address problems.

Soldiers need a break or change of their immediate environment. C/9 Soldiers were afforded a pass and leave, but as the deployment dragged on the benefits from breaks had smaller and limited effects. Short trips to the large bases and visits from the command helped in this regard, but near the end little helped raise the spirits of the troops. Moving Soldiers to other teams had some immediate positive effects, but again this was limited as everyone was tired and on-edge.

Commanders should not give timelines to deployments. This works if the timeline is met or it is a limited extension, but this is almost never the case. The open-ended extension sucks the moral and will out of Soldiers who see no break in sight, especially after more than one extension. This especially affects families since they have expectations of a reunion and when that is taken away the effects can be devastating. Poor attitudes and depression on the home front has a profound effect on Soldiers effectiveness in a combat zone.

During 1SG John Etter's first deployment to Iraq, he and his Soldiers supported Infantry maneuvers in combat operations. During his second deployment his unit supported vertical and horizontal construction building Combat Out-Posts and Forward Operating Bases. 1SG Etter discovered that Soldiers "could achieve anything if they set their minds to it and worked as a team."

1SG John Etter, Jr.
"510th Sapper Company"
1SG, 510th Sapper Company, 20th Engineer Battalion

My experience in Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08 in Baghdad, Iraq had a complete different mission than my previous deployment of Operation Iraqi Freedom 04-05 in Ramadi, Iraq. Having a Military Occupation Skill (MOS) of 21Z, a Senior Combat Engineer Sergeant and being the First Sergeant of a Mechanized Sapper Company in a Heavy Mechanized Engineer Battalion whose primary mission is to support the Infantry maneuver units in combat operations whether it be raids, ambushes or route clearance missions. Kicking in doors and killing the enemy is what we train to do. On this trip to the desert all of that was about to change, and we were given the mission to do something even harder. We were to work outside of our MOS with equipment not in our battalion and little time to prepare.

In the later part of 2005, the 20th Engineer Battalion had just cased its

colors and stood down from a long history with the First Calvary Division at Fort Hood, Texas. In March 2006, the battalion reactivated with all new personnel and equipment at Fort Hood as the 20th Engineer Battalion, 36th Engineer Brigade and was the first combat effects engineer battalion to transform into the new modular engineer battalion in the Army. The battalion consisted of a Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Forward Support Company, one Mechanized Sapper Company and two Heavy Mechanized Engineer Companies.

My Commander and I utilized our senior Noncommissioned Officers in the company and wrote all new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that were nonexistent and implemented them during the field training exercise (FTX) for our OIF 06-08 deployment with a possible route clearance mission in October 2006. I supervised the training of two teams that won second and sixth place in the US Army Best Sapper Competition in May 2006 and trained numerous other Soldiers to graduate from the Sapper Leader Course at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. We sent a large number of Officers, NCOs and Soldiers to Fort Leonard Wood on temporary duty to train-up on the route clearance equipment such as the Buffalo, the RG-36 and other equipment needed to accomplish a route clearance mission. When our Soldiers returned, they had high expectations and were motivated to carry out the route clearance mission in Iraq with the training they received, but just as the weather changes in Texas so did our mission.

The 36th Engineer Brigade Commander notified our Battalion Commander that our mission had been changed do to the rotation of engineer unit's available for the upcoming deployment to Iraq. The 130th Puerto Rican National Guard, a vertical construction battalion was going to replace the 5th Engineer Battalion, a route clearance battalion currently in Baghdad and the 19th Engineer Battalion at Fort Knox, Kentucky was behind schedule for deployment and having issues with standing up its companies.

The Battalion Commander conducted an emergency key leader meeting with all Company Commanders, as did the Command Sergeant Major with the First Sergeants. After discussing the current situation, the commander and I were on the phone rescheduling training opportunities for our company to attend MOS training on vertical construction operations for carpentry, plumbing and electrical skills. It seemed the route clearance mission was out the window, the month of June was right around the corner, and we deploy in October.

We conducted a quick survey of our company on which leaders and Soldiers had prior experience in vertical construction and obtained some carpentry, plumbing or electrical skills in their civilian life. It was amazing to find out what Soldiers have learned in their civilian life and how important a high school wood shop class can give the Army. This gave us great insight on where we needed to start, who was going to supervise training, and who needed training in those areas. We then sent those Soldiers and leaders who needed to acquire those skills to Fort Leonard Wood for a crash course on training in vertical construction. While this training was taking place and developing, the key lead-

ers in the company adjusted our company SOPs and battle drills to prepare our Officers, NCOs and Soldiers for another FTX. We also worked with the local Habitat for Humanity in Killeen, Texas to provide us additional construction work sites to increase our resources for our train-up for OIF 06-08.

When the 20th EN BN (-) arrived in Kuwait, we linked up with the 887th Engineer Company (Horizontal) from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. They would complete our task organization as a battalion and assist us in accomplishing our engineer mission. We left the two Heavy Engineer Company's back at Fort Hood, so that they could prepare for their rotation to Iraq after we returned.

We were replacing the 62nd Engineer Battalion, that was a sister battalion in the 36th EN BDE, and were relocating to Fort Hood upon their return from Iraq. They had vertical and horizontal engineer companies by MTOE. In addition, the higher headquarters that we would fall under was the 1169th Alabama National Guard, which was a vertical engineer group. They were responsible for providing the subject matter experts on all bills of materials (BOM) and the quality assurance on inspections of our job sites.

Our mission was to build Combat Out-Posts (COPs) and Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) for the Multi-National Forces in Baghdad, Iraq. We also had to sustain the combat troops and enable them to carry out their combat patrols and missions in and around Baghdad. Our mission also included the upgrade of current living conditions on camps that already existed. Midway through the deployment, our mission increased to assist other Engineer Task Force units to provide route repair and clearance missions. The 20th EN BN was the only Army engineer battalion deployed in the theater to provide a vertical construction mission throughout MND-B in Iraq.

Our battalion responded to the challenge of a vertical construction mission well beyond the expectations of many leaders sitting on the fence expecting to see failure and frustration. We hit the ground running after receiving an extremely weak left seat, right seat ride with the 62nd EN BN. I do not know if they were lazy or simply not motivated, but it became evident they did not like leaving the FOB. It was clear that the key leaders in that outfit were spinning their wheels and not acting as a combat multiplier. We did however; pick up another engineer company, the 642nd Engineer Company (Horizontal) from the 10th Mountain Division from New York.

We gave our Third Platoon the first vertical construction mission in Iraq because of their outstanding pre-deployment performance. Their mission was to build a $100,000 Sea hut facility to accommodate the command post of the 10th Mountain Division operating in the southern sector of Baghdad. They accomplished this mission under direct fire and indirect fire on a daily basis with many learning points in carpentry, but their construction techniques and superior quality craftsmanship reportedly made the experts we replaced look like amateurs. They finished a building that the 62nd EN BN had started and completed the construction of another Sea hut from the ground up.

This mission was just the tip of the spear, but it set the standard for our other platoons in the company to achieve and maintain high standards and it created a challenge among the platoons of who could do the best work and put their name on it.

After witnessing this accomplishment, it just proved that our leaders and Soldiers could achieve anything if they set their minds to it and worked as a team. It did not matter whether you were a Private, Sergeant or a Second Lieutenant; you took charge where you knew you had the skills and would accomplish the mission. It also proved that MOS were immaterial and out the window. We trained on various types of heavy engineer equipment such as the skid steer, the crane and the concrete mobile mixer, all equipment non-organic to our battalion.

The only problems that we faced during these missions were the amount of time it took for supplies to come in and keep up with our work production. Word was getting out among Infantry and Task Force commanders that there were engineers in town that had some construction skills and were willing to share them. Therefore, this created an extremely busy workload and little time to satisfy all who desired it. Our Soldiers constructed outstanding construction projects that provided the US military forces throughout Baghdad a safe and secure place to conduct their military operations.

Some of our biggest success stories were researching and constructing a security fence that greatly increased the force protection of the MNF-I Commanding General's headquarters. Our Battalion built a much-needed medical supply warehouse on Camp Liberty that received commendations from the DCG-S 1st Cav Div and the 1169th Alabama National Guard Commanding General and CSM. This project started with our leaders and Soldiers learning how to operate a concrete mobile mixer to form up and pour a foundation for the building to rest. They also learned to read building plans and blue prints. With these skills, it enabled them to take charge and continue the work effort while the quality control inspectors were at other project sites throughout Baghdad. The only shortfall on the construction sites was the inability to have replacement tires on standby for the forklift or bucket loader. Most of that occurred off the FOB in remote areas where there were rubble and debris from demolished buildings.

Some of the lessons learned from our operations in and around MND-B were that it was safer to travel in large numbers with a minimum of six vehicles in a convoy. Our Second Platoon left out on a mission with four vehicles in the convoy, all vehicles had .50 cal machine guns mounted and they were traveling a secure route with M-1 Abraham Tanks. Less than three hundred meters from the gate, they received small arms fire, RPGs, grenades and hit with a gasoline projected I.E.D. They had to dismount and fight their way to the gate. They lost three of the four vehicles and most of their equipment. During the attack, we had a couple of Soldiers wounded. This attack occurred during the day and no one was on the street outside the camp.

To cover all building supplies that are in the back of your vehicles so that they are not visible to the public and when transporting horizontal engineer equipment was another important lesson. Travel at night whenever the mission allows; this allowed us to encounter fewer I.E.D.s and limited the number of civilians wanting to stop our movement or congest the roadway along the route.

Recommendations for improvements on tactical and technical training for NCOs and Soldiers would be to continue to train on basic patrolling skills both foot and mounted. Everyone needs to be familiar with all weapon systems and communication equipment organic to their unit or the equipment that they will fall in on in theater. Convoy and vehicle recovery operations need training on for various types of conditions and roadway width and surfaces.

With less than three months to go on our deployment, our higher headquarters, 1176 Alabama National Guard, was changing command with the 35th Engineer Brigade, an Army Reserve unit from Missouri. We worked through the frustrations of a new unit hitting the ground wanting to change the operating procedures that had been working. It was not long after, that the Louisiana National Guard came to replace us. When they arrived, they were a highly motivated group and were eager to tackle the mission. Of course, they knew it all since they were a vertical construction battalion, therefore, that made it easier to hand over the tools of the trade.

During this time, the Secretary of Defense was addressing the issue of the 15-month deployment with the President of the United States. We did not know if we were going to escape under the radar, because of the fixed deployment rotation that we found ourselves in the middle of by working with the reserve and guard units, or tossed into the roll-up of the Fort Hood units redeploying back home. Thankfully, it turned out to be a 12-month tour for us. After we returned home, and enjoyed our time off with our families, our brigade commander tasked our battalion to construct and remodel the brigade classroom room that the 62nd Engineer Battalion (Vertical Construction) could not accomplish.

SUPPORTING IRAQ

The final key to long term peace and security in Iraq required the creation of an efficient and effective Iraqi Security Force and improving the lives of the Iraqi people. Efforts toward both ends had been occurring before “the Surge,” however during “the Surge” both elements received new emphasis.

In the stories that follow NCOs tell of their efforts to create professional Soldiers from the Iraqi Security Forces (both the Army and the police) and how they assisted in bettering the lives of the Iraqi people. There were many problems, including ethnic and religious problems, the lack of administrative skills, and the need to infuse professionalism in both the Iraqi Army and police.

1SG Eric B. Littlejohn tells of how his unit worked with and advised the 304th Iraq National Guard Special Forces. He also points to some of the early problems that existed in creating a professional Iraqi Soldier. Ammunition and fuel often disappeared overnight--sold for a profit. After months of training a professional Iraqi Soldier emerged.

1SG Eric B. Littlejohn
"Advisor: Iraqi National Special Forces"
19DZ, HHT 6-8 CAV, 3 ID

It was January 2005, when my unit arrived to Camp Falcon Iraq. During my assignment with 6th Squadron 8th Cavalry in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, I was the Headquarters-Headquarters Troop First Sergeant. Our Squadron completed the right/left seat ride and we started conducting our mission. One of the tasking that came down from Division Headquarters was the squadron needed to develop an advisory team consisting of one Captain, one First Sergeant and eight to nine personnel of selected military specialties. The task and purpose was to create a small joint strike force to work and advise the 304th Iraq National Guard Special Forces. The INGSF consisted of 146 Iraqi Army Soldiers. The area of operations that they would be responsible for was in (AL Dorha) zone 25 consisting of the Al Dorha market and the power plant in sector 26. Target packets consisted of known bath party members, former Republican Guard officials, Taliban leaders and AIF conducting in the zone.

The Squadron Commander decided to use his HHT Commander and 1SG for the mission. The Commander and the 1SG had an opportunity pick key

personnel to help form the Dark Horse Strike Force. Most of the Soldiers came from HHT and other key Soldiers from within the division. The strike force consisted of one Nuclear Biological Chemical (NBC) Noncommissioned Officer, two Medic NCOs, four Specialists as drivers, four Sergeants as gunners, one communications NCO and one sniper qualified NCO. This was the makeup of the strike force with all of recourses and support coming from the Divisions assets and that of Squadrons.

The first task was the train up for our INGSF colleagues, but before we could start this we had to ensure that our team trained on war fighting skills. The unit focused on Precision Offensive Operations; room clearing techniques, Combative training, advance first-aid, advanced weapon training with using explosives for breaching obstacles in an urban environment, search and seizure techniques and communications with reporting formats.

The idea for the training for the INGSF team would mirror our train up; Rules of Engagement (ROE) training and heavy emphasis on weapon shooting expertise. There were many challenges when it came to training our comrades. First of course was their use of their NCOs within their organization. The NCOs didn't have any involvement in the planning and didn't have a role except that he made a little more money. Many hours we devoted to the roles and responsibility of the NCO to help to set up the stronger organization. Reflective fire was important to the team. Many of the INGSF Soldiers didn't understand a good zero. We trained them to zero their weapons at 200 meters instead of 25 meters. They did not have an ROE for their Army during this time, however, the American Soldiers did. We had to explain to them importance of the ROE and how it's applied. There was no Field Training Exercise (FTX) or JRTC for them just good old fashion on-the-job training (OJT). After about a month of training we took the boys out to fight.

There were two main supply issues that we had to deal with, ammo and fuel. With all the resources we had available to us, these two areas fell way short. The Iraqi government wanted to start funding and supplying their own troops. The biggest problem for them was the fact they had no government to support this and no coordination to oversee it. So once again it fell into our hands to set up fuel points and a supply warehouse for them. Accountability of weapons ammo and fuel was a nightmare to say the least. You would issue out a standard issue of 7.76 ammunition the day before and the next day, the Soldier would be back for more this also held the same for fuel. What we found is that they were selling everything they got to include body armor and a uniform, what was here today sure was gone tomorrow. The underlining problem is the INGSF monthly pay wasn't enough for the cost of living. On the outside the insurgents were paying a lot of money for uniforms and body armor and if the Soldiers weren't accountable for their equipment this just turned into a means to compliment their income.

Another challenge was keeping the bad guys from knowing that they were

going to be next on the hit list. How it worked was this; we would receive a target packet on a suspected Taliban or someone who was dealing arms to the terrorist in or around our area of interest. Then we would brief and plan the INGSF on the mission. The operations order didn't exist and to set up this for them would have taken another month if not longer for them to understand, we worked off an FRAGO for them. What was happening was after we issued the FRAGO someone would call ahead to give warning to the person or people who we were after. So we decided to not to give any information out about the target until we were in the general area of the target, I called this a rolling FRAGO. This way whoever was tipping off the bad guys it would be too late for them to leave. This rolling FRAGO worked just fine and we had a higher percentage of successful hits.

It was 1 November 2005, when our strike force was conducting a presence patrol right off the access road that runs parallel to route Irish (Airport Road). We stopped in front of a house and talked to a local police officer and his wife and they invited us in for some chi tea. We talked about the community and all the projects that were continuing in their area. They expressed excitement about the soccer field that we were working on for the kids that was just around the corner. The conversation shifted to the security of Airport Road and how we were conducting business. It seemed like standard questions at the time, but we didn't know until later that day that they were asking fact-finding questions. We said our goodbyes and continued our presence patrol. Earlier that afternoon the commander received some information on a possible VBIED in our area and that to be on the lookout for a white Datson. This intelligence didn't mean that much since everyone owned one of these cars in Iraq, but we focused a little more and kept an extra eye out for this threat.

Around 1400 hours we came under small arms attack while we were on our patrol next to the soccer field. We indentified several insurgents armed with AK47s and one with an RPG on the opposite side of the road. One of the INGSF received a shot to the foot, and one of their Toyota trucks was hit by an RPG. The INGSF closed quickly on the insurgent killing two, but the others managed to escape into the village. We treated and ground MEDEVAC the wounded Soldiers and self-recovered the truck back to FOB Falcon. We returned later to conduct some questioning of some of the locals in and around the ambush site. Our first house we went to was the same house we had tea with earlier that day. As we got closer to the house, my commander came over the radio to halt our convoy and to dismount. I went up to his location and he told me that he just saw a police officer run into his house at a fast pace. Iraqi police officers don't run, so this seemed like something unusual was going on. We cordoned off the house and set up 360- degree security and advanced towards the house. We were about 100 meters away when the house blew up. As we got closer there were several smaller explosions. We could hear a man yelling in pain and as we got into the yard there was the police officer on fire and bleeding.

Our medic team worked on him while we secured the inside of the house. We found what we thought to be his wife and some vest making material with the exploded VBIED in the garage. Just earlier that day we had tea with these same people in the now blown-up home. The police officer died at the scene and we continued to call EOD to police-up all the now UXOs lying all around.

With little time for putting this unit together and with all the changes we faced the unit was useful. The team conducted over 30 precision offensive operations with apprehension of 15 suspected AIF and 12 weapon caches in or around the AL Dorha Market. These operations resulted with route Irish (Airport Road) not having a single VBIED attack on any coalition or Iraqi government officials during that period. Previously two trucks destroyed; one by the RPG another by an IED. Five INGSF killed in action and six wounded in action during a five-month time period. There was only one American Soldier wounded during these operations.

The ability of the United States Army to train an effective Army is astounding. Time, assets and the technical know-how of the Soldiers on the ground training them are our true professionals. With more time to develop the Iraqi government and our understanding of the tribal communities, we would have been more successful and the INGSF would have been able to perform more efficiently.

MSG Warren D. Soeldner and his Soldiers were tasked with taking the untrained 2nd Battalion of the Ministry of Interior, 2nd Special Police Brigade and turning them into a disciplined and effective fighting unit. This unit, primarily Shia in make-up, operated in the Kurdish city of Mosul. Despite initial ethnic tensions, MSG Soledner and his men created an effective Iraqi force.

MSG Warren D. Soeldner
"The 2/2 MOI Commandos"
Detachment Operations Sergeant, 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group

On December 28, 2004, Operational Detachment Alpha 061 ceased operating in its current Area of Operations in order to deploy to Mosul, Iraq and conduct Foreign Internal Defense (FID) operations in support of the upcoming Iraqi national elections. FM 31-20-3 (1994) explains FID as the primary SF mission to organize, train, advise, and improve the tactical and technical proficiency of these forces, so they can defeat the insurgency without direct US involvement. The emphasis is on training Host Nation cadres who will in-turn train their compatriots. The capabilities that SF employs to perform its FID mission are those inherent to its UW mission; only the operational environment is changed (FM

31-20-3, 1994). The detachment was currently conducting Unconventional Warfare (UW) operations and other advanced special operations along the Iranian border with Iraq. The new tasking would not have an effect on the detachments training or composition.

The detachment was composed of ten personnel, two men short of the doctrinal and unit manning tables. The team consisted of the following: The Detachment Commander, a Captain (O-3); the Detachment Operations Sergeant, or team sergeant, a Master Sergeant (E-8); both a senior and a junior Detachment Weapons Sergeant, a Sergeant First Class (E-7) and a Staff Sergeant (E-6) respectively; The detachment had three engineer sergeants, two of them E-7s and one E-6; additionally, there were a senior and junior medical sergeant; and finally, rounding out the detachment, a senior Communications Sergeant. The shortage of an Intelligence Sergeant and additional Communications Sergeant would be filled by myself, the team sergeant, based on my prior SF Military Occupational Specialties and other experiences. The team would do without an Assistant Detachment Commander, normally a Chief Warrant Officer 2.

After a quick mission planning cycle, it was determined that the detachment would leave one of its engineer sergeants behind to inventory, pack and arrange for the transportation of the detachments equipment to our new base of operations. Additional personnel from our SF Operational Base, or SF Company would assist him, and he would rejoin the team in Mosul later. The other nine personnel would load our two M1114 HUMMVS and trailers into two MC-130 aircraft, then fly directly into Mosul, where our Forward Operational Base (FOB) located there would receive us, and further escort us to our new home. We were deploying much as we had in the early days of the war with our vehicles, rucksacks, food, and bullets. Everything else would follow later as needed. We cross-loaded all the detachments equipment, as well as our furniture into Milvans for staged movement. Then we packed what we thought we would need in our vehicles, and moved out to the SFOB where we briefed the Company Commander, received approval for the mission, and coordinated the logistics to move all of our equipment to Mosul. The next day, New Year's Eve, we loaded up and made the short flight into Mosul. Upon download, we moved to the FOB, briefed the Battalion Commander, and upon his approval, arranged for a LOGPACK to escort us to our new base of operations and deliver water, food, fuel and supplies to get us started. The movement was uneventful and at approximately 2330 on the last day of the year, we rolled through a decrepit gate into the almost deserted and demolished Mosul Public Safety Academy (MPSA) in northeastern Mosul. The only personnel there were six Green Berets from another detachment in our battalion who had secured the area for us prior to our arrival.

Knowing them well, we shook hands, got a quick low-down on the situation, and they pulled out for home, about 10 miles away. I looked around and surveyed my new "kingdom." The MPSA had been stripped clean in an uprising

a month ago, that had resulted in the looting of the academy and other police stations throughout the city. Only the walls of the building still stood. Looters stripped everything else to include the wiring the walls. I had the detachment get our 5K generator running to provide power, set up communications, and went into priorities of work. Our host nation forces would be arriving in the morning, and I wanted them to see a functioning base of operations right off the bat. The detachment sandbagged the windows, set up an operations center, and went to 50% manning. The nearest US unit was across the river, 8 miles away. The nearest friendly forces were a Kurdish company running a checkpoint outside our non-existent gate. Luckily, I had fought in OIF I with the Company Commander of the Kurdish unit, and he volunteered his men to provide a QRF as well as man out gate.

The New Year dawned with the arrival of a battalion of new recruits forming the 2nd Battalion of the Ministry of the Interior 2nd Special Police Brigade. They were an untrained rabble of predominately Shia men, all carrying AK-47's, RPG's and RPK machine guns. Nothing drove this home more than when they arrived, they proceeded to indiscriminately fire into the air and celebrate as well as try to intimidate the Kurdish Soldiers at the checkpoint. The Brigade trucks that dropped them off departed, and the mission was on. Our first order of business was to begin building rapport with the battalion commander, and his XO (A former regime Intelligence Officer, and a Sunni). There were no NCOs in the unit. We warily traded small talk, got comfortable with each other, and jumped into the business of training the battalion leadership. First, we all sat down together with the Kurdish commander for lunch (Kurd, Shia, Sunni, and US all together). My commander and I were adamant that we would all occupy the same area, in partnership and good will. Besides, we knew that if things went sour, the Kurds would back us up until US forces could arrive. While the commander and I worked on relationships, the rest of detachment was busy refining the training plan. We had three weeks to get this unit operational.

By doctrine, the Noncommissioned Officers on an ODA are trainers and advisors. Each senior SF sergeant trains, advises, and employs a company size unit in combat operations. This same NCO, particularly in a UW scenario may lead those troops into combat. The junior noncommissioned officers assist the Assistant Detachment Commander in training and advising the battalion Staff. Each MOS has an additional staff function. The Junior Medical Sergeant is the S-1, the Junior Weapons Sergeant is the S-3, the junior Engineer is the S-4, and the junior communications sergeant is the S-6. The detachment commander's job is to train the battalion commander in command, planning and staff functions, as well as, advising him throughout the process. The Detachment Operations Sergeant trains the battalion Command Sergeant Major and in turn advises him in all the aspects of the Noncommissioned Officer, and training troops. He also ensures that the day-to-day functions of the detachment are taken care. By default, I also had the additional duties of working with the Iraqi XO, who was also the S-2. I did not

envision a lot of sleep in the next few months.

The first two days we attempted to juggle training and base camp improvements but it was clear that at that rate we would never meet our timeline. Luckily, I was able to convince our command that we needed an engineer company to build ranges, training facilities, mess facilities and barracks so the Iraqi Battalion had the facilities necessary to improve moral and build a cohesive unit. Within the first week, a US Army Reserve engineer unit rolled into camp with heavy equipment, and all the material necessary to rebuild the MPSA and provide electricity and water. I gave them their own building on the camp, and directed them to repair their facilities first. I wanted them to be able to get a good night's rest and live comfortably after a hard day of taking care of our facilities. Those Engineers came through. So much so, that we continued to find important work to keep them busy throughout our time there. They were happy to be off the FOB, happy to be doing what they love, and happy to accompany detachment on resupply runs to Dahuk every week.

Training was intense. The Iraqi's, after some initial discontent, trained hard to meet the three-week deadline. We had formed the battalion into three companies. Within days, we had identified certain Soldiers with leadership potential, and made them NCOs. They would form the basis of the cadre, and my best trainers worked with them to get them to a level where they could train their men. Due to the manpower constraints, we identified the Soldiers that were picking up the training faster, and assigned them to the 1st Company. They would be the first operational company. We had decided to run the battalion in a one-week Green, Amber, Red cycle. The company on Green cycle would receive the operational taskings. The Amber Company would support the Green Company, both as trainers and as a blocking force on the objective. The Red Company would have garrison duties such as guard mount, leaves and passes, and camp improvement. With some exceptions and issues, the system worked well. It also provided a company of Iraqi speaking trainers to facilitate the training. I have to admit that the staff training was probably the hardest part of the operation. Most of the staff officers had served in the former regime, and were not used to actually having a say in their operations. I do not think we actually got to the point of having a fully functional staff, but they tried, and relied heavily on us to guide them. In the end though, they could brief a five-paragraph operations order, and read a map. They also became adept at logistical issues required to run a base. Training progressed and it looked like we would be able to start conducting Traffic Control Points by the deadline. The first and second companies were able marksmen, and improving in their urban warfare capabilities. Our next challenge would be convoy operations.

At some point in the second week we received guidance from Multi-National Security Transition Command Iraq (MNSTC I) that the battalions vehicles were available for pickup in Al Kasik, Iraq. We borrowed 5-ton trucks from a sister ODA's Iraqi unit and necessarily conducted a daylight convoy to

Al Kasik where we the battalion was issued five-ton trucks and the now familiar blue and white Chevrolet Luv pickups. In retrospect, we should have ripped the lights and sirens out before issue. They were like kids with new toys. We were finally able to get them past the lights and noise, and proceeded to convoy back to Mosul. The three dozen pickups, six 5-tons, and our two M1114 HUMMVs, bristling with guns, were an impressive sight. We pulled point and rear, corralling the Commandos in the middle. As we entered Mosul, we ambushed from the high buildings along the route and all hell broke loose. The Commandos stopped right on an overpass started firing in all directions. No amount of coaxing over the radio could get them to start moving to clear the kill-zone. I was leading in the front vehicle and made the decision to back track up the convoy and visually wave them forward while our gunner engaged the enemy with the 50cal, and our other HUMMV engaged with the Mark 19 from the rear of the convoy. To the commandos' credit, they actually stopped firing as we drove by, my driver screaming and waving them forward. They convoy started moving again, and we were finally clear of the overpass and out of range. The only casualty suffered was the pride of one Iraqi gunner who fell out of the back of his vehicle with an RPK, as they started moving again. Our rear HUMMV picked him up and he rejoined his vehicle a few miles down the road, to back slaps and laughter from his comrades.

By week three, the battalion was ready for its first mission. We would conduct TCPs at three major intersections near the MPSA. We considered it low-threat, but a valid confidence target, in order to evaluate the 1st Company. 2nd Company would be in support, and provide a QRF. My commander and I also ensured we had a QRF on standby from nearby US forces. It was our responsibility to ensure that all the commando operations were de-conflicted and supported the battle space owners plan. The TCP's went in at night. The next morning northeast Mosul woke up to Iraqi police commandos manning checkpoints throughout the area. This would be the precursor to these same commandos providing security to election polling stations in the area. These checkpoints would continue for a week. On the final day, Election Day, we would brief the commandos and they would set up checkpoints at each polling station in our area of operations. We were keeping the locations of the true polling stations as close-hold as possible. Many polling stations in Mosul suffered an attack during the elections. The ones manned by our commandos were not.

Our original mission was finished. We did not redeploy back to our original AO. We had a trained force, a fortified base of operations, and we had earned the respect of US commanders in the area. We immediately refocused the commandos for Direct Action missions. It was time to do what we do best; develop intelligence, identify and verify targets, prosecute the target and start the process again. From February through June, our commandos conducted dozen of combines operations with three separate BCT's in Mosul. Additionally, they conducted unilateral operations with other Iraqi units working with Special Forces,

and supported several National Level operations. They worked nightly with US conventional and SOF ground and air power. They captured or supported the capture of numerous HVT's to include Sabawi Ibrahim Hassan Al-Tikriti (#36 and the Six of Diamonds), and Muhammad Khalaf Shakar, also known as Abu Talha (Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's most trusted operations agent in all of Iraq). Additionally, they uncovered a VBIED cell that led, through the exploitation of the intelligence gathered by the detachment and cooperation with the FBI, to a vehicle smuggling ring in the United States that was shipping SUV's from Texas to Jordan, and on to Iraq, for eventual use as VBIED's in Iraq. Less notable, but more important in my mind, was the capture of two IED cells that were targeting 1-15 INF newly fielded Strykers' in the Palestine neighborhood of Mosul.

Most of what I have done during the war on terror is classified, and will not become known for the next twenty-five years, if ever. OIF III started out as one of those missions, but due to the emerging issues on the battlefield, transitioned to the mission we did in Mosul. It was a classic SF mission I am extremely proud of the job my men did, and that I was a part of it. It validated the doctrine we have used for years, and showed me the flexibility of an ODA. Sometimes, it is good to go back and focus on the basics of our MOS.

Half my detachment was relatively new to SF when we deployed that trip. Their pre-mission training had focused on UW and ASO. Without a missed step, they went right into FID and performed fantastically. It was a by the book, true SF mission. As evidence of our success, the command embedded CBS 60 Minutes Wednesday with the detachment for almost three weeks and Steve Hebert, a respected free-lance photographer, for almost a month. Although the men on the detachment originally resented the press at the time, they appreciated it more as the visibility generated by the coverage led to more missions. While I have conducted dozens of deployments in support of the War on Terror, this particular mission will be one of the best memories I will retain. Although most of the missions I have conducted have been strategic in nature, and classified and compartmented under various Contingency Plans, it will be many years before the details are releasable. This one mission in this one deployment is something that I can not only share, but I can use to highlight the role of Special Forces and the Operational Detachment Alpha.

Training the Iraqi police was as important as training the Iraqi Soldiers. 1SG Michael Cosper tells of how he and his Soldiers brought discipline and accountability to Al-Dora and Al-Balat Police Stations. They found they needed to train the police leaders on administrative responsibilities, intelligence gathering, operational management, and logistical requirements.

1SG Michael L. Cosper
"Training the Iraqi Police"
Platoon Sergeant, 410th Military Police Company

1SG, 58th Military Police Company

On March 21, 2003, my unit arrived in Kuwait. While in Kuwait, we qualified with our assigned weapons one last time and trained on the local customs of the Iraqi people. By the end of March we had arrived on Forward Operating Base (FOB) Falcon and met the unit we replaced. What I remember the most was the negative report we received on the condition of the Iraqi Police in our sector. My platoon was assigned two police stations. One station was in the Baghdad district of Al-Dora and the other was in the Al-Balat district. These stations covered a large portion of Baghdad and both consisted of more than 297 Iraqi police officers.

Shortly after arriving on FOB Falcon we toured both police stations and the area they were responsible for. I remember there were so many things wrong with the stations and was very disappointed in how the Iraqi Police operated. I internally questioned the outgoing unit's contributions to these police stations and if they had taken their mission seriously. It didn't take long to realize the unit had performed very well. The problems were associated with the difference in culture and ideology of the Iraqi people as compared to that of Americans. I realized that day that if my platoon was going to be successful, we had to learn the Iraqi culture, their way of life, and their history.

I found the information I needed from the S2. After condensing the information, I briefed all of my team and squad leaders. I'm not sure they fully understood the challenges ahead, but they soon comprehended that training the Iraqi Police was unlike training American Soldiers. After our mandatory left and right seat rides with the outgoing unit, we were on our own. The leaders within my platoon had the mentality that we would soon turn these two Iraqi Police Stations into functional and smooth running stations. We started with a complete assessment of the Iraqi Police that included their level of performance and a physical security inspection of the stations.

We started with the Al-Dora Police Station. There were significant problems from day one. After arriving at 0800 hours, we noticed the police compound was quiet. There was no security at the gate leading into the compound and there were no Iraqi Police in sight. We soon found the police who were

on-duty. They were all sleeping inside the station. We angrily woke them up and were informed that they didn't work during the hours of darkness. While I had a conversation with the chief of police, one of my squad leaders spoke with a couple of the lieutenants. We both came to the same conclusion about their work ethics. They truly didn't understand about community policing and how to serve their community. It was a long conversation, but we were able to convince the police chief that policing was a continuous operation. He now understood this included operating during the night

After conversing with the chief of police, I realized that their work ethics were not the only problem. There was a serious logistical problem and it appeared getting supplies and essential equipment from the Iraqi system was impossible. I had my squad leaders generate a list of needed supplies. Other than the common materials, the list included second chance vests, weapons, ammunition, police vehicles, fuel, computers, and so many other mission essential items. We focused on the weapons and ammunition and soon found out that there was a serious accountability problem.

Every police officer had been issued a pistol upon graduation, but there were many officers who no longer had possession of their assigned weapon. In addition, at one point, there was an AK-47 assigned to the police station for every police officer authorized. Some of the AK-47 were missing. Although hard to prove who was responsible since there was no system of accountability, the missing weapons were lost or stolen. The missing weapons were reported through our chain of command. More importantly, I directed the police chief to ensure every police officer had at least one assigned weapon. Our second priority was the ammunition, which we quickly resupplied. We were able to acquire ammunition for their assigned pistol and AK-47 from the ammunition supply point on our FOB.

The assessment of Al-Balat Police Station showed the same problems as the Al-Dora. These police stations were in bad shape and we knew that in addition to training them on basic policing, we needed to focus on other areas. These areas included training the leaders on administrative responsibilities, intelligence gathering, operational management, and logistical requirements. Although this was a lot of information to teach a group of people, our biggest challenge was their ideology. The majority of the Iraqi people we were working with at these two Iraqi Police Stations were not motivated. They did not want to work long days and apply the effort necessary to police their country.

My lieutenant and I, along with the squad leaders, developed a training schedule for both police stations. We focused on basic police responsibilities, but also applied ourselves to changing their work ethics. We immediately identified the informal leaders and this made the biggest difference. These informal leaders pressured their peers to do the right thing and we saw a noticeable improvement in their commitment and devotion to duty. Although we saw improvements, training the Iraqi Police continued to be a struggle. We often

caught them sleeping and letting their guard down.

During an afternoon in June, insurgents drove a vehicle born improvised explosive device (VBIED) into a Baghdad IP Station. Although this was not my platoon's police station, the VBIED caused devastating results. We now had their undivided attention and their security improved. Another problem we faced was the attrition rate of police officers. After investigating the cause of high attrition, we found their families were being threatened by terrorists. We explained they had to endure this hard time and serve their communities. This worked for some and didn't for others. The constant focus on recruiting Iraqi Police helped keep the numbers up, but neither station reach 100 percent of their authorized strength.

At the end of this deployment we conducted another assessment of both Iraqi Police Stations. They had both improved, but still faced significant problems. Police officers were still working without necessary equipment. Several officers were borrowing second chance vests, ammunition, and their police vehicles were in constant need of repair. The logistical problem had not improved and if we didn't acquire the equipment, they operated without. This issue was brought to the attention of the Iraqi Minister of Interior, but we soon found that corruption was alive and strong. The corruption seemed to be at every level of government and the police system. Everyone seemed to have a price, but we knew this was something we couldn't fix at the platoon level.

The performance level of the Iraqi Police had significantly improved. The training paid high dividends and the Iraqi Police seemed to be excited. We also encouraged them to compete against each other for certain police tasks. The competition built esprit-de-corps and made training exciting. There performance level was not at the level it needed to be at, but we came to the conclusion that it would take several years. This conclusion was validated during my next tour to Iraq in 2007. This time I deployed as the first sergeant of the 58th Military Police Company. We were assigned to the Diyahla Province in Muqdadiya. My company was responsible for more than twenty-four Iraqi Police Stations throughout the province.

The squad leaders from my company meticulously assessed each police station. There were still several problems, but it was obvious the Iraqi Police had improved since I had re-deployed from Iraq in 2004. Three years later, they had become more focused, proficient, and dedicated. However, the logistical problem that existed during my last deployment was still an issue with every Iraqi Police Station in Iraq. There police vehicles often experienced mechanical problems and obtaining fuel was almost impossible. The police officers would often purchase fuel with their own money. The corruption was also still evident at all levels of their government and police chain of command. The police chiefs were responsible for paying their subordinate officers and they all complained they were receiving less money than they were promised.

Force protection was still a problem. The Iraqi Police had become com-

placent in securing their police compounds. Unless we forced them to secure the entry point, they would allow vehicles and personnel to approach without a simple search. It was another challenge to get the officers to commit to security and understand it was for their safety. We were relentless, but unless we were physically present, they wouldn't secure the compound.

Training the Iraqi Police proved to be one of the toughest challenges of my career. The true challenge was to understand the Iraqi culture and way of life. Once my Soldiers and I realized we would never change their ideology and mentality, we started to see progress. We had to interpret and explain the concept of operation through the eyes of an Iraqi. I don't think the Iraqi Police will ever operate at the level of the American military or civilian police. They don't apply the same importance and have accepted a certain level of loss. This acceptable loss is very different than that accepted in the American culture, which is the most valuable lesson I learned. They are not Americans and we were operating in their country.

MSG James T. Coleman displays what is the key element in the success of a NCO, adaptability. In his work he tells of learning what his new position entailed, receiving training, and then implementing that training in Iraq. On the team he discovered his purpose and role were to advise, teach, and mentor Iraqi leadership in all Battlefield Operating Systems during training and combat.

MSG James T. Coleman
"Military Transition Team Process Experience"
Brigade Senior Enlisted Advisor, 3rd Iraq Division

Throughout my military career of over 21 years, I had been on multiple deployments and never knew what a Military Transition Team (MiTT) was. When I came down on the assignment for the Military Transition Team, I had a lot of questions that need to be answered. What is the mission of a Military Transition Team? What is their role in the Army? The only person that I thought that could answer these questions was my Command Sergeant Major (CSM). At the time, he had no clue what a MiTT was either. I then went online to the Fort Riley, Kansas website to learn more about my future job. The website really didn't provide the definition of what I was going to do; it just provided general information. My answers to those questions would come on January 28, 2007. After arriving at Fort Riley I checked into the Welcome Center and everyone that was there had their own ideas of what we would be doing on this "MiTT". For about a week, we still had no idea what we were doing due to everyone having different date orders of report to Fort Riley. Once everyone finally arrived, we reported to the theater. They finally gave us a briefing of the break-down of

what the function is of the MiTT. The break down consisted of, from top to bottom: division, brigade and battalion levels. Division consisted of fifteen different branches of military operation specialists with ranks starting at 0-6/Colonel thru E-6/Staff Sergeant. Brigade consisted of 10 personnel with ranks 0-5/Lt. Colonel thru E-6/Staff Sergeant. Battalion consisted of 11 personnel with ranks O-4/Major thru E-6/Staff Sergeant. Once the levels of operations were explained, we then were given a training outline of what was to occur within the next 72-90 training calendar days.

With over 600 personnel in the auditorium, we were each individually assigned a level of responsibility, i.e. division, brigade or battalion. This was when we found out whether you were the Officer in Charge or the Noncommissioned Officer in Charge of your team. The system for selecting personnel to their positions was based on date of rank and not by military occupation specialty. I was assigned as the brigade senior advisor, Noncommissioned Officer in Charge. This responsibility consisted of three maneuver Battalions and the Headquarters Service Company which had a total of 2,475 Soldiers. Once this occurred we were further separated into three divisions, nine brigades, and twenty-seven battalions. After everyone had been assigned their role, only the division, brigade and battalion commanders and sergeant majors were briefed by the first infantry brigade commander, sergeant major and staff. At that point, we were given our schedule of our daily basis operations while at Fort Riley thru the point of deployment.

The first day consisted of everyone checking out of their hotels and into the Camp Funston barracks. This training area was set up to immolate a forward operation base (FOB) in Iraq/Afghanistan. Once we moved in, we began the in processing portion i.e. administration, finance, SGLI, wills, medical and dental procedures. The biggest part was the medical; this point was the elimination process. If you were found to have any injury which hindered your ability to deploy, this was the time to prematurely detect it so that any substitutions for personnel could be made. After the medical screening, individuals were then further assigned to their geographical area of operation being either Iraq or Afghanistan. At that point, you were given your counterpart's e-mail, which was already forward deployed to that area of the country. This allowed dialogue and any exchange of information needed to assist you before arriving. In addition, we were also given an information booklet of those areas' culture, language, customs and religious beliefs. We also had the opportunity to meet face to face with Iraqi civilians. They were especially hired for the purpose of teaching proper etiquette and customs. Some examples included drinking or eating what was offered whether it was consumed or not. It was also inappropriate to have a drink or bite before actually being given the consent by the host. They particularly stressed ways to avoid disrespect to the Iraqis' one of them being to never lie your headgear on the floor or cross your legs. This was extremely beneficial for the purpose of getting us prepared for what lie ahead.

Next, we started to draw the proper equipment i.e., uniforms, boots, weapons, and tactical gear needed. Then we received our vehicles we would use for training along with all its interior equipment i.e., commo, blue force tracker, and weapons. We were to become proficient and everyone was to become licensed.

Communication equipment was especially of importance due to understanding and learning proper radio etiquette. Many had to get use to calling in "nine line medevac", precise grid coordinates, and air strike support. The blue force tracker, which was a system used to plot friendly forces on the battlefield, was especially difficult due to many of us not being exposed to that type of equipment on a day to day basis. Our training on this equipment allowed for a total of twenty hours. For some, the proficiency level was not up to standard as planned. We then received additional training to get us comfortable with the overall use of the blue force tracker system. The weapons needed to be qualified included the fifty cal machine gun, two-forty machine guns, M-4 assault rifle, and the 9 mm handgun. Our training location was the Ft. Riley weapons range. For the next few weeks everyone attended four visits for each weapon qualification, unless further training was necessary. At least one night fire consisted of the weapon's qualification training.

Once our overall training was completed we received our orders and were given a window of 7 to 10 days of when we would deploy. Five days of leave were authorized not to exceed seven because of the deployment orders. Upon our return from leave we were given a 48-hour notification for departure. We loaded all our equipment and personal belongings to one staging area and then headed for the airfield. 167 personnel from the 3rd Iraqi Army Division boarded and departed for Kuwait. The flight was a total of sixteen hours which included a stop in Ireland for refueling. Feelings ran mixed among us, many were anxious to put to the test our training we received while others felt nervous in possibly having to engage in a hostile environment.

Once arriving into Kuwait, Camp Virginia Airfield, we loaded onto transient buses and headed for Camp Buehring, where we would be for a temporary period of 8-10 days. During this period we would participate in convoy live fire training, additional individual weapons training, and received further briefings in the area of assignment each team would be responsible for with their Iraqi counterparts. After completing training in Camp Buehring we headed to the Phoenix Academy in Talia, Iraq. Further cultural awareness, radio communication, blue force tracker, and combat life saver training was conducted for a period of five days. Our final destination was the FOB Sykes in Tal Afar, Iraq.

Upon arrival in Tal Afar we were greeted by our MiTT counterparts. We were taken to our living quarters and briefed on our following 8-10 day transition period, i.e. signing for all tactical and technical equipment (over 4 million dollars worth), overview of our Iraqi counterparts, and familiarization with the other organizations on the FOB. The following morning we were greeted by General Qasis, the brigade commander of the 3rd Iraqi Division, and his com-

mand sergeant major. General Qasis provided us with an overview of his three battalions and their area of responsibility of Tal Afar. This consisted of over 35 square miles and over 200,000 Iraqi civilians. Each battalion was to coordinate and meet with our group at precise dates and times to ensure the transition and operation success continued with the incoming personnel. My purpose and role on the team was to advise, teach and mentor Iraqi leadership in all Battlefield Operating Systems during training, preparation and combat. I also served as a liaison with coalition forces, provided counterparts with coalition effects, provided US and coalition with assessment of Iraqi capabilities and transition timeline to Iraqi control. After all necessary and critical in-processing procedures we were ready to take control from our counterparts on the 7th day.

In conclusion the process and journey of this experience allowed me to quickly learn and adapt to what a Military Transition Team was and its duties. As complicated and tedious as it may have seemed to me, I benefited greatly by being afforded the opportunity to have a first-hand experience. Our diversity and challenges gave us the ability to work alongside dedicated and committed foreign counterparts. In the future many more will begin with the same questions I had about this elite process but perhaps this time someone may be able to identify and clarify to them what a Military Transition Team does.

During his tour in Iraq, MSG Marc A. Roderick served as Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Intelligence Transition Team in Taji. He worked with members of the US Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force. His responsibilities included a wide variety of assignments that assisted not only the Coalition Forces, but also the Iraqis. MSG Roderick points to a few of the problems faced with training the Iraqi Security Forces.

MSG Marc A. Roderick
"Intelligence Transition Team"
Senior Enlisted Advisor, Intelligence Transition Team

I recently returned from the most rewarding and most challenging assignment of my military career. I was assigned to the Intelligence Transition Team (ITT). ITT is the intelligence section of the Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq (MNSTC-I). I deployed to Iraq from 17 June 2007 until 19 May 2008. ITT headquarters is in the US Embassy, Baghdad, Iraq. They further assigned me to the training division of ITT. I worked at the Iraqi Military Intelligence Academy (IMIA) in Taji, Iraq. Taji is located about 20 miles northwest of Baghdad or about an hour driving distance from the capital.

The entire notification process got messed up from the word go. At the time of notification, I was a sitting first sergeant and still had at least ten months

left in my assignment. I was to attend the First Sergeant Course in Vilseck, Germany beginning on 4 June 2007. One Tuesday afternoon, the operations officer, Major Huston called me into his office and informed me that I had been tasked by name from the Department of the Army to go and fill an intelligence position in Iraq. He had no further information. He didn't know where I was going or what I was going to do when I got there. He told me it was going to be an individual augmentee assignment and I would have to go to Fort Benning first. Thirty minutes later, Major Huston called me back into his office and had more news for me. He informed me that the brigade operations officer had just called and my assignment was being sent back to the Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM) operations officer for deletion. He told me the INSCOM operations officer was getting to the bottom of it and not to worry about it. As far as I knew that was the end of it. I put the tasking out of my mind and went about my business preparing for school.

About three weeks later Major Huston called me back in. He said he had some good news for me. I wouldn't need to prepare for the First Sergeant Course. He told me I was back on assignment for the individual augmentee posting in Iraq. The tasking had reared its ugly head again. Supposedly there was some big error made in the selection process, but there was no fix for it. So I was to report for training in two weeks. He also wanted to know what I knew about it. I informed him that when we talked the other day it was the first I had heard of it. Everyone in the chain was pointing a finger at me and saying I had to have requested the assignment, because taskings don't come down like this. Another surprise was that the brigade commander wanted to have a face to face discussion with me. Ordinarily that wouldn't be such a big deal, but the brigade headquarters was forty-five minutes away. So I jumped in the truck and headed down to Darmstadt. The brigade commander wanted to make sure that I hadn't asked for this assignment. He wanted to look me in the face and see if I was telling the truth. I put his mind to rest that one of his first sergeants wasn't being disloyal and asking to get out of their assignment to his brigade. With the brigade commander pacified, my orders were cut and I was on my way to Iraq.

My first stop was the CONUS Replacement Center (CRC), Fort Benning, Georgia for pre-deployment training. The course there is a pre-deployment requirement when deploying as an individual augmentee, if I had gone with my unit I would have deployed straight from Germany. CRC is really designed for reservists, guardsmen, and civilians who haven't had any or much training recently. The week at CRC was long and boring, and a true waste of time. I went through training that I conducted with my company the month prior. They medically screened me which was completed before I left Germany. They issued me equipment I had in my storage area. After seven long days, we all packed up our equipment and boarded the plane for the Middle East.

Our next stop was in Kuwait. Everyone coming into the theater must process through Ali Al Salem, Kuwait. The theater includes all of the Central

Command area of responsibility; Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan to name a few destinations. I ended up spending two days in Kuwait before I could get a flight north to Baghdad. The flight manifest was at 0400 for a 0900 flight. I had to show up at 0300 for roll call.

I landed at the Baghdad International Airport in the middle of the morning of what was going to be a very long day. I made some phone calls from the terminal and got some much needed guidance about whom and where to report to. The instructions I received were to report to the Deputy Chief Staff Intelligence (DCSINT) section. They were located in Camp Liberty in a place called the Perfume Palace. I had to drag my four bags to the bus stop and wait for a ride to Camp Liberty. I got to DCSINT around noon. I was introduced to the Command Sergeant Major, offered a job, and taken to lunch. After lunch the DCSINT CSM made some phone calls and was told that I was assigned to MNSTC-1 and needed to be in Baghdad that day.

The CSM got me a ride on the Rhino Express. The Rhino Express is the nickname for an armored convoy that transports personnel between Baghdad International Airport and the International Zone (IZ). I got to the Rhino Express just in time for the departure briefing. I transferred my gear over into Rhino and got my battle gear on and prepared for the trip. The trip was quick and uneventful. I arrived in the IZ around 1830 and was dumped in the middle of Baghdad. There was no terminal, no phones and no way to contact anyone to pick me up. I could only wait for my new unit to come pick me up. It seemed worse at the time, but I only had to wait about forty-five minutes.

The section's executive officer picked me up and took me to headquarters. The executive officer introduced me to the Unit Commander, a department of defense civilian and some of the key personnel. Half an hour later the senior enlisted on the ground, prior to my arrival, showed up. He took me to the temporary quarters and then to the chow hall. That was the end of day one in Iraq, not a good way to start a year long deployment. Day two did not get much better. No one knew what they were going to do with me. I was the senior enlisted service member on the ground and should have been assigned to the headquarters section. The Master Sergeant filling that position was just changed out one month ago and the senior officer did not want to make another switch. That still left the question of what to do with MSG Roderick. Three days later, the decision was made to ship me to the MI Academy in Taji.

Thursday afternoon I boarded a UH-60 Blackhawk for the short flight to Taji. Major Mueller an Air Force intelligence specialist picked me up at the flight line. We stowed my gear in the back of his pick-up and he drove me to our quarters a couple of miles from the flight line. I put my bags in my room and he gave me a short tour. He identified the major attractions, dining facility, post-exchange, recreation facilities, gym, laundry point, morale and welfare facilities.

After the quick tour, Major Mueller took me to our offices. He explained to me how the base was split in half and then divided even further. The base was

split in half between the Coalition and the Iraqi Army. On the Iraqi side the base was split into smaller branch specific sections. The armor section buildings had a green stripe painted near the top of their buildings. The Air Force section had a blue stripe painted around the top of theirs. The signal, engineer, administration and medical corps all had their own sections and their own colors. The MI Academy was in the Air Force section for the first couple of months that I was in the country.

Once we arrived at the office, Major Mueller introduced me to the office staff. The office staff was a Lieutenant Colonel from the United States Marine Corps. He had been in the country for nine months and would be leaving soon. The Executive Officer was Major Mueller from the Air Force; he was leaving in a month. The third officer was from the Navy. He was a Naval Intelligence Lieutenant, equivalent to an Army or Marine Corps Captain. Both of the enlisted Soldiers were from the United States Army Reserve; both were also Sergeant First Class. One was a human intelligence specialist, 97B and the other an all-source intelligence specialist, 96B.

I quickly found out I had many different hats to wear. I was the Senior Enlisted Advisor of the team and was responsible for all the enlisted actions. I was responsible for vehicle maintenance on fourteen vehicles conducted by four personnel. I served as the Administrative Clerk taking care of all of our personnel actions. I was the liaison with the Coalition Units and I would coordinate fuel, petroleum, oil and lubricants with the suppliers. I worked hand in hand with the base billeting officer at the Mayor's cell in order to maintain our small housing foot print. I assumed the duties of the Executive Officer when Major Mueller left the Unit. One of those duties was the Property Book Officer. I had to sign for all the equipment that was signed out to the academy. All the equipment totaled three million dollars. I actually showed up just in time to help the unit out. The property book had not been justified in the monthly inventory for ten months. The property book office had frozen our account. We were unable to conduct any supply actions. I could not sign for equipment, turn in equipment or transfer equipment. I could not pick up any supplies, not even pens or pencils. It was really quite ridiculous that a unit could be locked out of the supply system and still function. Logistics was not the only problem. The billeting office was out for blood. The first time I went in to their office to let them know who I was and which Unit I was assigned too, they were really nice about inviting me in and giving me a seat. They even asked if I wanted some water. Then they laid into me about how the system works and the consequences to my people if I failed to follow the procedures from then on. I provided them with a personnel roster on the spot, thanked them for their support, and went on my merry way.

My logistics duties didn't just apply to the US personnel. I had to assist the Iraqis with their supply system, as well. Their major logistical shortfalls were food, fuel, and water. The most precious and difficult commodity to maintain

was a good supply diesel fuel. The concept of a fuel shortage in Iraq is quite absurd. After all Iraq is one of the largest producers of raw petroleum in the world. But absurd or not, I was constantly going to local commanders trying to get a few hundred gallons of diesel for the academy. The reason the fuel is so important is because the academy was powered by two huge mega kilowatt generators. These two generators sucked down 70 liters of diesel an hour each. They were the heart of the academy; without them there was no power, no electricity, no computers, and no air conditioning.

Another problem was water. To correct this problem, the academy was recently renovated and added to the Camp Taji water grid. The problem was that the local water grid was broken more than it was functioning. We often had to borrow tank trucks and transport water to the academy. The days we had to transport water, all we did was transport water nothing else got accomplished that day. It took us six hours to move the thousands of liters of water required to run the academy.

Food, the human fuel, always presented a difficult problem for the Iraqis. They had their dining facility, but it was very poorly designed and maintained. We had to completely renovate the entire dining facility. It took us two months to get the contract written and the job completed. Actually two months in Iraq, two months from concept to completion is a miracle, but when you are on the ground and can't take care of your troops it is a very long time. Once the dining facility was complete, the next problem became the food. The commandant would send his guys out twice a week to get the produce for the next couple of days. The difficulty came when the purchasers got ambushed, robbed, and killed. That happened three times before we started to send these guys out under the cover of darkness when the academy was asleep. This change in tactics stopped the robberies.

At the academy, we had six courses of study when I showed up. All the students who came to the academy were required to first complete the Basic Military Intelligence Course (BMIC). BMIC was designed to give the students a beginner level of knowledge in order to create a base level of knowledge to advance into the specialty courses. BMIC lasted four weeks and culminated with a map training exercise. After graduation from BMIC, the students would move on to one of the specialty courses.

The specialty courses were Intelligence Analysis, Counter Intelligence, Human Intelligence, Signals Intelligence (SIGINT), and Reconnaissance and Surveillance (R&S). These courses were designed to provide specific training in one intelligence area of concentration. The specialty courses lasted five weeks with a one week field training exercise at the end. The entire class would come together during the exercise and form an actual functioning Military Intelligence company. This would be quite a week for us advisors, we had to chase 300 hundred students and 56 advisors around Camp Taji checking on training.

My responsibilities in the academic arena were very important to the suc-

cess of each and every class. I was the academic advisor to the lead instructor, the second in command at the academy. Together we established the year long schedule for Fiscal Year 2008. We also initiated a few very successful programs. We started a testing program to ensure the students were learning the material. First, we started with a weekly exam in the BMIC course. We developed three separate multiple choice tests. We needed three tests because the Iraqis feel if they can see someone else's exam it must be ok to get an answer or two. Then we supervised the creation of weekly tests for the specialty courses. We used this opportunity to train the specialty course instructors and make sure they knew their area of expertise. The Iraq instructors always wanted to stick with essay type answers, but the advisors insisted on multiple choice answers. The main reason for this was the translation time and quality. Both of these created difficulty providing quick and accurate feedback to the instructors and the students. The answers would have to be translated and then the translation would have to be checked to make sure it was good to go.

The largest and most in-depth project was the revision of the entire program. The courses had been written in 2004 by US contractors. Everyone at the academy was discovering a lot of material just didn't apply anymore, so we had to update, revise, or just delete some of the classes. The lead instructor and I along with four senior instructors and two interpreters set out to revise the courses. We spent a week on each course and went slide by slide through every class. The process was very long and took us 14 to 18 hours on some days to get through the scheduled classes. In the end, we had a pretty good product. The school commandant, the ITT commander, and the senior advisor were all very pleased with our work and appreciated our hard work.

I was also the advisor to the BMIC, SIGINT, and R&S courses. Being the academic advisor to the academy, it made sense to be the BMIC advisor. BMIC is the most important course at the academy. Even if a Soldier couldn't return for a follow on class, BMIC provided them with the entry level intelligence training. They became a great asset to their organization. I am a SIGINT Soldier by profession and thoroughly enjoyed my time working with the few classes we did fill. As in the US Army, SIGINT is a hard intelligence disciple to sell to commanders. The commanders can't hear the informant, see the images, or touch the raw data, so it is hard to trust SIGINT and even harder to use it properly. The SIGINT program always suffered students due to the lack of understanding. Also, the technical side of SIGINT further limited the number of students. Advising the R&S course was the most challenging of all the courses. We were trying to pass on advanced surveillance techniques to these Soldiers who hadn't learned how to conduct basic combat patrols. We had to take the entire program back to basic reconnaissance and combat patrolling. I remember looking into the eyes of the instructors who thought they were doing such a great job.

My redeployment followed the same stop-overs as my deployment. I went from Taji to Baghdad to Kuwait to Fort Benning and finally back to Germany.

My deployment was complete, mission success, well-done Soldier. My trip had changed many lives along the way; mine, the advisory team, and the Iraqis.

MSG Sean P. Kelly served as the First Sergeant of HHC, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division before he went to assist the Iraqis at the Joint Communication Center. There he worked to ensure communications between the Iraqi army, police, fire, and ambulance services were maintained. He found tough conditions, power outages, and a shortage of water.

MSG Sean P. Kelly
"Lending A Helping Hand"
Iraqi Special Forces LNO, HQ, 3rd BDE 2nd Infantry Division

Operation Arrowhead Ripper had a major impact on Al Qaeda in Iraq in the Summer of 2007. When I deployed to Iraq I was the First Sergeant of Headquarters Company 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division. Not like any position I had up to this point in my career HHC was a challenge.

If you ask any senior NCO that has had an HHC they will reinforce this belief. I depended largely on the senior noncommissioned officers to help me manage the everyday operations and they were very supportive. The brigade set up a provisional battalion to manage the separate companies and HHC was in this battalion

After my tenure as the HHC First Sergeant, I took an assignment to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) cell of the brigade. This was a cell that was put together to interact with the Iraqi army and security forces of the country as well as the government.

The battalion commander (BC) was actually the Deputy Brigade Commander as he fulfilled a dual role. A very dedicated officer, but if you ask anyone he was very impulsive and what he said was final. He was strapped with managing the Engineer Company, the Signal Company, the Military Intelligence Company and the Headquarters Company of the Brigade.

Operating on their own without his constant supervision, they may not have performed at the level they did. He had a lot of ideas, as you will see one in my personal experience, which in the end I thought was a great idea.

We flew out of Baghdad at around midnight in June 2007, and later arrived with a mix of staff officers and NCOs. I had no real idea what my mission would be and hoped to get a good day's rest and some chow after our arrival. You see, my OIC had flown out the day before and didn't really brief us on what our missions were. The ISF cell was set up to facilitate communications with the Iraqi Army and Police. Our cell consisted of two captains and two senior NCOs. I will just call them CPT B, CPT G, SFC S, and myself.

When I did land it was about 0100 and I met the HHC commander on the LZ. He got everyone moving where they were supposed to go. I found my cot and put my bags down.

Shortly after CPT G arrived, he informed our meeting with the battalion commander at his Stryker at 0900. So we decided to meet for breakfast at 0800 (at least I could get a couple hours sleep). Well, the battalion commander meant we were leaving at 0900. Fortunately for me, I had my bag loaded and was ready to go before 0900 not so for CPT G. He arrived with a massive duffel bag and was dragging it to the Stryker as the battalion commander was expressing his displeasure, not only to him but also to another Soldier from the signal company.

After 0900, we got rolling and left from the forward operating base (FOB). We traveled along one of the MSR's and it wasn't very far and an IED hit our trail vehicle a FOX. As luck would have it, there was only a blown front tire and minor injuries inside. We had to return to the FOB and we moved back slowly with the damaged vehicle. Upon return, the battalion commander did a damage assessment and a quick AAR with the personnel that were not injured. This hit the timeline and delayed the Battalion commanders plan so he was a little "fired up".

We started movement again after we got another vehicle and moved to the government center. There was an engineer platoon from 3/1 CAV pulling security and they had a compound with a gate right next to the place I would be working.

The building I was to be working in was right next to the compound guarded by the engineers from 3/1 CAV. The building was under renovation by some workers from the Philippines that were managed by a retired American service member. The compound with the engineers had a small DFAC and there was a large building, some temporary buildings, and my home was a small one story building with four rooms in the front and a so called latrine in the back.

I say so because the water came from a tank, which was subject to being empty. The commodes were just a hole in the floor. The large building had latrines but they also had water tanks subject to being empty and the commodes were the same. The temporary buildings had the sit down commode we are more accustomed to but it was about 100 meters from the building I stayed in.

The day we arrived, I informed the battalion commander I would secure our place to stay and was under the assumption things were squared away. I went to talk to the platoon sergeant of the engineer platoon running the compound and he didn't give me a warm reception. We talked a little bit and he told me he had to wait to get the key to our room. So I said I would return and I left to return to the Joint Communications Center (JCC).

CPT G was upstairs in the police office where we initially decided to set up operations. We brought a communication platform. We had an NCO with us and the signal company commander to make sure we would have communication. CPT G wanted to make sure we knew how to keep systems operating so he asked for a quick refresher class before they left.

I realized though that the mission assigned to us, as a brigade did not leave much room for taking time to be warm and friendly. We just needed essential equipment right away so we could start our mission. The room they gave us had two bunk beds with crappy old mattresses for us to sleep on. We would make it work.

We had two intelligence Soldiers with us at the start and an interpreter. We were set up and I told CPT G he should take the day shift and I would take the night. So began our two month mission.

The JCC had representatives from the Army, police, fire, and ambulance services. We were upstairs at the beginning but found it would be better to be down with the all representatives of civil services. So we moved down to the first floor after the first week.

As the work continued things in the building improved and it started to look nice. This did not remedy the morning power outage and the daily routine of starting the generator to keep our communication systems operational. I looked forward to this time because it was almost my time to go to breakfast. I pulled the night shift with one Soldier and I would send him to chow just after he started the generator. The Iraqi NCOs had difficulty setting up a clean-up roster for the latrine and it was not a nice place to go. The latrine upstairs was much cleaner, because Iraqi Soldiers as opposed to the police maintained it. My first night was awkward because there were a lot of small arms fire in the area and one Soldier and myself would spend the night with no interpreter. As time passed and we got familiar with the area it got easier. We were basically coordinating operations with the Iraqis to control safe movement on the battlefield.

There were a lot of births happening and the ambulances needed to move constantly. We developed a system where the Iraqis would ask for a clearance and we would clear the route. They would give us start points routes and end points and we would request clearance. There were some hiccups at the start, but things got better. We did many basic things to help the Iraqis like providing some pain relievers, bug repellent, or just giving some advice. There were many nights I would find myself on the roof trying to show them how to fix a television satellite dish. These were simple kind gestures but they meant a lot to the Iraqis.

As things developed and we became known to the US units in the area they would contact us directly if they had questions about Iraqi operations. We even coordinated safe movement of units through our battle space. The most trying reports were about things happening outside our area of operations. The Iraqis looked to me for answers and I couldn't give them because they were outside the control of my unit. We got better and better as the days passed. I was learning Iraqi and the folks I was working with at night were learning English. They saw us as the representation of the United States so I always tried to present a good image. We grew as a team on the night shift and CPT G developed systems and his own team during the day.

I know what we did paid big dividends on the battlefield and protected the lives of many Iraqi civilians. So my hat is off to our BC for coming up with this brilliant idea. Yes, it was a little painful and I would rather have done something else. I realize now how that made us part of the team and sent a big message to the Iraqis.

There are many individual events that I could talk about but I think what I should address is the importance of being visible. The Iraqis gained trust in us and felt that we were enduring their hardship. I was concerned for them as most of them were under a death threat and could not return home. One police captain had a twelve-year-old son and he would occasionally stay at the JCC because the enemy was threatening to kill the oldest son as a scare tactic.

Maneuver brigades should use this as a model and have a functioning cell embedded with a host nation. The brigade is the right level because it provides direct communication to division headquarters. Representatives from the fire department, police, army, and ambulance services are essential.

The use of a seasoned officer and a senior NCO to oversee operations proved to be the right level. Asking a junior officer or junior NCO to be isolated from the unit may be a difficult task based on experience.

The communication platform must be somewhat mobile and able to provide communication to higher continuously. It is advisable to have a primary and secondary means due to message traffic and systems failure.

Interpreter support is necessary to insure the correct information is relayed from sender to receiver. There were times we sent a message not properly translated and this slowed operations and could have resulted in a disaster.

1SG Keith De Vos tells of how he and his Soldiers of the 65th Military Police Company conducted Police Transition Team Operations with the Iraqi Police in the Mahmadiyah district to establish order. His unit received responsibility for five Iraqi police stations, one Joint Security station, and the Mahmadiyah District Headquarters. They worked with the Iraqis and produced an effective fighting force, which stood against the Jaysh al Madi.

1SG Keith DeVos
"Shia Uprising"
1SG, 65th Military Police Company (Airborne)

I assumed responsibility of the 65th Military Police Company (Airborne) on 1 June 2006. My commander, Captain Sean W. Doyne, and I knew that shortly after my arrival to the unit we would begin preparation for deployment to Mahmadiyah, Iraq. What we didn't know is that our time together as a "Command Team" would culminate in three days of intense fighting against a determined

enemy in the town of Mahmadiyah, Iraq. We had both been deployed numerous times before to both Iraq and Afghanistan and intended to use our previous deployment experience, as well as the experience of our combat veterans, to prepare the company.

My first order of business was to reorganize the unit. The company had fallen prey to the Army's life-cycle program and the vast majority of our leadership had been reassigned or returned to civilian life. Our Modified Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE) gave us 170 Soldiers broken down into three line platoons of 42 Soldiers and a headquarters platoon of 44 Soldiers. Our total strength was below 40% and of that 40% numerous Soldiers were unfit for deployment. I decided to take advantage of the remaining combat veterans I had in the company and started to frame the platoon leadership. I had learned many lessons by observing the 108th Military Police Company (Airborne) and the 23rd Military Police Company go through the process of "filling" with new Soldiers and leaders. The most important lesson I learned was that we could not count on a timely fill of Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) prior to receiving the skill level 1 Soldiers I knew was coming. My choice to fill the NCO ranks from within was the best decision I could have made. Corporal became the dominate rank in the company and the few remaining senior NCOs spent countless hours mentoring and preparing these new Corporals for their new found responsibility.

CPT Doyne and I, along with our operations team, conducted a mission analysis of our mission and chose to train on only a handful of tasks we felt would be the most significant in Iraq. The cornerstone of our training was Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) and marksmanship. The unit spent the better part of nine months on ranges and in MOUT cities all across Fort Bragg. As our deployment date drew closer we felt confident that our training had been on target and would serve to pull the unit through the fifteen month deployment.

On 14 December 2007, we arrived in Baghdad with 155 Soldiers and were airlifted to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Mahmadiyah, Iraq. FOB Mahmadiyah is in the northeast corner of the "Triangle of Death just southeast of Baghdad. Mahmadiyah is Shia dominated and is heavily influenced by Jaysh al Madi (JAM). JAM is the militant wing of Muqtada al Sadr and was once heavily targeted by coalition forces. Mahmadiyah is also infiltrated by the BADR Corps which is also a Shia militant group that opposes JAM. These two groups have a lengthy history of fighting against each other and coalition forces.

We were tasked organized under the 3-320th FA BN, Task Force (TF) Red Knight, 3 BCT, 101st ABN DIV. Our mission was to conduct Police Transition Team operations in support of the Mahmadiyah Qada. We assumed responsibility of five Iraqi Police stations, one Joint Security Station and the Mahmadiyah District Headquarters. We learned that the Iraqi Police were heavily infiltrated by JAM and would carry out JAM directed attacks against both the BADR Corp

and the coalition forces despite a fragile cease-fire.

During the months of January and February 2008, the squads did a tremendous job of establishing rapport with the Iraqi Police and garned an incredible amount of actionable intelligence on the few remaining Al Qaeda fighters that were operating in and around Mahmadiyah. Relationships began to blossom and we felt a slight sense of security in the city. All of that changed in the month of March. Tensions began reaching new heights as Muqtada al Sadr threatened to lift the cease-fire he had in place with the Iraqi government and coalition forces. With the withdrawal of British Forces out of Basra, JAM saw an opportunity to take up arms again. JAMs attack in Basra began a domino effect across Iraq and it came to a head for us on 28 March 2008 at approximately 1600 hours, day one of the Shia uprising in Mahmadiyah.

I was in the tactical operations center monitoring a series of attacks by JAM against the 4/3 Iraqi Army Brigade in Mahmadiyah. At approximately 1600 hours we received reports that JAM had attacked the Mahmadiyah Police District Headquarters and taken weapons from the arms room. We deployed a squad to the station and directed three additional squads to "stand up" as a Quick Reaction Force (QRF). As the first squad, under the leadership of SSG Matthew Hill, arrived to the station they came under heavy small arms and Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) fire. They successfully entered the station and established security. The decision was made to send two additional squads to the station to provide additional support and one squad to the Iraqi Army Compound to provide close-in QRF support. I arrived to the station with the second of three squads and was immediately briefed on the situation. Once the third squad arrived I gathered up the three squad leaders and established a defensive perimeter of the station.

As our defense plan took shape, we received heavy small arms fire from a Mosque that was to the northeast of the station. The intense training and preparation payed off and my Soldiers returned very accurate and well aimed fire. The firing stopped and for the remainder of the night we received intermittent small arms and sniper fire. Although we were very tired, morale was extremely high and I was impressed with the junior leader's efforts to keep the Soldiers motivated.

The morning of 29 March brought more intense fighting. I observed two AH-64 Apache Helicopters conducting low level reconnaissance of a neighborhood just south of the station. As the helicopters transitioned north they began to receive heavy machine gun fire from their south. I contacted the helicopters on their net and informed them of the threat. After some "cat and mouse" games the pilots were able to locate the enemy threat and neutralize it with Hellfire Missiles. The remainder of the day was defined with intermittent small arms fire from hide sites all around the station. As the sun set and the final prayer was complete, the station came under a heavy barrage of small arms fire, which I believe was the infiltration distracter of a sniper.

At approximately 2000, members of the Iraqi Police (IP) assigned to the Mahmadiyah District Headquarters assumed positions within our defense prepared to take up arms against the JAM network. These IPs were taking a big risk fighting against the dominate influence in Mahmaydiyah Qada, but after talking with them I was convinced they had enough of the corruption and wanted a better life. The real test would come a few hours later when we started receiving sniper fire.

At approximately 2300, we received accurate sniper fire to the defensive positions located on the roof of the station. I requested Scout Weapons Team (SWT) support and at approximately 2315 hours two OH-58Ds arrived on station (call-sign Lighthorse). The lead helicopter was directed to our internal net and I gave him a quick Situation Report (SITREP) and directed him to what we believed was the location of the sniper. Lighthorse remained on station with us for approximately two hours and was relieved by an Aerial Weapons Team (AWT) consisting of two AH-64 Apache Helicopters (call-sign Viper). Viper decided to orbit south of us as approximately 5,000 feet in an effort to bait the sniper into firing again at us. The goal was for the sniper to fire, giving away his position by muzzle flash, which Viper could clearly see with their optics. The bait worked and the sniper began to engage us again. Unfortunately the pilots couldn't see the muzzle flash and were unable to engage the enemy. Viper came off station at approximately 0400 hours for refuel and during the twenty minutes they were gone, the sniper had made a mistake and moved locations and engaged us again. This time his muzzle flash was observed and we returned heavy fire in the direction of the muzzle flash. Viper arrived back on station around 0420 and was cleared to engage the area that we positively identified as the location of the sniper. After Vipers engagement, the city remained calm until the first morning prayers occurred on the 30th. It is important to note that the IPs that assumed positions on the roof stood their ground and were attempting to engage the enemy along with my Soldiers.

The morning of the 30th was again defined by intermittent small arms fire. Due to coordinate offensive operations by the Iraqi Army, the small arms fire was considerably less. At this point my Soldiers, the IPs and I were operating off of short "cat naps" and limited food and water. Despite the hardships, the Soldiers morale was at an all time high. Never had I been more proud of my Soldiers and their actions in the face of the enemy. At approximately 1500, we were relieved by two squads from the company and returned to FOB Mahmadiyah for some much needed rest.

Although enemy battle damage assessments are classified, it is fair to say that Iraqi Army forces along with coalition forces won the day. A lot of lessons learned were garnered from this experience. The most important lesson learned is that our training plan, based on an honest and in-depth mission analysis was excellent. The decision to select only the necessary training tasks and then perfect those tasks paid off. I learned to rely heavily on the decisions of our junior

NCOs and that under fire they could be counted on to execute the mission in accordance with the commanders' intent.

I learned the significance of coordinating with the "land owners" for support and that once that support arrived to take control of it and use it to our advantage. TF Red Knight was truly a class act and treated us as one of their own. TF Red Knight (under the leadership of LTC Zemp and CSM Watkins) provided us not only with attack aviation support, but with QRF and logistical support throughout the fight.

The Iraqi Police performed well fighting against not only an enemy of the coalition, but the strongest influence in their area. Their performance truly brought the squads that were embedded with them and the individual IPs together. Days following the uprising, my Soldiers reported back that their relationship with the IPs was stronger then ever and that they believed real progress will be made.

Twenty seven Soldiers earned their Combat Action Badges during the three days of fighting. Every Soldier fought courageously and not a single Soldier took a "knee" despite the extremely long hours. The company walked away from the fight stronger and with a deep sense of pride for what they accomplished.

CONCLUSION

On June 30, 2009, the situation in Iraq had been stabilized to the point that US forces could leave the cities of Iraq. This accomplishment validated the efforts of "the Surge" and clearly displayed that by increasing troop numbers to stabilize the situation, improving the common citizen's life, and training a professional army and police force that the conditions could be established for saving the Iraqi nation.

In March 2008, General David Petraeus told National Public Radio that "the Surge" had created a degree of hope in the Iraqi people. He realized that there are many challenges the Iraqi nation must meet, but still significant progress had been made.

The stories of the NCO's during "the Surge" make one thing clear—adaptability is the hallmark of a good NCO. Thrust into a situation, often a different situation than they had trained for, they took concepts and made them realities. In combat NCOs learned to deal with insurgent attacks and IEDs. They helped the Iraqi people by building the elements needed for successful communities and a Security Force they could depend upon.

GLOSSARY

1SG: First Sergeant
al-Qaeda: Terrorist group responsible for 9/11
AMF: Afghan Militia Force

ANA: Afghan National Army
AN/PEQ-2: An infrared target pointer/illuminator/aiming laser used on a variety of U.S. Army weapons
AOR: Area of Responsibility
ASF: Afghan Security Forces
ASOT: Advanced Special Operations Tactics
BAF: Bagram Air Field, former Soviet base in Afghanistan
BDOC: Base Defense Operations Center
BMO: Battalion Medical Officer
CDS: Containerized Delivery System
CENTCOM: Central Command
CJSOTF-A: Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan
COLT: Combat Observation Lasing Team
CQB: Close Quarters Battle
CSM: Command Sergeant Major
EPW: Enemy Prisoners of War
ETT: Embedded Tactical Trainers
FDC: Fire Direction Center
FOB: Forward Operating Base
HMMWV: High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle
JCET: Joint Combined Exchange Training
Jingle truck: Russian 2 ½ truck
K2: Karshi-Kanabad, former Soviet airbase in the south-central Uzbekistan
LRTC: Leadership Reaction and Training Course
MEDCAP: Medical Civil Action Project
MSG: Master Sergeant
ODA-XXX: Operational Detachment Alpha (the three numbers following the hyphen identify group, battalion, company, and team)
OEF: Operation ENDURING FREEDOM
OEF-P: Operation ENDURING FREEDOM-PHILIPPINES
OIF: Operation IRAQI FREEDOM
OPFUND: Operations Fund
OPLAN: Operations Plan
PRT: Provincial Reconstruction Team
RIP: Relief in Place
SF: Special Forces
SF O&I: Special Forces Operations and Intelligence
SFARTAETC: Special Forces Advanced Reconnaissance, Target Analysis, and Exploitation Techniques Course
SFC: Sergeant First Class
SFD-K: Special Forces Detachment-Korea
SGM: Sergeant Major

SGT: Sergeant
SOCPAC: Special Operations Command Pacific
SOF: Special Operations Forces
SOR: Statement of Requirements
SOTIC: Special Operations Target Interdiction Course
SOT: Special Operations Tactics
SSA: Supply Support Activity
SSG: Staff Sergeant
Taliban: Islamic Fundamentalist who governed Afghanistan prior to Operation Enduring Freedom
TOA: Transition of Authority
TOW: Tube Launched Optically Tracked Command Link Wire Guided Missile
USASFC: United States Army Special Forces Command
USSOF: United States Special Operations Forces

After crushing the Iraqi Army, the United States hoped that Iraq could be rebuilt as a peaceful and prosperous nation. National elections at the end of 2005 further brightened the hope for Iraq's future. However, the breakdown of Iraqi society along ethnic and religious lines made this hope seem nearly implausible by the end of 2006... There were those who said the war could not be won and called for immediate withdrawal. However, the US decided on a more prudent course of action. On January 10, 2007, President George Bush announced "The New Way Forward" (which would be shortened to "the Surge")...

Product of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy