

Iraq —14 months later

Saying goodbye to a miniature city

1st AD prepares to hand over Baghdad airport facilities to Iraqi government

By Karl Weisel

104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

When 1st Armored Division vacates its Forward Operating Base at Baghdad International Airport, one Soldier will leave with mixed feelings. For Maj. Brian Williams, headquarters commandant for 1st Armored Division, departing will mean saying farewell to a miniature city he helped create, manage and hand back over to the Iraqi government.

"We're leaving them a good place," said Williams. "In my mind we're giving the Iraqi government something they can really work with."

That wasn't the case when U.S. Soldiers first took up residence on the war-torn airport grounds in the spring of 2003.

"When I came here in May you wouldn't have believed it. It was dirty, nasty and smelly. We came here right after the war. There were bodies and broken equipment ev-

erywhere," said Williams. "I remember thinking I will die living here. We started out living in tents. There were no showers. We cleaned it up. The biggest piece was picking up the pieces of the war."

In the early stages BIAP served as living and working quarters for some 12,000-15,000 3rd Infantry Division and 1st Armored Division Soldiers. Now the east side of BIAP serves several thousand, but that number will dwindle to less than 100 military by the middle of August, Williams said.

The 1st Armored Division Headquarters was situated in a former airport building that hadn't been used for more than two decades. "The building hadn't been occupied for 25 years," said Williams, explaining that after the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein greatly restricted the airport use, using it only for members of the Baath Party.

"We've repaired the plumbing, every piece of glass that was shattered by bullets, laid gravel. ... This



Photo by Karl Weisel

Soldiers clear their weapons before entering the Bob Hope Dining Facility at Baghdad's International Airport.

is the Taj Mahal compared to what was here before."

Over the course of the 14-month deployment, Williams, his fellow Soldiers and Iraqi workers have never stopped upgrading the living and working conditions at the site. "The commanding general said, 'leave it better than you found it.' He wanted his Soldiers everyday to make their living space better, saying, 'If you see something broke; fix it.' That kind of became our mantra and it's paid off," Williams said.

Reserve and National Guard engineers, fellow Soldiers with plumbing and electrical skills, and Iraqi contractors all joined forces to improve the site. While Iraqi workers seemed hesitant to put in a major effort in the beginning, they have changed dramatically over time as they got to see what the U.S. forces were capable of achieving, Williams said.

From the Bob Hope Dining Facility to air-conditioned quarters, a

host of fitness facilities to fast-food outlets, improving the quality of life for those serving in harm's way has remained a vital issue.

But alongside taking care of Soldiers, the efforts have also helped local Iraqis.

"The Army provides safety," said Busem Abed, manager of a small store selling everything from cold drinks to computer printer cartridges situated just around the corner from 1st AD Headquarters. "The Army, USA, is good. Before it was very dangerous in Baghdad; now it's the best."

Abed, who operated a store in downtown Baghdad before the war, said even though 1st AD would be leaving BIAP, life had already improved for him and his coworkers, and he was looking forward to setting up a new store in another military camp farther north.

As the Americans prepare to leave the airport, turning over items such as refrigerators, portable show-

ers and Morale Welfare and Recreation equipment to the U.S. government for redistribution and the facilities to ministries of the Iraqi government, they are also ensuring that no dangerous wastes are left behind. Since there are no Iraqi standards for hazardous materials and the like, 1st AD is using European standards to ensure no hazardous waste is left behind, Williams said.

"We'll also remove anything that says U.S. Army on the facilities and force protection barriers," said Williams. "We're giving the facilities back to the Ministries for the Interior and Transportation. Several other ministries, such as the Ministry of Health, are also benefiting."

"I think it's a success story," he said. "We paid thousands of dollars to fix this place up. We've made some very good friends. We've stimulated their economy. The Iraqis can tell their kids that they helped build this airport."



Photo by Dennis Johnson

Busem Abed serves his customer, Warrant Officer 1 Ronald Deal of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Division Support Command, at his store on the East Side of BIAP.

Soldier honored for intelligence work in Iraq

By Staff Sgt. Tony Sailer

1st Armored Division Public Affairs Office

Chief Warrant Officer John Groseclose, a human intelligence collector technician with Wackenheim's Company C, 501st Military Intelligence Battalion, received the National Military Intelligence Association's Nicholson Award for exceptional commitment to the intelligence profession.

Groseclose, a Hanover, Md., native, was nominated for his work as an interrogator and intelligence gatherer.

Groseclose was cited for his "professional intelligence excellence and exceptional dedi-

cation to duty. ... During Operation Iraqi Freedom and combat operations in Baghdad, Groseclose proved to be an intelligence professional of the highest caliber. ... He put his life on the line and worked the toughest areas of Baghdad to develop human intelligence to support ground commanders. He led his team safely through direct and indirect fire engagements with the enemy. He consistently produced intelligence that led to the capture and death of hostile forces. His efforts ultimately improved the security of coalition forces and the lives of the Iraqi people."

"There are a lot of people out there doing

a lot of good stuff," Groseclose said.

"While I was supporting the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, our percentage of success was pretty high, the target was usually there," Groseclose said. "I started this year out in the field with a (human intelligence) collection team (operating) in west Baghdad."

A humint team looks at the trends of attacks in a sector or town and conducts conversations with residents who help to gather information and provide sources will-



ing to share more information. They then put the threads together to identify patterns and build a list of targeting options for other units to act upon.

"We do work closely with the Iraqi Police," Groseclose said. "We share information about targets or assist with intelligence about warrants."

A speaker of Persian, Groseclose entered military service as a Marine ground radio repairman and later became an Army radio technician. He re-classed into the military intelligence field and went through the Warrant Officer's Course in 2002.

Iraq — 14 months later

Saving lives with Iron Eagle Express

By Karl Weisel

104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Harry Potter fans might be surprised to discover something similar to the Night Bus in Iraq. But rather than a speedy, magical double-decker bus that appears out of nowhere in the middle of the night, Soldiers in Iraq relied on the Iron Eagle Express to get them from place to place.

Originally started as a way to move logistical supplies by helicopter to remote locations south of Baghdad, the Iron Eagle Express quickly assumed a whole host of other missions.

"It was started on April 27 and was designed for logistics," said Sgt. Maj. Edward Massey, support, plans and operations sergeant major for 1st Armored Division's Division Support Command, "but it has transitioned to also transporting passengers."

As the sun sets June 20 in Baghdad, Soldiers and stacks of medical supplies wait for the telltale sounds of an approaching Blackhawk helicopter in a parking area which also doubles as a basketball court at the DISCOM compound near Baghdad. Massey gives the waiting passengers a quick safety briefing, checks his flight manifest and tells the "pax," as passengers are referred to in the business, what to do upon boarding and



Photo by Karl Weisel

Soldiers load medical supplies on to the Iron Eagle Express during a pickup at the Division Support Command's Forward Operating Base near Baghdad June 20.

disembarking from the 2-501st Aviation Regiment aircraft. Darkness falls and out of the black Iraqi sky two helicopters appear blowing dust across the landing area.

Quickly the waiting Soldiers load up supplies, toss their gear on board, are directed to seats by the flight crew and belted in. Minutes later the metal birds rise with running

lights off — the pilots and gunners peering through night-vision goggles as the express service zooms toward points south.

Traveling swiftly through the skies at the treetop level, the lights of villages flickering by below, the Iron Eagle Express floats down to drop the first of its passengers at a military camp near al Hillah. Other stops along the route take pax and supplies to camps dotted all over the Iraqi landscape.

Massey has ridden with every Iron Eagle Express. "Three times a week we were using it to get mail to people in remote sites — Monday, Wednesday and Friday," he said. "We weren't putting a dent in the mail with the Blackhawks, so we started using Chinooks too. With the Blackhawks we could carry about 60 bags. Once we got the Chinooks we could carry a lot more."

"We have one of our Soldiers fly along with the Iron Eagle Express when delivering mail," said 1st Lt. Meghan Wilmore, postal executive officer for the 55th Personnel Services Battalion. "We rotated it with as many Soldiers as we could to give them a chance to fly."

"The point was to move logistical supplies in the beginning," Massey said. "We moved ammo; we even moved human remains."

Like the Red Ball Express during World War II, the nightly helicopter flights kept the supply lines flowing freely, said Maj. David Gercken, 1st AD public affairs officer.

"It was just too great of an area for people to drive," said Massey. By transporting passengers by air under the cover of darkness, fewer lives were risked on convoy routes. Citing the example of a Soldier on the June 20 flight — a passenger trying to get to Camp Duke — getting him there safely by air helped reduce the risks of putting a convoy on the road. "There are no IEDs (improvised explosive devices) in the sky."

"To me it's all about the passengers," said Massey. "It keeps them off the road. It doesn't put other Soldiers in harm's way and we get them there quicker."

"You sometimes see tracers," he added. "They shot an RPG (rocket propelled grenade) at one of our Chinooks."

A member of the helicopter crew mentions having seen more tracer fire at night in the past, but adds, "You still have to watch everybody."

"Blackhawks and Chinooks do a round robin of all the Forward Operating Bases down south, all the various places where 1st Armored Division is," said Capt. Brooke Maynulet, 4th Brigade's S-1. "We've got folks in Karbala, an-Najaf, ad-Diwaniyah, al-Kut and al-Hillah, which most people know as Babylon. ... The first flights were done by Blackhawks and then they started rotating the Chinooks into it."

Four hours later, around 12:30 a.m., the Blackhawks land back at Baghdad International Airport dropping off several pax picked up along the route. Instead of calling it a night, the helicopter crews head back up into the black sky — called out on yet another mission.

As 1st AD neared the end of its extension in Iraq, mail handlers, aviators and one division sergeant major looked back with pride at another success story — the Iron Eagle Express.



Photo by Karl Weisel

Sgt. Maj. Edward Massey, support plans and operations sergeant major for 1st Armored Division's Division Support Command, briefs passengers before a Blackhawk ride from Baghdad to Babylon and points south on the Iron Eagle Express.



Photo by Dennis Johnson

Mailbags and passengers await the cover of darkness and the arrival of the Iron Eagle Express at one of the many pickup points in Iraq.

Youths enjoy free canoe trip

Story and photos by
Karen Edge
221st Base Support Battalion
Public Affairs Office

Team 221st Mobilization and Deployment office recently joined forces with the Family Advocacy Program to sponsor a youth canoe trip to the Ginsheimer Alt Rhein. Almost 20 children ranging in age from 12-16 spent a day on the river, made new friends and learned how to row a boat.

It quickly became obvious that teamwork was vital to keeping the canoe not only heading in the right direction, but afloat.

“It was hard at first, but then we started counting out loud together; it made it easier to keep our rhythm,” said Sierra Boggess, who joined the trip with her brother Chris. Their father is currently deployed to Iraq.

The group stopped for lunch around midday at a German restau-

rant, enjoyed local fare and then headed into the water for a quick dip after digesting their meal.

Some of the more adventurous among the participants took their canoes to the rapids for a quick whirlwind and made it back safely, still in their canoes with life jackets on and at the ready. Not all those canoeing were as lucky though, and as victim advocate Tania Deal found out, a canoe goes over quickly without much of a warning. Deal, along with family advocacy specialist, Damaris Feleke and Morale Welfare and Recreation staff member Freddie Johnson, went overboard from their canoe while supervising the adventurous trip to the rapids.

There were many tired, wet individuals aboard the bus back to Wiesbaden, but they all said they were looking forward to their next adventure.



Roby Saab (from left), Layne Robertson and Darwin Richards enjoy each other's company while swimming in the Alt Rhein during a youth canoe trip June 16.



Wiesbaden Outdoor Recreation staff unload canoes during a youth canoe trip sponsored by Team 221st Mobilization and Deployment, and Family Advocacy Programs.

Forums focus on trash, policies, safety

By Karen Edge

221st Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

Dealing with civilian misconduct, family support and ongoing renovation projects topped the agenda at the Dexheim Town Hall Meeting June 9.

A reminder about the "Three Strikes Rule for Civilian Misconduct Policy," which went into effect earlier this year, spelled out the steps taken in cases of misconduct. Also addressed was the policy for community service for civilian misconduct offenses.

"Whether you need directions to local attractions or assistance from stores on the economy, just let me know and I will ensure you have everything you need," said Gerhard Rathmacher, manager of the Dexheim Self Help Store.

Rathmacher also offered to assist spouses with local purchases by writing what was needed in German to ensure no translation problems occurred.

Family housing officials described projects currently in the works including the construction of a new connecting road between family housing and Anderson Barracks with an estimated completion of September.

The Directorate of Public Works hours of operation are Monday to Friday from 7:30 a.m. to noon and 12:30-4 p.m., officials said. Customers can call the Wiesbaden Fire Department at mil 337-5246 or civ (0611) 705-5246 for DPW assistance after duty hours.

The work order desk point of contact is Klaus Muendnich at mil 334-5875 or 334-5744.

One resident complained that Department of Defense Dependents Schools weren't offering summer-school classes this year for high school students.

Many 3rd Corps Support Command Soldiers offered to mentor students with the online curriculum being sponsored by DoDDs in the absence of a classroom setting.

Parents were also reminded to pre-register their children for the 2004-2005 school-year.

"It is very important to ensure your child is registered for the next school year even if your child attended the previous year," said Sandy McGillivray, 221st Base Support Battalion school liaison officer.

Child supervision was another concern raised by a resident who reported unattended children roaming freely through the housing area and playground. Rey Voisine, Area Support Team manager, encouraged residents to handle these situations with the parents or through him before escalating it to the Mili-

tary Police level.

Wiesbaden Town Hall

Summer safety, trash and trees topped the topic list at Wiesbaden's Town Hall Meeting June 23. After 3rd COSCOM commander, Brig. Gen. Vincent E. Boles, and 221st Base Support Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Christopher Franks, recognized individuals for having the best looking houses in the community, each took a few minutes to talk to residents.

"The community looked fantastic after the spring clean up. It looked like we were home and it looked like we cared," said Boles. He also reminded Soldiers who recently reintegrated and patrons of BSB services to be patient when 1st Armored Division Soldiers begin returning home and reintegrating.

Franks expressed his concern for the safety of each Soldier and individual in his command.

"Please be really safe this summer while running along the roadside, swimming and driving, especially in wet road conditions," he said. Wiesbaden's last traffic fatality was in July 2003.

One of the major issues brought up during the town hall will affect residents of Aukamm and Hainerberg Housing. Beginning Aug. 1 residents must take their trash containers out

of the condos for trash pick up. (See page 5 for details on the new trash procedures.) One resident voiced her concern and pointed out that she has many neighbors who do not place their trash into the bin and do not recycle.

"That brings us to another topic," said Franks. "The three strike policy is in effect and it will be enforced." Franks told residents that DPW personnel have taken pictures throughout housing areas of trash offenders and maintains a list of names of residents who continue to not discard their trash properly.

In response to questions from various residents regarding the number of recycling areas, cleanliness and scheduled pickups, Franks said more recycling areas are being built where needed, and building coordinators would be responsible to ensure the areas were clean and arrange an extra pickup if recycle bins were overflowing. Other topics of concern included quiet hours, tree roots and post security.

In conjunction with post security, Maj. Jake Jacob, 221st BSB provost marshal, advised residents at both forums that equipment would soon be arriving to implement the Installation Access Control System. All residents who have not yet registered in IACS were reminded to register immediately.



Photo by Sgt. Gregory F. Withrow

Chief of staff visits families

Gen. Peter Schoomaker, Army chief of staff, visits 1st Armored Division families at Wiesbaden Army Airfield June 24.

Community news notes

Dance classes

Army Community Service offers line dancing, Latin, country-western and popular dance classes July 13 and Aug. 3 from 10 a.m. to noon. To sign up call mil 337-5034 or civ (0611) 705-5034.

Children to put on production

The Amelia Earhart Playhouse and the Children's Summer Theater Workshop present "PLOP! And Other Fantastical Animal Tales." Performances will be held at 2 p.m. July 22, 23 and 25 and at 7:30 p.m. July 24. Tickets can be purchased at the Hainerberg and Wiesbaden

Army Airfield USO offices or at the Playhouse by calling mil 336-2473 or civ (0611) 816-2473.

Position open

Andrews Federal Credit Union seeks a loan specialist for their headquarters office at Wiesbaden Army Airfield. For more information call mil 337-5681 or civ (0611) 978 7535.

Grad DVD available

A DVD of the 2004 Gen. H.H. Arnold High School graduation and video teleconference is now available at the school's main office. The DVD includes messages from school administrators, the di-

rector of DoDDS-Europe and a behind-the-scenes look at the set up of the VTC system. The DVD is a free gift provided by Lt. Col. Christopher Franks, 221st Base Support Battalion commander.

Flea market

The Wiesbaden Community Activity Center now hosts monthly indoor flea markets. Upcoming flea markets are July 24 and Aug. 28. Reserve your table now by calling mil 337-5750 or civ (0611) 705-5750.

Free bowling on Thursdays

Spouses and families of deployed Soldiers can bowl for free at both the Wiesbaden and Dexheim Bowling Centers every Thursday from 3-6 p.m. during Iron Family Bowling. Shoe rental is also free. Contact your Family Readiness Group leader to obtain your special programs pass.

FCC providers needed

Join the 221st Base Support Battalion Family Child Care program. Stay at home with your children while building a career. Providers receive free training and nationally recognized accreditation. For information call mil 338-7729 or civ (0611) 380-7729.

ACS

Reservations

Reservations for the following classes may be made by calling mil 485-8188:

Rest of your life

A series titled The Beginning of the Rest of Your Life, designed to provide young couples with the needed skills to build a strong and lasting foundation, is now offered at ACS. Call mil 485-8188 or civ (06783) 6-8188 for details.

Job fair

A job fair is scheduled for July 16 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Rheinlander.

1-2-3 Magic

Spend an afternoon learning how to change your child's behavior July 6 from 3:30-5 p.m. at ACS.

Basic skills

A two hour workshop titled Basic Skills Seminar focuses on power and control signals will be held July 8 from noon to 2 p.m. at ACS.

A fair fight

A Fair Fighting Rules/Conflict Resolution for Couples session meets July 13 from 3:30-5 p.m. and a Basic Skills for Couples session meets July 15 from noon to 2 p.m.

Parental power

A Parent Power Rules session that focuses on control tactics is scheduled for July 20 from 3:30-5 p.m.

Cooking secrets

Spend a morning learning the British secrets to a great evening by participating in a session titled Cooking a Traditional British Dinner July 15 from 9-11 a.m. at ACS

Get a job

A job fair is scheduled for July 16 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Rheinlander. Fill out an application and receive an on-the-spot interview.

Tot group

Parents and Tots Playgroup (birth to pre-school) meets every Monday, 10-11:30 a.m., at Iron Kids Play Group Room in Building 8222.

Nurturing parents

Empowering Nurturing Parents is a group for nurturing graduates to continue the learning, and meets every Tuesday from 10-11:30 a.m. at the Iron Kids Play Room in Building 8222.

Coffee break

Spouses Coffee Break offers support for all military spouses and meets every Wednesday and Friday from 10-11:30 a.m. at the Iron

Baumholder happenings



Photo by Madeleine Dwoiakowski

Daddy's home at last

A Soldier from 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, enjoys a long awaited reunion with his family June 20 at Baumholder's Hall of Champions after the official welcome home ceremony for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team's advance party. In all, 85 soldiers representing various 2nd BCT units arrived to make preparations for the main group of Soldiers who will follow. The advance party landed late June 19 at Rhein-Main Air Base and arrived in Baumholder at around 1 a.m. June 20.

Kids Play Room in Building 8222. Bring your children along.

A free meal

Breakfast with ACS offers a free hot breakfast every Friday from 8:30-10:30 a.m. at the Family Readiness Group building. In addition to a hot meal, a 30-minute program on parenting or couple issues will be provided by professional counselors visiting from the States. Breakfast menus will change weekly, so mark your calendars for every Friday.

Free counseling

Professional counselors from the United States are available this summer to help the Baumholder community through reunion and reintegration. Their services are free and available at the Any Day tent and ACS. At the tent, counselors are available from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at ACS from 3:30-8 p.m. If you need crisis intervention or short-term assistance, call Army Community Service at civ (06783) 6-8188 and ask for a visiting counselor.

Clubs

Shooters

Rock band night at Shooters is July 17 from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Breakfast buffet

A breakfast buffet is scheduled for July 11 at the Rheinlander. Seatings are at 10 a.m. and noon and by reservation only. Call the club at mil 485-7507 for reservations.

Bowl for free

Strikers has free bowling every Thursday from 3-6 p.m. for all families.

Bowling specials

Bowling specials include Monday Night Madness 5-11 p.m.; Tuesday Nifty Fifties Night 5-11 p.m.; Wild Wednesdays starting at 5 p.m., \$5 cover charge and 25 cent games; Early Birds Bowling on Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Thursday Color Pin Bowling

from 6-11 p.m.; Friday Kids' Night Out from 6-11 p.m.; Saturday Cosmic Bowling from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.; and Sunday Family Bowling from 1-9 p.m.

Rudy's

Grab Bag Night is offered every Thursday from 5-10 p.m. For every purchase of \$5 or more you can grab at a chance to win a prize.

Golf course

Rolling Hills Golf Course offers Thursday night golf scrambles. Sign up in the pro shop from 3-5:30 p.m. Shotgun start is at 6 p.m. Entry fee is \$10, and nonmembers pay greens fees.

Recreation

Free trips

Free deployment trips are offered throughout July. Register by calling mil 485-6115 beginning at 10 a.m. July 7. The following trips are offered:

- * July 10, Monte Mare Schwimmbad
- * July 17, Warner Brothers Studio
- * July 24, Ikea shopping trip in Mannheim
- * July 31, Legoland-Germany.

Punt, pass and kick

A youth punt, pass and kick competition with a special appearance by Deuce McAllister, running back for the New Orleans Saints, is scheduled for 10 a.m. July 19 at Minnick Field. No registration is required and the event is open to children age 8-18.

Outdoor Rec trips

The following Outdoor Recreation sponsored trips are scheduled for July:

- * July 10, Disneyland Paris, France
- * July 10-11, white water rafting in Garmisch
- * July 17, Six Flags, Holland
- * July 17, Rhein Fest, Boppard
- * July 25, Legoland, Günzburg.

Free swim night

Teens enjoy a refreshing swim for free every Tuesday and Thursday from 1-8 p.m. at the Baumholder indoor pool.

Take advantage

Single Soldier Advantage Cards are available at the MWR table in the Any Day Tent during reintegration. With the card single Soldiers can take advantage of free and reduced price services.

Free shuttle

A free shopping shuttle to the Ramstein and Vogelweh exchange facilities is offered by Outdoor Recreation.

Advance reservations are required and may be made by calling Outdoor Recreation at mil 485-7182.

Trips are offered to Ramstein on Tuesdays and to Vogelweh on Thursdays.

Call Outdoor Recreation for departure times. A coupon for 20 percent off purchases and a coupon for \$2 off lunch will be offered to 14 riders per trip.

Express shuttle

A free Saturday express shuttle is offered to families of deployed Soldiers. Call mil 485-6115 beginning the Monday before the trip.

Youth

Youth activities

The following activities are offered to sixth-through-12th-grade youths in July:

- * Auto Tech Museum in Speyer July 8, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- * Remagen (Germany and Holland), July 10, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Shooters – another quality of life initiative

By Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

222nd Base Support Battalion
Public Affairs Office

The all new Shooters dining and dancing club opened its doors to the public June 25. Shooters is the latest quality of life improvement initiative for Baumholder Soldiers and families. After a brief presentation by Lt. Col. Todd A. Buchs, 222nd Base Support Battalion commander, and the ribbon cutting ceremony, the crowd swarmed into the facility for an afternoon of fun, food and drink.

The live musical entertainment kicked off at 3 p.m. with the two-man variety band Duo providing background music. The rock/variety band Mallet stepped up and continued the live music from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Shooters is the high energy club reincarnation of the old Rod and Gun Club. "We have a whole new atmosphere, new music, lots of new fun in the ballroom, plus we still have our restaurant open for lunch and for dinner and we're still doing home deliveries," said Mary Jane Spreier, Shooters manager.

"More funds are coming to do a lot more in this community ... we're not done yet. We've just started," said Buchs during the grand opening. Shooters has been under renovation

for almost one year. Throughout this year, a new winter garden has been added, the ballroom has been renovated and given a completely new atmosphere and the front dining area has been renovated. "I thank you for being patient and as I always say, this is for you. This is for our Soldiers ... for our families. That's why we exist, to make your lives better and to make your life at Baumholder and in the military that much better," said Buchs.

When it was all over Spreier said "It was a long day but it was worth it. People came when they saw that we were open and they loved it. They liked the new look." The music and dancing continued until 2 a.m. "They liked the music that Mallet played and they danced all night. Everybody was happy," said Spreier.

Unlike the old club where it was almost mandatory to wear a 10-pound belt buckle before getting in, Shooters now caters to families and single Soldiers alike.

The quaint broken corral fence motif has been replaced with glitter, neon lights and live music to please one and all.

Spreier was quick to point out that Shooters is not just a family restaurant. "We cater to the entire community," said Spreier. "We



Photo by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

Visitors at the Shooters grand opening June 25 await the word to "dig in" and enjoy all the food and drink the club provided for everyone. Visitors enjoyed everything from tacos to vanilla pudding.

serve lunch as we always did, and we now offer dining with a family atmosphere. But Shooters is also about nightly entertainment with music to please the entire community," said Spreier.

Regular patrons of the old club will be surprised to find a brand new facility within the walls of the old single theme club which tended to draw a narrow circle of clientele.

"Everything is new — new ceilings, new walls, new furniture, everything," said Spreier.

The new look includes glittering walls and ceiling, two brand new bars, one in the ballroom and the other in the restaurant. A fog machine pumps out steam onto the dance floor where pulsing neon lights reflect off the clouds of artificial smoke to create an atmosphere

compatible with any type of entertainment Shooters has lined up. There are two smoking areas that together are about half as large as the ballroom. They are equipped with retrofit equipment that sucks out all the smoke and provides a smoke-free environment in the facility.

For all the details about what Shooters has to offer call Spreier at mil485-6345.

□ Bellamar Swimming Pool Mannheim, July 13, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

□ Basketball and barbecue, July 16, 1-8 p.m.

Free clinic

A free Youth Sports basketball clinic is offered for youth 8-12 years old from 10 a.m. to noon and 1-4 p.m. for 13-18-year-olds. Children may register by calling mil 485-7276/7003.

Summer reading

Sign up now for the Summer Reading Program at the library offered every Tuesday at 10 a.m. The program is open to all children who read independently.

Story hour is offered for younger children at 10 a.m. on Thursdays. Call the library at mil 485-7229 for more information.

Hourly child care

Families of E-5 deployed Soldiers can now receive 10 free hours per month of respite care. Call for reservations.

Infants to kindergarten care is offered at the Dispensary and Strassburg CDCs.

Kindergarten care is offered at Wetzel and Smith CDCs.

Baumholder happenings

First- through sixth-grade care is offered at Wetzel SAS, mil 485-7475; Smith SAS, mil 485-6641; and Neubrücke SAS, mil 485-7731.

Sports, fitness

Shape up

Group exercise is offered Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:30-5:30 p.m. at the Rolling Hills Athletic Club.

Take a dive

Free Family Swim Nights are offered Fridays from 6-9 p.m. through July. Swim nights feature games and activities for children.

Sports lineup

A one-pitch softball tournament is scheduled July 8 and 9 at Iron Soldier Fields I and II at 10 a.m.

A Family Readiness Group relay race is scheduled July 15 at Minnick Field at 9 a.m.

The Baumholder community level softball team takes on Kaiser-

slautern July 24 and Spangdahlem July 31 at 11 a.m.

Summer league racquetball runs July through September.

Unit level softball qualifier tournament runs July 19-22. Sign up no later than July 7.

The 104th Area Support Group unit level softball championships are July 31 to Aug. 1.

Chapel

Operation FEED

Operation FEED, Families Enduring Extended Deployment, is a community chaplain's sponsored event to assist spouses with Soldiers downrange to deal with the challenges of the extended deployment.

Operation FEED will offer a free overnight stay at Hambachtal Retreat Center for spouses and their children.

There will be short seminars on various topics of interest to

spouses. Activities are also planned for children. Limited reservations are available so call today to make your reservation at civ (06783) 6-1570. Operation FEED dates are July 6-7, 13-14 and 20-21.

AAFES

AAFES promotions

AAFES offers the following promotions during July:

Saturdays, free movie matinee at the Wagon Wheel Theater starting at 4 p.m. (The free Saturday movie continues through Aug. 28.)

Fourth Of July sale, Toyland basketball shootout for discounts, 50 percent off selected Black and Decker and Craftsman tools, 50 percent off selected cosmetics and fashion jewelry.

* July 9, back to school fashions

* July 10, Brum Hitachi sale

* July 10, car sales with picnic and drawings

* July 13, bathroom sale
* July 15, DVD sale, \$9.95 items for \$5.95

* July 16-17, 30 percent off Franklin recliners

* July 19, 10 percent off all twin comforter and sheet sets

* July 20, free movie rental with the purchase of a DVD box set

* July 24, Casio demo sale
* July 24, car sales, picnic and drawings

* July 30, JVC demo sale
* July 30, Back to school fashions sale

* July 31, Panasonic demo sale
* July 31, car sales, picnic and drawings.

Lots of prizes
AAFES has \$5,000 in prizes to give away. Sign up in the Any Day Tent. Drawing are held every Saturday.

A hot meal
Enjoy a home cooked meal for only \$3.30 at Baumholder's dining facilities during family night. Call the DIVARTY Dining Facility at mil 485-6436 or the 2nd Brigade Dining Facility at mil 485-6267 for July 8 specials.

Iraq — 14 months later

Baghdad Tax Center helps Soldiers claim millions

By Karl Weisel
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

They say there are a couple of things you can always count on — and one of them is taxes. Soldiers deployed in and around the Baghdad area of Iraq can thank tax preparers with 1st Armored Division's Tax Center for helping them reap a \$3,070,622 windfall in returns this year. And that amount was still growing as customers continued to stop by for help June 24.

"I'm proud of the fact that we were the first combat zone tax center ever," said Capt. Tyson McDonald, officer in charge of the center at Baghdad International Airport and chief of administrative law and claims for 1st AD Forward's Legal Office.

"We've had a broad dynamic. We've served two corps, eight divisions, Army, Navy, Air Force, civilian contractors, Reserve and National Guard Soldiers," said the Baumholder-based 1st AD attorney.

As the only certified "tax expert" on the staff, McDonald said he relied on a team of dedicated Soldiers detailed to serve as tax assistants. "We had two people in each brigade. We trained them for about a week in Kuwait during the second week of January," he said, explaining that that was where they were able to link up with an official from the Internal Revenue Service



Photo by Karl Weisel

Capt. Tyson McDonald, chief of administrative law and claims for 1st Armored Division Forward's Legal Office, helps Warrant Officer 1 Max Ivulich of HHC, 4th Brigade, with an amendment to his 2003 tax return at the Baghdad International Airport Tax Center June 24.

for the training.

"We opened on Jan. 21. It took a while to get Soldiers to come in until the word got around," he said.

Just before the April 15 deadline and the closing of the original Tax Center on BIAP in anticipation of the end of 1st AD's 12-month deployment there was a rush on get-

ting assistance, he said. "We handled a large number of customers at our old center. After that we tore everything down and gave away everything."

Once it was announced that Soldiers would be extended for several more months in Iraq, McDonald said they found there was still a

need for tax assistance in the theater. A new center was established several buildings over in a former Iraqi airport building. "And it's been a steady flow ever since.

"Soldiers saved well over \$360,000 by not having to use a paid tax preparer," he said. They also saw an immediate return, 10 work-

ing days later, once they filed their returns electronically through the tax center.

"One of the big drives before April 15 was to let Soldiers, particularly Reserve and National Guard Soldiers, know some states don't automatically grant an extension on the filing date," he said.

"Really the hardest part was technical issues — power going out, issues with software. If it hadn't been for Chief Warrant Officer 2 Donnell McIntosh, chief legal administrator with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st AD, none of this would have been possible," said McDonald. "He set up all the networking, all of the computers."

Many Soldiers were pleasantly surprised at the amount of money they got back. "The average return was about \$1,400-1,500," he said. "Our largest return was upwards of \$8,000. He left saying he was going to put a GPS system in his car and take his children to Disneyland.

"The thing we're stressing to Soldiers is that if you get a rejection on your electronic return, don't forget to go in and get it fixed at one of the rear tax or legal assistance centers — Giessen, Friedberg, Baumholder, Wiesbaden and Hanau. We emailed everyone who got a rejection," said McDonald.

"The Tax Centers in the rear have done a spectacular job," he said.

1-35th Armor maintains security on Iraq supply route

Story and photo by Marine Sgt. M. Trent Lowry
1st Armored Division Public Affairs Office

If the road system in Iraq were compared to the human circulatory system, Main Supply Route Tampa would be the artery that keeps the life blood of the country flowing.

Continuing with the medical analogy, Task Force 1st Armored Division Soldiers are the white blood cells that protect Iraq from any elements that would attack the body.

Just ask members of Company C, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team. "I'd say MSR Tampa is one of the most important routes in theater," said Capt. Richard A. Graves, company commander, and a Shreveport, La., native.

"When you see the amount of logistics that pass through here, you quickly see the importance of the mission. If supplies can't get through, then people don't eat and vehicles don't get fixed."

Though it doesn't stop at Baghdad, the 450-mile-long MSR Tampa is the main line of communication between Baghdad and Kuwait. It carries civilian 18-wheelers and military convoys alike.

"Anywhere through there the enemy can place IEDs (improvised explosive devices). Anywhere through there they can attack us

with small arms fire and RPGs (rocket propelled grenades)," said 1st Lt. John R. Pulleyn, executive officer, from Chattanooga, Tenn. "In our sector alone that is the main mission: protect the route."

In the months since Task Force 1st AD troops have taken over the mission of safeguarding the passageway, Co. C has been on the receiving end of mortars, IEDs and various types of rocket attacks. While that may be a lot to contend with — and fortunately, the attacks have resulted in neither injuries for Co. C, nor any damage to the route infrastructure — attacks against the troops are a sign that the security efforts are working.

"The enemy is targeting us because we've denied them any access to the big targets, like bridges," Graves said. "We're not giving them enough time or the places to set up their IEDs.

"It helps when you have an enemy trying to kill you to help motivate you to make your mission a success," Graves said.

Part of keeping the route secure entails shoring up bridges. Soldiers have set up various combinations of concertina wire, sand barricades and speed bumps to protect the structures.

"Just like whenever you are defending a piece of ground in warfare, you are always



Photo by Marine Sgt. M. Trent Lowry

A Company C, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, M1 Abrams tank refuels, assisted by fuel specialists from 40th Engineer Battalion, along Main Supply Route Tampa.

trying to improve your position," Pulleyn said. "That's what we're doing here — making improvements and adjusting from there. We find out what security measures work and go with that."

Because of the route's length, keeping the MSR stocked with troops and vehicles can be a tricky task for the units.

"Like most missions, it's always a challenge to get the right amount of men and materials to the right place at the right time, but I don't think we'll have any problem accomplishing that," Pulleyn said. "It's very time-consuming, but I'd say the (companies) have responded remarkably well. We're getting it done and staying focused."

Iraq —14 months later



Photo by Dennis Johnson

Spc. Renee Whitney hands a package to Spc. Joseph Choverly as he and Spc. James Smith load mail trucks at the BIAP Postal Facility. The Soldiers are all part of Baumholder's Company A, 47th Forward Support Battalion.



Photo by Karl Weisel

Spc. Eric Miller (left) and Spc. Dusty Veres, both of Baumholder's 4-27th Field Artillery, address packages to send home from Baghdad.

Soldiers pitch in to keep mail moving

By Karl Weisel

104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

When 1st Armored Division Soldiers received word they would be extended beyond their initial 12-month deployment, leaders had to adjust quickly to new mission requirements.

For members of the 55th Personnel Services Battalion that meant taking on the additional responsibility of sending and receiving mail for the thousands of 1st AD and 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment troops spread out around Iraq.

"In an environment like this, the hardest part is keeping up with the units which are constantly moving," said 1st Lt. Meghan Wilmore,

55th PSB postal executive officer.

With the start of the extension 1st Armored Division's brigades quickly spread out to quell renewed violence in such cities as Karbala, an-Najaf and ad-Diwaniyah. For the postal handlers that meant being extremely flexible to keep up with the mail.

"We were getting 30,000 to 40,000 pounds of mail per day at the highest point," said Capt. Breck Tarr, 55th PSB's Alpha Detachment and postal forward commander. "Now we're down to about 10,000. Taking over the mission meant jumping into a job that very few people really knew."

Besides the many packages received from families and friends back at home stations, BIAP postal Sol-

diers also had to manage thousands of donated packages from concerned contributors. An outfit known as Operation Gratitude sent 10,000 packages including CDs, T-shirts, pistachios and the like.

While some members of the unit, such as 1st Lt. Maria Auer, postal platoon leader, from Friedberg, worked with the various Reserve units early on that had the mission before the 55th PSB took over, it was a quick learning curve for most of her fellow Soldiers in the unit. "Forty-three people in our unit took over from the Reserve units which had 78 people," said Auer. "A lot of them hadn't worked postal before. Before we took over we had post offices all over the place. And we traveled all over."

"Postal operations are constantly changing. I understand the theater routing scheme a lot better now. Things are getting easier for everyone," she said.

"At first we didn't think much about taking over postal operations," said Tarr. "But once we got started we saw all that was involved. For our Soldiers it was an opportunity to not sit behind a desk or a computer for a change — doing something not in their Military Occupational Specialty. It's not as easy as some people might think."

"They got a better appreciation for what other Soldiers in their same field have to do," said Wilmore. "Especially for people who stay in the military, the more rank they're going to get, the better it is knowing how postal operations work."

Getting feedback from satisfied

customers is also rewarding, Auer said. "We get a big response both positive and negative — but it's really great to run into somebody who says, 'wow, you got my mail.'"

"When you see those little boxes in the mail that say, 'I love you and miss you Daddy,' it kind of warms your heart," said Spc. Renee Whitney, a Company A, 47th Forward Support Battalion Soldier from Kalamazoo, Mich., by way of Baumholder. Whitney, along with several 47th FSB Soldiers were attached to the mail handlers to process 2nd Brigade mail throughout 1st AD's 14 months in Iraq.

"I will miss the closeness of the people; we all work as a team," said Whitney, "and we became really close. You don't see that everyday."

While delivering the mail was often serious business — Spc. Joseph Choverly of 47th FSB described having a rocket propelled grenade shoot across the road in front of his truck during one trip — there were humorous episodes as well.

"One time when I was in line passing boxes, one was vibrating," said fellow 47th FSB Soldier, Spc. James Smith. "After they checked it out and decided it wasn't dangerous we just laughed and didn't want to know."

Having the BIAP Post Office located so closely to the airport has ensured speedier service. Mail comes into the Joint Military Mail Terminal and contractors from Kellogg, Brown and Root bring the mail over to the Post Office. Units pick up their mail for the most part for transport around the command.

"Outgoing mail is running at about 10,000 or 11,000 pounds a day," said Tarr. "Now we are getting to the point where our outgoing mail equals or exceeds our incoming."

Postal officials warned Soldiers to make sure they observe Customs and postal regulations when mailing their items home. "Just keep it legal, and if you have any questions ask the Post Office staff," said Auer. "Also make sure you have a very clear to and from address. All of our postal companies are in the rear trying to keep up with the mail we're sending out."

"People should check their Community Mail Rooms daily back in Germany," said Wilmore. "If they decide to take block leave they should go in and talk to their CMR staff and let them know they won't be there to pick up mail."

Another initiative started during 55th PSB's postal oversight was transporting hundreds of mail bags to remote locations by helicopter as part of the 1st AD's Iron Eagle Express (see related story on page 7). Three nights a week mail was loaded onto Blackhawk and Chinook helicopters and carried to such locations as Babylon and other points south of Baghdad. Whitney was one of many postal Soldiers who got a chance to experience the thrill of flying over Iraq in a helicopter as part of the Iron Eagle Express, saying, "It was great."

As 1st Armored Division readied to move out in the direction of home, 55th PSB officials prepared to turn over operations to 1st Cavalry.