

Cav aims to help residents clean up village

By Spc. Amanda Morrissey
5th MPAD

AL ZAHRAH, Iraq-- It is a small neighborhood about 12 blocks long and five blocks wide, just a few miles away from Balad. The main street is roughly paved; the rest are just dirt tracks filled with trash and mud, teeming with children. All in all, there is nothing remarkable about Al Zahrah.

It has, however, managed to capture the attention of the U.S. forces at Forward Operating Base Paliwoda. "The people in this neighborhood have been good to us here. We'd like to do something in return for them," said 1st Lt. Anthony Fazio, the projects purchasing officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment.

The unit is proposing a \$4 million renovation project that includes installing an underground sewage system with connections to each house in



(Photo by Spc. Amanda Morrissey 5th MPAD)

1st Lt. Anthony Fazio (third from left), the projects purchasing officer for HHC ,3rd Bn., 8th Cav. Reg. speaks with Ahmed Omran (left), a local civil engineer, and Amir ab Dalhide Morhon (second left), the mayor of Balad, through an interpreter (far right), while on a patrol through the Al Zahrah neighborhood on Jan. 4.

the area, drain culverts, sidewalks and paved roads.

The long term benefits of this project would be numerous. The construction project

would provide about 150 people employment for at least six months, as well as create other jobs, such as garbage disposal, in the effort to maintain the

neighborhood, Fazio said.

Neighborhood improvements might also catch the

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Secret Soldiers provide ACB pilots information for mission successes

By Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert
1st ACB Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Pssst.

It's a well kept secret how their contributions save the lives of Soldiers each and every day in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

No, you won't hear the Soldiers from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade's security section talking about their daily adventures, because virtually everything they do is a secret.

The intelligence and terrain Soldiers

and U.S. Air Force weather personnel who comprise the brigade security section provide a three-dimensional picture of the battle space for aviators from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.

The brigade's pilots are in the skies over Baghdad 24 hours a day, and the security troops give them a daily picture of the threat, the terrain and the weather.

"This is without a doubt the most volatile sector in Iraq," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Levar Wilson, the assistant

brigade security officer.

Just as movie stars need consultants to keep them from making bad career choices, pilots need security Soldiers to advise them on everything from the enemy situation, hiding places for insurgents on the ground and bad weather.

"The number one thing we have to think about is the lives of the pilots," said Sgt. 1st Class Richard Nunnally, brigade security noncommissioned officer and a

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Security Soldiers work keeps Cav's airspace safe

Secrets

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native of Dewitt, Va. "We give them a clear and concise picture of what the threat looks like on the ground so they can be aware of that threat."

How these security consultants gather that information is, well, a secret, but it is as vital to the aviation mission as the aircraft the pilots fly in.

"We paint the most accurate picture of what the enemy is doing on the ground as it relates to the aviation specific type mission here, because everything that happens on the ground has an equal effect in the air," said Wilson, who hails from Hearne, Texas.

That metaphorical picture includes some actual pictures from the terrain team.

"We study the terrain, but more commonly we provide cartographic overlays on maps," said Staff Sgt. Randall Marks, terrain team NCOIC, who calls Portales, N.M. home.

"The threat boundaries can change a couple of times a week or monthly. There is no set pattern."

The brigade security troops provide intelligence to the battalion security sections as well, where the threat situation is briefed to pilots as part of each and every mission.

"We are the conduits between the battalions, the higher headquarters and even lateral headquarters within Iraq," Nunnally said.

Intelligence from the Baghdad area also is pertinent to aviators from other multinational divisions and even Multinational Corps-Iraq, who have to fly into the Baghdad airspace, Wilson explained.

The security mission is non-stop, and there is no down time. It encompasses intelligence for missions, operational security and personal security.

For this section of Soldiers, the mission is made more challenging by the expe-



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert, 1st ACB Public Affairs)

Pfc. Nichelle Sauls, an intelligence analyst from 1st ACB monitors a computer in the brigade security section. Sauls is part of a group who provides security and weather information to pilots from MND-Baghdad.

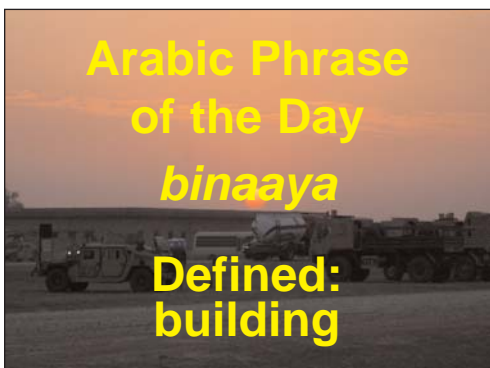
rience level.




"For a lot of our Soldiers, this is the first deployment," Wilson said. "We do more with smaller numbers than previous units have in this same location. We have (privates first class), specialists and young sergeants doing things that were being done by officers in

previous units. This is, by far, a great testament of their tenacity and will to learn. The Soldiers and NCOs are who make things happen in this section. (They) work hard, and they accomplish their missions."

And, what exactly are those missions?

They'll never tell.



Iraq 3-Day Weather Report			
	Today	Tomorrow	Friday
High: 65 Low: 39	High: 65 Low: 39	High: 66 Low: 40	

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NCOIC, Print Production: Staff Sgt. Mary Rose
Editor: Sgt. Michael Garrett
Staff Writers: Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, Spc. L.B. Edgar, Spc. Shea Butler, Pfc. Jeffrey Ledesma, Pfc. Ben Gable, Pfc. William Hatton
Contributing Writer: Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert, Spc. Amanda Morrissey

Contact the *Daily Charge* at VOIP 242-4093, DSN 318-847-2855 or e-mail david.j.larsen@mnd-b.army.mil.

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Baghdad in Brief

America responds to Camp Taji Soldier's mat problem

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - A Soldier based here received a negative e-mail response from a stateside company after he inquired about purchasing mats from the business.

Sgt. Jason Hess, an engineer with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Brigade Combat Team, had e-mailed discount-mats.com Jan. 16 to inquire whether or not the company would ship floor mats to military addresses and to Iraq.

The response to the e-mailed inquiry read, "We do not ship to APO addresses, and even if we did, we would NEVER ship to Iraq. If you were sensible, you and your troops would pull out of Iraq."

Subsequent media coverage of the correspondence incorrectly attributed the purpose of Hess' request was for sleeping mats, or mattresses.

According to Hess, who works doing construction - painting as well as repair-type jobs involving work orders for the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, the purpose of the mats was to prevent wear and tear on office furniture and keep dust down in the brigade's buildings.

The interest shown by the American public over this matter shows care and concern for deployed Soldiers, a command spokesman said.

"This is a great example of the American people supporting their Soldiers," said Maj. Randall Baucom, public affairs officer for the 1st Cav. Div.'s 1st Brigade. "We understand that people are lining up back home to send our troops sleeping mattresses. That's great, but we don't need them."

Hess said he has since found another company which will ship the floor mats to the brigade.



(Photo by Spc. Amanda Morrissey 5th MPAD)

Ahmed Omran, a local civil engineer, details the progress made to the water pump station in the Al Zahrah neighborhood.

Project will bring sanitation to Al Zahrah

Project

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attention of the provincial government, potentially resulting in additional funding for other projects. The result would be an all-around economic improvement for the town, said Fazio.

The greatest benefit, however, would be the improved health of the inhabitants.

"The old sewage system backs up here, especially when it rains, causing dirty water and debris to rise to the surface," said Fazio. "The kids go out and play in this stuff, and people are getting sick."

The new sewage system and drain culverts will remove the dirty water and debris from the streets, greatly improving the living standard for the Al Zahrah residents.

"We hope that people will see the improvements made in this neighborhood, how it looks and how it works, and want the same for their neighborhoods. Then they would be willing to work with U.S. forces to stabilize the violence in their area so we can go in there and do it," said Staff Sgt. Sean Cummins, the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion team leader.

The civil affairs team works as the eyes and ears for Fazio to provide information on what projects are most wanted and needed by the people, said Cummins.

Amir ab Dalhide Morhan, the mayor of

Balad, is working with Fazio on the project.

"Even though there is a change in the commands [at FOB Paliwoda], the policy always remains the same - to work with the people of Balad," said the mayor.

Fazio patrols with the 404th Civil Affairs team to gain a better understanding of what improvements have been completed and to determine what developments still need to occur. He talked with the locals about the problems they are having, and explained how the proposed project will help to alleviate those issues.

With the mayor's cooperation, Fazio has established several mandates to ensure the project will move forward with minimal disruptions. He intends to hire a local contractor who actually lives in Al Zahrah because the contractor will have a vested interest in making sure the project gets done, and gets done the right way.

Included in the proposal is a stipulation that locals must clean up garbage in the area before the project can get started, and that they must keep it clean once it is completed.

"I'm trying to change the mindset of the people. If they have to earn something, then maybe they will take pride in it and maintain it," Fazio said.

The approval process for the Al Zahrah renovation project could take up to two months. Once approved, the project is scheduled to be finished within six months of its start date.

Women Soldiers learn self-defense

By Pfc. William Hatton
7th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - The small corner of the gym usually filled with stationary bikes, treadmills and elliptical machines, is cleared out ready for the pending hand to hand attacks and counterattacks.

A group of camouflage-clad women enter the small area with eager minds ready for a combative training session set in a no-limit atmosphere.

They aren't training up to be vicious cage fighters, but are learning valuable techniques in a self-defense class.

Leaders with the 1st Cavalry Division felt a class would be beneficial for women here, said Spc. Jonte Scott, a Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers representative for the Headquarters Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cav. Div.

"The class was set up to help females working at Camp Liberty to gain the experience and knowledge of how to handle threatening situations dur-

ing their tour in Iraq," said Scott, a native of Sacramento, Calif.

One of the great things about the class is that it teaches Soldiers how to defend themselves in dangerous situations, Scott said.

After taking a self-defense class women will feel empowered, said Michael Foley, instructor of the self-defense class.

Once they get out and learn how to protect themselves they really feel and walk around like they can take care of themselves, he added.

While instructing, Foley told the students that there is a four letter word he doesn't want to hear during his class, and that word is "can't."

During the class Soldiers were not only able to learn new techniques and abilities, but students surprised themselves when they were given the opportunity to apply what they learned against men holding punching and kicking pads.

"I think it's important for all women to learn how to



(Photos by Pfc. William Hatton, 7th MPAD)

A Soldier from the 1st Cavalry Division attack other troops holding pads after learning valuable techniques in a women's self-defense class.

defend themselves because it comes as a great surprise to the attacker because they don't believe we can do anything," said Spc. Diana Contreras, a participant in the class, from HHC, DSTB.

"I didn't know I could hit as hard as I did. I always wonder if I could hit that hard when the time came up," Contreras said. Being able to move around and actually kick and punch someone helped, she added.

Soldiers in the class got the opportunity to not only learn different moves, but were able to actually perform them on male Soldiers holding blocking pads, Scott said.

"Some of the girls hit pretty hard," said Spc. John Nobal, an assistant during the class

from Roebing, N.J., HHC, DSTB.

It was exciting to see Soldiers who are typically quiet and small learn how to handle themselves and gain confidence if they were ever attacked, Scott said.

The thing to know is that an attacker isn't looking for a hard target, they're looking for an easy one, Foley said. After taking a class like this it gives females a sense they can take care of themselves, he added.

If any female Soldiers are interested in learning to defend themselves and get a good workout, cage fighting probably isn't a possibility, but a class on self-defense just might be the trick.

The next class will be on Jan. 27.



Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division participated in a self-defense class taught by Michael Foley (left), a martial arts expert, on Camp Liberty, Iraq, Jan 14.

Trusty tips to make leave go smoothly

**By Spc. Shea Butler
7th MPAD**

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Environmental and Morale Leave is meant to give troops a break from a long tour overseas. To ensure that you get the most out of your leave, follow the instructions of the Soldiers who have gone before you.

Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Patterson, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division,

wanted to put out a few helpful pointers for those about to go on leave, so they would know what to expect.

"It makes for a smoother transition if you know what to expect," Patterson said.

Preparation for leave should start days in advance. Soldiers tend to get excited before going home and you don't want to forget anything that will stop you from going on leave, Patterson said.

On the day before leave, turn in your weapon before 4

p.m. and make sure it is clean. You will receive a temporary memo from the company armorer stating that you have turned in your weapon so you can go to chow, Patterson said.

Another good bit of advice is when packing liquid items like shampoo or soap make sure they are below three ounces in quantity.

Now for the day you have been waiting for - departure day. Your uniform should consist of your Army Combat Uniform, boots, headgear, outer tactical vest, Army combat helmet and assault pack. Do not have ammo or magazine attached to the vest, or on your person, Patterson said.

After signing out of the unit, securing your leave form and getting transportation the airfield, there's an accountability formation and manifesting begins for a flight to Kuwait, Patterson explained.

After the short flight to Kuwait, troops spend between 8 and 24 hours there, awaiting a flight out.

Soldiers turn in their OTV and ACH to a warehouse and are given a hand receipt for those items. On the return trip,

that hand receipt gets troops their protective gear back. Patterson said to make sure its kept in a safe place.

Before leaving Kuwait troops sit through a minimum of four briefings and go through about several hours of lockdown and a series of shake downs, Patterson said.

There are only three entry points for leave: Germany, Dallas, and Atlanta. Patterson said the staff in Kuwait will assist you in choosing an entry point and will book flights all the way through to your final destination.

Once in the states, if that's where you're headed, Patterson said troops go through another series of shake downs and X-ray scans. There, you also receive your return flight information upon arrival to your final location. You will also be given several numbers in case of emergency.

Keep those numbers safe, Patterson suggested.

Patterson said it's roughly a two-day process to get from Baghdad to home. Knowing what to expect along the way should make things easier, he said.



(Photo illustration by Pfc. Shea Butler, 7th MPAD)

Don't let this be you! Be sure to prepare appropriately for your EML trip, doing so can save you lots of headache.

TELEVISION							
	8:00p.m.	8:30p.m.	9:00p.m.	9:30p.m.	10:00p.m.	10:30p.m.	11:00p.m.
	NFL Replay			NHL - All-Star Game			
	Headline News	ATS/Regional News	The Office	Two and a Half Men (9:25)	Command Information (9:50)	House	CSI: Miami
	MSNBC Live		MSNBC Live		Fox News Live		Studio B