



# The Sandstorm

2nd BCT, 10th Mountain Division - Vol. 1, Issue 1



**Constant Vigil:  
Task Force guards  
Victory Base  
Complex**

**Making our move:  
2nd BCT, 10th Mtn.  
Div. takes over area**

**Also:  
Opinions,  
what's going  
on back home,  
and views from  
Commando 6**

# The Sandstorm



Sandstorm - Vol. 1 - Issue 1

The Official Magazine of The  
Second Brigade Combat Team

Public Affairs Officer  
Maj. Webster Wright

PAO NCOIC  
Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie

Staff Writers  
Spc. Chris McCann  
Pvt. Jon Cano

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](mailto:commando_brigade@yahoo.com). We are always striving to improve this publication, and remember - this is *your* magazine.

We reserve the right to edit for security, accuracy, propriety, clarity and space. The Sandstorm is an official publication of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), and is produced by the 2nd BCT Public Affairs Office. The Sandstorm is in compliance with AR 360-1.

**Cover Photo:** Sgt. 1st Class John Cavaliere of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd BCT Personal Security Detachment, patrols in south Mahmudiyah. Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie.

This is the first edition of the Sandstorm, the official newsletter of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI). As the public affairs officer and managing editor I would like to explain what the magazine is all about.

Our goal is to highlight the positive things that the Commando Soldiers are doing while in theater and to provide command information so you know about the programs, incentives and opportunities available to you. Also, of course, this will be a forum for the leaders of the BCT to communicate with you.

We want to ensure that your efforts do not go unnoticed.

We hope that through the pages of this magazine you are able to see and share your successes with others. We have set aside a section on the back cover for you to send the magazine home. Just add the address, staple the pages together, and drop it in the mail box. The postage is free.

Our staff will make every attempt to publicize the great things the Commandos are doing.

Every unit, job, and rank is important to us. We want to cover what you are doing. Whether you are an infantryman patrolling the sector, on a military training team working with the Iraqi army, or a mechanic keeping the vehicles rolling out, we want to make sure you get the recognition you deserve. Everyone makes a contribution to this fight.

We need your help. We invite you to share your experiences.

We always welcome articles, photos and any suggestions you may have. Send the article up through your battalion PAO representative or e-mail it to us. We cannot tell the Commando story without your assistance.

Remember we are here to serve and support you. This is not our publication - it is yours. Without your hard work and dedication this publication would not be possible. We are proud to be able to record the history of the Commando BCT as they make history. The Sandstorm is a publication for the Soldier, by the Soldier. It is our pleasure to serve you.

Best wishes to the Commandos, families and friends.

Go Commandos!

-Maj. Web Wright, 2 BCT Public Affairs Officer



Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie

Brig. Gen. John Campbell, Deputy Commanding General (Maneuver), 1st Cavalry Division, and Col. Mike Kershaw, 2nd Brigade Combat Team commander, share ideas during Campbell's visit to Mahmudiyah on Sept. 17th.

## Commander's Comments

by Col. Michael Kershaw  
2nd BCT Commander

Commandos,

September 20 marked a significant event in the history of this brigade combat team. That day, we accepted responsibility for our area of operations in southern Baghdad. We took this AO over from a BCT that made huge accomplishments but made some heavy sacrifices as well. We owe them a debt of gratitude. We embarked on this mission well before we uncased the colors. For some this may seem like a continuation of previous deployments. For others it might seem to be a new chapter. We have built strong, swift and lethal companies, intelligent, adaptive staffs, and competent, resilient support elements. Our equipment and systems have proven capable. We are as good, if not better than, any unit the Army can field. Having said that, never forget that this mission is about information. We must realize at all times that it is the people of Iraq who will defeat the

terrorists. Our actions will either bring the people to our side or will push them toward the enemy. Always act in a manner to gain the trust and confidence of the Iraqi citizens.

We have several objectives while we are here.

First, to build and work hand-in-hand with the Iraqi Army and Police forces. Whether you are on a military transition team, in a rifle company, member of a staff or working logistics, you will undoubtedly be involved in working with our Iraqi brothers. I ask that you support them just as you would your Commando comrades.

Another goal is to assist the Iraqi government in providing the essential services, governance tools, and economic stability for Iraq to run independently. It is our job to facilitate continued growth and take the measures required to make sure they remain stable and continue to grow until the terrorists no longer have safe haven.

Lastly, we must protect the force. Remember that the enemy is always present and watching. Protect yourself and your buddies by

watching operational security and policing your lane. Maintain vigilance and discipline at all times, and take the appropriate force protection measures.

To the families – this is a challenging time for you. It is never easy for your loved ones to deploy to a foreign country.

We have left a very competent rear detachment charged with making sure you are taken care of in the manner you deserve as family members of American Soldiers. I invite you to participate and become involved in the family readiness groups and other support chains we have established.

Finally, I want to let everyone – Soldiers, families and civilians – know how proud I am of you. The nation has called and you have met the challenge.

Stay focused and keep up your spirits through the good times and the hard.

We will meet these challenges head on and maintain the high reputation and respect that this BCT commands.

Commandos!



# CHANGE THE C

by the 2nd BCT Public Affairs Office

The first month of a deployment is always one of upheaval – for both the unit going home and the one arriving to replace them.

Militaries since time immemorial have used flags and banners to show their presence, and so 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI)'s battalion and brigade colors being raised declare in no uncertain terms that the brigade is here to assist to the Iraqi security forces and keep peace in southern Baghdad.

Lt. Col. Michael Infanti, commander of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, uncased the battalion colors in a brief ceremony Sept. 17.

Infanti said that while the formalities were short, the meaning was great, and that 4-31 Inf. was now in charge of the



## ING OF GUARD

north Mahmudiyah area of operations. "You own it, you defend it, and you ... (will help) establish an Iraqi government," he told the formation.

Later on the morning of Sept. 17, the 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment raised their colors over an Iraqi army compound in south Mahmudiyah. There the unit will be able to work in close conjunction with the 4th Battalion, 6th Iraqi Army Regiment, also uncased their colors, officially taking the reins from the 101st Airborne Division.

"(It's) fun to have a ceremony with the Iraqi army," said Pvt. James Buron, a medic with Headquarters Battery and a native of Phippsberg, Maine. "It's good to get things underway.

"Hopefully no one will need to come here after us, because (the



See *Authority*, page 11

# THEIR CONSTANT VIGIL KEEPING: 2ND BCT SOLDIERS GUARD VICTORY BASE COMPLEX

Story and photo by Spc. Chris McCann  
2nd BCT Journalist

BAGHDAD – The 2nd Brigade Combat Team officially underwent transformation after returning from Baghdad, Iraq, last summer. But the unit, now headed to Baghdad again, is still flexible enough to recognize and fulfill, in a matter of weeks, the need for another unit.

Task Force Vigilant is “a special unit stood up for a special mission,” said Maj. Brett Kessler, TFV commander.

Soldiers in the unit will staff guard towers and entry control points of Camp Victory, conduct combat patrols in three villages in the area to deny anti-Iraqi forces reconnaissance of the camp and defend the suburban and rural areas against the AIF.

“It’s an ad-hoc organization brought together for this mission,” Kessler said, “so that the brigade can do the most important mission – training the Iraqi Army.”

The need for such a task force was noted a few months ago, Kessler said. The brigade operations team and Col. Michael Kershaw, 2nd BCT commander, worked together on the administrative aspects of the unit, and Soldiers were chosen just before deploying.

Most Soldiers in the brigade will be able to spend time in the task force, Kessler said. “Soldiers will have the opportunity to rotate from their areas of operation to Victory base camp,” he said. “It allows Soldiers to live in a place where conditions are better, get a different perspective, stay fresh and vigilant.”

Combat platoons will rotate together; Soldiers in other units also can rotate into the task force as conditions

allow.

Training for such a delicate mission is difficult, however. There are many pro-coalition civilians including women and children in the areas, and the decision to shoot or not shoot becomes even more critical.

Soldiers from the task force, chosen from a variety of units in the brigade, went to the Coalition Forces Land Component Command Military Operations in Urban Terrain training village at Camp Buehring last month to use the Engagement Simulation Training area, an interactive virtual training device.

Teams of five Soldiers would watch and react to three videotaped scenarios in which civilians and anti-Iraqi forces must be positively identified. Soldiers must watch closely for signs of threat and react lightning fast with laser-equipped M-4 rifles.

Improvised explosive devices detonated, wounding civilians and Soldiers; friendly patrols came through entry points followed by anti-Iraqi personnel; and vehicles approached ECPs by the book, only to have AIF with rifles jump out and attack Soldiers.

Each scenario required Soldiers to react differently – and quickly.

“This training is intended for what this team’s going to be doing. We’re going to be doing en-



Task Force Vigilant Soldiers practice escalation of force with a video system at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, last month.

try control points, so this is hands-on training for us,” said Sgt. Charles Smith, who is assigned to 2nd Brigade Support Troops Battalion and the task force.

The training is different from what 2nd BSTB Soldiers – mostly cooks, mechanics and other support troops – normally do, said Smith, a team leader. Although the rotation at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., earlier this year offered similar training, the advanced laser-tag-type gear has limitations.

“To me, this kind of training builds team cohesion. This is the best kind of training you can do,” Smith said.

Spc. Colin Knight, a task force team leader from 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, said training with the team he will work with was helpful.

“We all felt confident reacting with each other,” he said. “Everyone was OK with initiating action.”

After the initial reactions, the scenario would replay, showing where each shot went, color-

*See Vigilant, page 11*

# Around the Army

## Soldier praises vehicle, body armor's abilities

by Pfc. Durwood Blackmon  
25th Combat Aviation Brigade  
Public Affairs

TIKRIT, IRAQ (Army News Service) – Soldiers are issued cumbersome protective gear that they have to lug, carry and drag everywhere they go. With heavy steel doors and blast shields, vehicles in the Army are no exception.

For one Soldier of the 25th Infantry Division, Combat Aviation Brigade, however, both of these security defenses helped to save his life and the life of his fellow comrades when their Humvee was hit by an anti-tank mine.

Sgt. Aaron Richardson, petroleum supply non-commissioned officer, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, Combat Aviation Brigade, was the turret gunner when his vehicle was struck by a buried explosive during a roving patrol outside of Contingency Operating Base Speicher September 6.

“We were hit by an anti-tank mine. I remember seeing a flash and hearing a loud noise. Basically, I couldn’t hear anything after the noise, and the

blast threw me back into the turret,” he said.

Richardson received injuries from the blast impact, but without the proper safety equipment, he acknowledges, the situation could have been far worse.

“There are blast shields around the turret and the armor stood up to the blast. The front of the vehicle was gone, but there were really no dings or anything in the armor,” he said.

“I think the equipment they issue us, the up armor and personal equipment, should be worn at all times when you’re going outside the wire,” he continued.

“It may be an irritating task putting it on and lugging it around, but the equipment will save your life, and stop objects and projectiles from damaging your body.”

While other passengers received small injuries and the vehicle's front was destroyed, there were no fatalities.

Army training also played a key role in the aftermath of the attack.

Although Richardson couldn’t hear, and was at times incoherent, he reverted to his training and direction of others around him in aiding in securing the area.

“After the blast went off, we did buddy checks to see if everybody was alright and make sure we had no injuries.

“The mission still has to go on, so after that I climbed out of the vehicle, we dismounted the .50 caliber, cordoned off the area and extracted the vehicle for sensitive items. After the area was secure we waited for a recovery team and medical personnel to show up,” Richardson said.

Although Richardson is still recovering from his wounds, his experiences have only intensified his attitude towards proper safety and training.

“I was over here last year and we got hit twice. I wasn’t in the turret, so it’s a whole different scenario, but I think everybody needs round-robin training.

“You never know what your job will be when you get to Iraq,” said Richardson.

Sgt. Aaron Richardson of E Co., 2nd Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, survived an improvised explosive device attack on this Humvee thanks to the armor on the vehicle. (Photo courtesy of ARNEWS)



**Is your unit going on an interesting mission? Do you have an issue on your mind?**

**Let the Public Affairs Office know so we can put it in the Sandstorm!**

**Email us at:**

**commando\_brigade@yahoo.com or stop by the Public Affairs Office at the Camp Striker Tactical Operations Center.**



# WE WANT YOU

## Stay Commandos

**Receive up to \$15,000  
tax free lump sum**

**contact your career counselor or  
contact Re-up at VOIP: 242-4808  
bldg. 44 located at the strip mall**

# Opinion

## Families left behind also fight battles — on the home front

By Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie  
2<sup>nd</sup> BCT Public Affairs NCOIC

For many family members, home is where the Army sends them. They don't get to pick where they live - they simply follow their loved ones to unknown places and create a home. During deployments our loved ones are left to watch the children, pay the bills and maintain the vehicles.

These are only a few of things our families have to take care of while we are away.

I have been on both sides of the coin. When my husband and I were both in the military, he deployed to Iraq. Before he left I thought I would have it pretty easy since I was not the one deploying – I was wrong.

I never imagined how difficult it would be to take on all of our responsibilities as one.

Each day was more stressful than the last. Since I had never been deployed, I could not fathom what my husband was going through.

Then it hit me. For the longest time I was under the stereotypical impression that family members stayed at home eating bon-bons and watching television. I finally understood what so many other family members were experiencing.

I realized that their jobs were just as tough as the Soldiers. So many times the sacrifices our family members make for us go unnoticed.

The spouses who work in the home have it just as tough as those who work out of the home. I can tell you that staying home all day and taking care of children is challenging. For these homemakers, their job never ends.

The family members who do not have children are actively engaged in other areas of life. They may be taking difficult classes or working around the clock.

Now that I am deployed I can truly appreciate all that our great family members do for us.

Since I have been here my husband and mother have sent things for not only me, but my Soldiers. Through their support I am able to focus on the mission and take comfort in the fact that I have people at home who support what I am doing.

Without the support of our families we would not be successful. It is through their perseverance and support that our brigade functions.

When you get a chance, let your family members know how much you appreciate them and what they are doing for us.

While we are away fighting the battle in a foreign land, they are fighting the battle on the home front.

## The Powder Keg: Views from around the AO

**“How have the first few weeks of the deployment been going for you?”**



“It’s been exciting, a lot better than I expected. I get to do more of my job.”

*-Pfc. Julia Harrison, HHC 2nd Brigade Support Troops Battalion*



“It’s better than my previous deployments - being in the operations environment.”

*-Spc. Lawrence Maples, HHC, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment*



“I thought it would be really hard, but I’ve adjusted - and it’s kind of cool actually.”

*-Pvt. Juan Martinez, HHC, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment*



“It’s pretty exciting. We took over an ongoing concern instead of building up from scratch.”

*- Staff Sgt. Eric McRoberts, HHC, 210th Brigade Support Battalion*

# Fort Drum families begin moving into new homes

by Nicolas Zimmerman  
Watertown Daily Times

FORT DRUM, N.Y. — Fort Drum Garrison Commander Col. David J. Clark handed keys Thursday to the first of 845 Army families who will move into new on-post homes over the next three years.

The sergeant and his family toured the house for the first time with the garrison commander and a gaggle of television cameras in tow.

"This is a lot nicer than what we have now," Sgt. Marc Newsom said as he walked down the stairs in his family's just-finished home in the Crescent Woods planned community. Their old digs in the on-post Adirondack Creek neighborhood were "just a lot smaller, a lot older." Sgt. Newsom, on medical leave from Afghanistan after having surgery on his foot, will move into his house this week along with his wife, Kristin, and infant daughter, Brooklynn. Mrs. Newsom is expecting a second child at the end of October.

The 1,700-square-foot, three-bedroom, two-and-a-half bath home is the most basic of the 16 models being offered by Fort Drum Mountain Community Homes, the partnership between the Army and Actus Lend Lease, Nashville. The 845 homes are the fruits of the Army's housing privatization initiative. The company had hoped to offer its first new homes this spring but fell behind after parting ways with one of its biggest subcontractors. With construction back on track, project director Joseph E. McLaughlin said, the company hopes to turn over one new home per day for the next three years. Carl A. McLaughlin, executive director of the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization, didn't realize FDMCH was ready to turn over its first new home. But that, combined with news of single-family houses being built and apartments being planned off-post, left him feeling optimistic the region is chipping away at a housing deficit the Army has

pegged at 2,000 units. "We're slowly closing that gap," he said, estimating the shortage may have shrunk below 1,400 units. "2005 was a very productive year, and 2006 is shaping up to a very productive year. Plus, the multi-family housing we've got on the books is moving forward." Col. Clark acknowledged that the region is in for a "crunch" when 7,000 soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division return to the north country from Afghanistan next spring, but said he believes the market will improve. "I would love to walk outside the post right now and find a 500-house neighborhood built, with a bunch of 'for sale' signs and a bunch of realtors standing there to offer me the lowest interest rate possible," he said. "There will be some painful periods. Folks will probably have to live a little farther than they would like to for a while longer. But we're moving in the right direction."

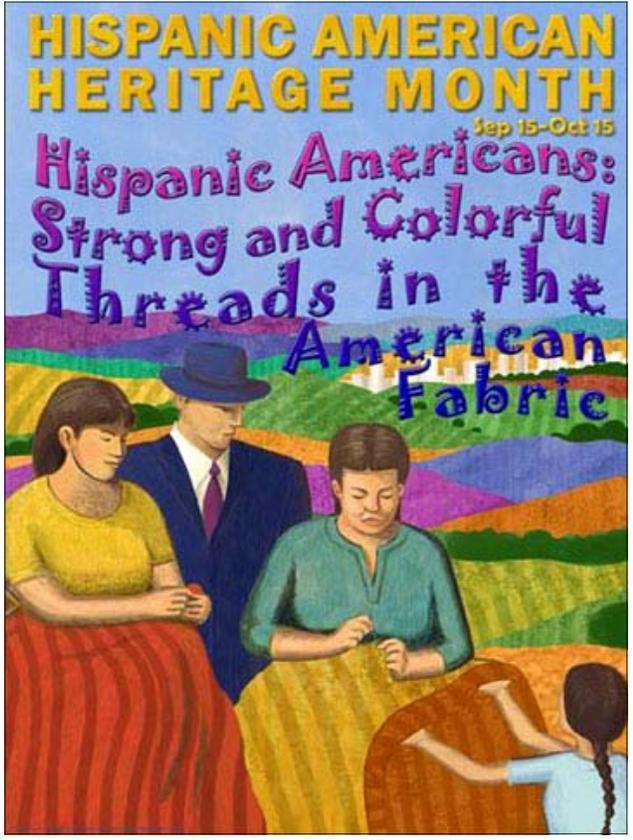


Photo by Pvt. Jon Cano

A civil affairs Soldier hands out candy to Iraqi children in Mahmoudiyah Sept. 17. The Soldiers were patrolling the city to ensure that schools and roads were adequate and well equipped for the citizens of the town.

**Authority** from page 5

Iraqis) will be self-sufficient.”

The sentiment was echoed by Staff Sgt. James Smotherman, a squad leader from the battery.

“I think it’s fantastic that we are uncasing here today as we assist them and enhance their ability to lead themselves and defend their country.”

“I’m excited,” said Spc. James Butler, a fire direction control specialist from Headquarters Battery, 2-15. He is from Galveston, Texas.

Colonel Michael Kershaw, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) commander, spoke briefly at the ceremony.

“We know from what our brothers in the Screaming Eagle (101st Air Assault) brigade tell us that the Desert Lion brigade is the best in the Iraqi Army,” he said, and expressed hope for continued efforts in the sector to bring peace to Mahmudiyah.

Col. Ali welcomed the newly arrived Soldiers to the area.

“I’m wishing you the best with your efforts and operations,” he said. “We hope you continue the efforts of the 101st.”

Baghdad has improved a lot during the 101st’s deployment, Ali said.

“I am very sure of the new unit because you have a great history, and I am sure you can improve this AO. ... You are brothers in arms and in blood.”

Sgt. Robert Simonovich, a squad leader with A Battery, 2-15, commented on the uncasing ceremony.

“It’s good that they can see we’re here working with them. It’s exciting to be working with the IA and see them taking the lead.”

Two units under the 2nd BCT uncased their colors for the first time ever in combat; the 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, and the 2nd Brigade Support Troops Battalion.

“This ceremony is significant in the fact that it’s the first uncasing of our colors on foreign soil,” said Sgt. 1st Class Eric Rees, signal platoon sergeant with the 2nd BSTB. “It’s the first time the unit has been together in a combat zone.”

While growing pains are expected, Rees has high hopes for the unit.

“We’ve got some challenges ahead,” he said. “We definitely will meet the challenges. We have nothing but

a lot of professionals.”

The battalion contains companies of engineers, military intelligence, signal and military police.

“We’ve learned a lot,” said Sgt. 1st Class Steve Plimpton, a platoon sergeant. “We have a tough mission but we’re ready to accept it and be successful.”

The 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, also unfurled its flag for the first time in combat.

“We’re ready, prepared and had a great transition with the 1st Battalion, 75th Cavalry Regiment, a great unit,” said Lt. Col. Mark Suich, 1-89 commander.

“We plan on moving what they had started in the right direction, and establish security and control in the sector by gaining the confidence of people.”

The 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment uncased its colors for the third time in Iraq, and many of the Soldiers of the unit are on their third tour as well.

Task Force Vigilant, an ad-hoc unit created to guard the Victory Base Complex, unveiled a unit sign in recognition of the transfer.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie

Lt. Col. Mark Suich, commander of 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, presents his outgoing counterpart from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, with a plaque at the transfer of authority.

**Vigilant** from page 6

coding each one as a kill shot, wound or miss.

Leaders hope the training will have great impact on the mission in Iraq this coming year.

“Whether manning a tower or entry control point or on patrol, they will be faced with a decision to shoot,” Kessler said. “Shooting is the easy part – it’s not shooting that’s hard. You don’t win against an insurgency by just shooting. Most often it’s not shooting that will win it.

“(This) training reinforces when to shoot and when not to.”



Col. Michael Kershaw, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) commander and Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Mahoney, brigade command sergeant major, raise the brigade colors at Camp Striker, Iraq, on Sept. 20, 2006.  
Photo by Maj. Web Wright.

From:



Free Mail

To: