

The Sandstorm

The Magazine of the 2nd BCT, 10th Mountain Division ~ Vol. 1 Issue 11

SEARCHING:
**Three Soldiers
missing in
Yusufiyah**

Iraqi Army takes lead in Mahmudiyah

The Sandstorm

The official magazine of the Second Brigade Combat Team

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If you'd like to see something in this magazine, or if you'd like to make contributions, please e-mail us at: commando_brigade@yahoo.com.

We're always striving to improve this publication. Remember, this is *your* magazine.

We reserve the right to edit for security, accuracy, propriety, clarity and space.

More information on the 2nd BCT Commandos can be found at www.CommandosOf2BCT.blogspot.com.

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In this issue:



Soldiers search the area around Yusufiyah for three Soldiers missing after a pre-dawn attack near Forward Operating Base Incheon that left one Iraqi and four U.S. Soldiers dead and another three presumed abducted. The search has continued since May 12.

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An Iraqi Soldier looks for "terrorists" at a demonstration of tactics and techniques at the Iraqi Army compound in Mahmudiyah May 9 at the "Iraqi Army in the Lead" ceremony celebrating the 4th Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division's formal assumption of the battle space around Yusufiyah.

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Commander's Comments

Commandos,



Kershaw

From the first days of basic training, Soldiers are inculcated with the Warrior Ethos, including the phrase "I will never leave a fallen comrade."

In this, our second week of searching for our three missing Soldiers, we all feel the sense of urgency. We continue to search, to act on tips from local citizens and intelligence we gather. We have questioned well over a thousand people and as of May 21, detained more than 70. We continue to aggressively clear not only our area of operations but areas west of the Euphrates River. Our efforts are aided by Multi-National Corps-Iraq assets from every branch of service and by Iraqi troops, both Shia and Sunni.

Our Iraqi comrades are committed not only to the fight for a free Iraq but to the friendships forged in the heat of many skirmishes.

Gen. Ali Jassim Al-Frejee, commander of the 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, has pledged his assistance.

"Any attack against U.S. soldiers is an attack against Iraqi soldiers," Gen. Ali told news reporters the other day.

"We are doing our best to find the Soldiers," said Sgt. Yassl, a 4/4/6 squad leader. "We (the IA soldiers) and the American Soldiers are like brothers and I want to find them. We need to catch the terrorists who did this

... we will bring them to justice."

We have been offered support by almost every unit in theater. The division and corps commanders have provided us whatever we have requested. At the risk of leaving some out, I would like to thank these groups in particular: the Tomahawks of the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Strykers, the Marine Corps tracking dog teams and our aviation support, Big Guns and Spears battalions of the 1st Aviation Cavalry Brigade.

Other units have assisted us as well, but I am not able to mention them here. These three units, however, have provided us invaluable assistance to both the Commandos of the 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division and the *jundis* of the 4/6 IA as we continue to search for our missing comrades.

Our efforts have not come without cost. We are grieved by the loss of four other Commandos in that attack, as we have been by all our losses. Two Commandos have been killed and a third is still a 'very serious injury' while others have been wounded. Coming on top of our other losses, these only add to our grief. But these losses will not deter us from our mission of recovering our missing comrades or our mission to provide a safe and secure South Baghdad for the people of Iraq.

We must continue the mission for them, if nothing else. We must succeed not only for the sake of Iraqi people and for ourselves, but for our brothers and sisters in arms who have given 'the last full

measure of devotion' in the effort to help a country yearning to be free.

At this time it would be easy and natural to forget our moral position - to return hate for the hate we have seen in the loss of our comrades.

However, we must not forget our moral high ground, the fact that our country is founded on freedom and laws which protect us from torture, from groundless arrests and searches.

Our mission dictates that we search homes and people here, but we are bound by the Geneva Conventions, Army regulations and our own moral fiber to be fair and just, to prohibit torture and shameful treatment. We cannot forget that 'Iraqi' does not equal 'terrorist,' and that the loss of a comrade does not justify abuse of any sort.

Defense of yourself, your fellow Soldiers or innocent civilians is always permitted, but in the wake of a painful time for our brigade, do not let yourself be swayed from the mission which is to help the Iraqis.

We have accomplished many things in the past two weeks; we have eliminated at least two enemy snipers, one of whom is suspected of killing and wounding of Soldiers here for at least the past year. We continue to detain many terrorist cell leaders and foreign fighters, and uncover numerous caches.

But we cannot rest on these laurels until we have accomplished our mission; our missing comrades and their families are in our thoughts and prayers as we continue the search. Be assured, we will find them, whatever it takes.

Continue to press the fight, remember your honor, and climb to glory.

Commandos!



SEARCHING

Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), missing after a May 12 attack, are presumed to have been kidnapped by terrorists. Pfc. Joseph Anzack (left), Spc. Alex Jimenez (center) and Pvt. Byron Fouty (right), were conducting a route overwatch mission to prevent placement of roadside bombs when their vehicles were ambushed. Four other U.S. Soldiers and an Iraqi soldier were killed in the fight.

Taking the Reins

*Spc. Chris McCann
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) PAO*

VICTORY BASE COMPLEX, Iraq — On the outskirts of Baghdad near the coalition hub of the Victory Base Complex lies Iraqi Family Village. Built by Saddam Hussein as an area for Baathist families whose husbands were injured or killed in combat, the village has no medical facilities. Before the regime's fall, travel to Baghdad was not an issue. But since 2003, many of the families in IFV have had almost no access to medical care.

To rectify the situation, Soldiers from Task Force Vigilant, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) out of Fort Drum, N.Y., arranged a major medical operation May 5.

The task force, composed of Soldiers from many of the 2nd BCT units, joined forces with Iraqi soldiers from the Iraqi Ground Forces Command, primarily to assist as the Iraqi doctors plied their trade.

Brig. Gen. Ali Mahdi, IGFC commander and a dentist, explained the strategy.

"We divided our team into three parts — the first is the medics, supporting the doctors. The second group is the dentists. We have two dentists with three medics, and also a pharmacy technician. The third group is the division-level civil-military operations."

With no clinic in the area, Iraqis flocked to the opportunity to be treated for their ills, with lines of people filtering through.

Even more important, however, is the understanding created by the major Iraqi Army presence at the operation.

"This will make the relationship (with coalition forces) very good," said Mahdi. "Such a service gives a good impression of the Iraqi military and coalition forces. It's very dangerous in Amariyah (an adjoining neighborhood),

and this service will hopefully make a change for the positive. This operation is very important right now — there are many family members of terrorists. If we treat them, hopefully they will warn them not to harm coalition forces. I hope to break this cycle."

The IFV city council members also attended the operation, which provided them almost a full day to network with residents they might not otherwise see.

They also were able to speak with Mahdi, who told them that if the Iraqi Ministry of Health would not assist with building a local clinic, he would talk with the Ministry of Defense to gain their support for a clinic staffed by Iraqi soldiers.

Second Lt. Suhaib Ismail, a dentist with IGFC, spent most of the day performing routine check-ups and extracting teeth.

"Most people prefer to have Iraqi doctors here," he explained between patients. "There are many terrorist attacks on 'collaborators' and many people who come to be treated by U.S. forces could be hurt just for coming in for help. We need to do this a lot to prove our goodwill and that we're building a new Iraq."

The 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd BCT, sent Capt.

Bryan Mead, brigade dentist, and Spc. Paul McBee, a dental technician, in the new "Doc In A Box" dental clinic. Mead and Ismail treated many patients in the renovated railroad car, which provides a nearly full-service dental clinic that can be easily transported. But Mead often stood aside, letting Ismail do his work.

Maj. Joshua Sparling, brigade surgeon for the 2nd BCT, agreed with the technique. "The real focus is getting the Iraqis really running things," Sparling said. "We're just here as advisors, and we're really moving in that direction. The providers are stepping back and letting Iraqi and U.S. medics do things." Maj. Ali Hamid Seber treated a variety of illnesses — mostly complaints like knee pain and allergies.



2nd Lt. Suhaib Ismail (left) a dentist with Iraqi Ground Forces Command, tells Abdul Hadar, 7, that one of his teeth needs to be removed during a medical operation conducted by Task Force Vigilant, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) in Iraqi Family Village just outside Baghdad May 5. Capt. Bryan Mead (center), the 2nd BCT dentist, assigned to the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, prepares to hand Ismail an anesthetic.



Photos by Spc. Chris McCann, 2nd BCT PAO

Warrant Officer Heydar Kassim Ali of the Iraqi Ground Forces Command checks a woman's blood pressure during a medical operation conducted by Task Force Vigilant, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) in Iraqi Family Village just outside Baghdad May 5.

He also wrote prescriptions and instructions for patients in Arabic, so that the pharmacy technicians could fill them quickly and without confusion.

By the end of seven-hour operation, the providers had treated about 700 patients for everything from runny noses to broken femurs.

Capt. Amanda Nalls, the personnel officer in charge for the 210th BSB, worked at the reception desk, noting names and complaints.

"I think they were really happy to see so many Iraqi soldiers working," she said. "I think it went very well."

The soldiers, Iraqi and U.S. alike, packed their gear into their Humvees and bade each other farewell; new friendships had been formed in the controlled chaos of the mission.

A woman named Gufran was one of the last patients to leave the pharmacy and had been seen for chronic back pain.

"It's the first time I've been seen by a doctor in almost four years," she said. "It's wonderful to see the (Iraqi) army and the American Soldiers working together."

In War and Peace

By Spc. Chris McCann
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) PAO

MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq — Elements of the Iraqi army celebrated the assumption of authority in the Yusufiyah area southwest of Mahmudiyah in a ceremony Tuesday.

The 4th Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army division has made tremendous improvements in personnel, training and equipment readiness over the last eight months, said Maj. William Warner, the Iraqi Security Forces coordinator for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI). “Their assumption of responsibility and the designation that they are ‘in the lead’ in the Yusufiyah area are indicative of the exceptional hard work by the officers and soldiers of the 4/4/6 IA.”

The ceremony included speeches from 4/6 IA commander Brig. Gen. Ali and other officers of the Iraqi Ground Forces Command, as well as Col. Mike Kershaw, commander of the 2nd BCT, whose 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment “Polar Bears” have been living and working with the 4/4/6 soldiers for the last nine months, training them.

The Iraqi soldiers conducted a pass-in-review, parading before the leadership.

Ali was awarded an Army Commendation Medal with a “V” device for valor for out-

standing leadership and work with the 4/4/6. Brig. Gen. Jim Huggins, deputy commanding general (maneuver) for the 3rd Infantry Division out of Fort Stewart, Ga., presented the award in front of the gathered Iraqi news media and attending dignitaries.

The Iraqi soldiers also conducted two mock skirmishes, taking down “terrorists” first on foot, then from Humvees. The wounded “terrorists” were treated and put into a Red Crescent ambulance while the others were detained and put into Humvees.

Lt. Ali Al-Meahi, visiting from the 1st Bde., 6th IA Div., is in an area where the Iraqi army is also leading operations.

“It’s very important for us to be in the lead,” Al-Meahi said. “There is a lot of communication between the soldiers and the people, and because of the trust the people have with the soldiers, we get a lot of co-operation.”

Sgt. Jarad Asalahe, who serves on Brig. Gen. Ali’s personal security detachment, agreed.

“We have been slowly taking the lead and building relations with the local people and the Coalition Forces. We did a lot of important work here. We try our best to do our job well, and we’re going to keep working hard against the terrorists.”

Over the coming year, Asalahe said, they hope to get Yusufiyah firmly under control.

“We hope we can improve the security situation and work to make the town safer than before, so the people can live in

safety,” he said.

Pvt. Hassan Nahas Ma’iuf Al-Hichiemi said that the official transition didn’t matter much to him, but the implications did.

“We want to do our job to protect the people and make it safe here,” he said. “We’d like to see everyone have security, and for terrorist acts to be at zero ... I think that’s a very reasonable goal. I think we can take responsibility now,” Al-Hichiemi said.

The 4/4/6 works largely out of Yusufiyah with the 4-31 Soldiers based on Forward Operating Base Yusufiyah, led by Lt. Col. Michael Infanti.

“This means we’re making progress,” Infanti said of the ceremony. “Our Soldiers can see that the hard work, the Soldiers that were killed and wounded, made a difference. We’ve made a change and turned over our area of operations to a capable force that’s able to go in and bring the fight to the enemy.”

The process has not been short or easy.

“We live with (the Iraqi soldiers), they’re included on every mission and task. We treat them as equals, and we treat them as brothers,” Infanti said, noting that the Iraqi soldiers will continue to train and work with the 4-31.

“The (soldiers) are more ready than they were nine months ago,” he said. “If you wait for things to be perfect, you won’t get anything done.”

Infanti, as one of the Americans who has worked most closely with the 4/4/6, watched the formal ceremony with interest.

“This makes all the sacrifices our unit has made worth it,” he said.



Photos by Spc. Chris McCann, 2nd BCT PAO

Iraqi soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division stand in company formations (above) and conduct a pass-in-review (left) during the battalion’s formal celebration of taking the lead in the Yusufiyah, Iraq area. The ceremony, held May 8 at the Iraqi Army Compound in Mahmudiyah, featured speeches from several leaders of the IA and the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI).

Moms deploy too

Spc. Chris McCann
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) PAO

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — The National War Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu is adorned with a quote attributed to Abraham Lincoln, to a woman who had lost sons in the Civil War: “The solemn pride that must be yours, to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of Freedom.”

But mothers don’t only send their sons to battle; sometimes they go themselves.

Sgt. Arays Cruz, who serves as the retention noncommissioned officer for the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) out of Fort Drum, N. Y., has two children.

The Cruz children, Derrick, 6 and Angel, 4, are well taken care of, says Cruz.

“They’re staying with my parents,” she said. “I have great support from (my parents), and it’s not that different for (the children), me being deployed. They’re progressing well, they’re going to school and they absolutely love staying with their grandparents. They get spoiled.”

For her, it’s a little harder, she admitted.

“I’m a single parent, and it makes it difficult. They’re really what I go home to,” she said. “And when I was deployed here in 2004, my son took his first step the day I left home, coming back to Iraq from leave.”

“They’re so young they only know that mommy’s in Iraq, but it’s my second deployment, so they have a sense of what it means. My parents tell them that I’m working to support them and I know I’m doing it to improve their future.”

Spc. Sonja Larson, a signal support specialist with the 210th BSB and her husband, Sgt. Darren Larson, brigade supply NCO with the 2nd BCT, are both deployed, and their two children stay with Sonja’s sister in Iowa.

“She’s an exceptional mother,” Darren said of his wife. “She raised the children as a single mother until we got married, holding down a full-time job and going to college full-time so she could get her associate’s degree in computer science. Joining the Army is something she always wanted to do, and she took a two-thirds pay cut to do it.”

Kayla, 15, and Mikey, 13, are old enough to understand more what their parents are doing.

“This is our first deployment,” Sonja said. “They’ve never been without me... They think it’s kind of cool what I’m doing, and they watch the news more. But mostly when we write and e-mail, it’s just day to day news of what’s going on.”

Finding someone to care for the children while they deployed wasn’t much of a worry, Sonja said.

“I came from a big family, and my sister has four children. They’re younger, so now she has teenagers who can help out. My whole family supports what I’m doing, and if one of them got tired of the children, I have seven other brothers and sisters that would do it.”

Sgt. Jeong Hinton has two daughters, aged 6 and 5.

“They’re so little they don’t understand, but they don’t like me being away,” she said. “But my husband explains to them that mommy has an important job in Iraq. He’s a stay-at-home dad, he doesn’t have an outside job, so the children can feel safe at home. We’re both glad he can be there to take care of them.”

She keeps in close contact as much as she can.

“We talk on the phone, and e-mail, and once a month I order a little gift online for them. My husband just sent me a webcam – we weren’t going to spend the money, but with the likely extension, I decided I needed it, I need to see my children.”

Some mothers – and fathers - have been lambasted and even lost custody of their children for “abandoning” them in favor of going to war, but Soldiers of the 2nd BCT haven’t taken much flak for their decisions, they say.

“My family used to say they didn’t like it,” said Hinton. “They said I should be home with the children and that my husband could go to Iraq instead. But it’s been nine months now, and they’ve accepted it, even if they don’t like it.”

“I don’t see why people think it’s such a different job,” Sonja Larson said. “There are fathers and mothers outside the military that travel everywhere and a nanny or family member ends up raising the children just as much as for a Soldier.”

Still, the Larsons said, distance makes it a little tougher.

“We have to administer things from here,” Darren said. “We’re not there to influence them with our values, and sometimes they have tough issues with no parent there to ask. But they have her family and my family there... I think it will be alright.”

Cruz agreed.

“My only fear is having my children, later, say I was never around. But my parents tell them, and I tell them how much I love them, no matter what. I don’t think there will be a problem. I think it will make us stronger, and when it’s all over we’ll be closer. We’ll have the fruits of our labor, a house to call our own.”

“Even when I’m away from my children,” said Hinton, “The love is still there, it’s deeper every day. I appreciate them more. Just to touch the girls, to see them, smell them – I’ll never take it for granted. I’ve learned so much about love here - it’s really a new level of love.”



Photo courtesy Sgt. Arays Cruz

Sgt. Arays Cruz (**center**), celebrates her son Angel's birthday Jan. 31 with her sons, Angel (**front left**), 4, and Derrick (**front right**), 6, and her parents, Estrella (**left**) and Alejo (**right**) while on leave from Iraq. Cruz, a single mother, is in the middle of her second tour in Iraq. Her parents care for the boys while she is deployed.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Army Emergency Relief

It's AER time again—when we as Soldiers have an opportunity to help others by contributing to a program that provides emergency financial assistance to Soldiers.

This year's theme, "Soldiers Helping Soldiers" speaks volumes about what the program is all about.

For 65 years the Army Emergency Relief organization has been helping active duty Soldiers, single or married, and their dependents, as well as surviving spouses and orphans of Soldiers who died while on active duty or after they retired.

AER has been helping in the form of interest free loans, grants, or a combination.

AER is there to help with emergency financial needs for things like rent, food, utilities, emergency transportation and vehicle repair, personal needs when pay is delayed or stolen, funeral expenses, and dental/medical expenses.

Soldiers and their dependents can get help from AER even if they do not contribute. However, keep in mind that AER does not get its money from the government. It really is a case of Soldiers helping Soldiers.

We ask for your help in three main areas; remind fellow Soldiers and spouses about AER when they have a financial emergency, support AER with a contribution, and encourage others to contribute.

Personnel Claims from the BOLT

The Commando Brigade Operational Law Team has information an important claims program that can reimburse soldiers – The Personnel Claims Program. This program aims to compensate soldiers for money lost incident to service.

Soldiers and DA civilians--have you had any personal property damaged, misplaced as a result of movement, or stolen? If so, you may be entitled to file a claim under the Personnel Claims Act.

The damage to, or loss of, property must be considered incident to service. In a deployed environment, many instances are incident to service.

Examples of some situations that may allow a claim include the following: (1) loss of baggage during transport to or around the area of operations; (2) damage to personal

items caused by combat activities; or (3) theft of personal property.

The PCA is a morale program and is not intended as an insurance policy. As a result, recovery is limited. If you are negligent, then you will not be able to recover under the PCA.

For example, if you left your sunglasses on the table at the DFAC and someone stole them, you will not be able to get money for the lost sunglasses.

Another major limitation is reasonableness. You can claim only for the loss or damage to items that were reasonable to have in a deployed environment.

For instance, you can recover for a few stolen DVDs - but not for 100 of them. You could also receive money to replace a broken TV, but not if it is a \$4,000 plasma TV.

There are other reasons that your recovery might be limited.

For example, if your laptop is broken and can be fixed, you will receive the cost of repair not the cost of replacement. Also, items more than six months old will be depreciated according to a set formula.

To file a claim, all you need to do is stop by the Commando BOLT Office in the Strip Mall (Building 44) on Camp Striker. The BOLT can also be reached by calling VOIP 242-4377.

You will need to bring proof of ownership (receipts, sworn statements and/or inventory forms), proof of loss (commander's inquiry, police report or lost baggage report) and proof of value (advertisements of similar items).

After you complete DD Forms 1842 and 1844, your claim(s) will be adjudicated. If approved, you will receive payment by electronic funds transfer.

If you have any questions in regards to the PCA, or on any other issues, please contact the Commando BOLT Office.

10th Mountain Division Association seeks members

From January through May of 1945, the 10th Mountain Division distinguished itself

in combat (Mt. Belvedere, Riva Ridge and the Po Valley) and in peacekeeping and stability operations (Northern Italy and Yugoslavia).

When the veterans of the division returned home from the battlefields, most went to school or work and began raising families. Only years later did they begin to look for their buddies. The 10th Mtn. Div. Association was not formed until 1971.

In 2007, in Denver, Colo., the World War II 10th Mt. Div. veterans will pass the leadership of the association to us, the 10th Mtn. Div. (Light).

To keep it a viable organization, we will need to have at least 5,000 members. Today's Mountain Soldiers are building upon the legacy of our WWII veterans.

They have added combat, peacekeeping and stability operations in Hurricane Andrew, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Horn of Africa and Iraq to the division's history. They and you deserve an association that fosters the camaraderie of Soldiers who bonded on the battlefield or shared the hazards of peace keeping and stability operations.

To that end I encourage you who are combat veterans to become members now, and those of you who are not, to become members of our association upon your return from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Application forms can be obtained on the 10th Mtn. Div. Association Web site: www.10thmtndivassoc.org or by contacting plummike@aol.com.

This is how the Fort Drum chapter spends your dues: we helped erect the Military Mountaineers Statue; erected the 9-11 Memorial; erected and keeps plaques current on Heroes Walk; supports local chapter visits to Walter Reed Army Medical Center to provide 10th Mt. Div. gifts to our wounded warriors; supports the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic; started and is building the 10th Mt. Div. (Light) scholarship fund; conducts reunions; provides awards to the Soldier and NCO of the year; and provides financial support for the "Mountain of Toys" annual Christmas event.

*Michael T. Plummer
President, Fort Drum NY Chapter*





"I will never leave a fallen comrade"

Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

YUSUFYAH, Iraq – It is a unit's worst nightmare – the uncertain fate of a fellow American Soldier.

Three Soldiers from Company D, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) that were abducted by terrorists May 12 in Quarghuli Village, Iraq are hoped to still be alive.

"I haven't seen anything that is telling me the Soldiers are not alive," said Lt. Col. Michael Infanti, the 4-31 commander. "Usually terrorists put out a video or something showing the Soldiers aren't okay ... but we have not seen anything as such."

Leaders say the missing Soldiers, Spc. Alex Jimenez, Pfc. Joseph Anzack and Pvt. Byron Fouty, had survivor characteristics.

"Jimenez and Anzack were both physically and mentally strong, especially Anzack – he was hard headed and strong willed," said Capt. Don Jamoles, the former D. Co. commander. "Jimenez ... he had a lot of street smarts."

Jamoles was the commander of the newly formed D Co. for about a year before being selected for a second command in Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 4-31. He shared a lot of firsts with the Soldiers – weapons training, patrols and establishing new battle positions. He was close to all three of the missing Soldiers, and said that while he understands that casualties happen in war, he never imagined something like this would ever happen to them.

"I was shocked when I found out and I never thought in a million years that something like this would happen to us, not to us," Jamoles said referring to his former Soldiers as still a part of him. "You know, I lay in bed each night imagining where these men can be, hoping we find something that will

Facing page, top left: Soldiers of Company D, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) patrol near Rushdi Mullah, Iraq, searching for lost comrades.

Top right: Soldiers of the 4-31 scan the horizon for indications of where the Soldiers might be.

Center right: A helicopter scatters leaflets offering a \$200,000 reward for information leading to the Soldiers' return.

Bottom: Soldiers of the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) sling-load a Zodiac boat onto a UH-60 helicopter so it can be moved to Patrol Base Dragon near Yusufiyah to search by water.

bring us closer to them and just wishing when I woke up they would be found."

Jamoles recently visited his former troops.

"I am not sure it was proper protocol to go see the Soldiers, but I wanted to see how they were doing," Jamoles said of the visit. "The Soldiers are really upset – this hurts more than losing a relative. You bring these Soldiers here (to Iraq) and then you lose them ... it tears you apart."

The area where the Soldiers were abducted, a former Ba'ath party region – is one of the most contested areas within the brigade's area; a place that is not friendly to American Soldiers. The Soldiers of the company faced challenges that other companies did not.

"The improvised explosive devices are a lot more catastrophic in that area than in others," Jamoles explained. "In most areas if a vehicle hits an IED it can be easily repaired. If an IED is hit here than it is guaranteed the vehicle will be flipped over. It is a bad area."

The deadliness of the local IEDs made overwatch of the area critical; it is easier to prevent emplacement than to defuse the devices. But other than the explosives, the only historical risk is occasional potshots taken at humvees.

Knowing the harsh reality of the area hasn't kept Soldiers from searching for their missing comrades.

As of Sunday, 188 air missions and continuous attack aviation missions had been conducted, 26 air assaults done, over 900 detainees questioned, 200 square miles cleared and more than 150 tips acted on. The unit has employed 10 dog teams and is using a forensic team to help locate the Soldiers.

"From the day this happened units have been calling and offering assistance," said Maj. Brian Kerns, the 2nd BCT assistant operations officer. "We have every echelon of the military aiding us ... as long as the Soldiers are missing, we will apply all efforts to find them."

As time passes, the Soldiers continue to fight scorching temperatures, walk over uneven land hoping not to step on IEDs, sift through reeds taller than them and wade through canals in hopes of finding their brothers.

"We are not stopping the search until we find these Soldiers," Infanti confidently said. "The terrorists made a mistake when they took our Soldiers. They'd better watch out, because we're coming for them."

Tips from local nationals offer hope as the search continues.

"We haven't heard of indicators suggest-

ing the Soldiers are dead," said Command Sgt. Maj. Alex Jimenez, the 4-31 command sergeant major. "It gets frustrating that we cannot find them, but we are not losing hope. We will continue searching for our Soldiers and doing whatever we can to find them – we will not leave them."

Ironically, Jimenez was on his way back to Iraq from leave when he picked up a newspaper while in Kuwait and read about the abduction. The article stated the attack happened in Mahmudiyah, Iraq which is home to another unit in the brigade. Jimenez did not find out it was his battalion that was attacked near Yusufiyah until he arrived in Iraq.

"I had no idea it was my Soldiers until I arrived in country," Jimenez said as he took a deep breath. "I thought, 'Not my Soldiers ... not my Soldiers.'"

Anzack's family and friends had experienced a similar irony when a Web site falsely posted that Anzack was killed last month. His family did not know he was alive until he called home, they told reporters. Anzack immediately updated his My Space account with a post that said, "I am not dead. I am still kicking."

Unfortunately, this time the reports about Anzack's abduction were true.

"It was kind of weird that Anzack was reported as being killed last month," Jamoles said of the reports. "But this time the report was true."

Infanti offered some insight about the ambush.

"Usually terrorists who are behind the attacks will not risk themselves so they pay others to carry out the attack," he said. "But right now we have a number of leads that are being followed at this point."

And following leads is what the U.S. Army has a history of doing to locate missing Soldiers. There have only been two U.S. Soldiers, Staff Sgt. Keith Maupin, who was abducted in April of 2004, and Spc. Ahmed Qusai al-Taayie, who was abducted in October of 2006, who have not been located.

"I am not going to give up on the Army – we will find the Soldiers," Jamoles said. "We will keep searching."

Day after day Soldiers will continue to search for their brothers until they are found.

These Soldiers are heartbroken, just like the parents of the missing comrades and the American population.

Jamoles looks down, fiddles with a set of keys in his hand and shakes his head in disbelief.

"How could something like this happen ... who would have thought?"



*Grave ... but
not forgotten*



On the hunt

Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) comb the canals and homes of the Yusufiyah, Iraq area during the massive search that has been ongoing since May 12.

Three Soldiers disappeared after a terror attack on a static overwatch post that killed four U.S. Soldiers and an Iraqi soldier.

The missing troops have prompted a search spanning hundreds of square miles.





Pfc. A.J. Mettao, a native of Saipan and a 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), an aviations operations specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, performs a traditional fire dance that prepares warriors for battle. The dance was part of the Camp Striker, Iraq, Asian-Pacific Islander Heritage Month observance.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie 2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

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