

# The Sandstorm

The magazine of the 2nd BCT, 10th Mountain Division - Vol. 1, Issue 7

**Countering Crime:  
Soldiers help provide  
for Iraqi Police in  
Airport Village**

**Iraqi brigade's  
largest mission  
to date**

**Plus: Unsung signal heroes, Soldiers lost but not forgotten**

# The Sandstorm

The official magazine of  
the Second Brigade  
Combat Team

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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](http://www.CommandosOf2BCT.blogspot.com).

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*Cover photo:*

Staff Sgt. Rob Absher, attached to 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) throws an incendiary grenade into reeds along Route Malibu recently to destroy concealment for terrorists.



## In this issue:



Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) conducted an air assault with Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment "Polar Bears," and the "Baghdad Eagles" of the 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division Jan. 15, searching homes in the Janabi Village area and tracking down terrorists.

See *Eagle Venture*, page 4



Amphibious assaults may not spring to mind when a person thinks of the Army, but the Golden Dragons of the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) have taken to the Euphrates River in operations geared toward denying terrorists safe haven in any environment.

See *Golden Dragons*, page 9

## Commander's Comments

Commandos:

This month marks the 'halfway' point of our deployment, at least as we were originally tasked. Since our arrival, however, Multi-National Forces, Iraqi has announced a 'surge' of U.S. forces, to include five U.S. brigade combat teams, additional Marine units and supporting forces. Most of these 'surge' forces are bound for Baghdad, while several units have had their tours extended. And this is not just in Iraq - our sister brigade, 3rd BCT in Afghanistan, was recently extended 'up to 120 days' on their tour as well.

I know that an extension is on everyone's minds. While the ultimate authority for the surge and any extension remain with the National Command Authority, our duty is clear - we must continue our mission until it is deemed complete. I can assure you that your chain of command is committed to keeping you informed of the status of our tour as we are with all other aspects of our mission.

We are in the middle of an Iraqi winter,



Kershaw

a period characterized by rain and cold. Flying conditions are often marginal and mud roads become more treacherous. Our living conditions are spartan and austere. As living conditions become tougher, the urge to withdraw into one's own problems becomes greater and the sense that our future is uncertain can sap not only our morale, but our strength for the fight.

This is, of course, not the first time our Army has faced uncertainty. On December 23, 1776, Thomas Paine published his first essay of a series entitled "The Crisis."

General Washington found it so inspiring that he directed it be read to the Army at Valley Forge. His words have become famous in American history and I would like to share them with you:

*These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dear-ness only that gives every thing its value."*

Our Army's struggle in Iraq enters its

fourth year. Our country is in the midst of a national debate and our command has determined a new strategy. New forces are arriving daily to help quell the sectarian violence that racks this nation and to assist in standing up the Iraqi Security Forces. In our own sector, the Baghdad Eagle Brigade is seen as a model of how coalition and Iraqi Army Forces cooperate. We recently re-introduced Iraqi Police into Lutifiyah and Yusufiyah after an absence of over a year. None of this has come cheaply, as the losses in our own ranks testify. But it is valuable progress, and as such is serving as a model for other forces, both U.S. and Iraqi, to follow.

Our brigade continues to excel in preventing south Baghdad from serving as a sanctuary for terrorists to fan the flames of sectarian violence in Baghdad. We've detained more terrorists this past month than any other and our recent cache finds have been some of the largest in our brigade's history.

Most significantly, throughout our sector, the local Iraqis are now our best source of intelligence - a testament to your skill and dedication and to your careful and precise application of the rules of engagement.

COMMANDOS!



Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2nd BCT PAO

## Da Bears

*Although the Chicago Bears lost the Super Bowl, Capt. Aaron Armetta, the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) medical officer, stayed at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation center watching the game until the bitter end, cheering his team on. "I'm a die-hard Bears fan, and I'll support them, win or lose," Armetta said. "I don't regret staying up all night to watch the game."*

# OPERATION EAGLE VENTURE

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

JANABI VILLAGE, Iraq — Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment Military Transition Team have been working — as has the entire 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) — to get the Iraqi soldiers trained to enable them to take over Iraq's security themselves.

So the success of the recent joint operation Jan. 15 which put the entire 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division together with Soldiers of the 2-15 and the "Polar Bears" of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd BCT, was a victory not only against terror, but for the soldiers themselves.

"This is the best Iraqi army unit I've worked with," said Staff Sgt. Michael Myers, a MiTT leader, to one of the Iraqi soldiers. "You guys are motivated."

Some troops air-assaulted into the village under cover of darkness, while the main force convoyed to the village, marching in at first light to search houses and fields, seeking weapons caches and suspected terrorists.

More than 600 troops participated in the operation.

"It went very well for such a large operation," said Capt. Art Stringer, the field artillery effects trainer, who planned much of the mission.

"It was a complex operation — the joint air assault, and a large ground assault. Once on site, we used Task Force Iron Claw, engineers and explosive ordnance disposal, and they all combined very well," Stringer said.

Giving the Iraqis a chance to help plan is important, he said.

"Any time you can let the Iraqis test their boundaries, it's good," Stringer said of the IA involvement. "It's their battle space, and it helps them build confidence in themselves and in the U.S. forces."

The operation, two weeks in the planning, netted 87 detainees, 12 of whom were on the IA blacklist, and several large caches of weaponry, which included rocket-propelled grenades and launchers. A large cache of improvised explosive device making materials was

also recovered, which included cell phones, wire and other hardware.

One of the IEDs discovered was a pipe six inches in diameter and 42 inches long, filled with homemade explosive. A detonation cord was implanted in it as a fuse.

"We're talking about a catastrophic IED," Stringer said of the device.

Some residents directed the troops to the homes of suspicious people.

"We got information on two of the guys on the blacklist," said Myers. The squad he was with interrogated a man who gave them the information.

"The Iraqi Soldiers are very motivated," Myers said. "They're doing a lot better than they were at first; they're doing more complex missions. They need some more experience with map reading and such, but they did an

excellent job creating a secure perimeter. They're doing well."

1st Lt. Bobby Temple, a platoon leader with the MiTT, concurred.

"They've got good situational awareness," he said. "Our navigational and communications assets are still essential to them — they don't have global positioning systems or even maps, but they're doing better. And once they've been to a place, they can get there again, no problem."

The Iraqi army took a very active role in the searches and planning, Stringer said.

"The mentorship the U.S. forces are giving the Iraqi soldiers is very helpful. We're seeing a great increase in their ability from the hard work of our guys," he said.

"Without the Iraqi army reciprocating our efforts, we couldn't do this."



Photo by Spc. Chris McCann, 2nd BCT PAO

Pvt. John Warren (center), a gunner for the 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment Military Transition Team, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), takes a knee while patrolling fields near Janabi Village, Iraq, Jan. 15. The combined U.S.-Iraqi army operation was aimed at finding caches and detaining terror suspects in the village.

# Sheiks, Soldiers attend meeting at Ahmed Suhel

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

AHMED SUHEL, Iraq - The men who arrived in the dusty village of Ahmed Suhel were leaders and power brokers from all the tribes around Yusufiyah, Iraq. They went into a tent on Patrol Base Al-Taraq and sat in near-silence, waiting for the meeting to begin.

The meeting was organized by Maj. Robert Griggs, the operations officer for the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), Lt. Col. Iman of the 4th Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division and Capt. Shane Finn, commander of Company C, 4-31. The purpose of the meeting was primarily to meet the sheiks and begin building a foundation for security in the area.

"I was told the Sunni sheiks would never sit down with us," Griggs said. "I was told you were all terrorists. But you are all here ... and I see you are not just Sunni, you're Iraqi."

This was met with nods of approval, and the meeting went on from there, discussing some of the major issues the tribes have - from security to public works projects.

A major point of discussion was the detention of the Zobai tribe's sheik, who was photographed by Iraqi soldiers with his shmagh, or headdress, around his shoulders. The sheiks said this was a sign of disrespect.

"We don't care what he did, to us it's a sign of being shamed," one of the sheiks said.

Griggs explained that the sheikh was detained in a combined operation with the U.S. and Iraqi security forces. He told his guests that he would personally investigate the incident and determine if there was wrong-doing.

"No one will disrespect another leader while we are here," Griggs said. "Even if he is found with an improvised explosive device in his hand, he is still a sheik."

Road closures were another problem.

Iman and Griggs stated that the roads would be opened when they are safe, citing a recent incident in which a man and his five-year-old son were killed by an IED.

Griggs also had requests of the sheiks.

"I ask you to meet with the Shia sheiks, and to control your tribes. I am here to get your support for the nahia council," he said. "We would also like to be able to take captured terror suspects to you, so you can tell us

if he is good or bad."

The sheiks uniformly agreed.

"If you bring them, we will tell you their names and all their information," said one.

Griggs said that the U.S. forces were undeterred by the violence in the area.

"The school here is terrible. We're working on that. The other day, three of my Soldiers were medically evacuated when eight bombs went off on their vehicle in Carghoul Village," Griggs told the sheiks. "Today, we're there again, fixing the school. We don't blame Iraqis. We keep helping even when terrorists blow us up."

"I can't tell from just one meeting, but the results will be the proof," said the Zobai sheik's nephew. "It's just the beginning, but I think it will grow. Cooperation will be good; we need to have Iraqi and U.S. forces together. A new army takes time to grow to the American level of competence."

Griggs was pleased with the outcome.

"No matter how much the Iraqi army and the coalition forces want to move ahead, the only ones who can make that happen are the civilian leaders," said Griggs. "And here, the civilian leadership is the sheiks."

## Iraqis counter crime with Commando help

By 1st Lt. Randall Cornelison  
TFV, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI)

BAGHDAD — Old things can become new, and it's exciting when they do.

In Airport Village, Iraq, also known as French Village, two thousand residents are receiving a new Iraqi police station in old buildings on the south side of the village.

With new windows, doors, paint and plaster, mown grass and stray trees uprooted, the old dilapidated buildings are becoming new, and with them a renewed beginning for Iraqi police in Airport Village.

Soldiers from Task Force Vigilant, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) are facilitating the process of building the new IP station. Currently, the distance from the village to the closest existing station is too far to get timely help. Citizens could not expect the police to arrive in the village from IP stations in Baghdad in time to help with a crisis. Additionally, because of some struggles within the Iraqi government, the IPs are not permitted to fully enforce the law except in the village.

"The new police station will bring the Iraqi Police drastically reduced response times, will serve as a visible symbol that the Iraqi government is able to protect its own

citizens from crime and the rogue militias which are threatening and forcing good families to leave the village, and will re-assert police primacy as legitimate Iraqi Security in Baghdad International Airport," said Maj. Brett Kessler, the TFV commander.

Taking a page from the new counterinsurgency manual, which states, "Well-sited and protected police stations can establish a presence in communities . . . and build support for the host-nation government" - TFV has worked closely with the IPs and the contractors to "build to suit."

The station renovation, designed by the Baghdad International Airport area IP chief, Lt. Col. Yaseen Mustafa Abdul Ghafour, Kessler and Esam Al Asker, an Iraqi local contractor, will create a sub-station of the main BIAP station and will be under Yaseen's supervision when complete.

The new facility includes a reception area, office space, a parking area, sleeping quarters, and holding cells for criminals. TF

Vigilant presented the idea for a new police station - one that would be integrated into the community and allow IPs the ability to train

on local, domestic law enforcement - to the city council and Yaseen, who made it (the idea) their own.

Council Chief Thabit stated, "The most important contribution is the trust the station will build between the residents and the Iraqi government.

This station is a seed of trust. It will always be available to assist residents with any need they have," he said. "The new generation of young people here will benefit from

interacting with police in Airport Village. I want to thank everyone who is working so hard to make this happen."

"The new station will enable IP officers to keep a closer eye on the village and better protect the citizens from crime, threats of eviction and speeding. One strong leader at a time, Iraq is becoming a safe place for Iraqi families."

**"One strong leader at a time, Iraq is becoming a safe place for Iraqi families."**  
- Council Chief Thabit

# Gone but not



**Norris**

Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) gathered on the evening of Dec. 30 to mourn the loss of three comrades killed in the war on terror.

Sgt. Christopher Messer, Sgt. Curtis Norris and Spc. Nathaniel Given were honored by friends and command alike, all remembered as outstanding Soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving their country.

Ronald Reagan was quoted in the ceremony—the sonnet written by John Gillespie Magee that he used in his speech when the Space Shuttle Challenger went down.

“We will never forget them ... as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye and ‘slipped the surly bonds of earth to touch the face of God.’”

Messer and Given, both of Company D, 4-31, were killed when an improvised explosive device detonated underfoot while they were searching for caches in the rural areas south of Baghdad.

Norris was serving as vehicle commander for a convoy with Co. F in a truck delivering Christmas dinner to troops in forward positions on Dec. 26 when an IED detonated, flipping the truck.

Given was remembered as a Soldier who came into his own in Iraq and “excelled in combat ... Messer took charge of him and helped him.”

“Norris wouldn’t want a pity party—just for us to continue his mission... We can honor them by adopting their best traits – service and courage.”

Spc. Tyler Teesdale knew Norris for three years, he said.

“We always called him Chuck,” Teesdale said, referring to the action-film star. “He was always available to



**Given**

talk to, always boosted our morale. He loved taking care of his daughter, watching movies, and every Saturday he’d watch Michigan football games.”

Norris was remembered by Staff Sgt. Raymond Spittler as a man who put family first.

“His big thing was family. He met (his wife) Rose in the Army and they got married. He was all about his family.”

Norris was also something of a comedian, Spittler said.

“He was always the one to say something funny or crazy ... and he was always there for the other Soldiers,” said Spittler.

Spc. Joseph Merchant was close to both Messer and Given.

“They were awesome Soldiers,” he said. “It’s hard to put into words how they were.”

Messer loved fishing, and Given was a car aficionado. “He loved Camaro Z-28s especially,” Merchant said.

The three frequently spent time together at Fort Drum, said Merchant, who was



**Messer**

Messer’s roommate for awhile.

“(Messer) loved his family more than anything,” Merchant said. “Given did as well.”

Messer’s awards and decorations include a Bronze Star Medal, a Purple Heart Medal, an Army Commendation Medal with ‘V’ device, a Valorous Unit award, a National Defense Service Medal, an Iraq Campaign Medal, a Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, a Global War on Terrorism service Medal, a Noncommissioned Officers Professional Development ribbon, an Army Good Conduct ribbon, an Overseas Service ribbon, an Army Service ribbon, a Combat Infantryman’s Badge, an Expert Infantryman’s Badge and a Driver’s Badge.

He is survived by his wife Aime and daughter Skyle of Fort Drum, N.Y.

Norris was posthumously promoted to the rank of sergeant, and was awarded a Bronze Star Medal, a Purple Heart Medal, an Army Commendation Medal, an Army Achievement Medal with three oak-leaf clusters, a National Defense Service Medal, an Iraq Campaign Medal, a Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, a Global War on Terrorism service Medal, an Army Good Conduct Medal, an Overseas Service ribbon, an Army Service ribbon and the Combat Action Badge.

He is survived by his wife Rose and daughter Kira of Fort Drum, N.Y.

Spc. Given’s awards and decorations include a Bronze Star Medal, a Purple Heart, a National Defense Service Medal, an Iraq Campaign Medal, a Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, an Army Service ribbon and the Combat Infantryman’s Badge.

He is survived by his parents Floyd and Donna Given of Dickinson, Texas.

## Commandos at Rest

*No words spoken can ease the pain  
when Soldiers' bodies down are lain.*

*We feel the loss in our very soul;  
without one man we are not whole.*

*So bow your heads as you walk by;  
their boots no longer will they tie.*

*If you're scared and things get hard  
remember Commandos above stand guard.*

— Staff Sgt. Timothy Chapman, Co. B, 4-31 Inf. Regt.

# Not Forgotten



**Denfrund**

Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) mourned fallen comrade Sgt. Jason Denfrund, Jan. 1 in a ceremony at Patrol Base Warrior Keep, Iraq.

Denfrund was killed Dec. 25 by an improvised explosive device explosion south of Baghdad. He was a native of Springville, N. Y.

Denfrund, a team leader in Company B, 2-14, graduated from the University of Buffalo where he had played linebacker on the football team. The Soldiers of his unit remembered his affection for the team – which could become mock rage if the Buffalo Bulls were criticized.

He also was “a good family guy,” said his friend, Spc. Anthony Carlson, a radio-telephone operator in Co. B.

Denfrund left behind a wife, Melissa, as well as a daughter, Chloe and a son, Jayden, who live in Illinois.

“He was a great friend,” Carlson said. “He would help anyone. He came to my wedding last year. ... We were like brothers. Our families would get together on weekends.”

As a team leader, Denfrund was usually in the front, leading raids on anti-Iraqi forces.

Capt. Palmer Phillips, commander of Co. B, recalled Denfrund’s humor and compassion and his skill in hand-to-hand fighting.

Carlson was with Denfrund during his last moments.

“We had a short conversation on the ground that day that he passed away from us,” Carlson said in a voice that threatened to crack.

“We never got to finish it.”

Denfrund’s awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart Medal, awarded posthumously, an Army Commendation Medal, an Army Achievement Medal, a Good Conduct Medal, a National Defense Service Medal, an Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary and Service medals, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Medal, the Kosovo Defense Medal, the Combat Infantryman’s Badge and the Expert Infantryman’s Badge.



**Vandling**

Many tears were shed at the memorial service Jan. 6 at Camp Striker, Iraq, that honored Sgt. Thomas Vandling Jr., of the 1113th Tactical Psychological Operations Team, 1110th Tactical Psychological Operations Detachment, 303rd TPO Company.

Vandling, a native of Pittsburgh, deployed with the 1st Marine Division during the assault on Baghdad during Operation Iraqi Freedom. He returned for OIF 06-08, supporting the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (AA) and the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI).

Maj. John Pelczarski, commander of the 303rd TPC, recalled Vandling fondly.

“He was excited to deploy as part of an organic unit,” Pelczarski said. “He did everything he had to do to deploy with his team and company.”

“He was an outstanding Soldier – professional, competent, enthusiastic. He always gave his best.”

Staff Sgt. Doug Gearheart recalled Vandling as moving through life “with a grace and ease and total lack of self-consciousness,” and that he balanced his civilian job, Army work and personal life “while still managing to have a great time in Pittsburgh.”

“Sgt. Vandling remains a positive force in our lives,” said 1110th TPD commander Capt. Teresa Haney, a native of Fort Ord, Calif. “He was a young man with the ability to keep things simple.”

Vandling’s awards and decorations include a Bronze Star Medal, two Purple Heart Medals, a Combat Action Badge, an Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service and Expeditionary medals, an Army Commendation Medal with a V Device, an Army Commendation Medal, an Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal, a Navy Achievement Medal and two Armed Forces Reserve Medals with M Devices.

He is survived by his parents Thomas Sr. and Dianne Vandling, his sister Elizabeth and brothers Mikey and Jimmy.



**Mitchell**

In the military there are Soldiers that touch people’s hearts and leave a their mark in the lives of many others – Neill Mitchell III was one of those Soldiers.

Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) gathered to mourn the loss of a fallen comrade during a ceremony at Patrol Base Gator Swamp, Iraq Jan. 13.

Mitchell, a native of Winchester, Tenn., who served as a gunner with 2-14, was killed by enemy small arms fire around the PB Gator Swamp area Jan. 6, just two weeks after returning from leave and one week after his 21st birthday.

Mitchell was also remembered for his big, white Cadillac – a car without working doors, referred to as the platoon car.

“One morning before first formation I noticed a big, white car that was parked with one tire on the curb at an odd angle,” said Staff Sgt. Darren Lemorta, a platoon sergeant with 2-14. “I found paperwork from so many different Soldiers in the platoon that I had no idea who it belonged to.”

The chaplain left the Soldiers with encouraging words.

“There is no way to hide the fact that losing someone you trained with, hung around with and fought with hurts,” said Ch. (Capt.) Kent Coffee, the 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) chaplain.

“To truly honor that friend’s sacrifice requires us all to dig deep and rely on our Army family and strength from God.”

Mitchell’s awards and decorations include the Purple Heart Medal, the Bronze Star Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon and the Combat Infantryman’s Badge.

Mitchell is survived by his father, Raymond Mitchell, Sr., and his grandmother Joyce, both of whom reside in Tennessee.

# Wolverine troops seize huge mortar cache

YUSUFYIAH, Iraq — Iraqi army and coalition troops found 1,129 81mm high-explosive mortar rounds in a cache near the main highway, Route Tampa, leading into Baghdad Feb. 3.

Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division and Troop B, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment “Wolverines,” 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), working together as part of Operation Wolverine Alesia, discovered the huge cache, near Yusufiyah, Iraq, just ten miles southwest of the capital.

Acting on a tip from a local national, the soldiers conducted an intentional search of the area which resulted in the largest cache find in 2nd BCT history.

The cache, which was buried in the dirt, was larger than expected. As the Soldiers continued to unearth more mortar rounds, it became evident that this was a major find.

“These mortar rounds are in the configuration to use as improvised explosive devices,” said Lt. Col. Mark Suich, the 1-89 squadron commander. “The mortar rounds in this condition cannot be used for indirect fire; they are fabricated and stored to be used against the coalition and sectarian enemies as IEDs.”

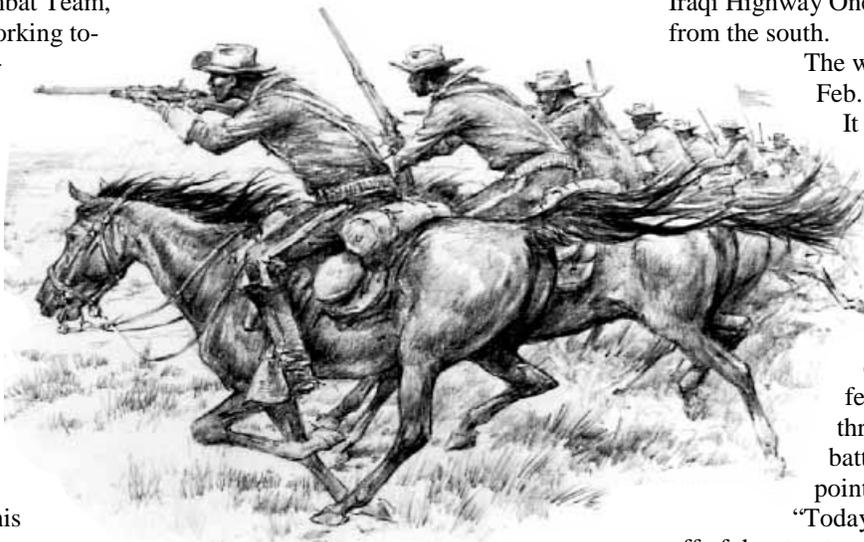
Suich was optimistic about how the find will affect the terrorist’s ability to harm others.

“We put a significant reduction in the enemy’s ability to emplace IEDs in this area

today,” Suich said. “We are pretty sure that these are affiliated with al Qaeda in Iraq.”

The area around Yusufiyah has long been identified as an al Qaeda and former Baathist regime safe haven where attacks are conducted against Baghdad and coalition and Iraqi security forces.

“This is what we refer to as a weapons su-



permarket-type cache,” said Maj. Mark Aitken, the 1-89 squadron executive officer. “The terrorists place a large cache of weapons in one place to draw from. They then pre-position what they draw in many other smaller caches around the countryside.”

During the operation four individuals were detained by the IA for suspicious activity in the vicinity of the cache.

In a subsequent cache nearby, Troop C, 1-89 found 20 120mm mortar rounds, 26 81mm mortar rounds, four PKC medium machine

guns, 8,000 rounds of PKC ammunition, three rifle scopes, 60 fragmentation hand grenades, 50 pounds of home made explosive, 27 boxes of 5.56 rifle ammunition and 10 rocket-propelled grenades.

Operation Alesia is a joint operation designed to deny terrorists sanctuary along Route Tampa, the military designation for Iraqi Highway One, leading into Baghdad from the south.

The week-long operation began Feb. 30.

It is named after a Roman battle led by Julius Caesar against the Gauls in 52 B.C. where the conquering force surrounded the enemy at the fortifications of Alesia, in modern day France, and defeated the defenders through siege warfare. The battle marked the turning point in the Gallic Wars.

“Today we took over 1100 IEDs off of the streets of Baghdad,” said Maj. Web Wright, spokesman for the 2nd BCT. “This is a really big deal.”

“Not only did we take these weapons off of the streets, 3-4-6 IA is fully integrated into this operation. Last night they found three caches and were actively involved in finding these two.”

The mortar rounds were destroyed during a controlled detonation by the explosive ordnance disposal detachment at approximately 2:35 p.m. The blast could be heard for over 20 miles.



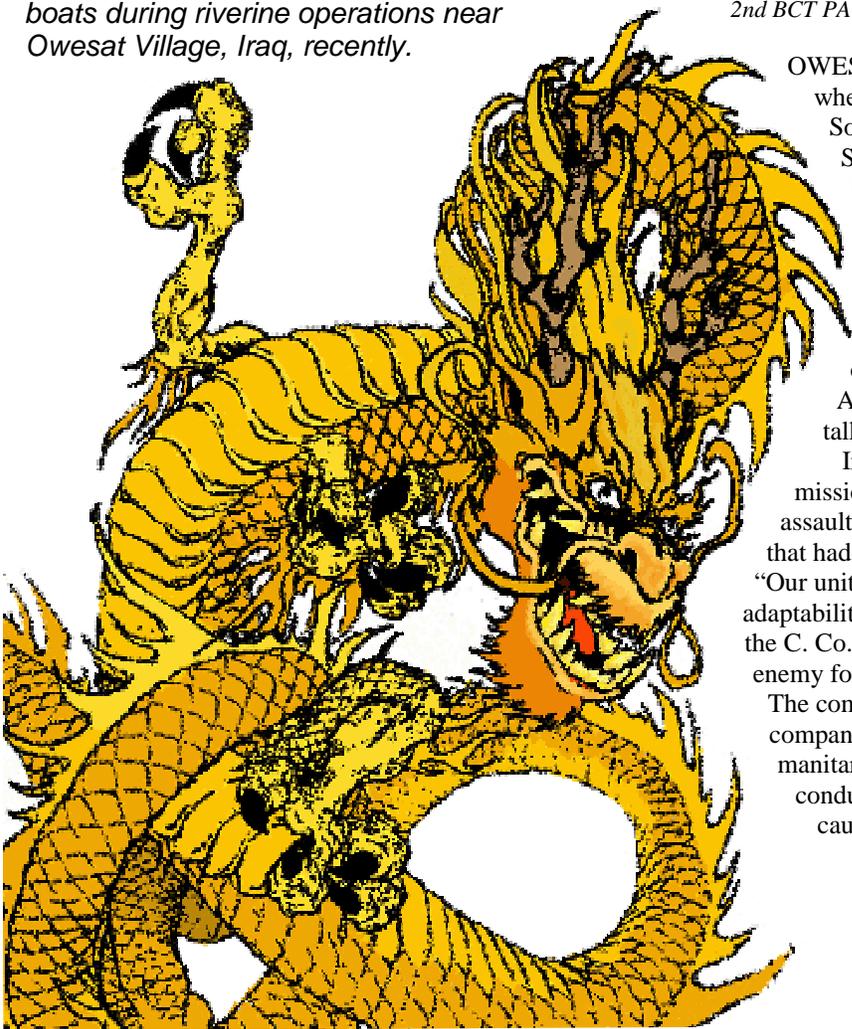
*Soldiers of the 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) stand next to ranks of mortar rounds discovered in a “supermarket” cache just south of Yusufiyah, Iraq, Feb. 3. The discovery of the cache, found after an informant’s tip, will cause a “serious reduction in the enemy’s ability to emplace improvised explosive devices,” said 1-89 commander Lt. Col. Mark Suich.*



2-14 Soldiers ply the Euphrates in patrol boats during riverine operations near Owesat Village, Iraq, recently.

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

Photo: Army photo



OWESAT VILLAGE, Iraq — Normally when one thinks of the Army they think of Soldiers on land. It is not too often that Soldiers use water to assault the enemy, but using water has become an asset to the modern-day Golden Dragons.

Soldiers from Company C., 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) conducted a search and attack operation in Owesat Village, Iraq into the Anbar Province to search for caches and talk to local nationals.

Instead of using convoys to conduct the mission the Golden Dragons used boats. They assaulted down the Euphrates River into an area that had never been engaged by Coalition Forces. “Our unit is really showing its flexibility and adaptability,” said 1st Lt. Matt Knox, who serves as the C. Co. executive officer. “We have to go after enemy forces anywhere in our area of operations.” The completion of the operation showed the company’s versatility to provide support and humanitarian support to the local populace while conducting operations against those that would cause harm to the local nationals.

“Our company flawlessly conducted its first ever boat assault and continued a successful mission outside of our normal area of operations,” Knox said.

The Golden Dragons plan continue using boats in future operations.



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

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — During America’s Revolutionary War, dispatches from General George Washington arrived on an average of three a day and were “gloomy to the point of despair,” said the members of Congress.

But the dispatches came through by couriers and turned the tide of the war at Monmouth, as they have in many wars.

“You can talk about us, but you can’t talk without us,” is the unofficial creed of signal Soldiers throughout the Army, said 1st Sgt. Ricardo Riostirado, the noncommissioned officer in charge of Company C, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI).

In a small shack by the brigade tactical operations center is the very hub of the 2nd BCT’s communications networks, from the radios and secure networks that let units far afield call for medical evacuation to the voice-over-Internet-protocol telephones that let Soldiers call home, and it’s tended by Soldiers of Co. C.

When they check the bandwidth usage, Riostirado said, it’s usually upwards of 200 gigabytes per hour of information flowing back and forth.

“We could easily compete with America Online,” he said of the flow of digits.

Even in the United States, networks can fail for a multitude of reasons. In a combat zone, with so many types of input, the possibility for problems is endless – but system failure doesn’t mean lost business or e-mail. Here, it can mean lost orders, lost maps, lost Soldiers.

Commanders in the field and in camp are constantly relaying questions, orders and situation reports.

To prevent tragedy, the Soldiers of Co. C endlessly maintain and check the equipment, from the generators to the individual routers and sends troops to remote forward operating bases to repair problems.

With almost 50 trucks, two joint network node and three command-post node transmitters, and over a dozen other major transmitters, there’s plenty that could happen.

“We haven’t had an outage that’s lasted more than five minutes,” Riostirado said. “It’s a seamless effect. There would be a total breakdown if we didn’t. And with dual homing—meaning that there are both satellite and radio-based transmitters—those outages have been immaterial.”

Sgt. 1st Class Eric Rees, a platoon sergeant in Co. C, supervises four to six Soldiers per shift as they maintain the equipment.

“The big thing is the heat,” he explained. Like most high-tech equipment, the transmitters need to stay cool.

“Without air conditioning the equipment will shut down within an hour,” he said.

Those are hard words in a country where the average high temperature is over 95 for at least

six months of the year, but combat operations don’t even slow down.

The company has redundant systems to prevent the loss of air conditioning.

Staff Sgt. Chastity Morin, senior information systems operator-analyst, only recently joined the ranks of signal Soldiers and feels the responsibility.

“I’m learning how things work here, cross-training,” she said. “It’s a good feeling; everyone’s relying on us.”

The company has received accolades for the development and implementation of a reliable communications structure that has enabled the brigade to communicate with its subordinate units in a timely manner, with high network capability and strong bandwidth management.

The 2nd platoon is stationed in Mahmudiyah, Iraq, maintaining a joint network node there. The line-of-sight link there connects southern Iraq to the greater Baghdad area and is indispensable for allowing communications between the divisions and corps.

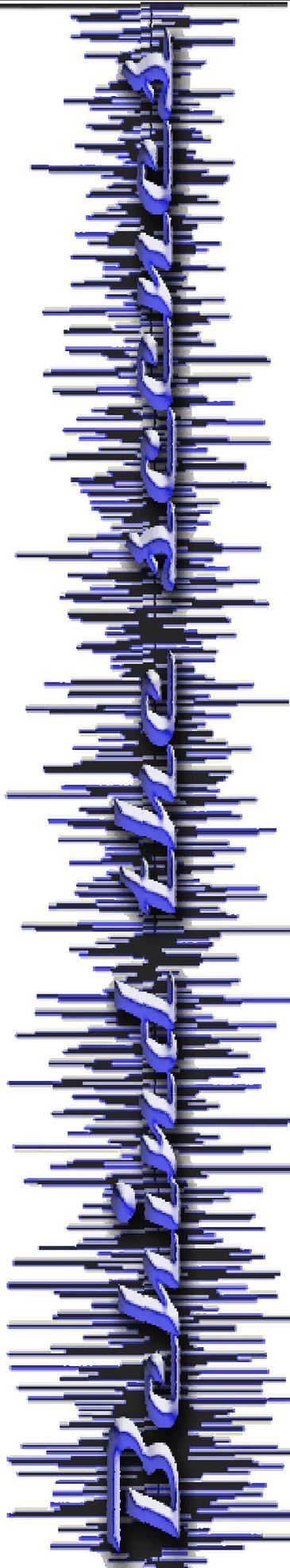
Also in Mahmudiyah is a satellite link to Forward Operating Base Lutifiyah that expands coverage throughout the 2nd BCT’s area of operations and allows secure communications between remote patrol bases.

“It’s an important job,” said Spc. Christopher Johnson, a signal systems specialist. “We do 24-hour operations here. Our focus is on tackling small problems before they become big problems.”



Photo by Spc. Chris McCann, 2nd BCT PAO

Staff Sgt. Chastity Morin checks the telemetry on one of the radio transmitters that serves the 2nd Brigade Combat Team’s area of operations in Iraq.



# Soldiers join noncommissioned officer corps

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

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — The tradition of commemorating the passing of a Soldier to a noncommissioned officer can be traced to the Army of Fredrick the Great. Before one could be recognized on the full status of an NCO, he was required to stand four watches, one every four days. Although different from yesterday's traditions, the Army today still commemorates the rites of passage for NCOs.

Soldiers from the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI) were inducted into the NCO Corps during a ceremony Jan. 19 here.

"This is a very emotional experience," said Sgt. Arays Cruz, the 210th retention NCO, who was being inducted at the ceremony.

"Before I became an NCO I never imagined that I would be standing here today surrounded by my peers."

As the color guard opened the ceremony senior NCOs provided the inductees with guidance to help them in their new role.

"Take care of your Soldiers," said Cmd. Sgt. Maj. Mark Joseph, the 15th Sustainment Brigade command sergeant major. "Make sure you always uphold the standards, whether it is conducting pre-combat inspections or making Soldiers wear their seatbelts .... Take the hard right instead of the easy wrong."

After the senior NCOs gave their speeches other NCOs took the responsibility of inducting 21 NCOs into the Corps.

The audience listened as the inductees raised their right hands to swear the oath of the NCO.

"As a NCO I accept the charge to observe and follow the orders and directions given by supervisors, acting according to the laws, articles and rules governing the discipline of the Army," the inductees said in unison. "In doing, so I will fulfill my greatest obligation as a leader, and thereby confirm my status as a NCO."

After the inductees swore in they signed and received their charge and the NCO Creed.

"Now that I am an NCO I will point Soldiers in the right direction and always help them out," Cruz said as her eyes filled with tears. "I will guide them in the right direction."

Before the inducted NCOs left, a Soldier made a simple request to them.

"Treat me with respect sergeant, for no heart in all the world is more loyal than the heart of the American Soldier," said Spc. Timothy Montminy, a 210th BSB driver. "Train me sergeant that one day too I can be called sergeant."

After the ceremony ended the inductees talked amongst themselves and received congratulatory handshakes.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2nd BCT PAO

Sgt. Matthew Deveikis (left), a light-wheeled vehicle mechanic with the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), gets ready to sign the charge of the noncommissioned officer after Cmd. Sgt. Maj. Spencer Gray (right), who serves as the 210th BSB command sergeant major, signs it.

**Fortes Defensores  
Vitae**



*(From left) Pfc. Romin Gallup, a sniper with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), Sgt. Matthew Herring, a sniper team leader with HHC, 2-14, and Spc. Thomas Mackey, an infantryman also with HHC, receive Army Commendation Medals with V Devices for valor at an awards ceremony on Camp Striker, Iraq Jan. 29.*

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

From:



Free Mail

To: