

THE ARROWHEAD

Family Readiness Group Newsletter

Vol. 7

"For the families of those deployed"

22 February, 2004

Arrowhead families and friends,

We are now fully settled in to Northern Iraq. On a daily basis our mission focus is split between helping rebuild the country and killing or capturing those who want to undermine that process. Working with government officials and the people of Mosul and Nineveh Province can be both exceptionally rewarding and extremely frustrating. You should all be proud of the daily efforts of your soldiers. They are both superb warriors and, as necessary, diplomats. Some of the nation-building tasks we ask each to do with little or no training are remarkable.

Our mission remains very dangerous. The serious nature of our business was very clear this week as we paid our respects with memorial services for 1LT Adam Mooney (3-17 CAV), SSG Christopher Bunda (2-3 IN), and SPC Michael Merila (1-14 CAV). What is clear from each is that these great soldiers are true heroes. We all continue our mission with a renewed determination to succeed in honor of all those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

As always, we appreciate your great support. Our efforts here are made significantly easier based on what you do for us each day.

COL Michael Rounds
Arrowhead!

Have A Blockbuster Night

Though the dangers in the AO still abound and we continue to remain vigilant, life in most of the FOBs has gotten reasonably predictable. Most soldiers have gotten into a routine or schedule that is most often described as "Groundhog Day". You know, that movie starring Bill Murray where he wakes up repeating the same day over and over.

Speaking of movies, one of many soldiers' "Groundhog Day" routine is the nightly movie. DVD movies are the preferred media since most people watch either on laptop computers or portable DVD players.

The DVD trading circuit can often be complex for the movie collector. When four or five people borrow a movie from you, how can you keep up with where all your movies are? Some of us still owe Blockbuster past due rental; but that's a story for another day (do past due rental fees fall under the Soldier and Sailor Relief Act?)

Painting Over the Old Regime



An Iraqi artist repaints the palace mural that depicted a triumphant ride of Uday and Qusay Hussein. The local workers requested to change the picture to remove the images of the sons of Saddam from the palace.

Anyway, for the uninitiated, here are a few common DVD-etiquette rules:

1. 3-day "rental" is acceptable; TV series get open-ended rental (we do have to work you know).
2. I should not have to hunt you down to get my DVD back...but I will!
3. Don't wipe the disk on your sleeve, pants, or worse, on exposed skin. It scratches the disk. YES, you can scratch it!
4. It WAS working when I gave it to you. It's my disk, I should know.
5. Two words...cargo pocket. It breaks the disk if you sit down with it in there.
6. Don't replace my "real" disk with a "hajji" version. It's just not right. There were no people walking around in the movie I gave you.
7. Don't complain about the movie. You picked it.
8. Put it in the case if you're not watching it. It's not a coaster please.
9. If it's a movie that just came out in the states, it's probably not a real, studio-quality DVD.
10. Mom, send more DVDs. I've seen all these...twice.

1-23rd Infantry Battalion

Tomahawk Families and Friends,



Hello again from the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. I am happy to report that your loved ones continue to provide the means for the people of Iraq, for our nation, and for the world at large to move forward. I know you tire of always hearing me tell you how truly phenomenal these men are, mostly

because you already know, but I beg your indulgence to let me brag about them some more. It's been a short time since we assumed operational control of our area, but it is astounding how much has been accomplished. The Task Force has already conducted multiple raids that have captured high value terrorist and former regime targets, uncovered substantial caches of weapons and ammunition, and discovered and disarmed explosive devices before they could be employed against us. Concurrent with all of that activity, the platoons and squads have been tireless in finding ways to continue the great civil military work started by the 1-502d IN, 2-502d IN, and 1-320th FA battalions of the 101st ABN (AA) Division here on this side of the river. From helping to rebuild schools to clearing fields that can be used to play soccer, the men have put their "hearts and minds" into defeating the thugs who are trying to terrorize



and bully these people by reinforcing the fact that the promise of a new day for Iraq is a reality.

As many of you know, our first group of soldiers will be departing soon for a well-deserved leave. I remain committed to the goal of getting 90% or better of all soldiers who will be deployed for a year back home on leave sometime between the 3rd and 10th month of the deployment. COL Rounds is also committed to the program and is working very hard in conjunction with commanders at all levels to achieve success. Things are always subject to change, but I am confident we will achieve and even exceed that 90% goal. Please ensure that your FRG contact information remains up to date so

that notification of leave schedules can be sent and that you can make preparations to welcome these great guys home. I would also ask that you please continue to stay involved in our family readiness groups so we can provide the help you need to stay informed about your loved ones.

The job is still far from being accomplished, and there is still danger, but make no mistake: things are progressing and getting better every single day. The reward for us here is that our actions are making a difference and will continue to make a difference. Just as your sacrifice of having your husbands, fathers, sons, brothers, uncles, cousins, and friends away for so long **MAKES A DIFFERENCE EVERY DAY**. And, as always, you have my personal thanks for letting me borrow them for a year and my promise to do everything in my power to give them back to you in equal or better condition that you gave them to me. Thanks again for all the prayers and well wishes – it makes a difference.

Respectfully,
LTC Buck James

-Tomahawks!

2-3rd Infantry Battalion

Friends, Family, and fellow Patriots,

The Patriot Battalion was pleased to see CSM Bjerke rejoin us this last week after leaving on December 31st with a detached retina in his right eye. Following a successful eye surgery in Germany, CSM Bjerke spent two weeks recuperating at Fort Lewis. Although he enjoyed spending time with his family, CSM Bjerke was anxious to rejoin his men and get back to the mission here in Iraq. It is great to have him back as it only adds to our combat capabilities.



Now that he is back, one of the first issues he will address is the ongoing construction project at the FOB. Currently, the Battalion is working on Force Protection

improvements such as the installation of concrete guard towers and improved outdoor lighting. Soldier hygiene and physical fitness improvements include a new 12-stall shower facility, a dining facility and an indoor gym. Soldier morale

improvements include the addition of a shopette, a restaurant, an Internet cafe with web cameras, low-cost Segovia telephones, and improved landscaping around the FOB. It is a lot of work, and sometimes the pace and lack of infrastructure in Iraq makes it frustratingly slow. There is no Home Depot or Wal Mart here, so buying anything for a project is a challenge, but we will make all of our bases into the best possible place for our soldiers to live and work.



Last week, Alpha Company made its move north to BDE HQ. By relocating, the company now has a quicker response time within their assigned Area of

Operations (AO). The quicker response time will provide our higher headquarters with an increased level of security and help protect other friendly forces in and throughout the northern sector of the city.

Currently, the staff is in the process of finalizing the Mid-Tour Leave Plan for the Battalion. Please understand that this is an Army program, so our ability to control it is limited at the Battalion level. The first soldiers to take advantage of the program left Iraq on February 17th. Approximately every three days nine to ten more soldiers will take their 15-day mid-tour leave.

As you may or may not know, we recently recovered SSG Christopher Bunda as well as LT Mooney, the second of two missing pilots from the 3-17th Air Calvary. These two discoveries marked the end of a very long and exhausting search along the banks of the Tigris River. In memory of SSG Bunda, Alpha Company held an evening candlelight ceremony on Saturday, the 14th and a traditional military memorial ceremony on Sunday, the 15th of February. The ceremonies were designed to allow our soldiers the opportunity to pay their final respects to their fallen comrade. These ceremonies were also successful in helping the soldiers bring closure to what has been the most painful experience of the deployment thus far.

We continue our combat operations daily and are aggressively searching out the enemy to make Mosul a safer place for everyone that lives here. We also awarded our first Purple Heart this week. SSG Pinedo from C Co received superficial shrapnel wound from an RPG round and we were able to present him with the award before he

departed on the Battalion's first MWR leave flight. It is dangerous business, but your husbands, sons, daughters, and wives are doing a wonderful job and exceeding everyone's expectations. Please continue your unwavering support for them and continue praying for our soldiers and the success of our mission.

Thank you for your support,

LTC Jay G. Flowers
"Patriots"

5-20th Infantry Battalion

Dear wives and family members of the Sykes' Regulars,

During this FRG newsletter I would like to show you some pictures of our soldiers in action as well as tell you a little about some of the things we are doing while we are in Iraq. We are conducting many different types of operations to bring peace and stability to the people of Iraq. The stories written in this newsletter are a snap shot to show you the wide range of operations we conduct on a day-to-day basis. During any given day one might find the Regulars conduct an early morning raid, followed by hosting a meeting of local mayors, and completed with a construction project to rebuild the local infrastructure. We are quickly becoming a jack-of-all-trades when it comes to the day-to-day operations we conduct to perform our role in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The short stories you see in this edition of "The Sykes Regular" partially the product of the hard work of the Battalion Public Affairs Officer, CPL Baker. He covers all news stories that pertain to the Sykes' Regulars and is doing an outstanding job.

C Company detains terrorist

As the Coalition forces continue to spread through Iraq, the enemy has been forced to become more adept at evading capture. For months soldiers have been hammering away at a "black list" of known terrorists and criminals and have dwindled their numbers to a mere handful. The remainder, however have continued their attacks on Coalition troops and Iraq's still fledgling infrastructure. The enemy is tenacious and determined, so it is no small task to find them and bring them to justice. It is with much satisfaction that the soldiers of Charlie Company bring in one of the men responsible for so much damage to the hard work being done here. Charlie 5-20 participated in an early morning joint

forces raid last week to capture key targets within the city they are assigned to protect. Joined by the 1st BN 14th Cavalry and other members of the Coalition forces, C Company moved in during the pre-dawn hours to execute their mission. Among the five targets assigned to the company was the house of a known terrorist. The terrorist was a cell operative for a terrorist group. As the Rock soldiers approached the dwelling they noticed a white van approaching that swiftly u-turned and left upon being spotted. Noting the incident, the soldiers proceeded with their mission and succeeded in capturing two of the terrorist's relatives, Saddam Hussein propaganda, and components for building improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The owner of the house, unfortunately, was not at home. Two days later, however, while on a routine patrol, CPL Palauni, a soldier in 3rd platoon, spotted the same white van with eight passengers inside, parked in front of the house that had originally been their target. Cordoning off the street, the 3rd platoon soldiers moved in quickly on their suspect. "They started trying to slink away", commented SSG Alexander, "And then they started to laugh. They stopped when we pulled out the flex cuffs, though." The terrorist they had been trying to capture was positively identified right away. Though only one man, the terrorist represents a positive step forward for the soldiers of Charlie 5-20 IN. With each ringleader taken off the streets, it means less indirect fire and IED attacks as well as decreased fear and improved cooperation with the local populace. You can be assured that Charlie Company's soldiers won't be slowing down anytime soon either. Everyday they will be out again, "black list" in hand, trying to give Iraq a second chance.

A new medical clinic is opened in Tall Ashear

Though the weather was overcast, the day was bright for the city of Tall Ashear, as local community leaders and soldiers from the 5th Battalion 20th Infantry gathered to celebrate the ribbon cutting of the new remodeled medical clinic. Built in 1958 and refurbished only once in 1961, the clinic was, until recently, completely unusable as a medical facility. Local leaders, with the assistance of Dr. Mohammed Saleh and Coalition forces, spent \$9500.00 to renovate the building and provide basic supplies. 1LT Mendoza and LTC Reed were given a tour of the newly repaired, repainted, and restocked clinic and were impressed by the progress that had been made. Dr. Mohammed Saleh, the primary medical provider, also introduced the new staff and hosted a celebratory luncheon. Dr. Mohammed, well known to the Coalition as being the first English speaking Iraqi in

the province to come forward and offer assistance, will continue to be on hand to ensure the clinic's continued success. Though the clinic is now open to patients, improvements are still being made. The future should bring more medicine, equipment, and doctors to the clinic, assuring the people of Tall Ashear consistent and reliable medical care at their disposal.



TRVC meeting resolves many educational issues
The Tigris Valley River Commission (TRVC) held a meeting on 10 February 2004 in Tall Abtah to discuss important issues in the Ninewah province. Composed of mayors, sheiks, heads of local security forces, and Coalition leaders, the TRVC is designed to encourage and assist in the cooperation between leaders here in the new Iraq. "I'm glad that you chosen education as the principle topic for today's meeting," opened Brigadier General Ham, I Corps commander and a special guest at the meeting. The primary concern for local leaders was the reopening of schools throughout the province. With over sixty-five learning facilities in the province closed and another one hundred and forty no longer adequate for teaching, getting children back into the classrooms has proven difficult. A lack of qualified teachers has also hampered progress. On hand to offer guidance was Dr. Hamad, the representative for education from Mosul. Discussion led to the scheduling of an "Education Conference" on February 18th at Q West to gather the heads of the existing schools and draft a plan for education within the province. In addition, coalition leaders showed support for the peaceful protests in Al Hatra and Tall Abtah. The mayors and police were congratulated on their diplomatic handling of free speech in the new Iraq. The mayors also discussed a music festival to be held at the ruins in Al Hatra this spring to celebrate the newly liberated Iraq. The mayors will be looking for Iraqi music groups to fill the venue.

New beginnings for the Qayyarah Oil Refinery

A new beginning is just over the horizon for the Qayyarah Oil Refinery. During a visit by the Sykes' Regulars, plans were unveiled for the oil refinement process to resume in the near future. Looted extensively after the fall of Saddam Hussein's

despotic regime, the refinery has been the focus of intense Coalition and local efforts. Able to produce asphalt, diesel fuel, fuel oil, gasoline, and other petroleum products, the resumption of processing will provide a valuable product to both the people of Iraq and the region at large. Due to the highly corrosive sulfur content of the local crude oil, only three of the refinery's tanks will be used to process the oil for export. This will provide much needed revenue and a boost to Iraq's economy. The remaining tanks will process clean oil brought in from Kirkuk and its products will be available for purchase by the local population. During his visit, LTC Reed discussed some options for the future with the leaders of the refinery. One possibility is building a pipeline to bring clean oil from other areas of Iraq to Qayyarah in order to be refined and shipped via a products pipeline to neighboring Turkey. In the interim, coalition forces are organizing trucks to help with the export of the refinery's products. The reopening of the refinery is only a small step in the recovery of Iraq, but, given time, will help to improve the quality of life not only in the Ninewah province, but countrywide.

Leave begins for the Sykes' Regulars

On the 17th of February, the first group of soldiers from the Sykes' Regulars will go on leave. The chance to take leave starts February 17th and ends on the 14th of September. As it currently stands, 95% of the battalion will be afforded the chance to take leave. The companies have done a wonderful job programming out leave dates in advance so that soldiers can plan accordingly. Under the leave policy, soldiers may take 15 days of leave that starts once they land in the United States. That means that their travel to and from the United States will not count against them. The program is a great chance to allow soldiers a break from our unwavering battle rhythm and allow for some well-earned rest and relaxation with their families.

As I am sure you can see, we are very busy conducting a full contingent of various operations to bring peace and stability to our little corner of Iraq. We conduct raids to capture bad guys so that they will not threaten our allies or us. We open businesses so that the local economy can flourish. We open medical clinics to provide adequate healthcare and treatment to the local populace. We meet with local mayors to discuss problems and implement solutions. Our efforts are making a great difference in our area of operations. It is our sincere desire that we complete our operations here successfully and turn the area over to the Iraqi people so that no more American soldiers have to

complete our mission. We are making outstanding progress, but we have a long way to go. I could not be more proud of the conduct of the Sykes' Regulars soldiers during this very busy time. They are magnificent!

LTC Karl D. Reed

1-14th Cavalry Squadron

Dear friends and family of the Warhorse,

The Squadron continues our daily operation in Iraq. The latest change in the Squadron area is the arrival of the Iraqi Armed Forces. We will begin to certify and train with them. This update includes notes and pictures from each of the units on life in their area of operations. We've included an update from C/5-20 IN (task organized to the Squadron) as well as C Troop (task organized to 5-20 IN) and C/52 IN (task organized to 1-37 FA).

We hope you've enjoyed the movies we've sent back and we'd appreciate any feedback you can give through FRG leadership and the Rear Detachment on making them better.

Mid-tour leaves have begun and you will begin to see your family members rotating back to the states for some well-deserved time at home. Thank you for your letters, e-mails, packages and prayers; please keep them coming – they keep us in touch with home and are always a boost to morale.

Sincerely,
LTC Buddy Carman

HHT

Operations and living conditions continue to improve on the FOB. The current project is the renovation of the Headquarters Campus. The Campus is a series of bunkers in horseshoe shape with a basketball court in the middle. The bunkers provide plenty of space for all sections to conduct daily operations. We have hired local civilians to assist in the cleaning, painting, and electrical repair of all the bunkers.



The work is going well and we hope to move out of the small wooden building currently used very soon. As you may be able to tell from the pictures, we

have had a nice dusting of snow. The Sinjar Mountain site received eight inches snow total. We continue to thank all of you for your love and support from home.

A TROOP

Dear families and friends of the Mighty Apocalypse,

We would like to thank all of our family and friends for your constant support of our missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Even though we are far away from our friends and family, the constant letters and care packages make us feel like we have a little piece of home right here with us. So, again "THANK YOU."

The Troop is doing very well now and has settled in quite nicely. The living conditions are better than we expected here, and a lot of the people at the main FOB wish they could be part of Alpha Troop and enjoy the luxuries that we have here. Like most of the FOBs, we have phones, Internet, local shops, hot showers, and an onsite café. The benefit to being here is that we don't have the congestion the other FOBs have.

As far as the soldiers, they are all doing fine. It is good to hear the guys talk about family, friends, the missions they have been on, and the missions they will go on. Most of the guys look forward to seeing their wives, families, and girlfriends. But the most exciting conversations are those when you walk up and the guys are talking about their children. For example, PFC Smith and his wife recently had a baby girl and he just got the pictures. Since getting those pictures, this soldier has not stopped smiling or talking about his baby girl. These are the reactions that have kept us going day to day, and as far as being leaders, this is all the motivation we need.

So, family and friends of Apocalypse Troop, we are doing well. We love and miss all of you and we will all see you again soon.

B TROOP

Hello Bronco Families! The last month has been very busy for all of us. The troop is currently split between operations at the FOB with the rest of the Squadron HQ, and a compound near the Syrian border. All of the platoons have now had time to rotate between both locations. While our main effort is still to maintain security through finding and

capturing the enemy, we find that most of our time is taken up with other peacekeeping operations as we attempt to rebuild this country. 1st Platoon and the Mortars/FIST have worked closely with the customs facility at the border as well as taking the



lead with the city council to start new infrastructure improvement projects. Some of the projects that we are currently working on are new water wells for some villages, roads, and medical clinic repairs. 2nd and 3rd Platoons have worked closely with the Iraqi Police Service and Iraqi Border Police in order to maintain the security of the area. In our area we also deal with a major irrigation system and oil pumping facility. Since most of the residents are farmers, the irrigation system is essential to their livelihood. We hold regular meetings to ensure that the system is maintained and all of the farmers will get the required amount of water once the planting season begins.

This month begins the much anticipated leave program. We will begin to rotate troopers home for two weeks at a time for a well-deserved break. Other big news from the past month include the promotions of many troopers, SGT Stewart and SGT San, the birth of Jillian Hegadush, and a lot of personnel moves that resulted in losing SPC Bearss, SPC Story, and SPC Dodd to the Military Intelligence Company while gaining many troopers that were working at the rear-detachment in Fort Lewis. All of your troopers continue to impress me with their hard-work, great attitude, and unparalleled skills. I am honored to work with them, and you should all be proud. Thank you for your



continued support. As some things never change, mail call is still the most anticipated time of the day for any trooper...keep those letters and care packages coming.

C TROOP

Dear Friends and Families of Crazy Horse,

As you read from LTC Carman's earlier message, we have been operating under 5th Battalion 20th Infantry Regiment, since December 28th. We occupied the airfield around the 10th of January and have been operating over an

enormous expanse of the battalion's area of operations. Since arriving here, we've put almost four times as many miles on our Strykers than the other two infantry companies combined. As a result, we've been pretty busy and the time seems to be flying by. This is also a great Cavalry mission, which keeps your husbands motivated. Crazy Horse continues to make a great name for itself, and the soldiers (your loved ones) humble me every day by the great work they do.

In the next movie you receive, you'll get a look at our living conditions, which are much better than at FOB Pacesetter, but we're still waiting on the containers that the rest of the Squadron has been enjoying since they began operations around Mosul. Otherwise, life with the infantry has been great. They've really taken us under their wings and we couldn't ask for anything more. The friendly rivalry between the Cav and the Grunts has been enjoyable, as well. SFC Decker and his boys have definitely felt more at home with a few more infantry around.

Finally, I want to thank you for your sacrifice, your tremendous support, your perseverance, and your commitment to each other. I want to give a special thanks to our FRG leader, who I know has been fielding all of the late night phone calls, and really been bearing the weight of the troop back home. Thanks so much, Jennifer.

CPT Eric McAllister

D TROOP

Greetings from Iraq.

A great deal has happened since our last update. Shortly after the New Year, our Squadron led the way for the brigade in our movement North to relieve the 101st Air Assault Division. As you know from reading the Tacoma News Tribune, the Squadron is located west of Mosul.

The troop has been busy, and all of the platoons in the troop have contributed significantly to the squadron's mission. The UAV Platoon has flown almost 150 hours of day and night missions. The Multi-Sensor Platoon has been conducting missions that make use of their unique skill sets. The NBC Platoon has perhaps been the busiest platoon in the brigade, conducting convoys escorts several days a week, in addition to executing real-world chemical and radiological sampling missions. Both the Tacoma News Tribune and the Army's Early Bird publication detailed one of their radiological

missions. Headquarters Platoon has been doing an exemplary job of managing and coordinating the security of the FOB.

Good news doesn't stop once we deploy. We were proud to promote two deserving soldiers in the UAV platoon. WO1 Matt Roman was promoted to CW2 on 16 January 2004 – the same day that the Squadron officially assumed responsibility for an area in Northwestern Iraq roughly the size of New Jersey. Also, SPC Michael Trogdon orders for promotion to SGT finally arrived. Congratulations to both deserving soldiers!

Mid-tour leave will start very shortly, and I can only imagine that the wives, families, and loved ones of the troops are excited as the soldiers are. Fortunately, it looks like every soldier that desires to take leave will get that opportunity!

Three soldiers in the troop have also had their wives deployed to Iraq. That hasn't stopped them from being able to reunite. UAV maintenance chief SGT Tate was able to see his wife shortly before he deployed, as she was one of the first soldiers to participate in the mid-tour leave program. After deployment, they were fortunate to be located less than 20 miles apart, and we were able to arrange for them to see each other. Also, NBC Recon platoon leader 1LT Lawrence Indyk was able to see his wife, a chemical officer assigned to the 101st Air Assault Division before she redeployed. Finally, SPC Jason West of Headquarters platoon had his wife deploy with the 201st MI Brigade earlier this year. They have not been able to see each other yet, but if an opportunity presents itself, we will try to accommodate.

Until next month.

Dragoons!

CPT Thomas Bauchspies

C/5-20 IN

The past month here has been very interesting as well as very exciting. After finding our niche, minds are starting to be at ease, and day-by-day, our accomplishments increase.

The company is in a secure compound inside Tall A'Far, Iraq. Its location allows us to maximize our interaction with the local populace, learn more about the area and take the necessary steps to help make the city a safer place for everyone. The safety of all Rock soldiers is the #1 concern. Our posture is our greatest weapon. With whatever may be happening around us, all the soldiers are well taken care of. Hot showers, Internet access, a day room with a big screen



television, and the daily use of telephones has enabled all of us to keep in touch with loved ones as well as help keep spirits lifted.

On a daily basis, soldiers of the Rock have been participating in many different kinds of missions. In support of the Iraqi government's plan to establish a democratic nation we meet with local tribal leaders, interact with the people, give humanitarian aid, and oversee the democratization of the area. This variety of missions helps keep The Rock on its toes and brings all of us together in the effort to facilitate the hand-off of responsibilities to the transitional Iraqi governmental agencies – ultimately getting us home to you sooner.

C/52 IN (AT)

Hello friends and family from Mosul, Iraq.

A lot has happened since our last publication, all for the better I think. We are now living in relative comfort at an established operating base with contracted meals, no more meals from a can! We have regular and reliable access to phones and the Internet so we can keep in touch with loved-ones. Our mission has a great deal of variety that is both challenging and rewarding ranging from building schools and clinics to kicking in the occasional door looking for bad guys. The men are busy and time is flying. Best of all, we are a quarter of the way complete with our deployment.

As usual, the men continue to impress me with creative solutions to problems unique to our company and their performance remains superb! There is more than enough work for all over here ranging from the mundane command post operations, to the countless miles we have patrolled and traveled to all of the towns and villages in our



area of operations. Iraqis often come in with information about bad guys and weapons caches that keeps us on our toes. We are constantly swarmed by crowds of Iraqi children wanting to see the Americans and practice their English. It is a good mission and your men are running with the ball and making everyone proud.

Thanks to all of the wives and loved-ones making the FRG such a success. Soldiers often give me feedback from you all and I am delighted that the FRG is keeping everyone informed and entertained. I am ever grateful to all who have worked so hard to keep the Avalanche family informed and together through this challenging time in all of our lives. Rest assured that all of your soldiers are taking good care of one another and keeping safe. Until the next edition...

3-17th Cavalry Squadron

To All of The Family Members of Task Force Lighthouse,

I extend my sincere regrets to Katie Mooney and Jamie Dorff and their families for the loss of their husbands, 1LT Adam Mooney and CW3 Pat Dorff. Both of these leaders knew how to motivate their troopers to bring the best out of them. Their desire to excel and unrelenting pursuit of combat readiness made Pat and Adam special. We will miss them dearly.

Our combat operations have been focused in and around the city of Mosul. The Task Force is spread out over a couple of different locations, which the Troops rotate to periodically. The Transfer of Authority (TOA) with 101st Airborne Division is complete and the Stryker Brigade is now aligned under what is called the Multi-National Division North, or Task Force Olympia.

Colonel Rounds, the Brigade Commander, and Brigadier General Ham, the Commander of Task Force Olympia, are extremely happy with the support that we are providing them. Colonel Crutchfield and Command Sergeant Major Sturtevant paid us a special visit from Afghanistan

recently. They spoke repeatedly about how thankful and how proud they are to have us serving in such an outstanding manner. Your Troopers continue to perform magnificently.

The Rest and Recuperation (R&R) Leave program has begun and your loved ones can't wait to see you. I hope that all families enjoy their time during this well deserved period of rest.

Living conditions on the FOB continue to improve by the day. Internet and phone facilities allow communication with family members. Mail deliveries are every other day and provisions are made for outgoing mail, as well.

As always, please keep in touch with your Troopers, and thank you for the sacrifices that you make. I am very proud of you all.

LTC Reginald P. Mason

1-37 Field Artillery Battalion

The Striker battalion is embarking upon a challenging week with upcoming regional meetings for our outlying towns. We have been busy with our continuing non-standard missions including



everything from convoy escort to fixed site security. Alpha's fuel escort mission from Turkey continues to be a priority as it provides the

resources necessary to run the northern region of Iraq. The battalion follows up on any tips we receive concerning weapons caches and possible non-compliant forces, with some success. Progress continues, through the battery's perseverance, as we lay the groundwork to lend structure and stability to these towns.

Headquarters and Service battery is busy juggling command and control of the battalion as well as reaching out to the town it is responsible for and managing access to the FOB through the civilian gate. Vast improvements to this gate have been implemented by HSB, it is beginning to look like the Ft. Lewis Main Gate! The battalion medical staff has been evaluating the medical facilities in outlying towns to assess if improvements are

possible. The structure of social medicine in this country makes it difficult for small towns to get proper diagnostic equipment, but we are told that they make up for it through effective clinical techniques. Our crack Civil Affairs team is continuing to manage all of the projects that we are currently working on, organize funding, and trying to solicit donations for school and medical supplies. Altogether, HSB is doing an excellent job managing many simultaneous and complex missions.

Steel continues with restructuring of outlying towns while supporting the oil escort mission. They have recently been featured in a few articles in the Tacoma News Tribune, including, "Mosul's Gasoline Alley," and "Making Friends, Not War."

Thunder also plays a large role in interfacing with outlying towns, restructuring and refurbishing both buildings and organizations. Thunder regularly visits one of 3 major towns, and over 90 villages. They have also voyaged north on one mission, close enough to gaze on both Syria and Turkey. The men are doing well as they learn how to navigate around the "hot spots" in Mosul and how to get out to their towns. The contrast is startling – in Mosul, the threat is high, but in the smaller towns, they are worshiped like liberators. Adults cheer as they enter the town, and kids flock to them (or maybe it is the thought of getting candy).



Rock continues its task of safeguarding the Palace. They are very busy manning gates and towers while providing the quick reaction force necessary to react to any suspicious activity. Rock and Thunder recently coordinated a display of our ad-hoc armored vehicles for several VIPs. We have been undertaking a rigorous process of hardening our HMMWVs with steel plates to decrease the impact of enemy action.

Every now and again we get a break from our busy schedule to recreate. We had one convoy up north during our snowstorm; according to our interpreters, it was the first snow in eight years around these parts. They brought back pictures of snowballs, soldiers with snow in their hair and of their snow covered trucks. Needless to say, it made for a chilly convoy. As we continue to develop our battle rhythm here, we are at the point where we are beginning to send soldiers home for much deserved rest and recuperation. We are allocated a few slots every three days, and are limited on the amount we can have on leave at one

time. Please call the rear-detachment commander if you are interested in our statistics. Most soldiers should get the opportunity to take leave, but that is only if everything goes as planned.



As another Striker update comes to a close we ask you to keep us in your prayers as we keep you in ours. Your support is evident in all we do, especially in the number of packages and letters flowing to our soldiers.

LTC Steve Sliwa

296th Brigade Support Battalion

Hello Frontline Families!

It's *early* Spring (late Winter?) in Iraq according to the locals. That brings rainy days and cold temperatures. Believe it or not we actually had snowflakes falling! Hard to believe that in just another month or two we'll be complaining about the heat. However, the change in weather also means we are that much further along the timeline in returning to you, so, there is an upside to everything, I guess!

First let me report that your soldiers of the Frontline Battalion are simply performing in a superb manner day in and day out. You can find Frontline Soldiers wherever a unit of the Brigade is located providing first-rate support. Everyday our soldiers hit the roads to deliver support to someone in the Brigade. Everyday our soldiers are out there repairing the Brigade's critical equipment that allows us to accomplish the mission we were sent here for. Everyday our soldiers are providing medical care to Arrowhead soldiers to get them well and back in the fight. I am so proud and honored to lead this great group of heroes! Everyday I am newly impressed.

Next, our first five soldiers are scheduled to depart tomorrow for the Army's R&R Leave Program! This is an exciting opportunity for our soldiers as most will get to take chargeable leave with travel covered by our Army! I would just ask two things of you as you re-unite with your soldier. First, understand

that it may take him/her a couple days to really relax. Be patient and your reunion will be fine. Second, be aware that there are no such things as "guaranteed", "locked-in" dates for anyone. This program is subject to the whims of travel in a combat zone, soldiers getting "bumped" by emergency leave soldiers, etc. So, I would advise against making expensive vacation plans that are non-refundable based on a specific return date for your soldier. Be patient and be flexible and you will be happy!

Finally, I'll close this update by thanking all of you again for what you do in support of us. We are well aware of your support and it makes a huge difference in our daily lives. Hope you all had a great Valentine's Day and a special birthday wish to my wife, Ann Margaret!!

LTC Dennis Thompson
Frontline Support!!

HHC Outlaws

As my time in command draws to a conclusion, I made it my mission this week to spend as much time as possible with the great soldiers in this company. Let me tell you that I consider it an honor to be their commander. Every single Outlaw that I talked to this week would rather be home in the great Northwest with family and friends. Every soldier from the rank of Private to Major have told me that they are proud of what we are doing here to help this country. I understand the great sacrifice that your loved ones are making while your loved one is deployed with the Army's finest Brigade. For that, I want to thank each one of you for all that you do while we are deployed. Know that while the mission accomplishment is what we are all about; my leaders and I stress safety daily so that I can bring every soldier home safely.



Allow me to address one issue that I am sure you are interested in. This week the Rest and Recuperation Leave Plan for the company was published. My leaders and I conducted this in the most fair and objective way possible. Please keep in mind that leave is a privilege and not a right. Use the date your soldier is supposed to leave as a

planning tool, not a confirmed leave date. Please do not plan elaborate vacations or celebrations as these dates may flex.

Although I am about to change command, I will not be leaving the company. I will work in the Support Operations Cell in the Battalion Headquarters. So I will continue to watch over your soldiers with the same vigilance that I do now. CPT Mike Pavek and Mary come to us from the Brigade S4 shop. They have three young children and Mary is currently pregnant with a due date in early June. Please welcome them to the Outlaw family.

'Til next time from Mosul, Iraq,
Outlaws!!!

Mad Dawgs

Happy Valentines Day to all our Mad Dawg significant others back home. We ALL send our love! We are quickly making Mosul our home and settling in. Some soldiers, like SPC Tippens, have pushed forward to support the maneuver battalions at other operating bases in Iraq. All the soldiers continue to excel in every mission tasking while



continually raising the bar and setting the standards for other companies to follow. We all wish our families and loved ones the very best on this special holiday and though we are physically here supporting our country, our hearts are with those left behind!

Ratchet

The Arrowhead Brigade now has full operational responsibility for the Area of Operation (AO). The CRTs are out with 1-14 CAV and 5-20 Infantry Battalion in forward operating bases, and continue to provide the service that we are known for. Some of our personnel are even on the Syrian Border like SGT Varales and SPC Worthington. We have people integrated into the Brigade operations with wreckers, gun trucks and convoy leaders. SFC Solmon, SSG(P) Blockmon, SFC Stripling, LT Crutchfield, LT Monke, CW3 Hammer, CW3



Nickens, CW3 Singh and LT Davis, have all been to the outlying areas to ensure the supplies needed are put into the right people's hands. They use our infantry brethren to protect the convoy, while other times we secure the convoy within our own internal assets. SGT Lim has been a steady road guide as he has been the most frequent person on the road using one of our bulletproof HMMWVs. All of the soldiers are getting prepared to move into the buildings that the 101st vacated. They have stone walls to keep our soldiers protected, and we are building walls to give each soldier as much personal space as a combat zone can afford. They should be ready for us by the 18th of February. Our morale remains high and our soldiers continue to improve where they work and live. Happy Valentines Day!!!

Witchdoctor Minutes



The Stryker Brigade Support Medical Company is proving that flexibility is essential to any military operation. Smashing established doctrine to meet the needs of the mission, elements of the company have been tasked amongst the maneuver battalions in effort to provide medical

support to the huge geographic area once covered by the 101st Division. As a result the resourceful Witchdoctor medics are battling with ongoing challenges in the areas of communication, resupply, and evacuation of casualties.

Despite these hurdles, our command remains completely in charge of providing the best field medical support in the Army. The pay phones and internet cafes are running reliably and the chow is usually pretty good. Each day is filled with patient care, vehicle maintenance, area beautification, evening briefings, and an hour or two to unwind at the end of a long day. If operations progress as planned we can begin the carefully orchestrated process of turning command and control of northern Iraq over the civil and Iraqi military authorities.

18th Engineer Company

Hello all Sapper Families and Friends.

Another month has passed in our deployment to Iraq. This month has been as busy if not busier than the last. The multiple missions that the company has been assigned has kept us extremely

busy. One platoon a week is working a reverse cycle schedule, which means they are sleeping during the day and patrolling the city of Mosul during the night. We are also busy supporting guard requirements around the FOB. The FOB was renamed in honor of a retired CSM from 1-23 IN who passed away recently.

The most exciting mission that we have is the support that we provide to the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team (EOD). These escort missions take us into the city as well as outside the city to the



neighboring towns. Everyone in the company continues to execute their mission extremely well and I could not be more proud of this

company. Speaking of proud, CPL Arnold's wife delivered a beautiful baby boy, Trent, on 9 Feb 04. He will be on his way home soon for Mid-Tour leave. Congratulations!

Almost everyone in the company will have the chance to participate in this Mid-Tour leave between now and September. For those of you who have access to a computer, you can view the Stryker Brigade's web page at www.strykernews.com for more information on what our soldiers are doing.

Near the beginning of February, the Groundhog visited us even in Iraq and didn't see his shadow, so I think summer is going to be upon us shortly. In the past couple of days, it has reached 65 degrees. It is about time for some of the soldiers, to include myself, to start wearing sunscreen. Until next month, we will keep all of you in our thoughts and prayers. Thanks for your continued support.

- CPT Patrick Dagon

209th Military Intelligence Company

Hello everyone! The month of February has been very busy and luckily has gone by very quickly. We have started to send our first few soldiers on their rest and recuperation leave. Every three days soldiers will be flying back to the states to reunite with their families. SSG Vinoski, SPC Lauinger and SPC Cragg are the first



few soldiers to be returning home. SSG Vinoski will be greeted by his wife, Wendy and their five month old baby, Colby. SPC Lauinger will be reunited with his wife Kristina and SPC Cragg will reunite with her mother, two sisters and her brother. The soldiers wanted to write their own messages to their families in this month's letter, so we have given them the opportunity to do so!

- Miss you both...Wish you were here...(1LT Schwaiger)
- Can't wait to see you. (SPC Williams)
- Can you mail yourself in a box and come over here? (SSG Bonogofski)
- I love you baby....I'll be home soon. (SPC Lauinger)
- Don't forget to feed the dog. Olive Juice. (PFC Huckaby)
- I miss you all and can't wait to get home. (SFC Perkins)
- Tell the kids I love them and GOD bless. (SPC Shelby)
- I wish we could throw pickles on the windows at Waffle House...Mahal Kita! (SGT Lambeth)
- Miss all of y'all! Countin' down the seconds 'til I get back ...9,711,373 ...2 ...1 ... 9,711,369... (CW3 Baker)
- Salong Hamnida.....(SSG Lawson)
- Love you, and can't wait until we are together again. (SFC Nelson)
- Austin, be a good boy. Mommy and daddy love and miss you. Have fun with mommy when she gets home. Love you, daddy. (CPT H)
- Hello babe I am good and with the 209th..miss you and tell the kids that I love them (SGT Clemens)



I will be sending out another FRG letter in a few weeks! The soldiers of the 209th Military Intelligence Company are working very hard day after day. Many decisions and missions have been

made based on their intelligence. I am very proud of the soldiers and their hard work.

CPT Kevin Hosier

334th Signal Company

Dear Lightning Families,

Hello from Iraq. The company is still doing very well, spread out in the bases that we are living in. As a whole, communications are stable and consistent and we strive to maintain and improve our links inter Brigade and to the States; presently we continue to stay busy and I am proud of the work your spouses have done. We have promoted several soldiers in the last month- congratulations go to the soldiers and their families.

We are all eating well, receiving mail from home and soldiers are sore from doing PT. A new gym opened where almost half the company is and it is an excellent place to relieve some stress. We have started rotating soldiers out on mid-tour leave and I hope you enjoy the time with your loved one.



The weather is improving and the rain is only on occasion now. Unfortunately (as I write this) we are in a cold spell right now, but soon we will be wishing for cooler weather.

If you would like to know more of the area:
<http://www.ninevehprovince.com/>

I hope this note finds you all well and as always, thank you for supporting your spouse and the FRG.

CPT Glenn Mellor

Charlie Company, 52nd Infantry Regiment

Up until now, most of C co, 52nd IN's time has been spent meeting local dignitaries and trying to solve local problems in the province to the southeast of Mosul called Niniwah. Contracting for the digging of new wells and the refurbishment of schools and government buildings is a role that they are

prepared for and executing well. In the last few days, however, they have had to remind both themselves and the local Iraqi people or foreign fighters who wish to do them harm that they are Infantry and their responsibility is to find and eliminate any threat to Iraqi peace and security they find in their area of responsibility.



On the 16 of February 2004, 2nd platoon was escorting the company commander CPT Eric Molfino to a town council meeting in the small town of Khidr Ilyas, located in the southern sector of their area of operations. As they traveled along the rural highway that leads to Khidr Ilyas, a large explosion shook 1LT Dan Johnson's Stryker throwing rock and debris all over both his vehicle and SFC Pete Rocha's. After it was learned that there were no injuries from the blast, the platoon's rear security reported that they saw a man who was standing by the side of the road flee to a blue car and that the car was currently heading north. The vehicle commander of the lead Stryker, SSG Ronald Varner, quickly began a chase as CPT Molfino ordered his Humvee to follow in pursuit. At this time, the two Strykers affected by the blast moved to the high ground to cover the pursuit of the suspect car. When no follow up attack was detected the two vehicles left the overwatch position and joined in the chase. SSG Varner and his crew had, at this time, closed on the suspect's vehicle and attempted to ram it off the road. After numerous attempts to push it off the road with the Stryker, SSG Varner gave the order for his gunner to fire his coax machine gun into the vehicle in order to disable it. SGT Sa'ad Fayed fired a burst into the vehicle and caused the vehicle to come to the stop. The four men still refused to get out of the vehicle so the gunner of the command Humvee, SSG Tripp fired a warning shot with his .50 cal machine gun to hurry their exit from the vehicle. 2nd platoon then subdued and detained the four suspects. After securing the suspects and handing them over to the 1-37 quick reaction force, the Avalanche element moved to investigate the blast site and sweep the area to find the observation position the suspects blew the device from. At the

site, they found two large craters and a wire leading to an ignition device with an antenna attached to it. Upon searching the area they found a 105 mm shell at an intersection about 700 meters north of the blast site, which was rigged to explode. Upon completion of the investigation the members of 2nd platoon and the crew of CPT Molfino's command vehicle went back to base feeling that they had performed well, but also feeling very lucky.

On the same day, in Mosul proper 1st platoon was securing some soldiers from Brigade Headquarters as they were straightening out a pay issue for the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) when enemy mortar fire began to be land around them. One dud mortar landed within feet of four dismounted 1st platoon soldiers pulling security. With the help of Military Police attached to 3rd Brigade, 1st platoon



maneuvered on the enemy and helped discover the point of origin of the attack aiding the eventual capture of the suspects.

As the work to build a better, safer Iraq continues, C/52 is excelling at both the peacekeeping and the war fighting aspects of their jobs. As their long deployment continues they hope to do more of the latter, but are ready to defend the peace and stability desired by the Iraqi's they work with.

5th EASOS (USAF)

Biggest news from the 5EASOS is MSgt Uhlenhake's STEP promotion. Big John was promoted to MSgt on 23 Jan 04 by Lt General Schmidt. STEP stands for STRipes for Exceptional Performers. STEP promotions are very rare, only one individual in all of Twelfth Air Force was STEP promoted to Master Sergeant. The promotion was richly deserved. SSgt Brown and SSgt Saxerud have been busy in Qatar working support issues. We expect to see them back later this week. SMSgt Bledsoe is holding down the fort and continues his trips back and forth to Mosul Air Field. SSgt McClenon has moved to Mosul Air Field to cover weather observation/forecasting requirements there until 15 Mar 04. MSgt Uhlenhake and SSgt Blackburn have been busy instructing SSgt Moody, SSgt Watts, and Major Keppel on the finer art of controlling aircraft. A tootsie roll got the better of MSgt Uhlenhake. He lost two front teeth during the

encounter and had to visit the dentist at Al Udeid. He wasn't in pain but his lisp was driving everyone else crazy.

Capt Davisson has thrown down the gauntlet. He has challenged the Army to come up with anyone who can beat him in the two-mile run. It actually started as a challenge to the section he works in, but has quickly mushroomed into an all out challenge to 3rd Brigade.

SSgt Combs, SSgt Rosenberg, and A1C Bennett continue to provide outstanding service to the 3-17 Cavalry aviation. The first rotation is anxiously awaiting their return. Lt Col Griffin, SMSgt Bledsoe, MSgt Uhlenhake, TSgt Mangum, SSgt Moody, SSgt Watts, SSgt Brown, SSgt Saxerud, SSgt Shockey, and SSgt Dobbins will be leaving in a little less than a month. SSgt Schaefer and SSgt Golembowski will return to Ft Drum soon after. SRA Atkinson will depart in less than two weeks. We'll miss them but I'm sure their families are glad they 're coming home. Maybe they will bring the rainy weather back with them. Most of us always thought it would be hot and dry here, but it's been raining as much as at Ft Lewis. On the 15th of February it actually snowed. That's life in the desert. Until next time, keep the letters and packages coming.

In the news

Sykes Regulars seizes weapons, captures suspect with help of informant

By Sgt. Jeremy Heckler

Task Force Olympia Public Affairs

MOSUL, IRAQ (Feb. 20, 2004) – With the help of a concerned citizen, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment under the operational control of Task Force Olympia, took explosives and an arms dealer off the streets of a small village outside of Qarrayah Feb. 19.

Company A responded to a tip from an informant who came to battalion headquarters and reported the presence of mortars in the village and identified a weapons dealer who was responsible for selling them.

"We had intelligence from the battalion level that a source knew of a man trafficking arms and could take us there," said Capt. Matthew Dabkowski, commander Company A.

Dabkowski said in response to the information the unit rolled into the village early the next morning and sealed it off.

"We got the call, set up and rolled in," said Pfc. Cliff Wolf, Co. A. "We surprised everyone and cleared the area and then started looking for weapons."

The company gathered 669 60mm mortar rounds as well as fuses and a rocket propelled grenade sight.

In addition to the mortars, the company took into custody two people who were suspected of trafficking the weapons and explosives.

After the end of combat operations in the village, the Soldiers of Company A awaited the arrival of the explosive ordnance disposal team who would transport the weapons to a safe area and properly dispose of them.

Everyone in the platoon took on the challenge and came home without incident.

Wolf said the help of the informant was invaluable in making the mission a success.



"It was a whole lot easier because you aren't knocking down everyone's door and harassing civilians," said Wolf.

"This helps us to collect weapons and get rid of the means for them to be used against us as well as not disturb the population," said Staff Sgt. Clifford Beattie, Co. A.

Beattie said the work of the informant was important because it eliminated the possibility of them going to the wrong building.

The Soldiers of Company A returned to their forward operating base after the end of the mission.

"Whenever we leave on a mission and it's successful, it is good for morale," said Dabkowski.

"This is definitely motivating for us," said 2nd Lt. Kevin Hutcherson, platoon leader, Co. A. "To go out and find something like two or three mortars is cool, to find 600 really makes a difference."

In addition to the boost to the Soldiers morale, the mission also demonstrated what happens when Iraqis and Americans work together.

"It shows that within the Iraqi population there are individuals willing to take personal risk to identify bad guys," said Dabkowski. "It shows they are as committed as we are to a safe, stable and secure Iraq."

And finally...



CPT VanVleck (1-37 FA) plays Frosty the Snowman in the Arrowhead production of "Mosul Winter Wonderland"

Thanks to everyone once again for your continued care and support. Knowing we have the support of the folks back home makes our job that much easier. In the coming months we will face many challenges – both in Iraq and at home. Please keep us in your thoughts. You are always in ours.

- Arrowhead