

Leadership Class Begins



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Keeping Soldiers Paid



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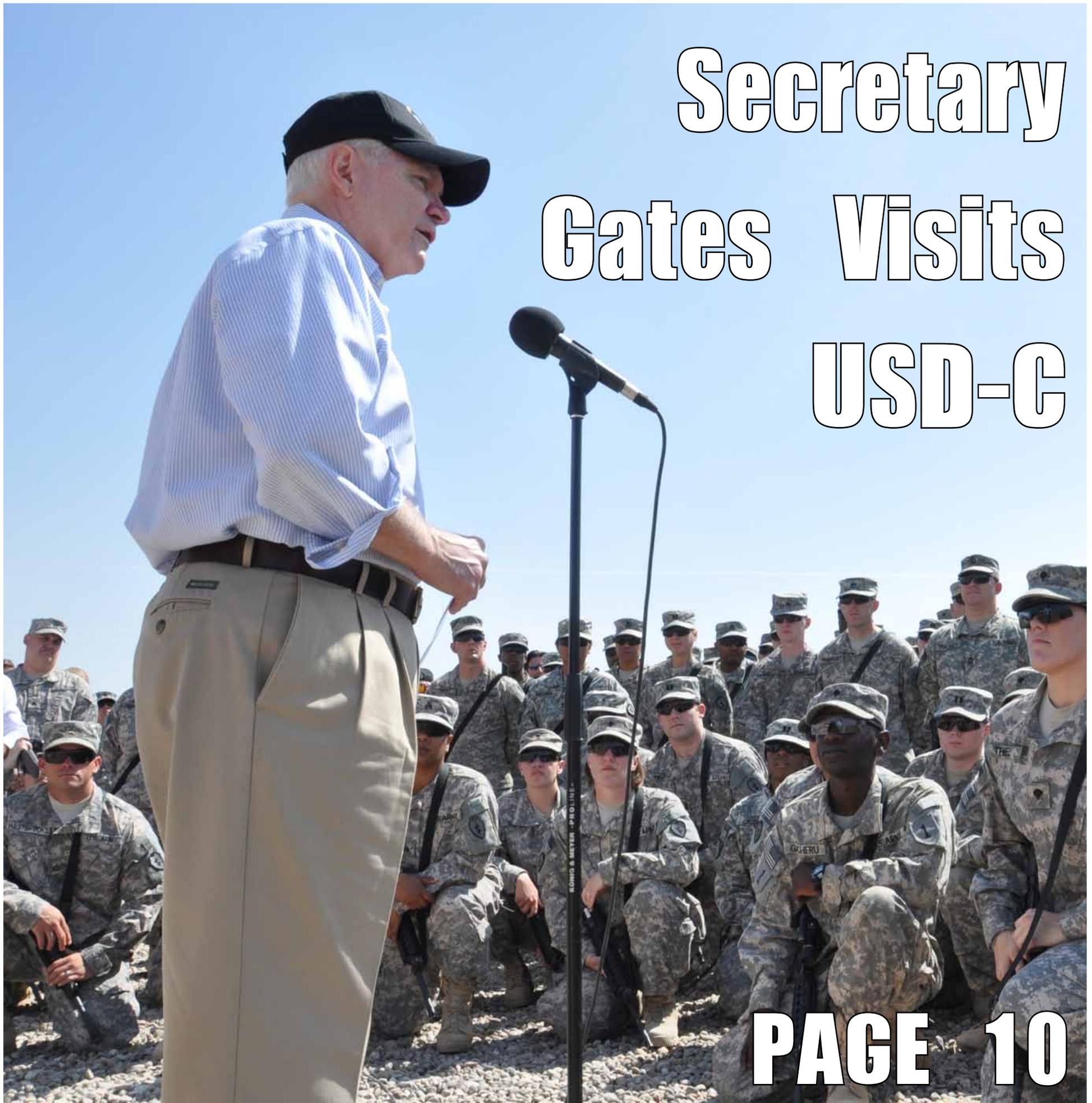
LIGHTNING STRIKES



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Secretary

Gates Visits

USD-C

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Photo by Sgt. Jesus J. Aranda, USD-C

Iraqi Army Investigators use recently learned techniques in real-world case

Story by
2nd Lt. Partick L. Beaudry,
2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C

Just days after completing an investigative forensics course, Iraqi Army law enforcement specialists had the opportunity to put their skills to the test.

Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 25th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division brought in a suspected terrorist who had been caught in his home with bomb-making materials and rockets. While their former instructor looked on, the IA forensic team began systematically collecting evidence, like they had been trained to do.

"It was rewarding," said Bob Wirkner, their instructor, a civilian law enforcement professional attached to D Company, 1st "Dragon" Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division - Center. "They were able to harvest biometric evidence from the subject for comparison against the rockets and associated hardware. This is the type of evidence that is needed for the successful prosecution."

The investigation began by examining the rockets for evidence after they were verified as safe by an explosive ordnance disposal team. On the rockets were a series of fingerprints, all belonging to the same individual.

Fingerprints were then taken from the suspect, along with his DNA.

"They were very professional. They went about their job and col-



Iraqi Army investigators from 2nd Battalion, 25th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division collect fingerprints from a suspected terrorist March 28, days after graduating from an investigative forensics class taught by a civilian law enforcement professional attached to D Company, 1st Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade. (Photo by Maj. Raymond Dillman, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.)

lected evidence like you would expect to see any team of investigators back in the states," said 1st Lt. Benjamin Middleton, a platoon leader with 1st Bn., 63rd Armor Regt. and a Beaufort, S.C., native.

And that is just what was taught in class.

"This training (that had just been

completed) allows the ISF to draw direct comparisons between evidence and a suspect," Wirkner said. "This helps the investigator narrow down their search and leads to a more successful prosecution."

Building the government of Iraq's prosecutorial abilities is an enduring capability that will allow the

Iraqi government to possess a strong and impartial legal system after U.S. forces leave the country. The evidence-based prosecutorial capability currently being taught by the Soldiers and civilian professionals of D Company is one of many practical steps forward to a secure and stable Iraq.



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WHY I STAYED ARMY



MY LEADERS MADE A PROMISE TO ME

BY **Sgt. Maj. Cyrus Netter**, OFFICE OF THE STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE, USD-C



I was 18 and in my senior year of high school in Valdosta, Ga., and I enrolled in Valdosta State College for a dual semester credit and partying was truly a seven-day event. In fact, I was convinced it was a course and I'd surely get credit for completing it that semester. As the semester came to a close I realized that my parents could not afford to pay tuition for me to party all year and there needed to be a change in my life. I talked to my brother, Scotty, about joining the Army as he had enlisted the year prior. I was so proud of

him in his Army greens and infantry blue cords. I wanted to be with him, but he advised me not to take a combat arms MOS, he said to enlist doing administrative or medical work. I enlisted as a 71D, legal specialist, and went off to Fort Knox, Ky., for basic training. The first NCO to impress me was Sgt. 1st Class Johnny Dobbs, my senior drill sergeant. He marched us to our company and he had a voice that sounded like Otis Redding was calling cadence.

I then went to Fort Benjamin Harrison, Ind., for AIT where I met Staff Sgt. Howard Metcalf. He became my mentor and one reason I stayed in the Army. I got recycled into his class after failing a six hour test on summarizing special courts-martial testimony. It was four hours of straight testimony played once. You had to have less than eight errors. He worked with me and got me through that and to this day he has been a mentor.

After AIT, my first NCO was Sgt. 1st Class Michael Dean Bryce who

was hard, but fair, and really made sure that you knew your stuff. He had me doing every small task that you could think of. Many didn't seem to have to do with being a legal specialist. Soon, I began to see the reason for the tasks; I became better at my job than the two others who arrived before me. I met a ton of people—everywhere, anywhere, any section. If you needed something, I knew someone. And, in the end, that's really what he wanted.

Then there was my first OIC, Capt. Joseph T. Frisk, who used to give me hell—or so I thought. We would run five or six miles during lunch in 99-degree heat at a six-minute pace. He also made sure I was taking college courses and if I said I couldn't afford it, he wrote a check to cover it. He had me do legal drafts and put red marks all over like a college professor. But, I got better and they got me additional legal training.

They turned out to be the greatest people you could ever meet.

They took extremely good care of me.

My wife truly gave me the strength to maintain focus over the last 25 years and really let me know that my efforts to do great never went unnoticed. She has always been there. I stayed in the Army because of my leaders, including retired Sgt. Maj. Howard Metcalf, regimental sergeant major Judge Advocate General's Corps; retired Sgt. 1st Class Michael D. Bryce and retired Col. Joseph T. Frisk, who were committed to making me a better Soldier and person. They cared enough to make sure I reached my full potential and they took the time to make sure I grew under their watch. They each made a promise to my family, and the Army, to take care of me and make me better, which they kept. For that I am forever grateful and will continue to serve as long as I have an opportunity to do my best each day and make a difference in the lives of other Soldiers.

TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

BY **Sgt. Maj. Larry H. White II**, NCOIC, USD-C REPOSTURE OFFICE

What has kept me in the Army and why do I continue to stay in? I'm a product of a military family. My father and grandfather both served in the military.

Initially, I enlisted because it was a way to pay for college. Neither my parents nor I could afford to pay my way through college. During high school, I applied for loans and scholarships, but all were denied. I started to believe that going to college was a bridge too far to gap.

My father asked if I had thought about joining the Army. I really didn't give it much thought when he first made the suggestion. Eventually, I took my father's advice and decided to see what the Army had to offer. At the time, they were of-

fering the GI Bill and the Army College Fund. All I had to do was sign up for a four-year enlistment and my college would be paid for. Without hesitation, I enlisted.

Although my initial reason for joining the Army was for college, what actually kept me serving were various leaders I encountered along the way. I will never forget Sgt. Lee Hohfield, my first squad leader.

He was always around from sun up until sun down and was the epitome of the NCO Corps. He set the example and always led from the front. I looked up to him and wanted to be like him. He took care of his Soldiers and always made time for them no matter what the situation was.

I've also encountered leaders that lead from behind their desk. Many look at this in a bad way, but I learned a lot from those types of leaders. It taught me what not to do or be as a leader.

To be an effective leader, you must fully understand what it is like to be led. All I do is pray that I always make the right decision, even if it is the hard one. Soldiers deserve leaders that are willing to be the example, show them what right looks like, and put the Soldiers' needs above their own.

I've made mistakes along the way, but I do know that if you take care of your Soldiers and truly care about your Soldiers, they will always take of you. I have stayed in the Army to make a difference and help generate



better Soldiers to take our military into the next generation.

I have met some great people in my travels and look forward to meeting many more. The Army is not just an organization, it's my extended family and the reason why I continue to do what I do each and every day.

USD-C SPOTLIGHT



Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Evans
1st Bn., 18th Inf. Regt.
2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C

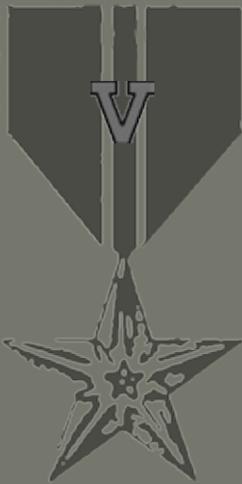


Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Evans, command sergeant major of 1st "Vanguard" Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division - Center and a Columbia, S.C., native, received the Bronze Star Medal with Valor for actions conducted between April 2003 and May 2004 in Tikrit, Iraq.

"I have spoken to my best friend, and company commander at the time, on numerous occasions and he too cannot recall most of our days," said Evans. "We were simply doing our job, more importantly, trying to save our men and our lives, daily!"

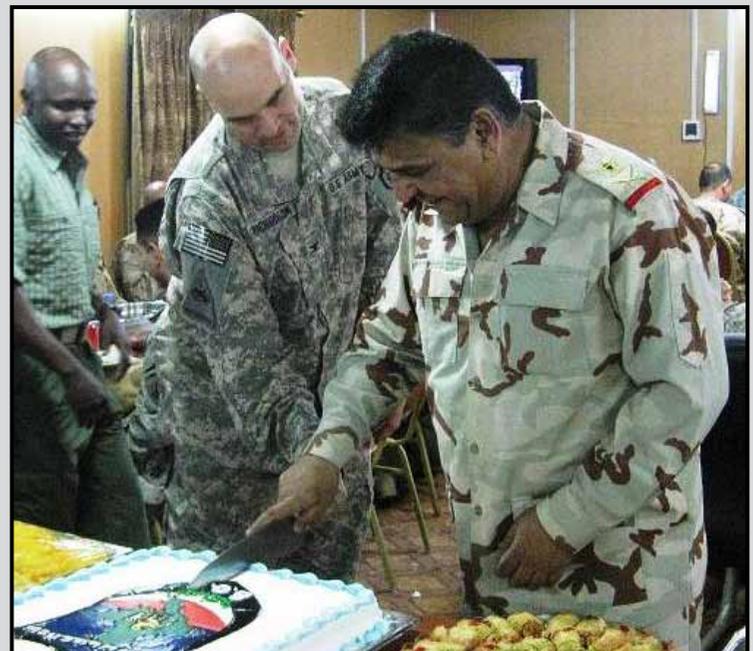
At the time, Evans was the first sergeant of C Company, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st "Raider" Brigade, 4th Infantry Division.

"Looking back, I would have to say that had it not been for my leadership allowing us to do what we needed to do, we would not have been successful," said Evans. "All of my training, from the day I entered my first platoon as a young Soldier, to walking the streets of Tikrit as the first sergeant paid off."



Partnership dinner in the International Zone

Soldiers with Battery A, 1st "First Lightning" Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, were among those who attended a dinner featuring traditional Iraqi cuisine like lamb, kabobs, and carp, hosted by their counterparts in Baghdad's International Zone Mar. 18. The shared dinner, hosted Iraqi Security Forces with the Baghdad Operations Command, was a way to both celebrate birthdays of service members and to say thank you to those who were getting ready to rotate out. As part of the dinner, Col. William Richardson, left, BOC Advisory Team chief and Iraqi Army Staff Maj. Gen. Hasan, BOC chief of staff cut the first piece of cake.



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Lending a Helping Hand

Iraqi Police distribute humanitarian aid supplies

Story and Photos by
Sgt. Daniel Stoutamire
2th AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C

Soldiers with 6th “Saber” Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center provided advice and assistance as the 4th Iraqi Federal Police Division took the lead in distributing humanitarian assistance recently in some of Baghdad’s most downtrodden mahallahs, or neighborhoods.

IFP Maj. Gen. Baha’a, commander of the 4th IFP Div., went door-to-door and personally handed each eligible resident their bag of aid, taking great care to ensure that no family in need was overlooked.

“Their senior leadership is out here doing it,” said Lt. Col. Cameron Cantlon, commander of the 6th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt., who accompanied Baha’a on the

aid mission. “They are picking families not by name or by asking, but by how they live, so the families that are the most in need are the ones getting the humanitarian assistance.”

Cantlon said the mahallahs in which the aid was distributed are known to be some of the poorest in Baghdad.

“These are the most needy neighborhoods inside the 4th IFP’s area of operations,” he said. “These are also mahallahs that are mixed Shiite and Sunni, and Staff Maj. Gen. Baha’a goes out of his way to make sure that he is non-sectarian.”

To ensure the aid was distributed as widely and effectively as possible, the 4th IFP Div. leaders devised a system whereby families presented a piece of paper proving their eligibility, and then gave their thumbprint before receiving their aid.

Cantlon said that having the ISF out in the mahallahs, interacting with the people, and showing they will provide

for their welfare is significant.

“[Humanitarian assistance] is another tool in the kit of the Iraqis as we transition out of the country,” Cantlon said. “I think the Iraqi [civilians] see us standing overwatch, and being available and talking to them, but not directing anything. That emboldens the ISF and shows the people that we are not the ones calling the shots.”

Several local media outlets, at the invitation of Baha’a, sent news teams to the mahallahs to cover the aid distribution.

“They wanted to be here to see the ISF work with the Iraqi people,” Cantlon said.

Everywhere the Soldiers of the “Saber” Squadron and 4th IFP went, they were followed by a group of interested onlookers, especially young children.

“I enjoy (being out here). It’s nice to see all smiles on their faces,” said 2nd Lt. Kyle Lee, the personal security detail platoon leader with 6th Sqdn., 9th

Cav. Regt. and a New Providence, N.J., native. “The 4th IFP Div. are the ones handing out the aid, so the people can see that the ISF are here to help them, and improve their lives.”

Though the “Saber” Squadron has only been deployed for a short time, it has already forged a strong relationship with the 4th IFP Div., and through events like humanitarian aid distribution, both Cantlon and Lee said they hope to strengthen that relationship.

Indeed, on the day of the aid distribution, senior leaders of the two units were working with their respective medical personnel on combat lifesaver training back at Joint Security Station Jihad, the 4th IFP’s main base, Lee said.

“We’re going to continue to work with the 4th IFP Div. on a weekly basis,” Lee said. “They always seem very happy to see us and work with us and we are happy to work with them and train them in any way we can help.”



Iraqi Federal Police Maj. Gen. Baha'a, left, commander of the 4th Iraqi Federal Police Division, hands a bag containing humanitarian aid to a family in need in one of Baghdad's poorest neighborhoods. Baha'a and the 4th IFP went door-to-door to ensure the broadest possible distribution of aid to those who most needed it.



Pfc. Diamond Madison, with C Company, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, helps fit a pediatric wheelchair to a disabled child, at the Anbar Operations Center in Ramadi. Soldiers with the brigade helped distribute 21 wheelchairs to disabled Iraq children. The wheelchairs came from the non-profit group Wheelchairs for Iraqi Kids, which provides pediatric wheelchairs at no cost to those who need them. To date, close to 1000 wheelchairs have been distributed throughout Iraq.

Mobility for the Future

'Vanguard' Brigade Soldiers Help Distribute Wheelchairs to Children in Need

Story and Photos by
Staff Sgt. Tonya Thomas
4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div., USD-C

"Today is the kind of day where it makes you proud to be a Soldier," said 1st Lt. Jonty McCoy, platoon leader with the 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division.

McCoy was referring to April 2 -- a day where fellow 4th AAB Soldiers spent at the Anbar Operations Center in Ramadi, Iraq -- distributing 21 pediatric wheelchairs to disabled Iraqi children.

"This is by far the best thing we've been able to see this deployment," he said. "The quality of life for these children has now significantly improved, and to be a part of that is amazing."

The event was made possible thanks to Brad Blausner, Dallas native, who founded the non-profit organization, Wheelchairs for Iraqi Kids, in August 2005. Blausner, who was pres-

ent for the Ramadi event, watched as the 926th donated wheelchair was given to another child in need.

Blausner said that in Iraq, many children are born with cerebral palsy and spine bifida, causing the physical disability in movement. He added that many children became double amputees as a result of violence in country, "so I came up with a plan in Aug 2005 to help," he said.

"I mean, who else is going to do this," said Blausner of his reasons to continue supporting this operation -- for free -- for the last 5 1/2 years. He credits also, support from former Iraq Commander, Gen. David Petraeus who helped him jumpstart the program and the continuing support of U.S. citizens who donate money to fund the \$385 wheelchairs.

Blausner helped teach 4th AAB Soldiers and Ministry of Health rehabilitation center employees how to fit the wheelchairs to children.

"They will be able to adjust the wheelchair to fit the child, and as the

child grows, the wheelchair grows also," he said.

Blausner also said that there is a plan in the works to help continue supporting this operation after the U.S. withdraws from the Iraqi footprint at the end of this year.

"We've teamed up with the Iraqi Disable Alliance Organization and the plan is to have the Iraqis eventually manufacture the wheelchairs and distribute them to not only Iraqi children, but perhaps Afghani children as well," he said.

Until then, Blausner said he has about 60 more wheelchairs he's planning to distribute with hope to positively affect the lives of more Iraqi families in the near future.

Specialist Gwendolyn Cousin, a Soldier with Golf Company, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th AAB, who was on-hand to support the Ramadi distribution, said that participating in the event was a blessing.

"I'm humbled to be a part of something that is so rewarding," she said.



Spc. Jacynth Ice, left, and 1st Lt. Abigail McManigal both with the 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div., help fit a wheelchair for a disabled Iraqi child at the Anbar Operations Center in Ramadi. Many service-members who donated their time to assemble the wheelchairs said it gave them a hands-on way to assist those in need.

The art of the IV

IA Soldiers stick with the basics of starting an intravenous line

Story and Photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy,
29th MPAD, USD-C

The Soldier was a little apprehensive at first. His eyes got a little larger with hesitant anticipation as it came closer to being his turn to step to front of the room. A few jokes and teasing were passed between him and his fellow Soldiers, which livened the mood for some and accentuated the uneasiness for others.

For some in the room, the task at hand—starting an intravenous line on a live person rather than a training aid—was a little daunting as it meant sticking someone with a needle. But, as the Soldier stepped forward, the training kicked in and two attempts later he had the line started.

Starting the IV line was just another step in a variety of training tasks Soldiers from the Iraqi Army's 37th Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division have been working on with Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division — Center.

Though many of the Iraqi Soldiers at the training had prior medical instruction, the training started off with basic first aid and progressed into more complex tasks such as starting an IV line.

"We're putting on medical training for the Iraqis that involves three days (of different tasks)," said Sgt. Lawrence Tremblay, the senior line medic with Company A, 1st Bn., 18th Inf. Regt. "We have first aid, which is bandaging and just the basics. The second day is the IV and (the final day) we're going to set up CLS (Combat Lifesaver) lanes for them to run through. So it will be set up as if they come upon a casualty out in the field."

And while Tremblay provided the basics for the training, he often relied on the Iraqi Soldiers to fully convey the tasks to their fellow Soldiers.

"I try to utilize the ones that (have prior experience and) know what they're doing," he said. "They



Sgt. Lawrence Tremblay, with rubber gloves, the senior line medic with Company A, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, goes over the procedures for giving an intravenous injection with Iraqi Soldiers from the 9th Iraqi Army Division during training at Camp Taji.



Sgt. Lawrence Tremblay watches as Iraqi Soldiers from the 9th Iraqi Army Division practice giving an intravenous injection during training at Camp Taji. U.S. Soldiers have been training with the Iraqi Soldiers on a variety of tasks from medical techniques to vehicle maintenance.



Tremblay shows Iraqi Soldiers from the 9th Iraqi Army Division a needle used for giving an intravenous injection. One of the first steps in giving an IV injection includes checking the needle for any burrs or imperfections along its edge. During the course, students learned all aspects of safely giving an IV injection.

can convey the correct way to do it because, obviously, they've been trained and they've caught on to the concept and the science behind it."

Still, for Tremblay there were many challenges that came with running the training, most notably the language barrier.

"Training has been a challenge because I've never really worked through an interpreter before," said Tremblay. "Working through an interpreter is sort of like I have to train him and then he trains the Iraqi (Soldiers). It's a little differ-

ent, but it's pretty much the same as how I would train any Soldier."

Tremblay said many of the Iraqi Soldiers were eager to take on the training, but there were certain areas—like the IV stick—where there was some apprehension, just as there is with many U.S. Soldiers who undergo the same training.

"They're just like any other Soldiers," said Tremblay. "They're nervous when it comes to the IV sticks. They get a little nauseous. I've had a couple come out here and almost throw up just thinking about it. They have that uneasy

feeling."

But while the students all had to go through the IV portion, Tremblay said he stressed other elements of the training that would have further reaching effects for the Soldiers to focus on

"I don't want them to miss the key points behind why they're doing what they're doing, such as why you dress a tourniquet to stop the bleeding," he said. "I don't want them totally focused completely on the IVs. I want them to take care of the basics first because the basics will save lives."

Sgt. Maj. Matthew McCoy, operations sergeant major with Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, gives instructions to students from the Lightning Academy during the final field training exercises for the class at Camp Liberty.



Class is in Session... Lightning Academy preps junior enlisted for leadership roles

Story and Photos by
Sgt. Isolda McClelland,
29th MPAD, USD-C

The leadership of United States Division – Center recently ran another iteration of the Lightning Academy, a week-long course that focuses on troop leading procedures, developmental counseling, risk management and a variety of tactical operations.

Held at Camp Liberty, Iraq, the Lightning Academy is designed to help junior enlisted Soldiers and noncommissioned officers become better leaders by building on, and reinforcing, many of the skills they already have.

“This course gives Soldiers from various MOSs (military occupational specialties) a chance to go outside of the box on those skills they learned in basic training, but may not do in their everyday job,” said Master Sgt. Douglas Rendles, the battlefield spectrum manager with USD – C.

Many in the class said the skills reviewed were indeed helpful.

“The Lightning Academy has been like a refresher in that it reminded me of those things I have learned before, but don’t always use in my job,” said Sgt. Martin Otano, with the 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, USD – C, who added that one of those basic skills stressed during the course was map reading and how to use terrain features to help you find your location, rather than relying heavily on GPS.

While learning to become less dependent on electronics, the Soldiers also

learned how to depend on and listen to each other. They fostered this cooperation by focusing on team building exercises and delegation of authority as they worked through various modules and scenarios throughout the course.

Students had to work together to solve various problems during the different training scenarios, said Sgt. 1st Class Olene Togiailua, the observer-controller trainer at the academy. When finished, students performed after-action reviews where they discussed the challenges faced during the scenario and different ways to solve it.

All of the skills learned and discussed during the week were then put to the test at the end of the training.

“The final day of the class includes testing those leadership skills learned throughout the course,” said Togiailua, adding that this was accomplished by performing simulated convoy operations to evaluate how the students maintained basic command and control of their teams as platoon and squad leaders during movement through the training lanes, he said.

For many in the course, it was a challenging week, but students of the course were ready offer advice to prepare other Soldiers who will be attending the academy.

“For a Soldier coming to the Lightning Academy I would say be flexible, be interested, keep an open mind and be prepared to deal with a lot of people from different backgrounds,” said Sgt. Christa Duker, a medic with the 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div.



Students from the Lightning Academy transport a simulated casualty while the rest of their team pulls security as part of the final tactical field training exercise of the course. During the course students covered topics such as troop leading procedures, developmental counseling, risk management and a variety of tactical operations. During the tactical exercise students were put into a variety of leadership positions where they put to use many of the elements the weeklong course had covered.

Moving in the Right Direction

'Longknife' Squadron trains 2nd IFP Div. on land nav

Story by
2nd Lt. Devin Osburn,
2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C

Troopers with 5th "Longknife" Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center, recently trained their Iraqi counterparts in the 2nd Iraqi Federal Police Division on land navigation techniques and passed on lessons learned from their own training on the subject.

Knowing how to read a map and navigate from one point to another is an important skill to have in any military branch and is emphasized in U.S. Army basic training.

"[At basic training], I was expected to learn proper map reading and the use of a compass to successfully complete the land navigation course at Fort Knox, Ky.," said Pfc. Daniel Davis, a fire support specialist with 5th Sqdn., 4th Cav. Regt. and a Sacramento, Calif., native.

Unlike American Soldiers, many members of the Iraqi Federal Police have had little or no experience with land navigation, said Davis.

The troopers of 5th Sqdn., 4th Cav. Regt. started training the Iraqis just as they would any new U.S. Soldier. The two days of classes given to the IFP covered various basic navigation techniques. The first day consisted

of map reading and measuring distances on the map.

After teaching basic compass and map reading techniques to their Iraqi counterparts, the "Longknife" Squadron Soldiers went over using GPS units. Technologies such as GPS enhance land navigation by allowing one to pinpoint one's position anywhere in the world.

"A GPS unit is a great tool to have at your [command]," said Staff Sgt. Trevor Donnatien, a Felton, Del., native with 5th Sqdn., 4th Cav. Regt.

"However, it can fail and leave you lost if you do not have proper land navigation training."

Donnatien said the more basic tools of land navigation would never lose their importance.

"Map reading and orienteering will never fail you," he said, "and you do not have to rely on an electrical device to get you to where you are going."

The hope is that eventually the IFP members trained by the "Longknife" Squadron will be able to teach the same skills to their fellow officers.

Land navigation is a vital skill that can help to make coordination easier throughout the ranks of the 2nd IFP Div. as they maneuver through the streets of Baghdad.



Staff Sgt. Chris Ream, center, a cavalry scout with 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center, and 1st Lt. Erik Rekedal, left, an armor officer with the same unit hand out maps to members of the 2nd Iraqi Federal Police Division before beginning land navigation training in Baghdad, March 28. The two days of classes given to the 2nd IFP Div. covered various skills also vital to U.S. Soldiers such as map reading and measuring straight-line and curved-line distances from one point to another, in addition to familiarizing them with GPS. (Photo by Pfc. Shane Stabler, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.)



I just wanted to come and say 'TH

Secretary Gates visits USD-C Troops, talks about successes in Iraq a

Story and
Photos by
Sgt. 1st Class
Jon Soucy,
29th MPAD,
USD-C

Many of the positive changes and progress that has taken place in Iraq over the past few years has been a direct result of the efforts of the service members deployed there, said Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates during a recent visit with Soldiers from United States Division – Center at Camp Liberty.

“The difference that you and those like you have made in this country is evident around you every single day,” said Gates. “You’ve gone from establishing Joint Security Stations, that I visited in Baghdad in 2007, to now and (fulfilling) the advise and assist role. It marks the progress that you and those that have sacrificed so much have brought about.”

And, Gates reiterated, that because of those efforts, the U.S. drawdown in Iraq is continuing as scheduled and that any continued presence beyond

December would have to come from a direct request from the Iraqi government.

“That’s basically a decision for the Iraqi government to make,” he said.

But, Gates also said that as the drawdown continues, he doesn’t want to see the Army as a whole lose out on the experience and knowledge that Soldiers have gained, especially at the company level.

“I gave a speech at West Point and I talked about both this war and the war in Afghanistan being, essentially, the captains’ wars,” said Gates. “These are fundamentally small-unit wars. We’re not dealing with corps in the field, or divisions in the field, but, at the largest the brigade and a lot at the battalion and the company and the platoon level.”

That has led, said Gates, to in-

creased responsibilities at lower levels.

“A lot of younger officers, company grade officers—and NCOs for that matter—have been given a lot of responsibility, a lot of independence, a lot of freedom to innovate,” said Gates. (They have had) to do things differently and deal with a whole range of issues, everything from shooting the enemy to holding village (meetings) or building roads or a hundred other things like that.”

And, said Gates, that experience should be used in positive ways throughout the military.

“What I talked about at West Point was my worry about what happens when the men and women who have been given that kind of freedom and that kind of opportunity come back and end up in a closet in the Pentagon preparing (briefing) slides,” he said.

That experience level has also led to an unprecedented level of readiness within the military, said Gates.

“We now have the most battle-hardened—and senior military leaders will tell you—best military that we have had. I’d hate to see us squander that after we’re out of active combat by having innovative, open-minded personnel policies that take advantage of the experiences that you all have in places like Iraq.”

Gates said that one way to ensure that experience isn’t wasted is by having those Soldiers teach others and pass on their experiences.

“Some of the things that I’ve talked about is increased opportunities to go back to school, get a degree or a graduate degree,” he said. “Maybe to go to one of the service schools, or a variety of experiences so that you’re not just plucked back down into a



Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates speaks with Soldiers from United States Division-Center during a visit to Camp Liberty. During the visit Gates stressed that many of the positive changes in Iraq has come directly from the actions of those deployed there. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy, 29th MPAD)

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by hole somewhere in the Pentagon.” Gates also discussed other issues affecting USD-C Soldiers, such as recent unrest in places like Libya and how that may affect other areas within the Middle East. “I don’t see any repercussions from Libya coming here,” said Gates, referring to Iraq. And, stressed Gates, Iraq is already at the end state that is driving much of the unrest found in other areas in the region. “In terms of the broader disputes and turmoil going on around the region, in a way it’s a measure of what you and the Iraqi (Security Forces) have already achieved,” he said. “Iraq is already where a lot of these other countries want to be. That is, having elections where anybody can run, having people from multiple sectarian groups running and then having a



Maj. Gen. Bernard S. Champoux, left, commanding general of the 25th Infantry Division and United States Division-Center, talks with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates during Gates' visit to Camp Liberty. (Photo by Sgt. Jesus J. Aranda, USD-C)



Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates speaks with Soldiers from United States Division-Center during a visit to Camp Liberty, April 7. During the visit Gates spoke with Soldiers from the division about the U.S. drawdown in Iraq, the repeal of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy and other changes throughout the Army. (Photo by Sgt. Jesus J. Aranda, USD-C)

pretty good democratic government.” Gates then opened a question and answer session with Soldiers from the division, and answered questions on possible changes to Army policy, such as the opening of combat arms positions to women. “Frankly, the policy hasn’t caught up with the reality in some respects,” said Gates. “I’m confident that this is an area that is going to change. The timescale of the change, I have no idea.” But no matter the changes to come, Gates said his big reason for visiting was simply to say thank you. “I don’t know how many trips I’ve made to Iraq, maybe 14, and this will probably be my last one,” he said. “I just wanted to come and say thank you and tell you that working with you all has been the greatest privilege and the greatest honor of my life.”



Command Sgt. Maj. Ray A. Devens, sergeant major of the 25th Infantry Division and United States Division-Center, greets Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates while during Gates' visit to Camp Liberty. (Photo by Sgt. Jesus J. Aranda, USD-C)

WHAT MAKES



STAFF SGT. ELLIOT JENSEN

116th Garrison Command

myLEADERSHIP....

The leadership in the unit sets the pace and their constant concern for the Soldier is what makes me strong. Knowing that a unit takes care of the individual Soldiers by seeing that basic needs are met and any issues that arise are taken care of immediately, keeps morale high and makes it easier to cope in an environment away from home.

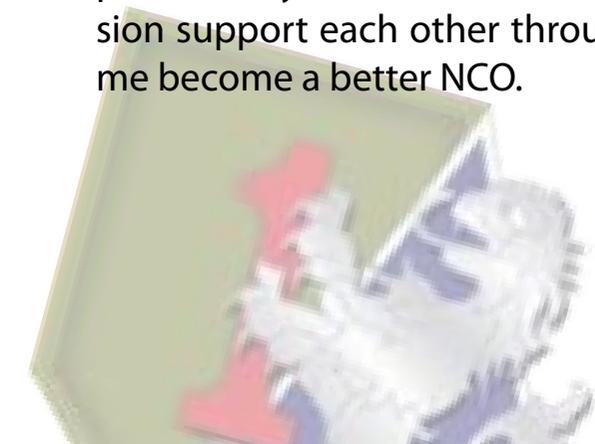
Having a loving and supportive family makes me strong. It give me a peace of mind to know that my family is proud of what I do and are willing to make the sacrifice without a father figure in the home. Knowing that they are being cared for by extended family, close friends, and the family support group enables me to focus and continue the mission.

SGT. Jeffrey Douglas

2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.

myTEAM

My team makes me strong. My team has taught me that loyalty to those with whom I serve can be a source of strength in the toughest of times. Mentoring my Soldiers gives me great satisfaction, watching them develop as both intelligence analysts and critical thinkers. Soldiers (are) my greatest source of pride. I depend on my team members every day to contribute to our mission support each other through difficult moments and to help me become a better NCO.



ME STRONG

SGT. Toya Carroll

I & S Co., HHBN, 25TH INF. DIV.

myFAMILY, FAITH...

I can easily say that my family and my faith makes me strong because my family has given me their unconditional support through my years in the military. I have to say what made me strong since May 08 and during this deployment is 1st Sgt. Twonda Benjamin. My first sergeant has been there for me as a mentor and leader. She has taught me how to be a firm but gentle leader. She set the example in doing what is right. She has mentored me in my job, and always holds me to a higher expectation and standard than even I think I can reach. Her confidence in me makes me a stronger person and a stronger leader.

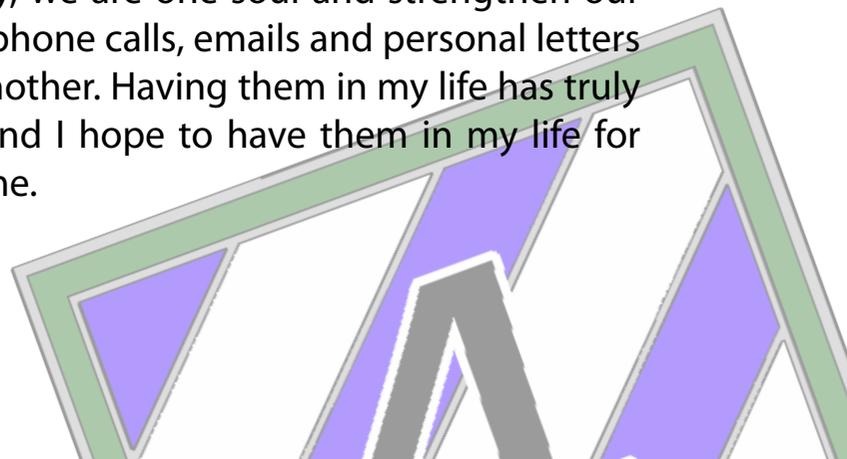


SGT. JAMAAL ELLISON

STB, 4th AAB, 3rd Inf. Div.

myFAMILY

My family is my source of strength. I am blessed to have a wonderful wife and two children. They provide me with a source of comfort, laughter and understanding. Each day, I am blessed to be surrounded by the love they share with me and I am able to share with them. During the times we are away, we are one soul and strengthen our relationship with phone calls, emails and personal letters we send to one another. Having them in my life has truly been a blessing and I hope to have them in my life for many years to come.



Spc. David Street, left, with the 1153rd Financial Management Detachment, assists a customer at the Camp Liberty Finance Office. By fulfilling its most critical role of resolving service members' pay problems, the detachment helps to ensure Soldiers stay mission-focused.



Show me the Money!

1153rd FMD helps with pay issues, boosts morale

Story and Photos by
Sgt. Jennifer Sardam,
29th MPAD, USD-C

Since arriving in Iraq in December, Soldiers with the 1153rd Financial Management Detachment have worked hard to resolve military pay issues that Soldiers from throughout Victory Base Complex and Forward Operating Base Union III may have.

Many from the unit feel proud of their responsibility to these service members in Iraq.

"I feel like I'm a part of history," said Staff Sgt. Kimberly Stevenson, chief of military pay for the 1153rd FMD at the Camp Liberty Finance Office on VBC.

"We're National Guard, and so there's something very deep in your heart that you feel privileged to be a part of something like this."

As Soldiers who share the same deployed environment and personal concerns as their customers, 1153rd FMD personnel are well aware of the stress that financial difficulties can create.

"You almost take it personally when they're having a pay problem, because you really do want to help," said Stevenson.

This understanding is evident to many who visit the Camp Liberty Finance Office, where pay personnel strive for a timely response to their customers' issues.

"From the time a Soldier comes in

with a pay issue, we make every attempt to resolve that within 72 hours," said Stevenson, a Saint Augustine, Fla., native. However, she added, the goal is to try to answer pay questions immediately, when possible.

For some military pay staff, that means occasionally sacrificing down time to get the job done.

"We do get stressed out when we don't know how to help a Soldier or resolve it quickly enough," said Stevenson. "But I know every one of my Soldiers feels the same way. At 6 o'clock at night you don't want to talk about work because you just want to relax for a few minutes, but you go back and work it till 10 o'clock, trying to fix it."

Soldiers can also do their part to assist the process by addressing pay concerns as soon as they surface.

"You can put it off so much, but it adds up," said Stevenson, who has 12 years of experience working in military pay. "Pay, to me, is the most important thing. That keeps the mortgage going... and the family happy."

Many of the major finance issues that bring Soldiers in for assistance come from not properly addressing problems early on, said Stevenson.

"We see a lot of that here such as people not getting the BAH (Basic Allowance for Housing) that's due to them, because they didn't turn in the appropriate paperwork," she said.

"Some of these are taking a long time to resolve, but it does feel good once you complete that for the Soldier."

She recommends that Soldiers stay educated on the basics of their pay, starting by logging on regularly to MyPay, an online self-service tool from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, to read their Leave and Earnings Statements.

"I had one Soldier come in, and he hadn't looked on MyPay for a couple of months, and one day he looked, and he hadn't been paid for two months," said Stevenson. "What he thought was a simple problem was a really big problem, because his ETS (expiration term of service) hadn't been put into the system."

And if there is an issue, researching the problem in order to resolve it means tracking down paperwork and contacting various unit personnel offices, and that keeps the military pay staff of the 1153rd FMD the busiest, said Stevenson.

Soldiers can help to streamline this process by being personally prepared at the start of a deployment.

As part of getting ready to leave they should have all affairs in order, review any paperwork, and bring copies of important documents, said Sgt. Jason Johnson, a certifier in the disbursing section at the Camp Liberty Finance Office.

Continuing to communicate with the finance staff along the way helps the service member to avoid many pay issues altogether.

"If you have a child, come let us know," said Hickey, a Keystone Heights, Fla., native. "If you move duty stations, come let us know. If you have any significant life changes, come in and let finance know...even if we just tell you that we don't need to know that, at least you're not putting yourself in debt or missing out on money that you're eligible to get."

Many of the finance Soldiers realize the impact they have on deployed service members.

"It's very important, because no one (works) for free," said Johnson. "If we're taking care of their needs, or they have a problem, and they perceive that we are working hard to resolve it and get them some answers, they're going to be more focused on their mission."



Street, a Keystone Heights, Fla. native, goes over paperwork with a customer at the finance office.



Dagger Brigade truckers compete to be best trucker

(LEFT) Spc. Tyler Baxter, of D Company, 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division – Center, directs the driver of a Palletized Load System cargo truck to a trailer during a motor transport operator skills competition at Camp Liberty, April 8. The competition involved flat-rack loading a PLS truck, negotiating a slalom course in a semi-truck and trailer as well as other transportation related skills. (Photo by Spc. David A. Waters, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.)

(BELOW) Spc. Tyler Baxter, left, and Pfc. Dominique Walker perform a tie-down procedures for a forklift during a motor transport operator skills competition April 8 at Camp Liberty. The competition (Photo by Spc. David A. Waters, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.)



Dagger Brigade Snapshot Corner



Baghdad



JSS Jihad



JSS Falcon

Lt. Gen. Frank G. Helmick, commanding general of the XVIII Airborne Corps and deputy commanding general for operations, United States Forces-Iraq, talks with Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division during his visit to Joint Security Station Loyalty, March 23. (Photo by 1st Lt. Kai Gonsalves, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., USD-C)



USD-C at a glance



(LEFT) Col. Paul Calvert, left, commander of the 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, speaks with Maj. Colleen Stephens, behavioral health officer with 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div., after awarding her the Combat Action Badge during a ceremony at Camp Liberty, March 27. Insurgent forces used an anti-armor hand grenade to attack a convoy in which Stephens was riding in early March.

(BELOW) Soldiers with the 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div. stand in formation after being awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge at Camp Liberty, March 27 (Photos by Chief Warrant Officer 2 James Smotherman, 2nd AAB, 1st Inf. Div.)





(ABOVE) Maj. Gen. Bernard S. Champoux, commanding general, 25th Infantry Division and United States Division - Center, greets Australian Army Maj. Gen. Angus Campbell, commanding general of Task Force 633 and Australian forces in the Middle East, during Campbell's visit to USD-C April 2.



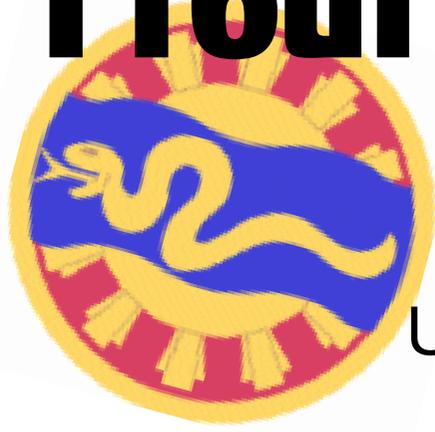
(RIGHT) Sgt. Alan Sipple, a tanker with D Company, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, watches as an Iraqi Army Soldier with the 37th Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division fuels an M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tanks at Camp Taji, March 23. Soldiers from D Company have been working with 9th IA Soldiers training on all aspects of operating the Abrams tank. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy)

USD-C at a glance



Pfc. Joel Smith, a radio operator with Signal Company, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, USD-C, drives a Light-Medium Tactical Vehicle, during drivers training at Camp Liberty. The training, run by the staff of the battalion motor pool, focused on familiarizing new drivers with the Humvee, LMTV and small busses. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy, 29th MPAD)

116th Cav Goes the Distance to 'Beat Coach Pete'



USD-C Soldiers take part in Annual Boise State fun run



(LEFT) Participants in the 5-kilometer race to 'Beat Coach Pete' head out from the start point at Camp, April 7. More than 300 service members and civilians stationed at Victory Base Complex participated in the race. (Photo by Staff Sgt. April Davis, 116th Cav. Bde.)

(BELOW) Spc. Patrick Thomas, center, of Lewisville, Idaho, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 116th Cavalry Brigade, races to be the first member of his unit to cross the finish-line during the, "Beat Coach Pete" race at Contingency Operating Site Taji, April 7. Soldiers of the 116th BSTB, headquartered out of Twin Falls, Idaho, coordinated the race as part of their Morale, Welfare and Recreation program to coincide with the annual Boise State University event. (Photo by Virginia Reighney)



Story by
Staff Sgt. April Davis,
116th Cav Bde., USD-C

Members of the 116th Cavalry Brigade, Idaho Army National Guard, currently serving under United States Division – Center, hosted three "Beat Coach Pete" races in Iraq, April 7 and 11, to mimic Boise State University's annual scholarship run event featuring football coach, Chris Peterson.

It all began when Capt. Monty Blamires, of Boise, Idaho, a Boise State alum and employee of BSU's Reserve Officers' Training Corps, received an email reminder to register for this year's Fourth Annual Beat Coach Pete Scholarship Run/Walk. Blamires and 20 of his ROTC cadets participated in the very first "Beat Coach Pete" race in 2008.

"I still have, and proudly wear, my shirt," said Blamires. "I finished it in just over 21 minutes and Coach Pete, smiling and laughing, came in around 28 minutes. I realized that his goal was not to beat everyone who ran, but to have fun and give back to our university and the general student body."

Since then, military training prevented Blamires from participating in the race. This year, he decided being deployed to Taji, Iraq, as the personnel management officer for

the 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, wasn't going to prevent him from taking part in the "Beat Coach Pete" event.

"I wanted to hold a run here in Iraq because it helps me and the other Soldiers here feel like we are still a part of our community (back home)," he said.

Blamires contacted Boise State's race director, Lisa Stuppy, who was glad to help the Soldiers spread Bronco Nation pride worldwide.

"We were thrilled to be contacted by the troops to do something like this for them," said Stuppy. "It's been really great to work with the folks in the 116th and they are so excited to partner with us."

As word spread throughout the 116th, more Idaho Soldiers decided to participate and one race turned into three separate races at three different military installations throughout central Iraq.

The headquarters element of the 116th Cavalry Brigade hosted a 5-kilometer fun run at Camp Victory in Baghdad, April 7. Soldiers from throughout the brigade, and from a variety of Idaho schools, took part.

"We have Soldiers from Eastern Idaho who attended Idaho State University and Soldiers from Northern Idaho who attended University of Idaho, so we're getting everybody involved from Idaho in

this event and they're showing great support, not only to Boise State, but statewide," said Sgt. 1st Class Samuel Austin, operations sergeant with brigade headquarters and a BSU fan who helped organized the race at Camp Victory. "Mostly, for the 116th Soldiers, it gives them a little taste of home, it's a morale booster."

At Contingency Operating Site Taji, north of Baghdad, Blamires and his fellow Soldiers of the 116th BSTB hosted a fun run with approximately 110 military and civilian participants.

"Everyone had a great time," said Blamires. "Although we couldn't physically be there (in Boise), in spirit we were there running beside each and every one of you."

Although, Soldiers in the unit from the Twin Falls area say they will still remain loyal to the College of Southern Idaho and proudly display the large campus-sized flag the college mailed overseas to them.

Members of Southeast Idaho's 1st Battalion, 148th Field Artillery Regiment, headquartered out of Pocatello, Idaho, said they were moving a little slower after completing their 3-mile version of the "Beat Coach Pete" run at Contingency Operating Location Prosperity in Baghdad, April 11. Although the unit is headquartered in Idaho

State University Bengals' territory, they decided to join their brothers and sisters in arms and adopt the run. This run, at the International Zone (formally known as the "Green Zone"), included approximately 50 runners, all were Idaho Soldiers.

Lt. Col. Kimberly Johaneck, of Boise, said that the "Beat Coach Pete" Iraq races were putting Boise State and Idaho on the map globally. Johaneck is an adjunct professor of sociology for Boise State and has continued to teach a few online courses during this deployment.

"I am pleased that I can support Boise State University, even from across the world in Baghdad," she said.



Lt. Col. Fred Long gives a thumbs-up as he runs on Camp Victory in Baghdad, Iraq, during the 'Beat Coach Pete' Iraq fun run, April 7. Soldiers from 116th Cav. Bde. coordinated the race.



Staff Sgt. Christopher Stone, lead vocalist with Show of Force, the 25th Infantry Division Band's rock band ensemble, sings during a concert at Forward Operating Base Hammer, March 26. The mission of the 25th Inf. Div. band is to uplift the morale of the deployed service members. Since coming to Iraq, Show of Force has played more than 50 concerts in outlying FOBs across the country.

Rockin' Out at FOB Hammer

25th Infantry Division Band plays for troops, brings with them a little music from home
 Story and Photos by Sgt. Isolda McClelland, 29th MPAD, USD-C

At Forward Operation Base Hammer, home of the Besmaya Combat Training Center, the usual sounds of the day are the booms emitted from the various training ranges. Recently, the booms didn't come from the ranges, but rather the small stage area on the FOB. The booming sounds of drums hammering away and the low rumble of bass guitars meant coming that Show of Force, the 25th Infantry Division Band's rock band ensemble, was warming up and getting ready to bring together a crowd of Soldiers and civilians to the stage.

This nine-member group started off the day playing acoustic rock tunes inside of the Hammer Dining Facility during lunch. The evening show, however, contained a hard-rock style of music that featured widely known American artists such as Metallica, Paramour, Disturbed, Tool and more.

While the band does not focus on typical ceremonial music, the music they do play is meant to uplift the morale and spirits of deployed service members.

"We're trying to integrate rock bands and what we call popular music ensembles, as the primary focus especially in a deployed environment where we are playing for 25-year-old Soldiers," said Sgt. Brendan Owen, senior instrumentalist, with Show of Force. They do not want to hear John Philip Sousa, or "Mustang Sally" for that matter. They want modern music and that is what we are giving them.

Members of Show of Force, the 25th Infantry Division Band's rock ensemble, perform during shows at Forward Operating Base Hammer. Playing more contemporary hard rock and heavy metal type music, the band, rather than ceremonial music, the band is designed to appeal more to the musical tastes of younger Soldiers. Playing that style of music, said band members, reflects an Army-wide shift in the material that bands play. Ceremonial music, however, is still one of the mainstays of the band.

Playing for deployed troops also lifts the morale of the band members as well.

"You know, you may go about a typical Army day... and that one hour we play, you see that one guy singing along with you, it's awesome," said Staff Sgt Christopher Stone, lead vocalist with Show of Force.

Many in the audience were pleased with the selection of music played.

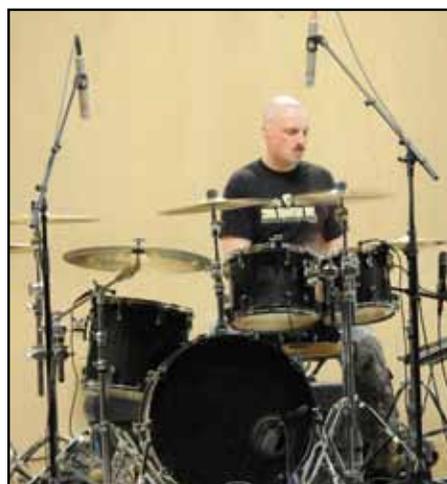
"It was absolutely fantastic, a lot of great classics from back home. And this gives our (Iraqi partners) a taste of Americana," said 1st Lt. Joshua Wiedner, of C Company, 1st Battalion 18th Infantry Regiment, and the officer in charge of the Mayor Cell at FOB Hammer.

Since deploying, the band has played more than 50 shows to outlying FOBs throughout Iraq, and it's the goal of the band to be engaging and entertaining.

"Anyone who sees our show should expect to get rocked," said Owen. "They are going to get a good show. They are going to get entertained and hopefully they are going to forget, for a little while, whatever stress and whatever things are on their minds for a couple of hours."

Those in attendance agreed that the entertainment factor was great.

"From what I saw the guys really enjoyed themselves. Everybody seemed like they had a great time and I am glad that (the band) took the time to come out here and play for some of our Soldiers," said Wiedner.





SCRA

What it is and how it benefits service members

By Capt. John Larkin,
Office of the
Staff Judge Advocate USD-C

If you spend enough time in the military, sooner or later you are bound to hear someone mention the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA), also formerly known as the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act. This law provides powerful protections to members of the military, particularly those who are serving their country on a deployment. Often Soldiers do not take advantage of this law, for no better reason than the fact that they are unaware that it might apply to them.

One of the best protections of the SCRA is the six percent interest cap. For certain debts, your service entitles you to have the interest rate lowered to six percent per year. However, this protection only applies to debts you incurred before joining the military, or before you were called to active duty. This can add up to thousands of dollars in

savings each year. Creditors must retroactively adjust the interest rate to six percent from the date you began to serve, once you give them written notice and your orders.

If you receive a letter that you must appear in court while you are still in Iraq, you should contact the Legal Assistance Office. The SCRA entitles you to a delay of proceedings, but only if you give the court written notice. This notice must convince the court that your presence in Iraq significantly harms your ability to defend yourself in court. The Legal Assistance Office can draft an SCRA letter for you.

The purpose is to protect deployed Soldiers from losing cases simply because they were out of the country on the day of the court hearing. Given the delays in sending mail to Iraq, as well as the fact that a court may not even know that you are here, it is highly advisable that you have your mail sent to someone in the States whom you trust, and with whom you talk regularly.

It is preferable to request a de-

lay of proceedings under the SCRA, however, if you find that you are the subject of a default judgment, you can apply to the court to have that judgment set aside. You must be able to demonstrate that your ability to defend yourself was significantly harmed by your presence in Iraq, and that you had a valid defense against the lawsuit. You must make this request within 90 days of your return from Iraq.

If you are leasing a house, apartment, or a vehicle, your deployment orders give you the option of terminating the lease early, once you notify your landlord or finance company of the deployment. This option is not just available to you, but also to your dependent, if his or her ability to comply with the lease is materially affected by your service. You must terminate the lease by giving the person who has the contract (your landlord, for example) written notice that you are terminating under the SCRA, as well as a copy of your orders. It is always a good idea to send it return receipt requested.

The Takeaways

- The SCRA caps interest rates on most pre-service debt at 6 percent.
- Use the SCRA to delay lawsuits against you until you are able to fully defend yourself.
- Have someone you trust keep track of your mail while you are deployed.
- The SCRA lets you set aside default judgments against you, but only if you act within 90 days of returning from a deployment.
- The SCRA allows you to terminate auto and real estate leases early when you deploy or PCS.



Planning on traveling outside the US while on EML? You may need your passport.

- Isn't my military ID enough to travel to NATO countries? Yes, and No. If you're on military orders then yes, your ID can get you in and out of that country. But, according to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, you will want to ensure that you have a passport, if you are traveling outside of your military duties, specifically if you are traveling commercial.
- I plan on traveling on military aircraft to Germany for my EML and renting a car upon arrival and driving throughout Europe, specifically to France. Do I need my passport or any other documents? Though France is a NATO partner, they changed the laws several years ago and require not only a passport, but that you have an international driver's license as well (AAA can help with this).
- I am taking my leave in Texas, but plan on traveling with my family down to Mexico for a few days. Will we need passports? Yes, you can obtain a passport card or the passport book. The passport card is good for travel to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda at land border crossings or sea ports of entry. Children need passports too – birth certificates are no longer good enough.
- I'm not sure where or when I will be taking my leave, but figured that I can get a passport later?

No, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad plans to shut down the service in June; and it can be 4-6 weeks to get a passport from Baghdad; this does not include the time it takes to get a certified birth certificate (foil or embossed sealed), from the state you were born, and receive your photos back from www.epassportphoto.com. There is no place to get official passport photos on Camp Liberty or VBC. After June, you are out of luck.

For detailed answers to these questions, as well as, travel warnings, visit www.travel.state.gov or <http://iraq.usembassy.gov/> or the USD-C Office of the Staff Judge Advocate at DSN 847-2388 for additional information.