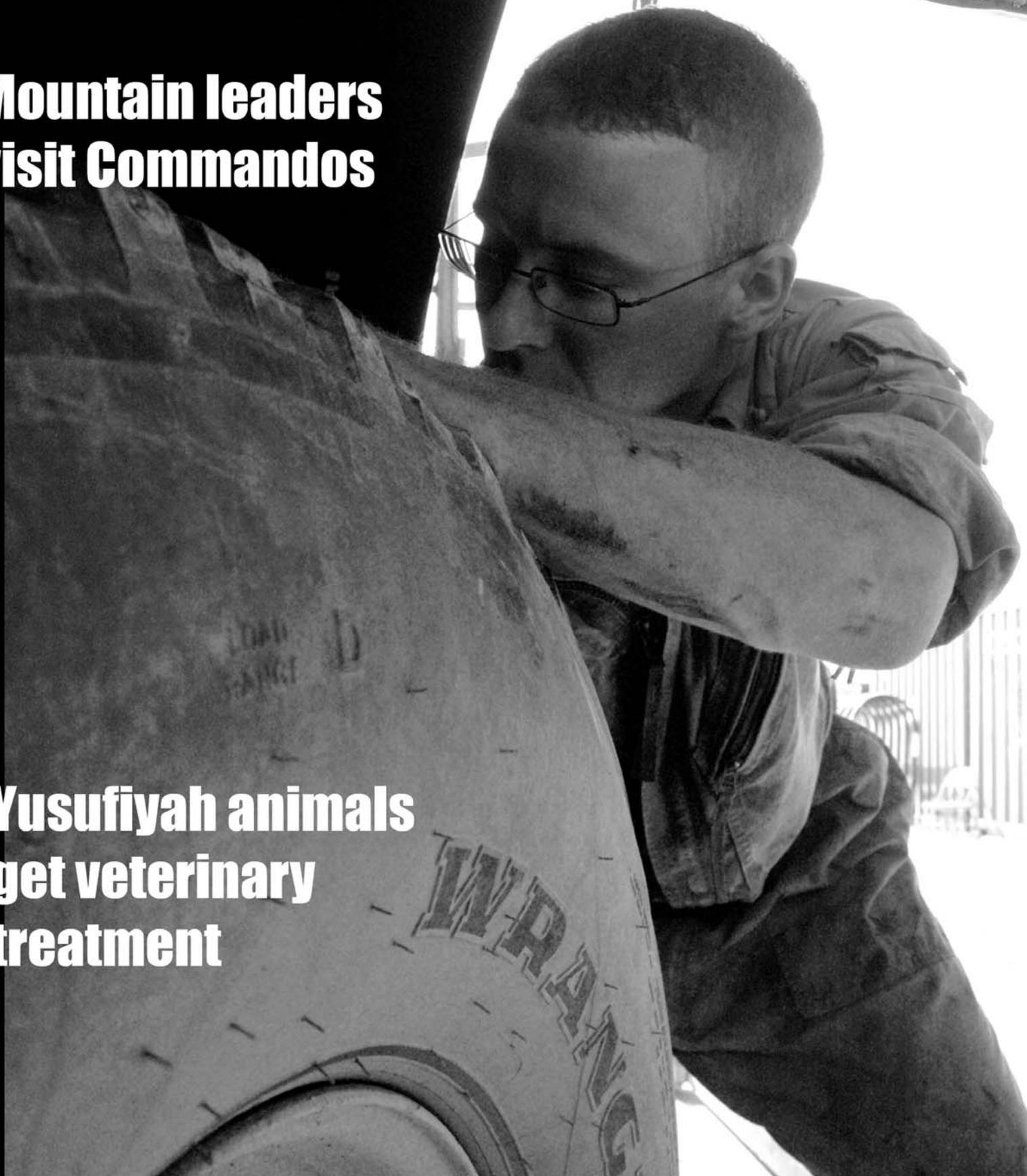


The Sandstorm

The magazine of the 2nd BCT, 10th Mountain Division - Vol 1, Issue 6

**Mountain leaders
visit Commandos**

**Yusufiyah animals
get veterinary
treatment**



The Sandstorm

The official magazine of the
Second Brigade Combat
Team

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In this issue:



Maj. Gen. Benjamin Freakley (left), the 10th Mountain Division (LI) commanding general, and Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph Borja (right), the division command sergeant major, congratulate Staff Sgt. Anthony Petrarca (center), of the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) on his reenlistment Dec. 18 on Camp Striker.

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.

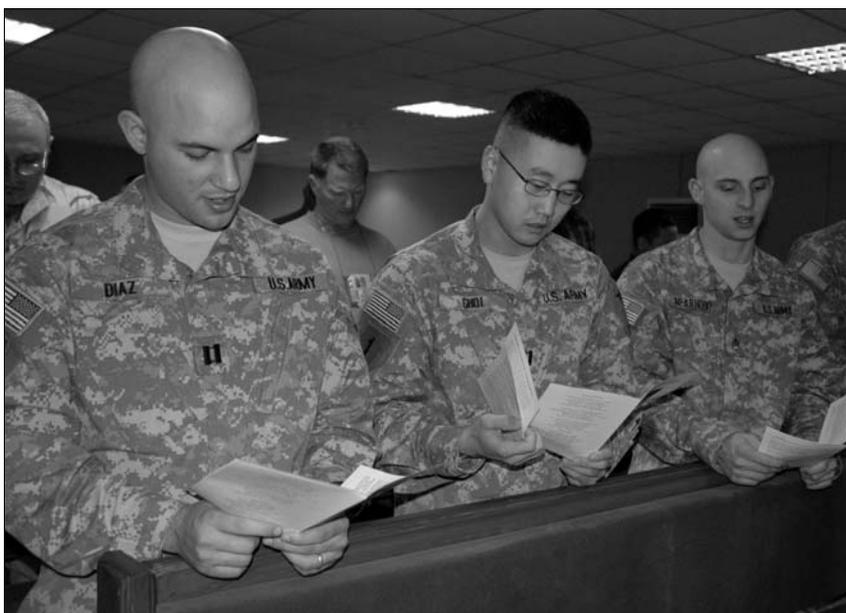
We reserve the right to edit for security, accuracy, propriety, clarity and space.

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

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.

See Visiting Dignitaries, page 4



Soldiers bow their heads to pray during a Community Candlelight Service at the chapel at Camp Striker, Iraq on Dec. 24. Soldiers around the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) celebrated Christmas and Hanukkah this year with their surrogate "family" in Iraq.

See Christmas, page 8

Commander's Comments

Commandos,



Kershaw

In one of many Christmas packages, we received an item that caught my attention. There was a book entitled "The Last Ridge", a history of this great division in World War II. Inside the front cover was this inscription:

To our new 10th Mtn. Soldiers, with our prayers. The last chapter describes our unit's takeover of Mussolini's northern headquarters (1st Platoon, Co. K, 85th Mt. Infantry). Our lieutenant, Gene Hames, describes the operation; I was his platoon sergeant. Gene & I became very close friends, and skied together for over 20 years. We just returned from his funeral in Denver. The best of luck to all of you.

Bob York

We are coming to the end of a year filled with what will prove to be monumental events in the history of the brigade and on the verge of beginning a new year with new and unique challenges and opportunities.

2006 saw this brigade transform into the new modular brigade combat team. We restructured, fielded new equipment and added

new positions and units. We trained at every level including a six-week rotation at the National Training Center in California. The corps commander saw us off at Fort Drum as we embarked on this brigade's third mission in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

On 20 Sept., 2006 we assumed duties from the Strike brigade and immediately started applying pressure to the enemy while working with locals to drive a wedge between them and insurgents.

We moved deep into previously denied territory, established strong points in villages once controlled by terrorists and captured and occupied the Yusufiyah Thermal Power Plant – a one-time al Qaeda stronghold. We fought off complex counterattacks, endured mortar fires and cleared IEDs – and suffered our losses. We have attacked on foot, by vehicle, by helicopter and by boats on the Euphrates – and with the jundis of the Baghdad Eagle brigade, brought security to places that had not seen it since Operation Iraqi Freedom began. Most importantly, we have engaged the people on an unprecedented scale and seen our efforts rewarded with more information to go after the remaining insurgents.

We have made remarkable achievements and we should be proud of what we

have done. The mission is not over, however. We still have a long way to go.

2007 will bring new challenges. The National Command Authority and chain of command have a new vision for how to array forces throughout Iraq and Baghdad. I foresee us working even more in an advisory role to the Iraqis assuming the main security role in Iraq.

In years to come, each of us will look back on what we did here. The small things that seem so important as we go about our mission here will fade in importance over time.

What we will remember is how we stood together as Soldiers during good times and bad; how we accomplished things that others were unwilling to do; how we honored those who we lost and how we got the job done. You are forming bonds and experiences that will remain with you for the rest of your life.

And for each of you, I hope, there will come a day when an old comrade - maybe someone you ski with for twenty years or who you haven't heard from since redeployment - will reach out to you and say, "I was proud to serve with you in Iraq."

Happy New Year,

Commando 6



Photo by Pvt. Jon Cano, 2nd BCT PAO

2nd Brigade *Trauma* Team ?

Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) personal security detachment render first aid to a wounded motorist on Route Tampa Dec. 25. The Iraqi man was injured just before the PSD arrived, suffering a gunshot wound to the neck. He was treated at the scene and evacuated to a local medical facility for further care.

VISITING DIGITARIES

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

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) had a chance to meet top Mountain leaders during the past week.

Maj. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley, the 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) commanding general, and Cmd. Sgt. Maj. Ralph Borja, the 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) command sergeant major, visited Commando Brigade Soldiers from Dec. 14-19 in the brigade's area of operations.

"The command sergeant major and I wanted to see the current status of the brigade in combat in Iraq, see if the Soldiers had any equipment or manning issues, ask them (the Soldiers) how they felt about the training they received prior to deployment and if there were any training adjustments that needed to be made," Freakley said. "We also wanted to visit our Soldiers before the holidays."

During the visit Freakley and Borja spoke with Soldiers from each of the brigade's battalions.

On the first day they were able to spend some time with Task Force Vigilant Soldiers. While there, Freakley conducted a re-enlistment ceremony and went with Borja to eat din-

ner with the Soldiers.

Before departing the area Freakley left the Soldiers with some encouraging words.

"The TFV is unique, well led and has great Soldiers," Freakley said. "(The Soldiers) have a significant mission and high morale. They are very positive young men and women."

On Dec. 15 Freakley and Borja made their way to the two infantry battalions, the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment "Golden Dragons," and the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment "Polar Bears."

They toured Patrol Base Dragon, which was established by the Golden Dragons after they took over the Yusufiyah Thermal Power Plant in Yusufiyah, Iraq and Warrior Keep, another patrol base the Soldiers man.

"The Golden Dragons face a unique set of challenges with the river, agriculture and the ground, but they are handling them extremely well," Freakley said.

After visiting with the Golden Dragons Freakley and Borja visited the Polar Bears in Yusufiyah and Rushdi Mullah, Iraq. While there Freakley presented some of the Soldiers with Purple Heart Medals.

See Visitors, page 11



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

Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph Borja (left), 10th Mountain Division (LI) command sergeant major, talks to a Soldier of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) at Camp Striker, Iraq during a visit to the Commando Brigade's area of operations on Dec. 18.



Maj. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley (right), the 10th Mountain Division (LI) commanding general, shakes hands with Pfc. Travis Tysinger (left), a military policeman with the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI), on Dec. 18 at Camp Striker, Iraq. Freakley presented Tysinger with a Purple Heart Medal for wounds he sustained during a combat mission.



Gen. Peter Schoomaker (left), the U.S. Army chief of staff, greets Pfc. Maegan Campbell (right), an intelligence analyst with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) on Dec. 23 at Camp Striker, Iraq. Schoomaker visited the 2nd BCT's area of operations during his tour of Iraq.

Al-Rasheed students get brighter school

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq — As coalition forces and Iraqis work together to rebuild the country after years of corruption, neglect and terror, one of the key focal points to ensure a peaceful, prosperous future is the educational system.

Terrorist operations are often conducted by poor Iraqis, not because they subscribe to the ideology, but simply because terrorist organizations pay them very well if they can prove they have caused damage to coalition forces.

To that end, Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) provided security for the secondary school in Al-Rasheed, Iraq, while the school underwent some needed renovation. The school re-opened Saturday, Dec.

23, to the evident joy of its 500 students, aged 12 to 15, after a month-long renovation.

Headmaster Jumaa Ja'asi Muhammad welcomed Battery Commander Capt. Blake Keil to the ribbon-cutting, as well as Isa, the Al-Rasheed mayor and several soldiers of the Iraqi Army as Soldiers guarded the area.

Muhammad explained that the school, in a mixed Sunni-Shia area, has no sectarian tensions despite those in the country at large.

"We don't talk about tribes or religion," he said. "The students are here just to go to school."

The project was begun by the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, explained Keil, and the 2-10th took it over when the 101st redeployed to the United States.

"For the last three months we've provided security and acted as a liaison between the

headmaster, city council, and the contractors. There have been no issues and no attacks."

Al-Rasheed mayor Isa was pleased by the finished project.

"It was our dream to fix up the school, and now we have. Thank God the Americans helped us out. It's not easy when you need to fix a school in this area."

The students recited poetry in honor of the occasion in front of

a small assembly of American and Iraqi soldiers and their peers.

The Americans then distributed backpacks, school supplies and T-shirts to the school's pupils.

"We thank you guys," said student Malik Rahim Mes'out. "You have fixed our school, it's wonderful."

Ahmad Shakeir especially liked the new paint. "There's color now. That's very nice."



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

Providers give Soldiers the tools to complete missions

Capt. Amanda Nalls
210th BSB, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — While the Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) continue to push farther into sector in order to defeat the enemy, other Soldiers are working behind the scenes to help accomplish missions.

The 210th Brigade Support Battalion's, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI), armament repair section is developing innovative ways to ensure that the Iraqi Army soldiers have the tools necessary to complete their mission.

In addition to their day-to-day work - repairing and modifying weapon systems within the brigade - the armament section has turned their attention towards repairing weapons in support the Iraqi Army.

After enemy weapons are seized from weapons caches by the maneuver units within the brigade, the weapons are brought to the armament team for inspection and repairs.

To date, the team has inspected 170 weapons, repaired at least 40, and re-issued

over 70 back to the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Special Forces.

The project, which will ensure that the Iraqi Army is armed and prepared to defend themselves against Anti-Iraqi Forces, will continue to grow in magnitude as more enemy weapons are captured throughout the brigade's area of operations.

"My Soldiers are really working hard to complete this mission in addition to their normal job repairing weapons for the brigade," Chief Warrant Officer Christopher Shaffer, a 210th BSB armament repair technician, said. "We have a small section, but they do an amazing job with the resources they have to work with."

In just a few short months, the Soldiers of the armament repair section have made a lasting contribution to their fellow Soldiers and have made great strides in furthering the

fight in the Global War on Terror.

"We're focusing our efforts forward," commented Lt. Col. Brian Rogers, the 210th BSB commander. "This is the critical year in Iraq and the Provider battalion is going to make a difference."

With that guidance in mind, the Arma-

“ This is the critical year in Iraq, and the Provider battalion is going to make a difference. ”

-Lt. Col. Brian Rogers, 210th BSB Commander

ment Section has made every effort to ensure that the Soldiers of the 2nd BCT, as well as their Iraqi Army counterparts, have some of the most accurate and well-maintained weapons in theater.



All C Dreat a

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE YUSUFIYAH, Iraq — In the rural areas south of Baghdad, a cow or two and a flock of sheep in the yard is normal. But animals can get sick, and due to terrorism – whether sect-against-sect or against coalition forces - travel is dangerous for veterinarians too.

To begin repairing this, the Multi-National Division – Baghdad veterinarian, Lt. Col. Neil Ahle, and several Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) conducted a veterinary operation in a schoolyard in Al-Taraq, Iraq on Dec. 22.

“One problem of the country at large is the infrastructure,” Ahle said, noting that while schools are opening and water treatment plants coming back on-line, medical and veterinary care in rural areas is



Creatures and Small

still foundering.

“With the lack of refrigeration, vaccines go bad,” Ahle explained. “And with the violence between tribes and sects, veterinarians don’t go out. The animals have suffered, as well as the crops. Meat, milk and wool are very big business here.”

Everyone pays the price for the loss, Ahle added.

“With a lack of veterinary care, the crops go down, the death toll rises, farmers lose money. Maybe they can support their own family, but there’s no cash crop.”

So when Ahle appeared at the Al-Taraq school with his medical kits and Soldiers of Company C, 4-31 announced that free medical care would be given to animals, it wasn’t long before people arrived with livestock in tow.

With no veterinary equipment such as a chute to funnel the animals through, separating those that had been vaccinated from those who hadn’t, the Soldiers went to work with steel pickets and engineer tape to create makeshift fences.

One man brought a cow, rack-thin and blind in one eye. He asked if Ahle had medication for the eye, but Ahle had to explain through an interpreter that the eye was too far gone. He gave the cow a dose of wormer and a vaccination against some of the endemic diseases.

Two shepherds brought a flock of sheep and goats next – about sixty animals, from a full-curl ram to a tiny brown kid goat born only days before.

Ahle and the shepherds seemed to have a moment of consternation. How to get all of these sheep through the process and not get them mixed up? A

moment later, Navy Cmdr. Mike Sanchez, a civil affairs officer with MND-B, had chalk to mark the sheep’s heads when they’d been treated, and the shepherd was holding up his first candidate for a dose of wormer, vitamins and vaccine. He gamely continued, holding up each of the sheep and then goats.

Ahle told him he had the best-behaved animals he’d ever seen, but the next batch of sheep required the assistance of some Soldiers from Co. C to keep them out of the classrooms or holding still while receiving vaccine.

A cow was mostly healthy except for the horn that had curled around, poised to penetrate the cow’s skull. With six Soldiers holding the animal against a concrete pillar, Ahle borrowed a pocketknife with a saw and cut off part of the offending horn. He explained that if uncut, the horn would first pinch the skin, then slowly penetrate the animal’s sinus cavity, causing infection.

By a little after noon, Ahle and his de facto assistants had treated 95 sheep and five cattle. They had trimmed hooves and horns, wrestled goats, and been dragged through the mud.

Encouraging Iraqi veterinarians was Ahle’s main goal, he said.

“Maybe by doing this veterinary care, we’ll get a vet in the area to step up,” he said. “We put a lot of effort into many areas, but pushing the Iraqi people to step up and do it – well, this is a way to do that.”

Sgt. Joseph Strauch, a radio-telephone operator with Co. C, helped wrestle sheep, and said he enjoyed doing something different.

“It was something new,” he said. “It’s not every day you herd sheep. It’s the most interesting thing I’ve done in Iraq.”



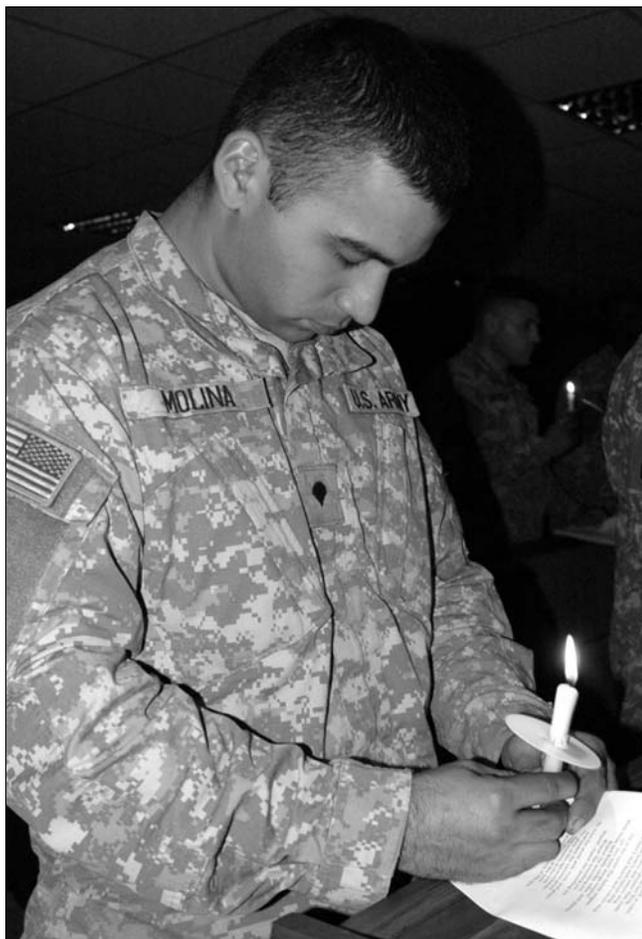
Photos by Spc. Chris McCann, 2nd BCT PAO

Christmas Celebration

Evening service at Striker Chapel lights the darkness

Right: *Spc. Amar Molina, a 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) mechanic, bows his head during a community candlelight service at the chapel at Camp Striker, Iraq, on Dec. 24.*

Below: *Sgt. Brendaliz Morales (left) a 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) intelligence analyst, reaches to light her candle from Pfc. Shana Keenan's (right) at the candlelight ceremony. Keenan also is an analyst for the 2nd BSTB.*



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

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — In a city where most residents must use candlelight because they have no power, Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) celebrated Christmas by candlelight.

Soldiers of the 2nd BCT and the local community gathered in the 2nd BCT chapel for a Community Candlelight Service Dec. 24 here.

The service was opened with an invocation then members of the choir led the audience in Christmas carols.

“It was encouraging to take a break from everything and gather with the other believers to celebrate Christmas,” said Capt. Scott Carow, a 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI), physical therapist.

Carow, a member of the choir, played the guitar and sang during the service.

Although the Soldiers were unable to be with their families on Christmas, the service offered warmth of the season.

“The service made me feel like I was at home,” said Pfc. Shana Keenan, a 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) intelligence analyst.

“At home we do this (attend candlelight services) every year,” Keenan said as she recalled memories from home.

While some Soldiers attended the service as part of a home-away-from-home tradition, others rejoiced for the first time.

“This is something different for me,” said Sgt. Brendaliz Morales, a 2nd BSTB intelligence analyst, as she recalled her Christmas family traditions. “My family would get together and stay up until midnight then open presents,” she said. “But the service allowed me to be with my family here.”

Throughout the ceremony Soldiers united with each other as they lit candles.

“To me, the candlelight service is way of calming down the hustle and bustle of the season and bringing things back to the real meaning,” said Spc. Jenna Maravillas, an information systems operator with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI).

Maravillas recalled going to candlelight services since she was a child. “It was nice to see so many people show up to take time to remember the real meaning of Christmas.”



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

Allons provides medical care to Sunnis, Shias

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq — Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), and Iraqi soldiers of the 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, conducted two medical operations in Mahmudiyah and Al-Rakub, Iraq on Dec. 25.

Al-Rakub is a primarily Sunni village just outside Mahmudiyah, and the Al-Jazir neighborhood of Mahmudiyah is largely populated by Shia Muslims.

Sgt. Maj. Hassan, a medic with the 4/6 IA, explained to the people gathered at each clinic that Col. Muhsin, the new commander of the 2nd Battalion, 4/6 IA, has taken charge of the battalion and is planning to create some changes in the local area.

“We are planning to do these kinds of operations regularly,” Hassan said. “If you want good government, we need to work together. We need your help. The Americans want to help everybody, Sunni or Shia, and you must trust the Iraqi Army to help make a new Iraq.”

Muhsin specifically wanted to hold clinics in both Sunni and Shia areas to emphasize that the Iraqi Army does not choose sides.

Around 150 people came to the clinic in Al-Rakub, bringing their children and the elderly. In all, the Soldiers of 2-15 and Hassan treated 70 local residents.

“The majority of what we’re seeing are common illnesses,” said Capt. Russ Ritter, commander of Company C, 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd BCT. “Mostly it’s

upper respiratory infections and coughs.”

The Iraqi medics were very active in the operation, Ritter said.

“One of the great things is that the Iraqi medics are taking the lead,” said Ritter. “It’s a very good thing to see.”

Two doctors, Capt. Damon Cudihy of Co. C, 210th BSB and 1st Lt. Seth Holland of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2-15, provided care to the people. They were assisted by Pfc. Lisa Dueker, also with Co. C, 210th BSB, and Staff Sgt. Dustin Parchey, a medic with HHB, 2-15.

“People were very enthusiastic and receptive toward the MEDOP,” Ritter said.

Al-Jazir resident Heleh Nayif was treated at the neighborhood clinic.

“I am glad that the Americans came to help us,” she said. “I was very happy to find you guys here. The doctors treated my rheumatism, thank God.”

Hassanan, another Al-Jazir resident, had a persistent infection in his leg and received treatment.

“I appreciate it. Thank you very much,” said Hassanan, who brought his sister to the clinic as well. “I tried to take her to the hospital the other day, but it was closed, so I brought her here.”

In Al-Jazir, 300 people came to the clinic and 151 were treated.

Capt. Matthew Wyatt, 2nd BCT medical officer, was enthusiastic about the operation.

“We were very well-received here,” he said. “We’re getting an idea of what people need. We can figure out what things to bring to future operations, and make sure that the battalions get the right things.”

Getting the Iraqi army involved is critical, Wyatt added.

“As we continue to get more Iraqi doctors involved, it will help build trust in the local population.”

Dueker, looking tired after a full day of treating everything from coughs to serious burns, still remained upbeat.

“The best part was the children,” she said. “We were treating a lot of upper respiratory infections, but that goes along with the season. Usually I’m at Camp Striker, working in the troop medical center, so it was really cool to do something different. I love it.”

The day chosen for the operation was not without significance, said Company A, 2-15 commander Blake Keil.

“It was a good way to celebrate Christmas,” he said. “We were giving, helping the less fortunate.”



Above: Pfc. Lisa Dueker (right), of Co. C, 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) discusses an Iraqi boy’s illness with 2nd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division medic Sgt. Maj. Hassan at a medical operation in the Al-Jazir neighborhood of Mahmudiyah, Iraq, on Dec. 25.



Left: Capt. Damon Cudihy (right), of Co. C, 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), examines a young Iraqi boy at the Al-Jazir medical operation.

1-89 Cavalry plans in open forum with residents

2nd Lt. Zach Alessi-Friedlander
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

BAGHDAD — Soldiers of C Troop, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) hosted a town-hall meeting for the residents of Abu Sheikan and Al Hillan, Iraq at the Al Thawan School on Dec. 22.

Residents arrived at the school early, enabling them to talk with Capt. Adam Sawyer, C Troop's commander, Lt. Col. Mark Suich, the 1-89 commander and other 1-89 staff members.

A half hour after the first residents began arriving at the school, Sawyer and Suich called the meeting into session. Sawyer explained that he intended the meeting as an "open forum" to discuss any and all issues on the minds of the villages' residents.

Moreover, recognizing that trust between local nationals and U.S. Soldiers is the foundation upon which effective civil-military operations are built, Sawyer said that "I will be honest about what we can and cannot affect; certain things are easier for us to influence than others," a sentiment reiterated by both him

and Suich several times throughout the meeting.

Initially, many of the village residents addressed the fact that, although they felt relatively safe in their respective towns, the imperiled security in other areas has prevented them from traveling to places such as Baghdad and Mahmudiyah, Iraq.

One of the first local nationals, Dooud Yunis Hamid al-Jabori, to address Sawyer and Suich said, "This is our home and we are Iraqis. This is our country, and we are limited to our town. We can't go anywhere else."

Some of the residents were concerned about the new — mostly Shia — Iraqi National Police checkpoint located just outside of these two Sunni villages. Sawyer offered to conduct joint patrols through both villages.

These patrols will illustrate to the residents of the villages that they should not only trust the NPs with ensuring their security but that C Troop will work hard to teach the NPs the tactics and techniques that they need in order to combat the insurgent threats that they might encounter. Moreover, when several members of the audience explained that they would

like to have C Troop re-adjust a series of obstacle controlling the flow of vehicular traffic into the villages, both commanders, noticeably impressed that the village appeared to have a plan about how to better secure their own community, agreed.

Seemingly content that C Troop was not only aware of their security concerns but also actively working to improve their safety, the discussion shifted to questions of local government. Abu Sheikan and Al Hillan are home to two tribes: the Jabori and Humaryi. Most of those in attendance appeared to be members of the Jabori tribe, who occupy the southern portions of these two villages. The local Jabori sheik attended the meeting and was greeted by members of the audience as well as Sawyer and Suich.

The sheik sat in the front row and helped to structure the discussion. He organized his thinking by taking notes and managed the discourse by identifying residents with the experience and technical competence to address specific essential-service concerns. Suich then took the opportunity to underscore the importance of having the village nominate residents to

attend the regional council meetings to articulate their needs to the appropriate Iraqi ministries.

"I will personally accompany and secure any member of the village willing to attend the Nahia- or Qada-council meetings," Suich said. "Right now, the mayor of Mahmudiyah is addressing Sunni concerns over problems with the IA because of complaints made at the last Qada meeting."

The final part of the meeting concerned essential services.

Karim Shia' Hamid al-Jabori, a resident of Al Hillan, who works as the school's security guard, explained that the school currently serves 200 children. However, the villages have many high school-aged students, who are currently forced to travel over 10 kilometers to reach the nearest available school. He explained that the school needs approximately 3 new classrooms.

Suich and Sawyer discussed possible solutions with the audience: in the short term, temporary trailers could be staged in the vicinity of El Thawan; and that, in the long term, once the villages identified a local builder, a contract could be brokered for the construction of a permanent addition.

The audience nodded and murmured their thanks.

A local national named Khamees Asmeel Khadar took the floor and said "we need three transformers so that we can distribute power more effectively to the entire area.

"I used to work at the Yusufiyah, Iraq Ministry of Power, and I can install these transformers if you can get them for us," Khadar said.

The meeting ended in good spirits. The sheik in attendance placed his notes to the side and explained that if 1-89 does "even some of the things we have discussed, then you will have the support of the entire village."



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Lucretia Gordon, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

Holiday Spirit goes native

The Camp Striker dining facility goes all-out in decorating for the holidays— Iraq style.

The displays included traditional Christmas reindeer and evergreens as well as native date-palm fronds.

From *Visitors*, page 4

“The Polar Bears face a challenge with the type of enemy they have in their area of operations as well as agricultural and the canal systems,” Freakley said. “They are doing extremely well.”

On Dec. 17 Freakley and Borja visited the 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, and the 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment.

While visiting 2-15 Soldiers, Freakley noticed the strong relationship the American Soldiers have with the Iraqi soldiers they are working with.

“They (2-15 FAR) are doing a wonderful job with the IA brigade they are working with,” Freakley said. “The support and mentoring they are giving the IA brigade is wonderful.”

After visiting with 2-15, Freakley and Borja went to see 1-89 Soldiers. They toured the 1-89 battle position in Gator Swamp and flew over their area of responsibility.

“The Soldiers of 1-89 are able to cover a lot of ground and are doing a great job.”

Freakley presented 1-89 Soldiers with Combat Action Badges before departing the area.

On Dec. 18 Freakley and Borja visited the support battalions, the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion and the 210th Brigade Support Battalion.

They rode in one of the 2nd BSTB’s Buffalo vehicles and ate lunch with the 2nd BSTB Soldiers.

“The 2nd BSTB is the backbone of the brigade in many ways – they provide engineer, signal, military intelligence and military police support. They have a complex mission and are working hard,” Freakley said.

Their final stop was at the 210th BSB headquarters where they took the opportunity to talk to the 210th BSB Soldiers and present them with coins.

“The 210th BSB is a strong and innovative support battalion. They have innovative ways to repair Soldiers’ equipment,” Freakley said. “Company C, Charlie Medical Company is well staffed with doctors. The Doc-In-A-Box is a unique capability that can deliver medical care and medical assistance to Soldiers in remote areas.”

As part of their visit with each battalion, Freakley and Borja made sure to ask the Soldiers how their equipment was holding up, inform them on the new houses being built and upgrades to barracks currently in the works at Fort Drum, N.Y., talk with them about their morale and to wish them happy holidays.

“The visit was good and it showed they (the commanding general and the command sergeant major) care about the Soldiers,” said Pvt. Joshua Carson, who serves as a

guard with TFV. “Their visit brings morale to the Soldiers of the brigade.”

Borja shared some of his personal thoughts with some of the senior leadership. “I commend the leaders for a job well done.

“Each and every one of the Soldiers here is looking toward you (the senior leaders) to take care of our warriors,” Borja said as he gave some of the senior leaders coins. “I cannot meet all of your warriors, but I hope you can pass the coins along to them.”

Before departing the Commando Brigade, Borja left with encouraging words for the Soldiers.

“All the training the Soldiers received before deploying definitely paid dividends here in Iraq to all the Soldiers and the type of mission they have to conduct,” Borja said.

“I am extremely proud of them and I know they will continue doing a great job.”

Although Freakley and Borja visited Soldiers in Iraq, they did not forget about the warriors at home.

“The rear detachment, families and family readiness groups are helping with the mission overall so that our forward deployed Soldiers can focus on their mission,” Freakley said. “It is evident all over the brigade.”

“It was humbling to be with the Commando Brigade Soldiers and to see the great work they have done,” Freakley said.

News Briefs

2-14 Inf. finds weapons cache

FORWARD OPERATING BASE YUSUFYAH, IRAQ – Soldiers from the scout platoon, Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) discovered a weapon cache near the Euphrates River village of Abu Farris, Iraq, on Dec. 26.

In the cache was found three rocket propelled grenades, a bag of ‘crush-wire’ improvised explosive devise initiators, AK-47 assault rifle parts and repair tools, a hand grenade, a bag of homemade explosives, a box of blasting caps and a rifle scope.

Abu Farris was a traditional crossing site for terrorists and foreign fighters coming from Al Anbar province to stage attacks into Bagdad. Task Force 2-14 seized the Yusufiyah Thermal

Power Plant next to Abu Farris in October and has been interdicting the terrorist traffic, shutting off support and safe haven.

1-89 Cav. finds IED, cache, detains trigger operator

CAMP STRIKER, IRAQ – Soldiers from Troop A, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, part of 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division (LI), discovered and neutralized an improvised explosive devise on the main road into Baghdad near Radwanayah, Iraq on Dec. 26.

The IED was made out of a 155mm artillery round. The Soldiers secured the area and called in an explosive ordinance disposal team, who detonated the IED, rendering travel safe in the area.

A search of the area brought the alleged triggerman from his hiding area. Soldiers detained him and discovered the com-

mand detonation device and an anti-personnel mine in his possession.

The Soldiers also found two 120mm mortar rounds, four 81mm mortar rounds, four 60mm mortar rounds and a 155mm artillery round, all in various stages of IED fabrication.

There were no injuries.

The alleged triggerman was taken into custody for questioning.

Operation Baghdad Eagle detains 30

MAHMUDIYAH, IRAQ – Soldiers from the 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division detained 30 suspected terrorists along objectives in the vicinity of the CiCi Bar Canal, southwest of Mahmudiyah, Iraq on Dec. 26.

Of the 30 men detained, 14 matched descriptions of wanted terrorists in the area.

The operation was planned

to deny al Qaeda safe haven by detaining sympathizers, planners and facilitators in the targeted area.

The operation included the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th battalions of 4/6 IA and cleared an area nine by four square kilometers, suspected as being an al Qaeda training ground.

The operation was planned and executed entirely by the 4/6 IA with U.S. advisers from the 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), providing communication capabilities.

The operation was deemed successful in that the operation was planned and conducted coordinating the majority of the 4th Bde., all targets were taken without any casualties, and operational security was maintained throughout.

The detainees are being held for questioning by the 4th Bde.



Sgt. Charles Robel, an infantryman with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) uses a grinding wheel to fix a pair of bolt cutters at the Yusufiyah Thermal Power Plant southwest of Baghdad, Iraq.

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

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