

NCO/ Soldier of the Year

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LIGHTNING STRIKES



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UNITED STATES DIVISION – CENTER

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Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month



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Photo by SGT Edwin Gray

2011 HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity to honor the accomplishments of Hispanic Americans who continue to shape the character of our military through their vibrant cultures and commitment to service. During this month, we celebrate the diversity that makes America stronger, and we recognize the many ways Hispanic Americans have enriched our Nation.

Hispanic Americans have a proud tradition of service to our Nation. In times of great consequence, they have answered the call to defend America. These brave men and women bring honor to America, and we are grateful for their service and sacrifice. Since the founding of our country, Hispanic Americans have volunteered to defend the United States from threats at home and abroad, serving our Nation with valor. Forty-four Hispanic Americans have been awarded the Medal of Honor for gallantry and bravery in defense of our Nation. Hispanic American service men and women continue to answer the call, and for that we owe them and their Families a tremendous debt of gratitude.

I hereby proclaim 15 September 2011 to 15 October 2011 as Hispanic Heritage Month in the Tropic Lightning Division and United States Division-Center. Hispanic Americans' imprint distinctively contributes to the diverse culture of United States Division-Center. I strongly encourage all personnel of the Tropic Lightning Division and United States Division - Center to take advantage of the programs to commemorate and honor Hispanic Americans and the significant role they play in making our Nation strong, prosperous, and free.



RAY A. DEVENS
Command Sergeant Major, USA
Division Command Sergeant Major

Lightning in the New Dawn!



BERNARD S. CHAMPOUX
Major General, USA
Commanding



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Commanding General
MG Bernard S. Champoux

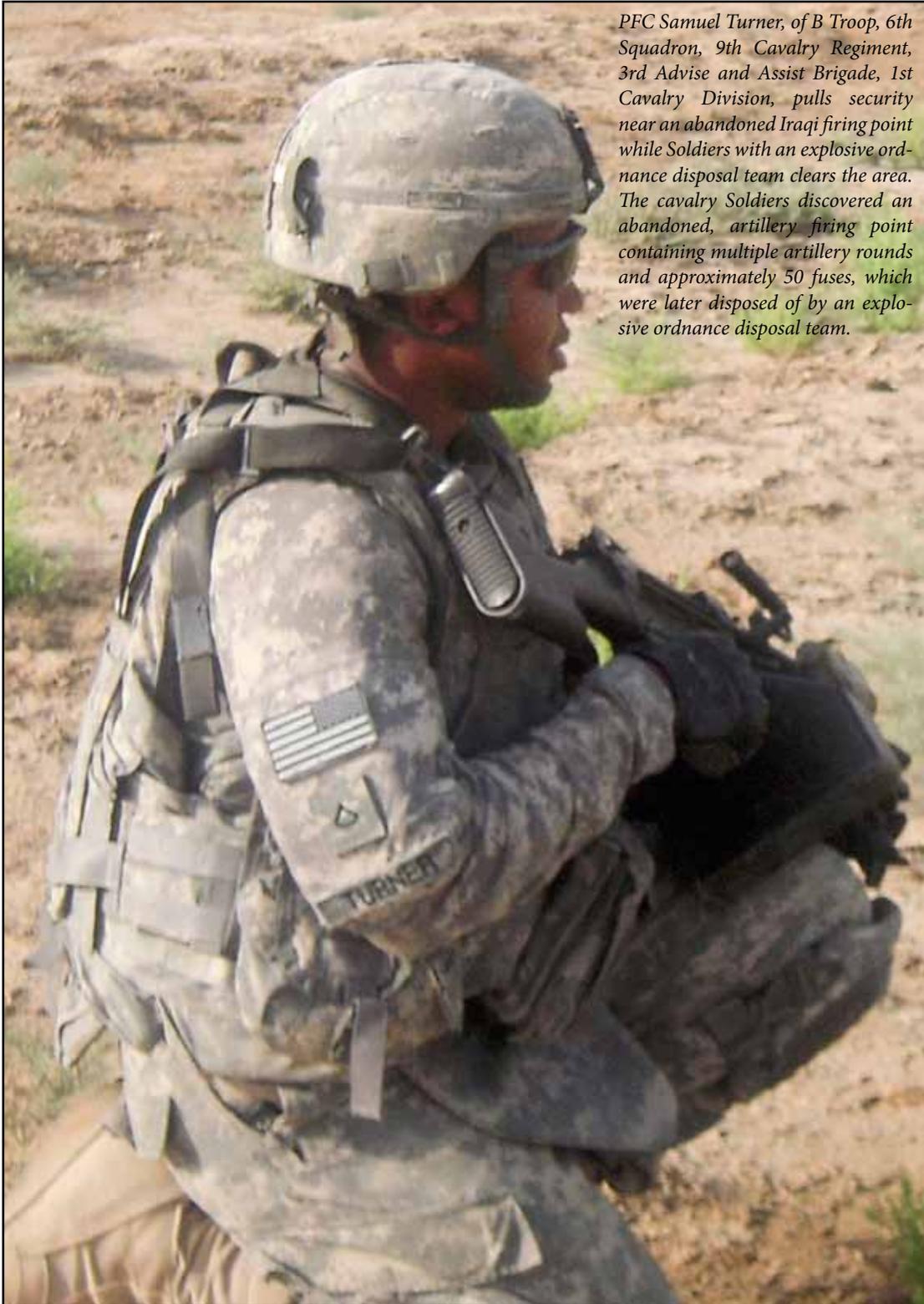
Command Sergeant Major
CSM Ray A. Devens

Public Affairs Officer
LTC Sean Wilson



Keeping the area safe

Cavalry Soldiers with 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, work with EOD and Iraqi Army counterparts to neutralize unexploded ordnance



PFC Samuel Turner, of B Troop, 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, pulls security near an abandoned Iraqi firing point while Soldiers with an explosive ordnance disposal team clears the area. The cavalry Soldiers discovered an abandoned, artillery firing point containing multiple artillery rounds and approximately 50 fuses, which were later disposed of by an explosive ordnance disposal team.

Story and Photos
by 2LT Stuart White

During a recent routine patrol, 1LT Christopher Morrow, a native of Austin, Texas, and a platoon leader with B Troop, 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, spotted ordnance on the side of the road, outside of Al Kut.

Upon investigation, the Soldiers in the platoon discovered an old, abandoned, Iraqi artillery firing point containing multiple artillery rounds and approximately 50 fuses.

However, the Soldiers didn't have the equipment necessary to dispose of the unexploded ordnance, which is a potential risk to civilians and could also be used by insurgents to harm both U.S. Soldiers and Iraqi Security Forces. Because of this risk, the platoon returned with an explosive ordnance disposal team to dispose of the artillery rounds and fuses.

When explosives or potential weapons are found, EOD is called to follow platoons into the various sectors around Iraq to analyze and safely dispose of them. EOD refers to these rounds as explosive remnants of war.

These explosive remnants of war are dangerous because it is unknown when the shells were made, what they are made of, the condition of the fuses, who left them, or how long they have been there. Patrolling platoons take explosives like these very seriously and treat each one as a potential threat.

"Even though there was no evidence of terrorist activity around the old firing point, disposing of leftover ordnance keeps the Iraqi civilians and U.S. Soldiers safer, so finding any small amount of explosives is important," said Morrow.

Along with EOD, the platoon partnered with Iraqi Army Soldiers to secure the site. Working with their Iraqi Army partners is a part of every mission the squadron executes. The Iraqi Army facilitates all operations and works with United States Soldiers to accomplish each mission.

"Executing the mission is always our first priority, but a key element of that mission is working with the Iraqi Security Forces because they are ultimately in charge of security in Wasit province," said SFC Dallas McKay.

The Soldiers and their Iraqi Army partners escorted an EOD team to the old Iraqi firing point and then secured the area for EOD to gather the explosives.

The Soldiers spread out over a large area and began clearing several old firing points, uncovering several high explosive, illumination and white phosphorus rounds as well as numerous fuses.

"Every mission is designed to prevent terrorists from harming innocent people or attacking Soldiers. (The) platoon showed a lot of awareness finding these rounds, and it supports our mission," said LTC Cameron Cantlon, commander of 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment.

EOD gathered all the explosives took them back to Contingency Operating Base Delta, and disposed of them using a controlled detonation.



An explosive ordnance disposal team member evaluates unexploded ordnance in order to safely and securely move it to an appropriate place for disposal.



1LT Christopher Morrow, a platoon leader with B Troop, 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division talks with Iraqi Army Lt. Muhammad before they leave for an abandoned Iraqi firing point near Al Kut.

CPT Matthew Cyr, commander of Company C, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division conducts the inaugural climb on the Sapper Tower, at Contingency Operating Base Adder. The tower was constructed in front of the company headquarters building on COB Adder and serves as both an inspirational motivator and training device for combat engineers training for Sapper School. (Photo by 1LT Peter Thompson)



Sappers climb to new heights

SPC Doxton Johnson climbs the Sapper Tower with a 40-pound ruck sack before conducting a six-mile foot march at Contingency Operating Base Adder. (Photo by 1LT Peter Thompson)



Story by
SPC William McGuigan

Soldiers from C Company, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, recently developed and constructed a 20-foot, portable steel rope tower. With the support of PVT David Poirier, a welder and mechanic assigned to Company C, materials were procured and cut to strict specifications. After two weeks of manufacturing and welding, the tower's frame was complete and ready for assembly.

SPC Doxton Johnson led a small team of Soldiers from the company and assisted in the raising of the tower, which was anchored next to the company's command post.

Thanks to the generous donations of several families of unit members, the company was able to raise enough money to purchase new ropes for the tower, which now allows two climbers to negotiate the obstacle at once.

To date, the new sapper tower has seen more than 150 climbs, each intended to instill confidence and physical toughness in the Soldiers of the unit. Designed to replicate the rope tower at the Sapper Leader Course, it has also become an invaluable training tool for those Soldiers who aspire to earn the Sapper Tab.

At the end of August, the company as a whole decided on a new standard that would be set forth for the remainder of the deployment: before each mission, every Soldier on that patrol will climb the tower – an affirmation that sappers will overcome any obstacle.





An officer with the 9th Iraqi Army Division hands out backpacks to a girl and her mother during a humanitarian aid and school supply distribution at an elementary school near Camp Taji. Soldiers with Company A, 1st Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, helped provide perimeter security for the event.

Getting Ready for School

'Vanguard' Battalion Soldiers help 9th Iraqi Army Division with school supply drop



Two girls inspect each others' new backpacks during a humanitarian aid and school supply distribution at an elementary school near Camp Taji, just north of Baghdad.

Story and Photos by
SGT Daniel Stoutamire

Proving that the desire for the latest and greatest in back-to-school fashion is not solely an American phenomenon during the late summer months, Iraqi families came out to two local schools to receive humanitarian assistance in the form of school supplies from the 9th Iraqi Army Division in the vicinity of Camp Taji, just north of Baghdad.

Soldiers with Company A, 1st "Vanguard" Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division helped provide perimeter security for the school supply distribution, which occurred at the Sommer and Morocco Elementary Schools, and provided more than 450 backpacks and seven large boxes of school supplies to local children.

"The main idea [behind the event] was to let the civilian population see that the Iraqi Army cares about their well-being, beyond simply their physical security," said MAJ Anthony George, a member of the Stability Transition Team attached to the battalion. "It also gives the IA the opportunity to interact with people in a [different] setting."

While the 9th Iraqi Army Divi-

sion lead the passing out of the supplies, many of their Soldiers worked with Company A to provide perimeter security and maintain order.

"We controlled the outer cordon to ensure the site was secure and to ensure an even distribution of supplies," said 1LT Zechariah Thiry, a platoon leader with Company A.

At both locations, the Iraqi Army Soldiers were warmly received and there were no incidents during the supply distribution. The gratitude of the recipients and their families was apparent, even as they waited in line. Among the most popular items were the 'Ben 10' backpacks, though it is unknown whether those who got them were fans of the American cartoon series, or just happy to have brand-new backpacks.

The ability and initiative shown by the Iraqi Army in orchestrating the event will have a lasting impact in the neighborhoods affected, said George.

"The actual backpacks will have a tangible, if minor, impact on these childrens' education," he said. "Them seeing their army showing concern and supporting their civilian activities will have a positive effect on the relationship between the population and the IA."

SSG Matthew Craig, from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Armored Division, escorts a contractor to the Iraqi Army side of Contingency Operating Base Taji.



Providing Security for Success



CPL Justin Twiss, left, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Armored Division, watches over civilian contractors while they work at Contingency Operating Base Taji. Soldiers with Headquarters and Headquarters Company have been providing security for civilian contractors who have working with Iraqi Army personnel as U.S. forces continue to transition out of Iraq.

Story and Photos by SSG Mike C. Norris

Contingency Operating Base Taji is split into two sides. On one side there are U.S. forces, who are preparing to transition their partnership with Iraq, to the U.S. State Department. On the other side is a thriving Iraqi Army base filled with the commotion of Iraqi Soldiers busy at work.

As part of the transition, U.S. forces have been working with civilian contractors to advise the Iraqis in the training of several technical aspects such as logistics, weapons repair, vehicle maintenance, and technical systems used for training.

The contractors rely on U.S. Forces to provide security so they can complete their task.

This mission was given to the Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Armored Division.

Everyday, Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company provide security for contractors who work on the Iraqi Army side of COS Taji.

“We facilitate movement for the contractors and ensure their safety,” said SSG Matthew Craig, the sergeant of the guard with Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

As the sergeant of the guard, Craig visits the various sites where his Soldiers work each day and coordinates with the contractors to provide the security they need.

“You have to stay flexible,” said Craig. “They might not need anyone in the morning, but later that day, they might need everyone we have.”

To ensure that every site is safe, the Soldiers stay with the contractors until they return to the U.S. side of the base each day.

“The people really getting the job done are the non-commissioned officers on the sites,” said Craig. “They are doing a really great job. I couldn’t ask for more.”



Members of the Anbar Police Directorate's media team gather around as SGT Tony McCaslin, a broadcast journalist with the 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, explains video techniques at the APD in Ramadi. McCaslin taught a video class to the policemen to improve their video skills, which will increase their ability to keep the public informed about the Iraqi Police's mission in the province.

2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division trains Iraqi police on video storytelling techniques

Story and photos by
SGT Kissta M. Feldner

Iraqi Police in Anbar Province have been conducting their own missions, capturing terrorist group leaders and securing the province with less assistance from U.S. Forces as time goes on. As a way to ensure those roles and missions are documented, the police decided to stop relying on external media sources and take matters into their own hands.

Enter SGT Tony McCaslin, a broadcast journalist with the 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 82nd Airborne. An award winning broadcast journalist, McCaslin was chosen to provide an instructional class to the media team at the Anbar Police Directorate in Ramadi. As part of the unit's mission to advise, train and assist Iraqi Security Forces, McCaslin taught the policemen basic videography skills to improve their ability to tell their story.

"The better their stories are, the more people will want to watch them," McCaslin said. "And if the people know the Anbar Police have the facts, the people will trust them."

Iraqi Police Lt. Ali Fakhri Abbas,

the directorate's media relations and public affairs director, said they noticed the cameramen were making mistakes, which is why they asked for additional training.

"This is our job," Ali said. "And we wanted to get more knowledge from the U.S. forces before they leave."

McCaslin chose to cover basics, such as composition and video sequencing - techniques that make the video more interesting to the viewer. But when the class began he realized even those skills were more complex than most of the policemen were used to.

"Halfway through the class, I found out that some of them didn't even know how to use their new camera," he said. "What a lot of broadcasters would consider basic, they were having trouble with."

Remaining flexible in his syllabus, he quickly changed his sights to covering basic features on the camera. The policemen recently purchased a professional grade video camera, which has different controls and options than their older, handheld cameras. The buttons were also in English, adding one more obstacle for the Arabic-speaking men.

McCaslin familiarized himself

with the settings of the device as the policemen gathered close so as not to miss any important steps. One concern they voiced was that footage they shoot in the sun would become overexposed and unusable. McCaslin showed them how to adjust the camera's filter features to be able to shoot in extreme lighting.

After the demonstration, he handed the camera off to members of the class to perform the techniques covered earlier in the day. The men practiced different camera angles and perspective shots to help them achieve varied effects.

"I could tell they were excited to use the new camera and to figure it out for the first time," he said. "I saw that they really want to do this."

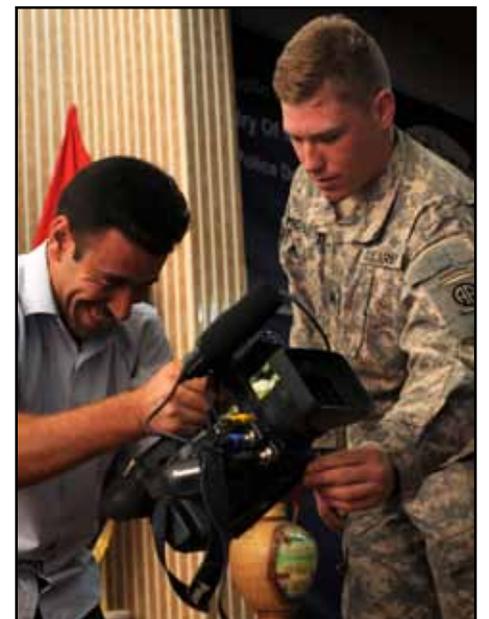
The IP media teams throughout Anbar have worked with Marine and U.S. Army units in the past to improve their video abilities.

After receiving classes and new equipment from the military, they have become an integral part of police operations in Anbar as they have now created their own television program.

'The Punishment' is a widely watched series that highlights arrests made by the police, including

confessions from the criminals and on-the-scene reenactments of the crimes. A broadcast of this type is just one way the Iraqi Police media teams are broadening their outreach to their local audiences.

"They're making that connection between the police and the citizens of Anbar," McCaslin said. "And that makes all the difference."



SGT Tony McCaslin demonstrates how to use a low camera angle to achieve certain effects during a video class at the Anbar Police Directorate in Ramadi.

Staying Connected

Task Force Legion's 'geek squad' works out the kinks of communication

Story and Photo by SGT Scott Raper

Even before all elements of the 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade was fully on ground in Baghdad, there was work to be done by those in the brigade. Members of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade quickly fell in to help pave the way for the entire brigade to conduct its mission as part of Operation New Dawn.

One of those members was SPC Jackson Gudgel of Louisville, Ky. As an information systems specialist, Gudgel mans a brigade "help desk", assisting with any and all issues Soldiers have with their e-mail, networks or general information technologies. The job is a tough and important task considering the necessity of setting up communication and access requirements for every Soldier.

The 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade Soldiers are filling the shoes of the 116th Cavalry Brigade, who rotated out in September. Gudgel said there's a lot to benefit from the opportunity to

work side by side with Soldiers you are replacing.

"It's great to have the 116th still here helping," said Gudgel. "They've been here awhile. They know what's been going on and what kind of problems they have run into. It helps us learn our job better and know in advance what kind of problems we may face."

Not only is transitioning jobs an important task, adjusting to a new environment is as well. Gudgel says the weather could be worse and living conditions are pretty good.

"I'm just trying to get used to Baghdad, where everything is and how to get around. At least it is cooler than Kuwait and chow is great, good meals all around," he said.

Gudgel is mostly looking forward to finding a rhythm in all aspects of the 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade's deployment and doing his job properly to assist all his fellow Soldiers as they all work toward completing the mission in Iraq.



SPC Jackson Gudgel, an information systems specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, works to help keep Soldiers in the brigade connected.



SGT Luther Snow, right, an infantryman with Company B, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, prepares to call in a nine-line medical evacuation request on a radio during the warrior tasks circuit portion of the brigade's Soldier and Noncommissioned officer of the Year competition at Camp Liberty. Snow went on to win the competition amongst the NCOs and will represent the unit at the 1st Infantry Division NCO of the Year competition.

'Dagger' Brigade Soldiers compete for the title of Soldier and NCO of the year

Story and photos by SGT Daniel Stoutamire

Quick—how many nations were present at the signing of the Geneva Convention? What are the six groups individual awards can be grouped into? What are three field-expedient methods of land navigation? Now, imagine pondering these questions having completed—all in the previous 36 hours—an 8-mile road march in full body armor, immediately followed by a rifle range, a mentally-taxing battery of Soldier tasks and drills, and a full Army Physical Fitness Test with chin-ups.

That's exactly what seven candidates did—three Soldiers and four noncommissioned officers—while competing for the right to be called the 2011 2nd "Dagger" Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division Soldier and NCO of the Year and represent the Dagger Brigade at the 1st Inf. Div. competition.

"The NCO and Soldier selected as the NCO and Soldier of the Year are expected to demonstrate a high degree of physical fitness, technical proficiency, demonstrate proficiency in their warrior tasks, and demonstrate support of the Army Values

by their actions," said CSM Rodney R. Lewis, command sergeant major of the Dagger Brigade. "What impressed me most about the candidates was their physical fitness levels and their knowledge of the boarded subject areas."

Though all competitors gave their all and brought credit upon themselves and their units, there could be only one winner per division. SGT Luther Snow, an infantryman with Company B, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment won the NCO division while SGT Steven Salas, a satellite operator with Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, who competed as a Soldier, as he had won the Soldier of the Quarter competition as a specialist, came out on top among the Soldiers.

Because Salas is now an NCO, one of the runners-up in the Soldier division, PFC Robert Hamberg, a tanker with Company C, 1st Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment will represent the brigade at the division competition.

"My fellow competitors all did really well and represented their

battalions really well," said Salas. "There was a kind of camaraderie amongst the candidates, where you push each other, and you don't want anyone to do less than their best."

The formal board was the final hurdle for the candidates, which followed an early-morning APFT. The previous day began at 4 a.m., with the eight-mile road march around Camp Liberty. The road march was then followed immediately by a 'stress shoot' at which the candidates fired 40 rounds at various targets from three firing positions. Some candidates shot extremely well, while fatigue was evident with others. After a short break, the candidates reconvened for a battery of tests on their warrior skills, such as assembling weapons, headspace and timing on an M-2 .50-cal. machine gun and first aid among other tasks.

"Preparing for the competition was a months-long process, and to prepare, I was road marching every week and running every other night," said Snow. "I was constantly drilling on my Soldier tasks until they became muscle memory."

Salas, who as a satellite operator, doesn't usually work with weapons systems like the M-240B and M-249 machine guns, coordinated with his battalion arms room to get his hands on some with which to practice his Soldier tasks.

Both Snow and Salas have told their families of their victory and are proud of their achievements.

"Excellence is demonstrating superiority," said Lewis. "To be selected as the NCO or Soldier of the Year, Soldiers are required to perform every task to the highest standard and prove they are the best in everything they do."

Lewis believes the Dagger Brigade representatives are capable of bringing credit to the brigade at the division competition and even beyond.

"I am confident the winners will represent the Dagger Brigade in an outstanding manner at the division-level competition," he said. "The Dagger Soldiers are prepared to win at the division level today and with continued preparation they will represent the brigade at the Army level."

What MAKES

PFC Rocio Acaba
Headquarters and Headquarters Troop,
3rd Advise and Assist Brigade,
1st Cavalry Division

Growing up in a nurturing Hispanic culture taught me the value of family. My family and I are very close and grounded in values. We do not need to have a special occasion to get together and celebrate. We support and stand up for each other no matter what. When I joined the Army they were extremely proud of me, but also very sad because I was leaving Puerto Rico. My family is the reason why I fight, why I wake up everyday and go to work, for them I give my all. I am proud to be a part of the Armed Forces, because in the Army it doesn't matter where you are from, we are all a family. Like my father always says, "Home is where your family is."

The Hispanic individual that influenced my life is my father. He and his brother were drafted by the Marines to fight in Vietnam. He volunteered for a second tour and then joined the Navy, and retired after 20 years. From the stories he tells me, and the things he can remember, I know he has gone through a lot. He motivates me through my hard times as a Soldier. With this being my third deployment, it is nothing compared to what he and my uncle went through years ago. Without my father, I don't think I would ever have joined the Army. Coming from a close oriented Hispanic background, it is easy to get the support we need to become the people we are today. Without the support of my father, I would not be where I am today, and this is what makes me strong.

SPC Shane Flores
G6 VTC OPS
Signal Company,
Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion,
25th Infantry Division

SPC Shanice M. Xavier
303rd Ordnance Battalion
(Explosive Ordnance Disposal)

The Hispanic individual that makes me strong is my father. He is my inspiration to be a better person. He is my mentor, my counselor, and most of all, my best friend. He supports my decision, but won't hesitate to make a correction. He encourages me to be a better person by motivating and guiding me in my path for a better future. My father is a great listener whom I confide in when times get tough. He always knows the right words to comfort me. His positive outlook on life and personal values have helped shape me to be the proud and successful wife and daughter that I am today.

ME STRONG

CSM Thomas Johnson
Command Sergeant Major
149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade
(Garrison Command)

When I begin to ponder as to how I first was introduced to my first Hispanic friend, it was a very subtle introduction. The Hispanic community has allowed me an opportunity to explore a culture that enjoys life, which involves family and friends. The Hispanic community made me feel as if I was part of a military organization.

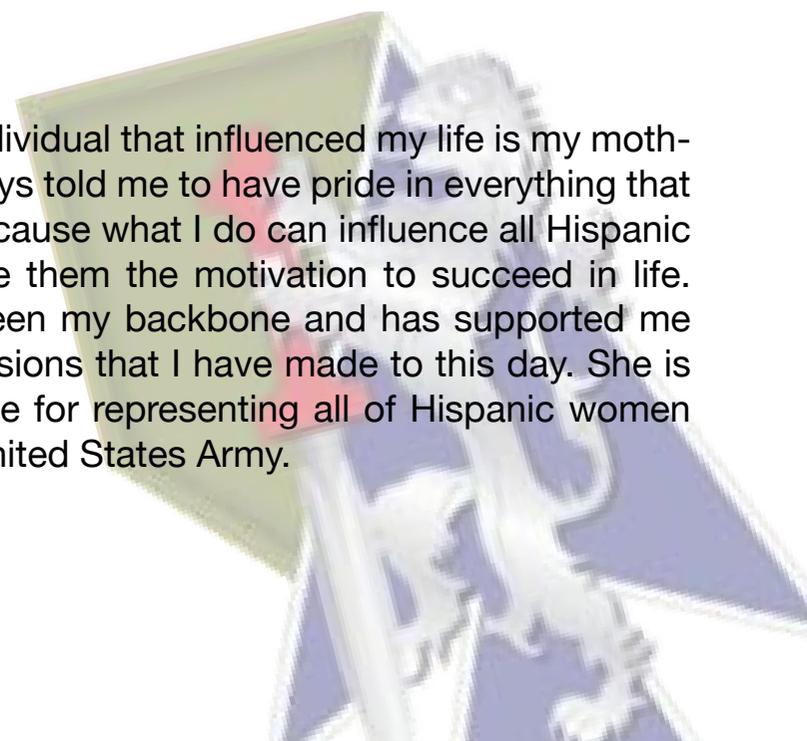


In my time in the Army, I was fortunate to work with a Soldier named MSG Ortega. MSG Ortega was the epitome of what a leader should be in my eyes. MSG Ortega showed me what it means to be a leader who cared about their troops, as he always strived to pass his knowledge on to his subordinates. MSG Ortega taught me to be a mentor to Soldiers, provide Soldiers with a leader that was not afraid to lead from the front, and most of all, guide them in the right path both in the Army, and outside of the Army.

1LT Dan Palmer
Brigade Strength Manager
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
4th Advise and Assist Brigade,
1st Armored Division

SPC Deanna Francois
Human Resources Specialist
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
299th Brigade Support Battalion,
2nd Advise and Assist Brigade,
1st Infantry Division

The Hispanic individual that influenced my life is my mother. She has always told me to have pride in everything that I accomplish because what I do can influence all Hispanic women and give them the motivation to succeed in life. My mom has been my backbone and has supported me in all of the decisions that I have made to this day. She is very proud of me for representing all of Hispanic women serving in the United States Army.



Honoring Hispanic Culture

Story and photos by
Sgt. Edwin Gray

Soldiers with the 25th Infantry Division and United States Division - Center came together Oct. 7 to celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month at Camp Liberty.

The purpose of the gathering was to reflect on the Hispanic commitment in the U.S. military and to inform others about the history of Hispanic culture through dance and ceremony.

The cultural backgrounds of 22 Hispanic countries were displayed and represented at the celebration, and many Soldiers were pleased with the diverse turnout.

"I think the diversity is most important because it creates the dynamics for our force to be multi-dimensional, as opposed to being one dimensional with one type of Soldier," said SSG Emanuel Alvarez, a platoon sergeant with the Personal Security Detachment with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 25th Infantry Division. "The fact that we are from many different places from all across the world and can join the United States Army is a great thing. This Army is a melting pot of people all over the world and that is a great contributor to our success as a military overall."

The hosts said they were extremely proud of being able to present many unique sectors of Hispanic heritage. They also felt the event was a success and were gratified to be a part of it.

"I am proud of who I am and where I come from," said SPC Gina

Palacios an administrative specialist for the command group of the 25th Infantry Division. "We work very hard to have what we have here today and I am so proud of the turnout and everyone that I worked with."

Several Hispanic Medal of Honor recipients were recognized and honored, which many Soldiers at the event felt brought a special significance with it being in a deployed environment.

"I believe being deployed made this event that much special because I actually got to see all of the different Hispanic (people) from different Latin American countries that serve along with me that I rarely get to see," said Alvarez. "It also shows that the Army actually does recognize its roots from other cultural backgrounds so it was very special."

SSG Esmeralda Hernandez, a supply sergeant for signal operations with 25th Inf. Div., along with CW2 Aaron Sargent, targeting officer with the 25th Infantry Division, performed four different types of Hispanic dance including the Salsa in tribute to Hispanic History. Many in attendance said they were impressed by and proud of the overall event. Some felt this showed how diverse the U.S. military is, and it also helps to display many of the various stories within the Hispanic culture.

"We should all be proud of who we are and who we fight for," said SGT Dolores Rivera, a communications shop noncommissioned officer in charge with the 25th Infantry Division. "We are many countries united with many stories but we are all just one Army."



SSG Esmeralda Hernandez and CW2 Aaron Sargent dance during the Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration at Camp Liberty. They performed four different types of Hispanic dances including the salsa in tribute to Hispanic history.



SSG Emanuel Alvarez, a platoon sergeant with the Personal Security Detachment with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 25th Infantry Division gives a speech at the Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration at Camp Liberty.

Story and Photo by
2LT Jonathan Woislaw

Soldiers with Battery A, 1st “First Lightning” Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division helped to facilitate the successful transfer of Joint Security Station Loyalty, their home during their current deployment, to full Iraqi Government control.

As part of a battalion-wide effort, artillerymen with Battery A’s 2nd Platoon conducted multiple joint force protection patrols and assisted with property removal during the base’s last few days, and even hours, of United States Forces – Iraq control. All the work culminated in the timely and safe relocation of the First Lightning Battalion into other operating locations within United States Division - Center.

“I’m very proud of the way our Soldiers responded to the challenge of maintaining a full schedule of combat force protection patrols, while also being able to focus on the extra tasks necessary to sign over the JSS [to Iraqi control],” said SSG Ryan Becker, a platoon sergeant with Battery A.

These extra duties included hours of loading excess equipment and property onto convoys leaving JSS Loyalty, as well as providing security for and supervising contracted workers conducting vital closeout tasks.

The transfer of authority at JSS Loyalty was a significant milestone in a year-long deployment for the Soldiers of Battery A and the First Lightning Battalion as a whole.

“We accomplished a lot at JSS Loyalty—partnering with the 1st [Iraqi] Federal Police [Division] and helping to keep security in our area had real results that we could see day-to-day,” said Staff Sgt. Robert Tressider, a section chief with Battery A. “The battery was ready to move on to another important mission.”

Throughout the entire deployment, the artillerymen of the battalion have taken on the role of a maneuver force. While the formation has not been fulfilling its traditional mission of providing artillery fire against enemy targets, Soldiers have adapted and adjusted to their current mission.

“Good training and solid leadership made the transition to a maneuver, infantry-style mission much smoother than would otherwise be expected,” said Becker.

The closure of JSS Loyalty is seen by some as a move in the right direction on the way home after a year-long effort supporting the Iraqi Security Forces.

“Finishing the mission at JSS Loyalty was a proud moment for me, as a commander, as we are one step closer to the completion of a successful deployment for the battery and the battalion,” said CPT Brian Cotter, commander of Battery A. “We closed that chapter of the deployment and opened another.”

The battalion is now one step closer to going home.

“I’m glad we have the entire battery together again,” said SGT Richard McNulty, a section chief with Battery A. “Now we can move forward together.”

First Lightning Battalion helps close JSS Loyalty



A Soldier with Battery A, 1st “First Lightning” Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division supervises workers removing U.S. military property from Joint Security Station Loyalty. The task of transferring full control of JSS Loyalty over to the Government of Iraq required the combined efforts of Battery A Soldiers over a period of several months.



USD-C PHYSICAL FITNESS FORUM (PFF)

www.25idl.army.mil/fitness

Too Hot to Trot?



Bottom line: Humans can tolerate extended exposure to naturally occurring climatic heat stress if they are gradually introduced to hot environments (acclimatized), adequate control measures are in place, and physical activity is limited. Other specific military situations such as working in engine or boiler rooms, being in certain combat vehicles, firefighting and wearing protective clothing in hot environments can lead to heat conditions so severe they cannot be tolerated for extended periods.

Leadership is the key to safely train and exercise in hot weather. Implementing a well thought out risk management strategy facilitates exercise and military operations in heat. Soldiers should have confidence that they can master the environment through the use of preventive measures. Heat stress refers to environment and host conditions that tend to increase body temperature. Heat strain is the physiological and psychological consequences of heat stress.

- 1) Assessment of risk factors for heat injury and potential heat stress:
 - a. Climate: High air temperature, high humidity, thermal radiation, and low air movement, wind, solar load
 - b. Heat exchange: Influenced by air temperature, air humidity, wind speed, solar, sky and ground radiation, and clothing
 - c. Mission: Increased work intensity, duration and Soldier status
 - d. Uniform: Body armor, over-garment, load
 - e. Nutritional Status: inadequate fluid replacement and nutrition
 - f. Physical Fitness: Sick, less fit, overweight, medications, highly motivated
 - g. Not prepared for the heat (Unacclimatized)
- 2) Develop controls:
 - a. Buddy checks for changes in mental status
 - b. Adequate water and nutrition, fluid replacement
 - c. Modify work and physical activity schedules
 - d. Shade or movement to cooler area
 - e. Medical evacuation planning
 - f. Maintain physical fitness and good health
 - g. Heat acclimatization
 - h. Rest
 - i. Leadership: Proper planning and observation for signs of distress

TRY SOMETHING NEW

With the Army's recent embrace of the new Physical Readiness Training (PRT) program, leaders are now learning and passing on exercises never before seen in unit fitness sessions. Leaders are encouraged to use PRT as a framework for producing and maintaining combat-ready Soldiers but we also encourage unit leaders to try new things.

PRT may be the new standard of fitness training for Soldiers but there are still traditional forms of training (including on-the-job duties) which can help improve and maintain fitness. No matter where the training occurs, always ensure proper supervision is enforced to prevent injuries.



Body weight related exercises, such as the plank, are simple to do and require nothing more than your own body and determination. Exercise routines based on body weight training can give just as good a workout as a gym routine.

BUILDING THE SOLDIER ATHLETE Myth Busters

What You Eat

MYTH

Vegetarian diets are healthier than meat-inclusive diets.

FACT

Eating lots of vegetables is healthy, but cutting out an entire food group-- even saturated fats-- is a bad idea. Meat is a key source of iron, which keeps your energy levels up, allows you to think clearer, and produces enzymes to fight infection.

Fitnessmagazine.com



Leaders should always take temperature considerations into planning PRT sessions with their Squads. The effects of Heat Injuries on Soldiers can last a lifetime and also hinder unit effectiveness as additional preventative measures to protect heat casualties need to be put into place. Proper hydration practices before and after activities in high temperatures can save lives.

TEAM OF TEAMS



USD-C LOOKS BACK AT
OPERATION NEW DAWN 2011

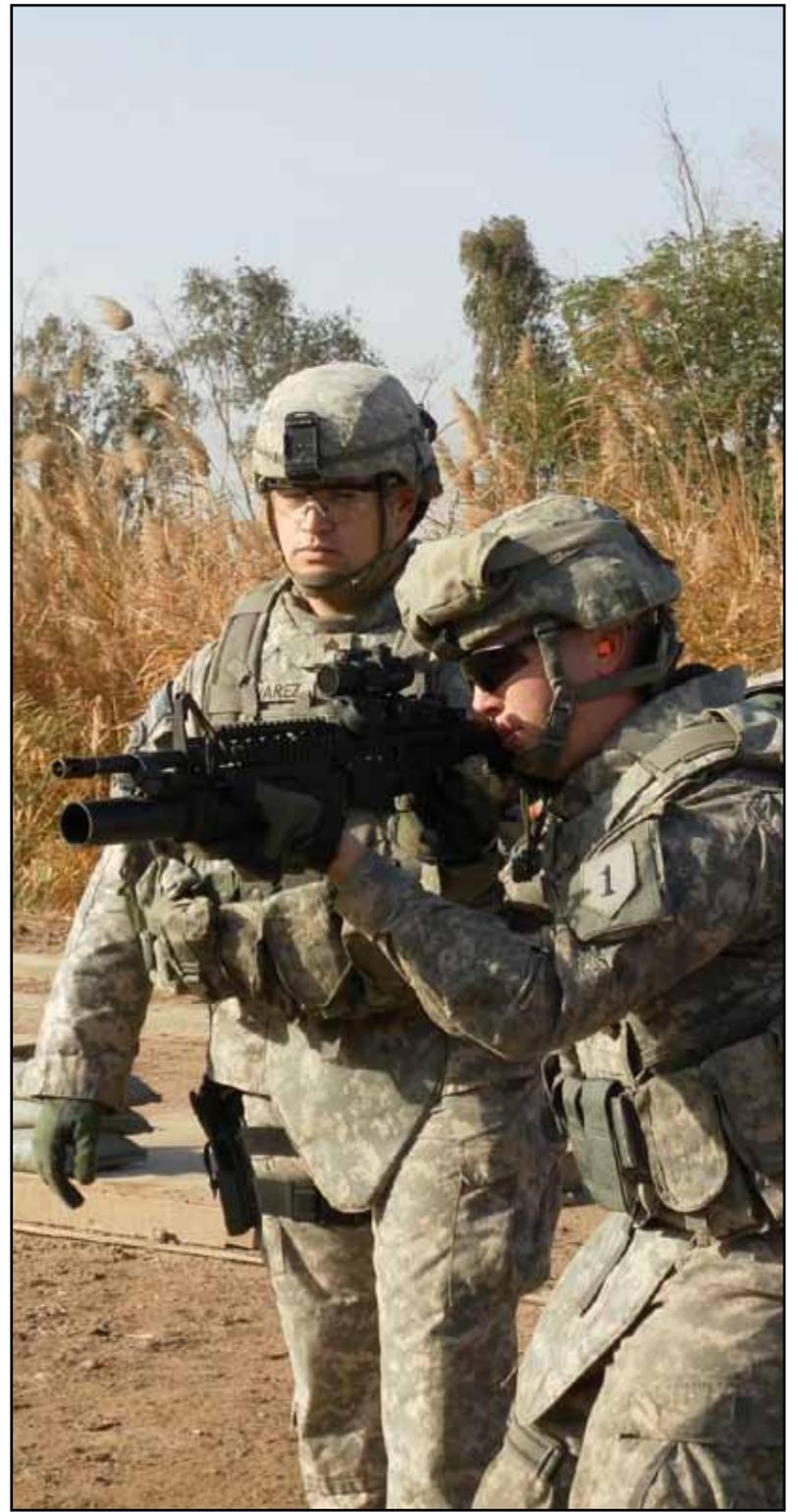
Who we are



Warriors. Leaders. Mentors. Those who make up United States Division - Center are all of those things, and more. It's the basics of who we are and what we do. It's the bedrock of what makes for mission success. It means training hard, passing on lessons learned honoring the past and working together to meet the mission.

Over the course of Operation New Dawn all of those elements have come into play and drawing from those experiences, the diversity among us and the commonality that runs throughout USD-C has resulted in unqualified success. Warriors. Leaders. Mentors. That's who we are.





Partnering for the Future

Partnered training, partnered missions and working together were often the hallmarks of Operation New Dawn. Passing on the skills to be self-sufficient and successful was the focus for many USD-C Soldiers.

Tackling everything from training on basic room clearing procedures and operations in urban terrain to medical techniques and criminal investigative skills, it meant long days that added up greater successes.

It was also running missions together, Iraqi Security Forces and U.S. Soldiers standing side by side. No matter the mission, whether it was a partnered patrol, humanitarian aid drop or any number of other missions, it involved sharing in both the planning and execution phases.

The goal was partnering for success and preparing for the future.



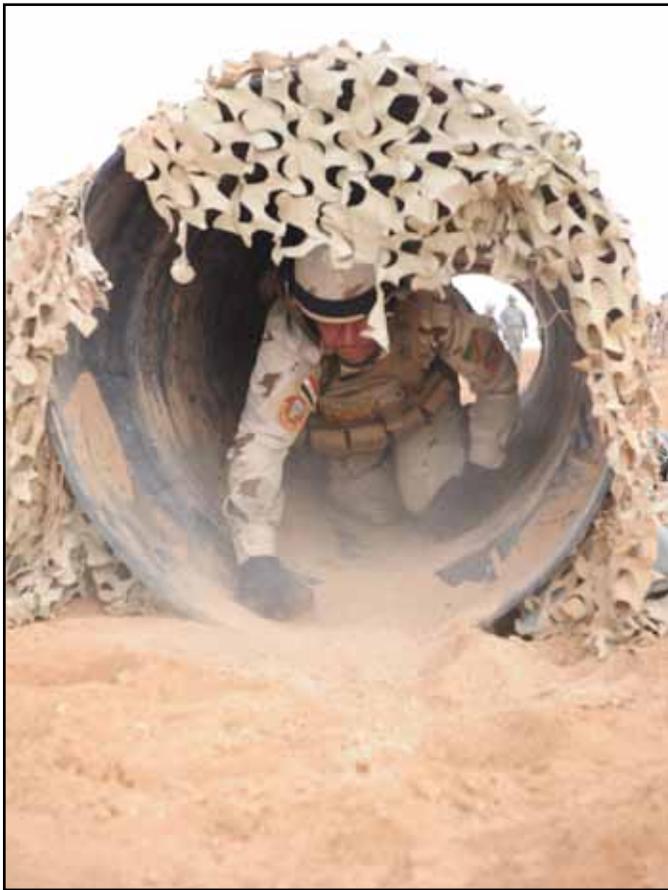


Taking the Lead

As the weeks and months passed USD - Ctroops began taking on a less prominent role in missions. While they were still there to advise and assist as needed, they were there mainly in the background. It was now the members of the Iraqi Security Forces taking the lead with things.

The training of new members was now being done and reinforced by those already in the ranks. The confidence and capability of the force was constantly growing.

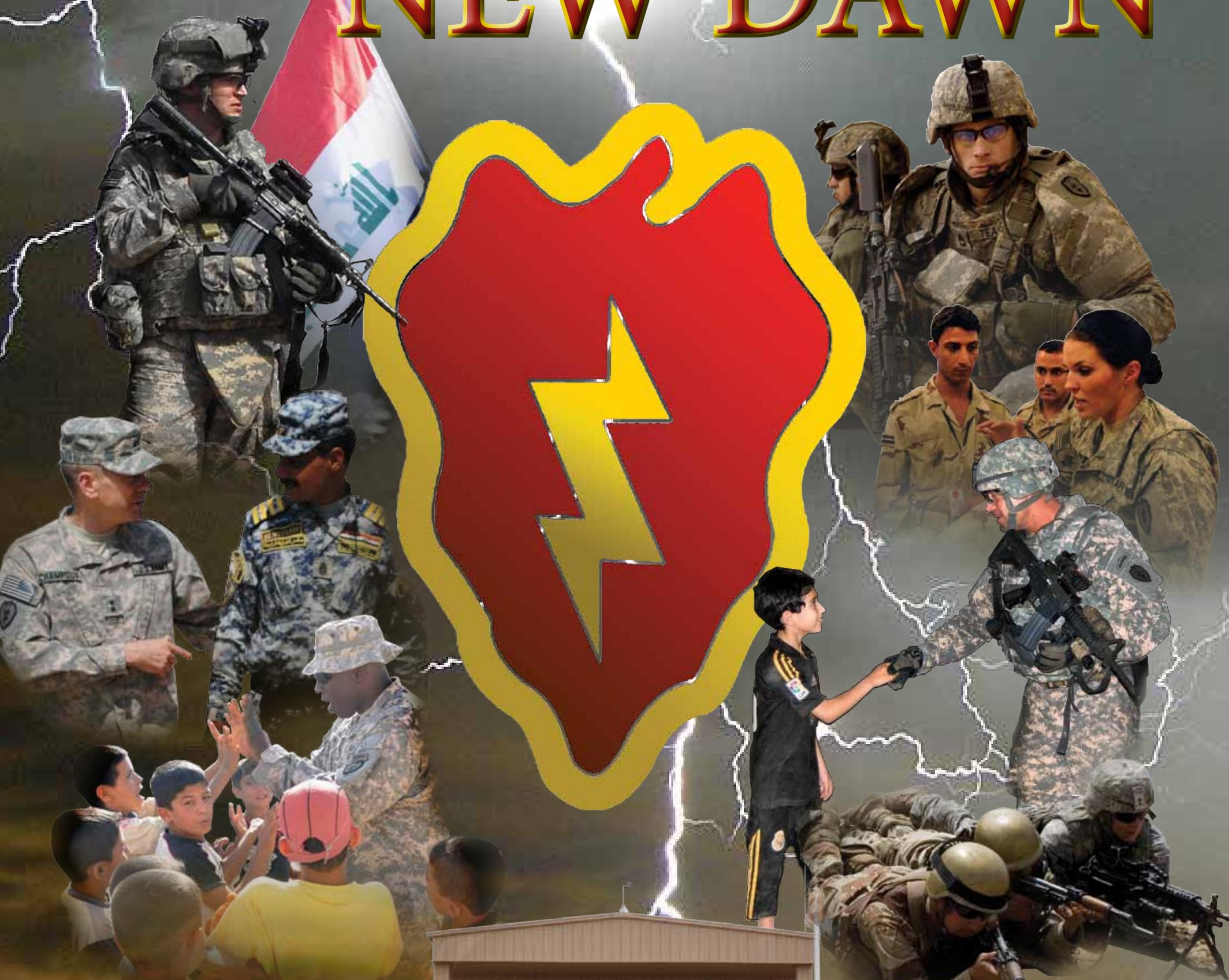
Planning for missions now took on a new meaning as the Iraqi Security Forces expanded their mission set and responded in a greater capacity to provide for a safer and more secure Iraq. From humanitarian assistance missions to security patrols and law enforcement engagements, they are being professionally and skillfully executed with practiced ease.



LIGHTNING

IN THE

NEW DAWN



25th INFANTRY DIVISION