We are looking for any type of submissions to include: letters, articles, comic strips or artwork, and photographs.

If you would like a copy of this issue please contact your Battalion UPAR

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What Makes it Great

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What Makes it Great

The Dagger Brigade Combat Team will be trained and ready, fully deployable, disciplined, confident, dedicated and serving selflessly with pride.

We are caring of one another and sensitive to the needs of our Soldiers, family members and DA civilians.

We communicate accurately across the chain of command and work together as a combined arms team of teams.

We are responsible stewards of our Nation’s treasure.

We are professionals and ambassadors of our Nation and responsible and respected guests in the Schweinfurt Community, and wherever we find ourselves.

We are flexible, motivated and fully capable of executing any assigned tasks to standard regardless of the challenges.

Picture Credits

(Cover Page) U.S. Army soldiers B Company 2/5 Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division, conduct security patrol in Agurguf, Iraq (US Army photo by Sgt. Martin Newton, Combat Camera)

Staff Sgt. Tharp can speak with the owners without interference. Staff Sgt. Tharp asks the owners about electricity, plumbing, water, government, jobs, and security in the area. Most seem displeased with the police in the area, as well as job opportunities and electricity. Staff Sgt. Tharp records all this information down and takes pictures of those interviewed as well as their store.

Within two hours of setting up a perimeter 1st Platoon has conducted complete interviews with all store owners in the Mushada Market. Staff Sgt. Tharp confers with Capt. Jasso about the mission. There were no problems or attacks during the mission. The unit breaks down and sets up the market for the night, camp.

Today’s mission did not involve a firefight between US Army forces and insurgents, but it was still a victory for Alpha Company. The fight in Taji is similar to many other parts of Iraq. By gaining the support of the Iraqi people, the Apaches can ultimately build up the Iraqi people to run their own country.
Getting up before 5:00 in the morning is the normal wake-up time for Soldiers of Team Alpha, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, Blue Spaders, located north of Baghdad in Taji. Dark and cold, the infantrymen of 1st Platoon still move quickly to prepare their vehicles and equipment for the upcoming combat patrol. Today’s mission: conduct a cordon and knock off the Mushada Market in order to meet the people and ensure stability in an area constantly attacked by insurgents.

The overall company mission is simple. Team Alpha, the Apaches, have to secure a portion of main supply route Tampa, a highway running all the way from Kuwait across the country, providing American bases with critical logistical support. However, executing this mission has proved much more difficult.

The insurgents in Taji play a cat and mouse game with Alpha Company. They plant IEDs everyday and shoot mortars and small arms fire at patrols who stay in one place too long. They almost seem a step ahead of the Apaches because they know the land. In the past several weeks, since Alpha’s arrival, all attacks that were investigated did not turn up any suspects. Capt. Andrew Jasso, Alpha Company Commander, suspects that some, if not most, of the insurgents live in the area the Apaches patrol. The rest are too scared to come forward with information that could lead to the capture of the insurgents. The solution is to conduct missions like today. Go into town and get to know the people.

At 5:30 a.m., Staff Sgt. Trenton Tharp, Platoon Sergeant for 1st Platoon, gives the mission brief to his men prior to departure. The mission and intent for the day, as well as possible courses of action if the patrol takes contact, are given out. At the end, he asks if there are any questions. Everyone shakes their head- they all know what they have to do.

Afterwards the section mounts up and meets up with the Company Commander, a PSYOP Team, and a Canine Unit, at the company operations center. By 6:00 a.m. the convoy has exited Camp Taji, safeties on with weapons loaded. The lead vehicle turns north on main supply route Tampa and slowly moves towards the market. The road they travel is the same one used by the logistics convoys, and is heavily targeted by the Sunni insurgents with roadside bombs made out of artillery shells or (Continued on page 15)

One of my favorite verses when I was last deployed was Proverbs 25:25, “Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a far country.” I loved to get the emails, cards, letters and care packages! My name was placed on TV in Wausau, Wisconsin for the “Send a Troop a Card” program that Christmas and in no time I was receiving dozens of encouraging cards and letters from many wonderful people who cared enough to take the time and send some “good news” that refreshed my soul.

Well, I am only one person but hopefully through this newsletter I can share some “good news from a far country” to encourage you today. My encouragement comes in the shape of good news from “home” regarding your great spouses and kids that have been doing some wonderful things in this community to share their love and encourage each other. Let me share just a snapshot of one great event that just recently impacted our community.

The Christmas play, “Where Are You Christmas?” written by Wendy Latella was performed by a cast and crew of about 50 family members from our community this past weekend (Dec. 16-17.) The play centers around a couple of families who are struggling to find meaning and significance in this season while dad/husband is deployed yet again. As part of their journey they are led back to the simple story of the first Christmas. A lowly carpenter and his pregnant wife seeking shelter in a stable. A baby born, simply clothed and sheltered in a manger (the feed trough for the animals). And a wondrous angelic declaration for shepherds and kings.

What our kids find as the story unfolds is a reminder of a God who loves them so much that He sent His own Son, Baby Jesus. They are reminded, through all the symbols of Christmas, that God came to give them life and love and forgiveness of sin. And just as importantly, they are reminded that God is there to help them and their deployed parents through these difficult days as well.

What better “good news” is there than that? Well, hopefully you are encouraged a little bit. I know I am! I am so glad that I have the privilege of serving your great families and watching them serve and encourage each other. Our ministry here in Schweinfurt is strong today because of your great spouses and kids! As you are beginning the new year and upcoming reunions I pray that 2007 will be filled with “Good News” for you and your families!
Dagger's Edge

Motor Pool Operations

During the busy day, not too many Soldiers have time to conduct maintenance on their vehicles. Everyone knows that keeping vehicles fully mission capable is extremely important to the companies, battalions and the brigade. Company C, 101st MI Battalion has limited amount of personnel on the maintenance team. Actually there are only three technicians and one technician supervisor to support the entire company. When a truck comes to the motor pool to be worked on, an operator usually accompanies it, taking the Soldier from his or her daily tasks. With many Soldiers having little experience with fixing trucks, time must be set aside to explain the correct procedures needed to complete the services.

Pvt. 1st Class Brendan Potter patiently explained how to connect a new hub input/output sill and change brakes on an HMMWV to Capt. Jeremiah Pray, Charlie Company’s Commander. Afternoon, Pvt. 1st Class Nicole Jonas had to take time away from producing informational slides, in order to change the tires on her platoon’s vehicle.

From early in the morning, until the sun goes down, the maintenance team is either getting parts for the vehicle or doing scheduled and unscheduled maintenance on the company’s vehicle. When a vehicle needs maintenance it means a mission will have to be put on pause, allowing the enemy to get a step ahead. Staff Sgt. Abner Green, Technician Supervisor, will not stand for a mission being cancelled because a vehicle cannot start or be used. When a vehicle became unusable due to a hole in the gas tank, Staff Sgt. Green had the new gas tank on order just hours after the incident occurred. Nothing will get the way of Company C 101st MI completing their mission for the brigade.

A Scriptural View

Story by 1st Lt. Angel Winstanley

The Black Knights of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, have been deployed for over a month. We have come to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. While we have been here, elections have occurred that seem to indicate a nationwide dissatisfaction with how the war is being handled by those who were in office. The British have announced plans which could result in their withdrawal within the year. Where does all of this leave us? What is our reason for being here? It can be reasoned that each person has a personal reason for being here, or for being in the Army and the side effect is being in Iraq, but what about us as a group? Why are we here?

The scripture passage used for a recent Sunday sermon was, Hebrews 10:31-39.

These people who had received the grace of God through the suffering of Jesus were now suffering for others in a similar fashion. Those who were mistreated could also experience the benefits of grace. They did it because they knew they had a better way. They were willing to sacrifice so others could benefit. Because of their commitment, they were rewarded.

The scripture goes on to say, “For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised… but my righteous one will live by faith. My soul takes no pleasure in anyone who shrinks back.”

But we are not among those who shrink back. Those Christians brought to those who were suffering a better way and were rewarded for their endurance. We have come here to provide the people of Iraq a better way. When we endure to the end, the people of Iraq, we as Americans, and the entire world will be rewarded. Rewarded with a world that stands firm against the evils of terrorism and dictatorial governments. We already know this is a struggle with hardships and sufferings. What we must prove is that we too can say to the world, “We are not among those who shrink back.”

Continue the mission, Black Knights. Destroy evil, protect the innocent, and provide for the greater good. May God strengthen, protect, and comfort you. AMEN.

This is one of many examples of the dual capable First Lightning battalion. Their Soldiers continue to provide security and patrol the Lightning area of operations, inside and outside the wire every day, and now have added a new lethality to the fight against the insurgency.

(First Lightning...Continued from page 12)
1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, the First Lightning battalion, has maintained its reputation since firing the first aimed Artillery barrage of World War I on Oct. 22, 1917, at Luneville, France. On Dec. 15, 2006 at Camp Liberty, Iraq, the M109A6 Paladins of the 1st Bn, 7th Field Artillery were called into action once again. Almost two years after firing in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II, the battalion’s accuracy and abilities were displayed as they conducted Terrain Denial missions in support of 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry.

Soldiers from Battery C spent the past few days preparing to provide indirect fire. Numerous technical rehearsals were executed, ensuring all communications equipment was properly functioning. Motivation ran high as these Soldiers would get a chance to perform the duties as Artillerymen.

As evening darkness approached, the observers from 2nd Bn, 12th Cav. gave the command and a thunderous boom could be heard as an artillery round left Camp Liberty for the first time in a year. The illumination round burst and the maneuver forces on the ground got a good view of an area historically used by the enemy to launch mortar and rocket attacks against the Victory Base Complex. The First Lightning battalion provided continuous illumination and incorporated six high explosive rounds, which shook the ground as they impacted precisely where they were supposed to. This terrain denial mission proved to warn insurgents that Coalition Forces know where they shoot from and to enforce the fact we have the capabilities to shoot back.

A M109A6 Paladin from 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, shoots the first round in a terrain denial mission from Camp Liberty, Iraq. (US Army photo by Capt. Matthew Angliss.)
Before moving north from Kuwait, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 299th Forward Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, from Schweinfurt, Germany, was assigned responsibility of the Division Holding Area Annex (DHA-A) on Camp Liberty in Baghdad. The facility is designed to temporarily hold suspected insurgents who are detained by various units operating around Camp Liberty. During the time a detainee is held at the DHA-A, military interrogators work closely with lawyers from the Judge Advocate General’s office to determine whether or not there is sufficient evidence to send a detainee to a long term holding facility and await a trial in an Iraqi court. Before reviewing all of the evidence, a detainee will either be released where he or she was picked up, turned over to the Iraqi Police, or sent to a permanent facility to await trial.

Prior to accepting responsibility of the DHA-A, Soldiers were chosen throughout the battalion by their respective company commanders and 1st Sgt.’s to begin training for the this mission. 299th Soldiers received a two-day block of instruction from the 2nd Battalion, 1st Military Police Platoon, on basic detainee handling and detention facility operations at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. During the two day class Soldiers learned how to restrain unruly detainees, how to search a prisoner, some basic Arabic phrases, how to transport detainees, and how to properly search a cell or perform a shake down.

After arriving at Camp Liberty, Soldiers immediately began another seven-day block of instruction on current detainee handling operations. Corrections Specialist, Sgt. 1st Class Juan Munoz, taught the class. This class is mandatory for all Soldiers working outside of their military specialty, and was implemented to ensure detainees are always treated with dignity and respect. Headquarters Soldiers received additional training on detainee handling, updated techniques for searching prisoners and holding cells, how to restrain detainees using handcuffs and shackles, and completed their training with a day of combat- lives and self-defense classes.

Upon completion of the classroom training Soldiers from the DHA-A Platoon were split into three groups, and began relief in place operations with the 47th FSB, 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, from Baumholder, Germany. After three days of observation and hands-on training, the 299th Soldiers felt confident and moved into the driver’s seat at the DHA-A. The 47th FSB continued to provide minimal guidance for another three days, and answered any questions that arose during daily operations. 1st Lt. Jon Skidmore, DHA-A Officer in Charge (OIC) and Sgt. 1st Class Ronald Bingham DHA-A Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) were confident in their new mission, and assumed command and control of the facility on November 1, 2006. The Soldiers of Headquarters Company will continue to process detainees until the unit redeploys to Schweinfurt, Germany.

Their mission is an integral part in improving the stability and security of Iraq, and helps to protect American and coalition forces from terrorist attacks while operating in and around Baghdad. Despite the fact that this is a high visibility operation and a stressful job that very few Soldiers in the unit have performed in the past, they continue to take pride in their work and continue to live by the battalion motto, “On Call to Serve!”

DAGGER’S EDGE

(“Semper Gumby” Continued from page 10) devices. By 2:55 p.m., EOD personnel safely executed a controlled detonation of the car bomb, leaving nothing behind but a three foot hole in the ground and a twisted piece of the chassis. With their first mission of the day complete, they headed back to Camp Liberty only to be redirected within minutes of the gate to another roadside bomb location. This request sent them to a site where a roadside bomb had already exploded, injuring no one but leaving two mortar rounds and two artillery shells unexploded. EOD quickly remedied the situation and detonated the remaining ordinance.

Before the dust had a chance to settle from the ensuing explosion, 1st Platoon was called on yet another mission. This time it was not for a bomb, but to apprehend an insurgent involved in bomb emplacement. Tactical questioning and an Explosion Spray Test confirmed the detainee had been handling explosives. 1st Lt. Herndon’s team then photographed the man, collected his personal belongings, and safely transported him to the Detaining Holding Area on Camp Liberty.

By the end of the day, the Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Battery B, had secured the site for two controlled detonations, worked hand in hand with Iraqi Army and Iraqi Special Police, and transported a suspected insurgent who may provide information on other insurgents operating within the area. 1st Platoon is highly trained to be able to respond to any call and execute professionally in any scenario. Their constant state of readiness and “Semper Gumby” attitude makes the Soldiers of Battery B a valuable asset to Task Force Gila, and integral part of the EOD mission.

Instructor, Sgt. 1st Class Juan Munoz, right, demonstrates how to use pressure points and leverage to escape from a headlock on Sgt. Joshua Crump during the DHA-A’s seven day training. (US Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jennifer Gessner, 299th FSB.)


(l)Helltcats Continued on page 11)
A quick Google search of “Semper Gumby,” which means always flexible, will provide over 25,000 results and, not surprisingly, the top ten refer to the military in some way. This is more than just a clever motto. For Battery B, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, attached to 9th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Gila, it describes the nature of their mission perfectly. While other members of the task force carry out their missions within the Area of Operations, Battery B acts much like a 911 responder and waits for the call. Their job is to escort Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams to possible roadside bomb sites and provide security for them while they carry out their operations. This requires Battery B to be ready to respond at any hour, day or night, to any variety of situations and locations.

On the Dec. 5, 1st Platoon, experienced first hand the need to be “Semper Gumby.” The Soldiers of 1st Platoon spent the morning maintaining their vehicles and weapons. The same afternoon, they appreciated the preparations they made to be ready for any mission. Around 1:30 p.m., 1st Lt. Adam Herndon, 1st Platoon Leader, received the first request for support for Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) call of the day. He and the Soldiers who make up the escort team rallied at EOD’s headquarters in less than fifteen minutes. There was a car bomb and 1st Lt. Herndon’s team geared up to take EOD to the scene. Upon arrival they discovered a yellow Chevy Caprice with a cell phone and wires that led to the gas tank. The surrounding area was already cordoned off by the Iraqi Special Police (ISP). The escort team immediately searched the area for secondary

"Semper Gumby" Continued on page 11

9th Engineers First to Cross

2-12 Cavalry Thunder Horse

Thunder Horse Starts with Successful Operations

2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry has successfully begun operations alongside the Iraqi Army. Starting Dec. 7, a series of three battalion-sized operations have taken place. The first operation was in conjunction with 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry, and the others were just 2-12 Cav. All were conducted with integration of Iraqi Security Forces to include Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army Soldiers. These operations yielded numerous weapons caches, helping to make the area safer.

Operation Beastmaster was a series of three cordon and search operations aimed at finding weapons caches in southern Ghazaliyah in the Mansour District of western Baghdad. The operations had no U.S. Casualties, and were highlighted by the Iraqi Army rescuing over 20 kidnapped local nationals.

The rescue of kidnapping victims was executed entirely by the Iraqi Army. They captured or killed seven insurgents and rescued over twenty hostages, some of whom required medical care. Medics from 2nd Bn, 12th Cav. were at the scene, and attended to those individuals. All three cordon and search operations included in Operation Beastmaster led coalition Soldiers to weapons caches. Those caches have included artillery rounds and numerous RPG and mortar rounds as well AK-47 ammunition and magazines.

The operations were in the vicinity of a major road north of Camp Liberty that had been heavily laden with roadside bombs. The intent of this operation was to make it a safer place to travel.
Developing The Iraqi Army

Story by Capt. Lee Showman

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1st Platoon, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, conducted a joint patrol with Iraqi National Policemen from the 2-3-1 National Police Battalion in the Baghdad neighborhoods of Aamel and Bayaa. This joint patrol accomplished multiple missions.

The National Police and US Army working together is a crucial step toward turning over all se-}

curity responsibilities to the Iraqi Security Forces.

Joint patrols like the one led by Sgt. 1st Class Martin Gutierrez and the “Outlaws” from 1st Platoon train and develop the skills of the Iraqi Security Forces and help legitimize the Iraqi National Police with the local population.

The importance of joint patrols conducted throughout the Task Force Vanguard Area of Operations in west Rasheed, Baghdad, was evident from the positive feedback that the local population in the neighborhoods of Aamel and Bayaa gave the patrol on Dec. 19.

The Vanguards continue to take strides in developing self-sufficient Iraqi Security Forces that are prepared to maintain a safe and secure Iraqi. }

Recon Missions Continued from page 5

Force security detachments and other coalition security detachments. The platoon has planned op-

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with general’s aides, battalion level operations officers, military and national police transition team offi-

cers, and the 2nd Brigade Combat Team staff to ensure the Brigade Commander can be at the right

place and time to achieve a synchronized effort throughout the area of operations.

Through maintaining vigilance, adherence to standards and detailed planning the Bandits will

continue to accomplish their daily mission and serve with distinction.

57th Improves Their Foxholes

Story by 1st Lt Kyle Harvey

The past two weeks for the 57th Signal Company have been good and we continue to send Soldiers on Rest and Recuperation (R&R) for their two week vacation. Upon their return we get to hear about the different ad-

ventures that they had and no two trips are alike.

Staff Sgt. David Martin, who just re-

turned from his R&R in Schweinfurt, Germany, went from Baghdad, to Kuwait, to Bahrain, to Ireland, before finally getting to Frankfurt, Germany.

“It was a parody of events, from getting bumped off of multiple flights, to the customs agents in Dublin de-

manding that we have passports,” said Staff Sergeant Martin.

The important thing is that eventually the Sol-

diers get to their final destination and to their family and

friends for their two week vacation. Some Soldiers are opting to use the opportunity to go anywhere for free by going to exotic loca-

tions like Thailand and Australia. As Soldiers return from R&R they really do seem re-

freshed and ready to finish out the remain-

der of our deployment.

We have settled in to our battle rhythm here at Camp Liberty, but continue to improve our foxhole. It has always been preached that we should leave a place in better shape than we found it. 57th Signal Company, along with all of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team units, have made strides in this direc-
tion with repainting, construction, and straightening up network cables. All this work enhances the automations capability of the Brigade command group. Additions to the Brigade MWR building, run by our own Staff Sgt. James Spivey, has also been completed.

These ongoing projects enhance the command and control capabilities of the Bri-

gade, the appearance of our living and working conditions, and the overall quality of life for all of the Soldiers. We have already made our place on Camp Liberty better than we found it and we will continue to do so in the coming months.

STAY DAGGER STAY ARMY ARMY STRONG
Soldiers and National Police-men provided security for the civilians in Aamel and Bayaa as they presented a strong presence and spot checked the operations and readiness of all the National Police checkpoints in the area on Dec. 19.

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The National Police and US Army working together is a crucial step toward turning over all security responsibilities to the Iraqi Security Forces. Joint patrols like the one led by Sgt. 1st Class Martin Gutierrez and the “Outlaws” from 1st Platoon train and develop the skills of the Iraqi Security Forces and help legitimize the Iraqi National Police with the local population. The importance of joint patrols conducted throughout the Task Force Vanguard Area of Operations in west Rasheed, Baghdad, was evident from the positive feedback that the local population in the neighborhoods of Aamel and Bayaa gave the patrol on Dec. 19.

The Vanguards continue to take strides in developing self-sufficient Iraqi Security Forces that are prepared to maintain a safe and secure Iraqi. Force security detachments and other coalition security detachments. The platoon has planned operations usually planned at battalion and brigade combat team staff levels. They have coordinated with general’s aides, battalion level operations officers, military and national police transition team officers, and the 2nd Brigade Combat Team staff to ensure the Brigade Commander can be at the right place and time to achieve a synchronized effort throughout the area of operations.

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Upon arrival they discovered a yellow Chevy Caprice with a cell phone and wires that led to the gas tank. The surrounding area was already cordoned off by the Iraqi Special Police (ISP). The escort team immediately searched the area for secondary explosives (“Semper Gumby” Continued on page 11).

2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry
Thunder Horse

Thunder Horse Starts with Successful Operations

Story by 2nd Lt. Mike Daschel

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2-12 Cavalry Thunder Horse

9th Engineers
First to Cross

Story by Spc. Ian Harris

Sgt. Jonathon Helwig, Battery B, attached to 9th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, provides security for an explosive ordnance disposal team escorts mission. (US Army Photo by 1st Lt. Adam Herndon, Co. B, 1st Bn, 7th Field Artillery.)

Cpl. Shaun Brewster, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, provides medical aid to injured Iraqis after they are rescued from kidnappers by the Iraqi Army Dec. 11. (US Army photo by Sgt. Michael Leonhardy.)

Pvt. 1st Class Ian Harris, attached to 9th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, provides security for an explosive ordnance disposal team escorts mission. (US Army Photo by 1st Lt. Adam Herndon, Co. B, 1st Bn, 7th Field Artillery.)

Pvt. 1st Class Russell Pattison, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, searches a house with a soldier from 1/3/6 Iraqi Army during Operation Beastmaster. (US Army photo by Sgt. Martin Newton, Combat Camera.)
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Upon completion of the classroom training Soldiers from the DHA-A Platoon were split into three groups, and began relief in place operations with the 47th FSB, 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, from Baumholder, Germany. After three days of observation and hands-on training, the 299th Soldiers felt confident and moved into the driver’s seat at the DHA-A. The 47th FSB continued to provide minimal guidance for another three days, and answered any questions that arose during daily operations. 1st Lt. Jon Skidmore, DHA-A Officer in Charge (OIC) and Sgt. 1st Class Ronald Bingham DHA-A Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) were confident in their new mission, and assumed command and control of the facility on November 1, 2006. The Soldiers of Headquarters Company will continue to process detainees until the unit redeploys to Schweinfurt, Germany.

Their mission is an integral part in improving the stability and security of Iraq, and helps to protect American and coalition forces from terrorist attacks while operating in and around Baghdad. Despite the fact that this is a high visibility operation and a stressful job that very few Soldiers in the unit have performed in the past, they continue to take pride in their work and continue to live by the battalion motto, “On Call to Serve!”

Devices. By 2:55 p.m., EOD personnel safely executed a controlled detonation of the car bomb, leaving nothing behind but a three foot hole in the ground and a twisted piece of the chassis.

With their first mission of the day complete, they headed back to Camp Liberty only to be redirected within minutes of the gate to another roadside bomb location. This request sent them to a site where a roadside bomb had already exploded, injuring no one but leaving two mortar rounds and two artillery shells unexploded. EOD quickly remedied the situation and detonated the remaining ordnance.

Before the dust had a chance to settle from the ensuing explosion, 1st Platoon was called on yet another mission. This time it was not for a bomb, but to apprehend an insurgent involved in bomb emplacement.

Tactical questioning and an Explosion Spray Test confirmed the detainee had been handling explosives. 1st Lt. Herndon’s team then photographed the man, collected his personal belongings, and safely transported him to the Detaining Holding Area on Camp Liberty.

By the end of the day, the Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Battery B, had secured the site for two controlled detonations, worked hand in hand with Iraqi Army and Iraqi Special Police, and transported a suspected insurgent who may provide information on other insurgents operating within the area. 1st Platoon is highly trained to be able to respond to any call and execute professionally in any scenario. Their constant state of readiness and “Semper Gumby” attitude makes the Soldiers of Battery B a valuable asset to Task Force Gila, and integral part of the EOD mission.
1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, the First Lightning battalion, has maintained its reputation since firing the first aimed Artillery barrage of World War I on Oct. 22, 1917, at Luneville, France.

On Dec. 15, 2006 at Camp Liberty, Iraq, the M109A6 Paladins of the 1st Bn, 7th Field Artillery were called into action once again. Almost two years after firing in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II, the battalion’s accuracy and abilities were displayed as they conducted Terrain Denial missions in support of 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry.

Soldiers from Battery C spent the past few days preparing to provide indirect fire. Numerous technical rehearsals were executed, ensuring all communications equipment was properly functioning. Motivation ran high as these Soldiers would get a chance to perform the duties as Artillerymen.

As evening darkness approached, the observers from 2nd Bn, 12th Cav. gave the command and a thunderous boom could be heard as an artillery round left Camp Liberty for the first time in a year. The illumination round burst and the maneuver forces on the ground got a good view of an area historically used by the enemy to launch mortar and rocket attacks against the Victory Base Complex. The First Lightning battalion provided continuous illumination and incorporated six high explosive rounds, which shook the ground as they impacted precisely where they were supposed to. This terrain denial mission proved to warn insurgents that Coalition Forces know where they shoot from and to enforce the fact we have the capabilities to shoot back.

A M109A6 Paladin from 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, shoots the first round in a terrain denial mission from Camp Liberty, Iraq. (US Army photo by Capt. Matthew Angliss.)

(First Lightning...Continued on page 13)
During the busy day, not too many Soldiers have time to conduct maintenance on their vehicles. Everyone knows that keeping vehicles fully mission capable is extremely important to the companies, battalions and the brigade. Company C, 101 Military Intelligence Battalion has limited amount of personnel on the maintenance team. Actually there are only three technicians and one technician supervisor to support the entire company.

When a truck comes to the motor pool to be worked on, an operator usually accompanies it, taking the Soldier from his or her daily tasks. With many Soldiers having little experience with fixing trucks, time must be set aside to explain the correct procedures needed to complete the services.

Pvt. 1st. Class Brendan Potter patiently explained how to connect a new hub input/output sill and change brakes on a HMMWV to Capt. Jeremiah Pray, Charlie Company’s Commander. One afternoon, Pvt. 1st Class Nicole Jonas had to take time away from producing informational slides, in order to change the tires on her platoon’s vehicle.

From early in the morning, until the sun goes down, the maintenance team is either getting parts for the vehicle or doing scheduled and unscheduled maintenance on the company’s vehicle. When a vehicle needs maintenance it means a mission will have to be put on pause, allowing the enemy to get a step ahead. Staff Sgt. Abner Green, Technician Supervisor, will not stand for a mission being cancelled because a vehicle cannot start or be used. When a vehicle became unusable due to a hole in the gas tank, Staff Sgt. Green had the new gas tank on order just hours after the incident occurred. Nothing will get the way of Company C 101 MI completing their mission for the brigade.

The Black Knights of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, have been deployed for over a month. We have come to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. While we have been here, elections have occurred that seem to indicate a nationwide dissatisfaction with how the war is being handled by those who were in office. The British have announced plans which could result in their withdrawal within the year. Where does all of this leave us? What is our reason for being here? It can be reasoned that each person has a personal reason for being here, or for being in the Army and the side effect is being in Iraq, but what about us as a group? Why are we here?

The scripture passage used for a recent Sunday sermon was, Hebrews 10:31-39. "For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised… but my righteous one will live by faith. My soul takes no pleasure in anyone who shrinks back.”

But we are not among those who shrink back. Those Christians brought to those who were suffering a better way and were rewarded for their endurance. We have come here to provide the people of Iraq a better way. When we endure to the end, the people of Iraq, we as Americans, and the entire world will be rewarded. Rewarded with a world that stands firm against the evils of terrorism and dictatorial governments. We already know this is a struggle with hardships and sufferings. What we must prove is that we too can say to the world, “We are not among those who shrink back.”

Continue the mission, Black Knights. Destroy evil, protect the innocent, and provide for the greater good. May God strengthen, protect, and comfort you. AMEN.
Apache Company in Taji

Story by 1st Lt. Daniel Morkes

Getting up before 5:00 in the morning is the normal wake-up time for Soldiers of Team Alpha, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, Blue Spaders, located north of Baghdad in Taji. Dark and cold, the infantrymen of 1st Platoon still move quickly to prepare their vehicles and equipment for the upcoming combat patrol. Today’s mission: conduct a cordon and knock of the Mushada Market in order to meet the people and ensure stability in an area constantly attacked by insurgents. The overall mission: conduct a cordon and knock of the Mushada Market in order to meet the people and ensure stability in an area constantly attacked by insurgents. The overall mission: conduct a cordon and knock of the Mushada Market in order to meet the people and ensure stability in an area constantly attacked by insurgents. The overall mission: conduct a cordon and knock of the Mushada Market in order to meet the people and ensure stability in an area constantly attacked by insurgents. The overall mission: conduct a cordon and knock of the Mushada Market in order to meet the people and ensure stability in an area constantly attacked by insurgents. The overall mission: conduct a cordon and knock of the Mushada Market in order to meet the people and ensure stability.

The overall company mission is simple. Team Alpha, the Apaches, have to secure a portion of main supply route Tampa, a highway running all the way from Kuwait across the country, providing American bases with critical logistical support. However, executing this mission has proved much more difficult. The insurgents in Taji play a cat and mouse game with Alpha Company. They plant IEDs everyday and shoot mortars and small arms fire at patrols who stay in one place too long. They almost seem a step ahead of the Apaches because they know the land. In the past several weeks, since Alpha’s arrival, all attacks that were investigated did not turn up any suspects. Capt. Andrew Jasso, Alpha Company Commander, suspects that some, if not most, of the insurgents live in the area the Apaches patrol. The rest are too scared to come forward with information that could lead to the capture of the insurgents. The solution is to conduct missions like today. Go into town and get to know the people. At 5:30 a.m., Staff Sgt. Trenton Tharp, Platoon Sergeant for 1st Platoon, gives the mission brief to his men prior to departure. The mission and intent for the day, as well as possible courses of action if the patrol takes contact, are given out. At the end, he asks if there are any questions. Everyone shakes their head— they all know what they have to do.

Afterwards the section mounts up and meets up with the Company Commander, a PSYOP Team, and a Canine Unit, at the company operations center. By 6:00 a.m. the convoy has exited Camp Taji, safeties on with weapons loaded. The lead vehicle turns north on main supply route Tampa and slowly moves towards the market. The road they travel is the same one used by the logistics convoys, and is heavily targeted by the Sunni insurgents with roadside bombs made out of artillery shells or one place too long. They almost seem a step ahead of the Apaches because they know the land. In the past several weeks, since Alpha’s arrival, all attacks that were investigated did not turn up any suspects. Capt. Andrew Jasso, Alpha Company Commander, suspects that some, if not most, of the insurgents live in the area the Apaches patrol. The rest are too scared to come forward with information that could lead to the capture of the insurgents. The solution is to conduct missions like today. Go into town and get to know the people.

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One of my favorite verses when I was last deployed was Proverbs 25:25, “Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a far country.” I loved to get the emails, cards, letters and care packages! My name was placed on TV in Wausau, Wisconsin for the “Send a Troop a Card” program that Christmas and in no time I was receiving dozens of encouraging cards and letters from many wonderful people who cared enough to take the time and send some “good news” that refreshed my soul. Well, I am only one person but hopefully through this newsletter I can share some “good news from a far country” to encourage you today. My encouragement comes in the shape of good news from “home” regarding your great spouses and kids that have been doing some wonderful things in this community to share their love and encourage each other. Let me share just a snapshot of one great event that just recently impacted our community.

The Christmas play, “Where Are You Christmas?” written by Wendy Latella was performed by a cast and crew of about 50 family members from our community this past weekend (Dec. 16-17). The play centers around a couple of families who are struggling to find meaning and significance in this season while dad/ husband is deployed yet again. As part of their journey they are led back to the simple story of the first Christmas. A lowly carpenter and his pregnant wife seeking shelter in a stable. A baby born, simply clothed and sheltered in a manger (the feed trough for the animals). And a wondrous angelic declaration for shepherds and kings.

What our kids find as the story unfolds is a reminder of a God who loves them so much that He sent His own Son, Baby Jesus. They are reminded, through all the symbols of Christmas, that God came to give them life and love and forgiveness of sin. And just as importantly, they are reminded that God is there to help them and their deployed parents through these difficult days as well.

What better “good news” is there than that? Well, hopefully you are encouraged a little bit. I know I am! I am so glad that I have the privilege of serving your great families and watching them serve and encourage each other. Our ministry here in Schweinfurt is strong today because of your great spouses and kids! As you are beginning the new year and upcoming reunions I pray that 2007 will be filled with “Good News” for you and your families!
What Makes it Great

Good News From the Homefront  CH (Maj.) Randy Brandt  Pg 3
Motor Pool Operations  1st Lt. Angel Winstanley  Pg 4
Recon Missions — Renegades  Capt. William Schoenfeld  Pg 5
Hellcats Secure Detainees  Capt. Stephen Polacek  Pg 6
Thunder Horse Starts with Successful Operations  2nd Lt. Mike Daschel  Pg 7
Developing the Iraqi Army  Capt. Lee Showman  Pg 8
57th Improves Their Foxholes  1st Lt. Kyle Harvey  Pg 9
Semper Gumby  Spc. Ian Harris  Pg 10
First Lightning Strikes Again  Capt. Chris Simmons  Pg 12
A Scriptural View  CH (Capt.) Steven Rindahl  Pg 13
Apache Company in Taji  1st Lt. Daniel Morkes  Pg 14

We are caring of one another and sensitive to the needs of our Soldiers, family members and DA civilians.
We communicate accurately across the chain of command and work together as a combined arms team of teams.
We are responsible stewards of our Nation’s treasure.
We are professionals and ambassadors of our Nation and responsible and respected guests in the Schweinfurt Community, and wherever we find ourselves.
We are flexible, motivated and fully capable of executing any assigned tasks to standard regardless of the challenges.

Picture Credits

(Cover Page) U.S. Army soldiers B Company 2/5 Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division, conduct security patrol in Agurguf, Iraq (US Army photo by Sgt. Martin Newton, Combat Camera)

Dagger’s Edge

The Dagger Brigade Combat Team will be trained and ready, fully deployable, disciplined, confident, dedicated and serving selflessly with pride. Staff Sgt. Tharp can speak with the owners without interference. Staff Sgt. Tharp asks the owners about electricity, plumbing, water, government, jobs, and security in the area. Most seem displeased with the police in the area, as well as job opportunities and electricity. Staff Sgt. Tharp records all this information down and takes pictures of those interviewed as well as their store.

Within two hours of setting up a perimeter 1st Platoon has conducted complete interviews with all store owners in the Mushada Market. Staff Sgt. Tharp confers with Capt. Jasso about the mission. There were no problems or attacks during the mission. The unit breaks down and moves south back to camp.

Today's mission did not involve a firefight between US Army forces and insurgents, but it was still a victory for Alpha Company. The fight in Taji is similar to many other parts of Iraq. By gaining the support of the Iraqi people, the Apaches can ultimately build up the Iraqi people to run their own country.

(Continued from page 14)

Home made explosives.

Staff Sgt. Tharp keeps in constant contact with his vehicles over the radio. The lead vehicle stops and calls back that there is a foreign object on the right side of the road that was not there before. Staff Sgt. Tharp tells them to use their spot lights because it is still dark outside as the season approaches winter. The gunners on the vehicles remain watchful for potential threats within their fields of fire. The crews inside the up-armored HMMWV’s gaze out their bullet-proof windows into the morning light. After a few moments the lead vehicle sends up an all clear and the convoy continues on to the market with no further incidents.

Once on the objective, the members of the convoy spread out and set up security along the roads bordering the market area. Squads dismount and set up hasty road blocks with concertina wire to keep traffic away and thus minimize the threat of suicide car bombs. The Canine Unit and an infantry squad search the jungle area behind the stores for any possible weapons or ordnance caches.

While the Soldiers of 1st Platoon continue setting up their positions, the PYSOP Team gets out of their vehicles and engages the populace, while Staff Sgt. Tharp and his Iraqi interpreter, Sam, interview store owners. A security element under Sgt. Noah Plumb and Private 1st Class Severin Michalski guard the outside of the store their Platoon Sergeant is in so that...
The Greatest Brigade Combat Team Ever Formed.

We are looking for any type of submissions to include: letters, articles, comic strips or artwork, and photographs.

If you would like a copy of this issue please contact your Battalion UPAR

2-12 Cav: 2nd Lt. Michael Daschel
1-5 Cav: Capt. Cruz Rivera
TF Justice: 1st Lt. Cassidy Eaves
299th FSB: Capt. Aimee Ruscio
9th Eng.: 1st Lt. Christina Kessler
1-7 FA: Capt. Warrick Craig
57th Signal: 1st Lt. Harvey

1-18 IN: Capt. Phil Hensel
1-26 IN: Capt. Jared Purcell
1-77 AR: Capt. Sean Bolling

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This Edition can also be found online at www.2bct.1id.army.mil

Spc. Marvin Ayala assigned to Team Charlie, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, attached to 506th Regimental Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (AASLT), provides security while other members of the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment search an open area in Adhamiyah, Iraq for hidden weapons. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1(AW/SW/NAC) Keith W. DeVinney)

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