



Ironhorse Desert News

Operation Iraqi Freedom

“Steadfast & Loyal”



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Photo by SPC Rhea Anderegg

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, GEN Richard Meyers, visits with soldiers from 1-8 Infantry Battalion in Balad.



Photo by MSG Debra Bingham

GEN Richard Meyers presents a coin to SPC Veasna Oum, in Tikrit, Iraq on July 27.

By MSG Debra Bingham

TIKRIT, Iraq—The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff visited with soldiers from Task Force Ironhorse in Iraq on July 27.

Air Force GEN Richard B. Meyers stopped in Tikrit, where he met with 4th Infantry Division commander MG Raymond Odierno to talk about current operations. Odierno described the daily challenges soldiers face requiring them to switch between the role of soldier and peacekeeper. Meyers and Odierno agreed that soldiers have adapted to both roles.

The Joint Chiefs chairman presented coins to soldiers in the massive headquarters building, a former palace of Saddam located on a ridge high above the Tigris River. Then he boarded a helicopter for a flight to Balad to visit members of 1-8th Infantry.

Meyers said he had an “incredible afternoon” talking with troops. The troops seemed to enjoy the visit as well, as they eagerly posed for photographs with the general.



Photos by SPC Rhea Anderegg

GEN Meyers spent the afternoon talking with soldiers from 1-8 Infantry. He also made time to pose for photos with soldiers.



Task Force News

Story and Photos by SSG Craig Pickett

TIKRIT, Iraq—Keeping the skies over Tikrit free from mid-air collisions falls into the hands of members of F Company, 1-58 Aviation Regiment. The select group of soldiers from Fort Hood, Texas, tracks aircraft over the city 24-hours a day.

"A lot of people think we are the Air Force," said SPC Shane Boggs. "They don't know the Army has air traffic controllers."

The Army does have controllers and they are stationed at most operating bases in Iraq where aircraft land. They play an important role in the daily operations of landing and taking off.

"We provide air traffic control services and emergency assistance in a safe, orderly, expedient flow," said SPC John Mengel.

Mengel, with the help of SPC George Egbert, mans a mini flight tower overlooking the helipad that services Forward Operating Base Ironhorse.

The helipad, which sports a gigantic, painted 4th Infantry Division patch in the center, can handle up to nine helicopters. Any more traffic and the controllers direct them to a dusty field a few hundred meters away.

On the arrival of each helicopter, Egbert or one of the others who man the tower relays critical information.

"I tell them wind speed, wind direction, wind gust and the altimeter," said Egbert. Egbert said the most critical piece of information is the altimeter reading, which is basically the distance from sea level to the landing pad.

It becomes even more important during busy times when pilots have to land in the dusty field. The swirling blades of the helicopter kick up dust and create a brown-out condition where pilots can not see the ground. They have to rely on Egbert's altimeter reading and their cockpit instruments to guide them in safely.

Typically, though, the soldiers who pull duty in Viper Tower rarely see more than four or five helicopters at a time and on a busy day may see as many as 30.

"We like it when it is busy," said Mengel. "When it is slow, it is boring."

Even when it is slow, the soldiers use their time wisely. All air traffic controllers stationed at FOB Ironhorse rotate through the different stations in order to cross train.

"I see this as an opportunity," said Egbert. "I've gotten rated on three separate systems. When I leave, it will help me if I get out and do this as a civilian."

Egbert said he likes tower duty because it seems more hands-on. "It's cool to actually see the aircraft," he said. Normally when he is working flight following, he only tracks aircraft on a map.



SPC John Mengel gives vital information to pilots from Viper Tower as they land at FOB Ironhorse.

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AIR, FROM PAGE 2

Flight following is the other area where controllers pull duty day and night. In the back of a small truck, soldiers are responsible for planning routes to ensure no two aircraft are on the same path. Soldiers who man the Tactical Airspace Integration System track aircraft in a radius of 35 kilometers.

"When we first got here, we were working a lot, but now the routes are more standardized," said SPC Scott LaRoche.

Whether the troops are busy or slow, air traffic is being controlled and monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Army, not the Air Force keeps the airways safe over Tikrit.



On July 28, the TUAV platoon of A/104MI hit a milestone in the history of the SHADOW 200, reaching 1,000 hours of flight operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Story and Photo by CPT Joshua Comstock, 104th MI

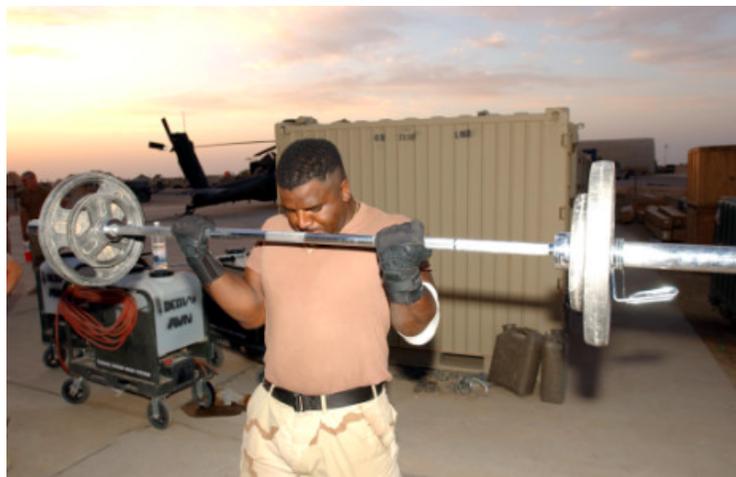
On July 28, the first fielded SHADOW 200 Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (TUAV) platoon completed 1,000 hours of flight operations in combat. The TUAV gives the maneuver commander improved situational awareness by providing "the view over the next hill."

The 104th Military Intelligence Battalion was the first unit to conduct the SHADOW's Initial Operational Test & Evaluation. Since the 104th MI deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom it has provided Task Force Ironhorse units with aerial reconnaissance and surveillance. It's the first deployment of a SHADOW 200 TUAV platoon outside of a garrison environment in the history of the system. Many of the platoon's operators have flown more than 200 hours during the deployment.

Despite the harsh desert environment and extreme heat conditions of Iraq, mechanics and technicians from the 104th MI have maintained the TUAV's flight capabilities. The platoon has demonstrated the SHADOW's flexibility and range of capabilities during the deployment; from launching at a moment's notice during combat operations to flying it to the extreme limits of its range.

The Nighthawks of the A-104th MI continue as pioneers in TUAV operations and are setting the standard for future operations.

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SSG Derrick Fuller, A Co., 404th Aviation Support Battalion, lifts weights outside the hanger of an old Iraqi airbase where he works.



PFC Raphael Riley, with B Co., 502nd Personnel Support Battalion, and SSG Joe Cole, with 1-44th Air Defense Artillery Battalion, play video games inside the MWR building at FOB Speicher, Iraq .

Story and Photos by SSG Craig Pickett

TIKRIT, Iraq—The initial shock of deploying to a war zone has worn off. Soldiers of the Task Force Ironhorse are now looking for ways to pass the time between missions. Their efforts are creative and oftentimes involved.

Soldiers at FOB Speicher, located on an old Iraqi airbase north of Tikrit, have found many ways to occupy their time. One activity, is hanging out in 'The Little Palace'.

That is what SFC Alphonso Ford calls the building he is in charge of. Ford, who is with Division Support Command, is the non commissioned officer in charge of the Morale, Welfare and Recreation building that houses many amenities.

He said the most popular items in the 'Palace' are the two computers available for internet access. Soldiers sign up for a 15 minute session that Ford times with a stop watch. He does this to ensure everyone gets his or her allotted time.

Second to the internet in popularity is the Sony Play Station. There is always a crowd around the monitor waiting for a chance to challenge the winner of any particular game.

"This is great," said SPC Kyle Walker, with A Detachment, 502nd Personnel Support Battalion. "It's a big morale booster. When we got here, we didn't know what we were going to do for fun."

Soon however, Walker's unit and others received a request for a wish list of MWR items they wanted. It wasn't long before they started showing up in the MWR building.

Items that have been bought include a popcorn machine, refrigerator, fans, and a television and DVD player. Movies are shown three times a day along with broadcasts of American Forces Network programming.

Ford said they are open all day and night except between the hours of physical training, which is 5 a.m. to 9 a.m.

On the other side of the camp, members of 4th Brigade have their own version of the 'Little Palace.' It is a brown canvas tent with a small television, one computer to access e-mail and a phone line to make morale calls back home.

PFC Brian Hancock, D Co., 2-4th Aviation Battalion, says the television gets bad reception and it's hard to get through on the phone line. "Sometimes you have to dial for 30 minutes," he said. "But, it's a start."

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PALACE, FROM PAGE 4

Hancock said he is staying busy as a UH-60 Blackhawk Helicopter mechanic and has only visited the tent twice. On one occasion, he was able to talk to his wife on the problematic phone.

"I got to talk to my wife and hear her voice," he said. "It helps – it helps a lot to hear her."

Hancock said his unit has also made its own set of free weights from old cans and concrete. Others, however, were more fortunate and found weight equipment left behind by fleeing Iraqi soldiers. CPT Steve Foster was working out on a set of parallel bars found nearby as a way of reducing stress. He is a prosecuting lawyer with Headquarters Co., 4th Brigade.

"This is great," Foster said of the impromptu gym. "This is the best one I've seen. I try to work out three times a week."

Others around camp can be seen tossing around a football or playing basketball in an empty hanger. There is always a round of dominoes to be found or the ever present card game.

Whatever their means of relaxation, soldiers of Task Force Ironhorse are finding a way to pass the time and stay in touch with family and friends and stay in shape, too.



Story and Photos by MSG Dave Johnson

TIKRIT, Iraq – Operation Tyr, named after the god of war in Norse mythology, began as a show of force. The 4th Infantry Division's 4th Brigade initiated the operation to discourage any para-military dissidents who may have been in the surrounding communities.

During the operation, the 1st Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery Regiment fired a myriad of weapons at stationary targets. Sight and sound senses were exploited. Many weapons were fired at night so the local populace was likely to watch. Daytime operations attracted a lot of attention, too, with deafening 'boom' sounds as explosions resonated throughout the area. The targets used were strategically placed to ensure safety, but high visibility.

"This operation is a show of force to our neighbors. It's a chance to rattle our sabers and show them we mean business," said LTC Rick Starkey, commander of the 1-44 out of Fort Hood, Texas. "We're peaceful, but if provoked, we will attack."

"We hauled two Iraqi T-55 tanks in from along the highway to use as targets," said 1LT Joseph Rodibaugh, executive officer with C Battery, 1-44th. "Visibility," he explained, "is key to this operation. We're letting any para-military in the community know if they mess with us, they'll leave in a box."

The Iraqi tanks were turned into fireballs, and that left impressions on any who witnessed the impact.

"We're here to help the Iraqi people," said SSG Jeffrey Johnson, master gunner with C Battery, "However, if resistance rises, they'll think twice. We're a lethal force."

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TOW, FROM PAGE 5

"C Battery, or 'Combat Battery' as I call them," said Starkey, "is instrumental in this show of force."

"We fired 68 rounds of high explosive rounds at night," said CPT Brian Faye, commander of C Battery. "We got their attention last night."

During daylight, the operation drew attention from the locals. "We've fired Anti Tank 4s (hand-held missiles) out near the main gate area so anyone with ideas about attacking us can see our capabilities," said Rodibaugh. "We also used 25 millimeter guns, our TOWs and coaxial machine guns."

The TOW is a Tube-Launched, Optically Tracked Wire Guided Missile System. It is an anti-armor weapon. The TOW system is designed and capable of destroying 90 percent of the world's armor vehicles," said WO Barry Parsons, a missile maintenance technician with C Battery. "It's a pinpoint system. What they aim at, they'll hit."

"TOWs were put on the Bradleys so they can defend themselves against armor," added Parsons.

The situation in Iraq dictated the Bradleys have a modification. "There are three weapons systems on the Bradleys," said SPC Del Sallee, a Bradley mechanic with C Battery. "We've got the 25 millimeter gun, the coaxial machine gun and now the TOW."

The soldiers of the 1-44 displayed enthusiasm for the opportunity to fire their weapons. "I've fired every weapon system on the Bradleys and Linebackers except the TOW," said PVT Jeremy Magallanes, a driver and gunner with C Battery. Magallanes expressed his longing to fire a weapon as he awaited his opportunity. "I love firing stingers the most," he added.

Operation Tyr has numerous soldiers within 4th Brigade actively involved. "We integrated all the checkpoints into the operation," said Rodibaugh. "Integration between us and the other units is key. If we had to engage, this is how it would be. We've got all the units involved, from medical support to maintenance. All our units are contributing."

The show of force to the local community is not the only objective achieved with this operation. Proficiency and familiarity with weapons systems requires a lot of hands-on application. Soldiers are performing a myriad of tasks in Iraq, and often have long periods between day-to-day tasks and working their primary job function, firing weapons.

"This operation gives the soldiers confidence in their weapons systems and helps maintain proficiency," said 1SG Michael Banes from C Battery.

Combat Stress Team

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Religious Services at FOB Ironhorse

Sunday: 9:30 a.m.-- Protestant

11:00 a.m.-- Gospel

Noon-- LDS

1:00-- Catholic

Friday: 7:30 p.m.-- Jewish

12:25 p.m.-- Muslim

Wednesday: 6:30 p.m.--Prayer & Praise

7:00 p.m.- Bible Study

Task Force News

By MSG Dave Johnson

TIKRIT, Iraq – MG Raymond Odierno, commander of the 4th Infantry Division and Task Force Ironhorse, hosted a commander's conference at the main palace on July 28. Brigade and separate battalion commanders, along with staff officers, attended the conference.

The commanding general emphasized the 4th Infantry Division's continual pursuit of former regime loyalists and the efforts to provide safety and security and to continue rebuilding Iraq.

The CG stated short- and long-term objectives for Taskforce Ironhorse.

According to MAJ Brian Bennett, Secretary General Staff, staff officers briefed on their functional areas within the taskforce.

LTC Ted Martin, the G3 Operations Officer, stated patrols and raids continue to root out high-profile targets. The combat brigades have done an excellent job and continue to perform extraordinary missions.

Short-term goals within the operations realm include finalization of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps. The members will perform security missions at key locations in Task Force's area of operations.

Establishing an Iraqi army battalion by mid-August is a long-term objective.

LTC Steve Shea, the G1 officer-in-charge, addressed personnel issues that affect the Division. He spoke about STOP LOSS. Soldiers are retiring and leaving 4th ID units for scheduled transfers. Replacements are arriving, so personnel readiness remains high.

"There is no degradation of combat power in our BCTs and troops," said Bennett.

According to Bennett, the G1 addressed replacement plans for National Guard and Army Reserve. "Engineers are the top priority to replace," said Bennett.

Shea also spoke of Morale Welfare and Recreation trips and facilities. The MWR building on FOB Ironhorse has been used by many task force soldiers for decompression and R&R. There is an additional MWR facility in Qatar. V Corps controls the number of soldiers who will get the four-day R&R tour, and the task force has an allocation of seats to send its hard-working soldiers on the much-deserved trek.

The G4 logistics officer, LTC Terry Hermanns, briefed the attendees about supply concerns and accomplishments. The railhead in Bayji has been open for about a month, and supplies are coming in to the task force AO rapidly. Soldiers are now receiving four bottles of water per day. Much-needed repair parts are arriving in bulk, too.

"There is a plan to complete the rail line from Bayji to FOB Speicher," said Bennett. "This accomplishment will really improve the supply chain."

Hermanns addressed the plan to issue an additional set of desert camouflage uniforms to soldiers. Mid-August is the projected timeframe.

The conference adjourned and the information with which the commanders departed demonstrate that Task Force Ironhorse continues to maintain, improve and plan for the future.

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News Briefs

AMMAN, Jordan -- Saddam Hussein's daughters, in interviews Friday, expressed deep affection for their father but said they didn't know where he is and that they last saw him a week before the Iraq war started. Raghad Saddam Hussein and Rana Hussein, who received sanctuary a day earlier in Jordan, appeared relaxed as they spoke with CNN and the Arab satellite station Al-Arabiya at a royal palace in Amman, where they are staying with their nine children. Neither would discuss their brothers Odai and Qusai, who were killed in a shootout last week with U.S. forces in northern Iraq. But as for Saddam, Raghad Hussein called him a "very good father" with "a big heart."

WEST GLACIER, Mont.--Firefighters began burning an additional three-mile stretch of dense forest Friday in an attempt to hold back a fire threatening homes and the headquarters of Glacier National Park. Firefighters want to extend the seven-mile fire barrier they burned out on Wednesday and Thursday to remove fuel in front of the main blaze and keep it from reaching West Glacier and park headquarters.

WASHINGTON--Still-secret sections of Congress' Sept. 11 report examine interactions between Saudi businessmen and the royal family that may have intentionally or unwittingly aided al-Qaida or the suicide hijackers, according to people who have seen it. The report suggests that one, and possibly two, Saudi men who encountered the hijackers or their acquaintances were tied to Saudi intelligence and that a Muslim imam in the United States may have been a facilitator for some hijackers, the sources said, speaking only on condition of anonymity.

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — A small airplane with four people aboard crash-landed between two fields where a baseball game and soccer match were in progress. There were no serious injuries. The pilot and two passengers aboard the single-engine Cessna 207 Skywagon, operated by Spernak Airways, were taken to hospitals with minor injuries. The fourth person in the plane, Seth Siver, walked away. No one on the ground was injured in the Thursday night crash. The wreck happened during the third inning of a minor-league game between the Anchorage Bucs and the Fairbanks Goldpanners with about 500 people in attendance.

WASHINGTON -- Gen. Pete Schoomaker was sworn in Friday as the 35th Army chief of staff, the Pentagon said in a statement. As the Army's highest ranking officer, Schoomaker takes the helm of a branch of service that recently saw its leaders clash with -- and ultimately lose to -- Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Schoomaker's predecessor, Gen. Eric K. Shinseki, retired in June after a stormy tenure. He met resistance from Rumsfeld, who did not sign onto Shinseki's vision of transforming the Army.

UNITED NATIONS — North Korea might consider freezing its nuclear program if multilateral talks go well and it receives assurances from the United States that it will not be attacked, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said late Friday. He called for the talks on North Korea's nuclear program to get under way soon. Washington had long pushed for multilateral talks on the international standoff over North Korea's nuclear program. After months of insisting on bilateral talks, the North agreed Thursday to six-way discussions.

SPORTS ZONE

TENNIS—Serena Williams will not defend her U.S. Open title this month after undergoing knee surgery Friday. The world's top-ranked women's player had surgery to repair a partial tear in the mid-portion of the quadriceps tendon of her left knee. Williams will be out 6-to-8 weeks and is expected to make a full recovery, according to Dr. Rodney Gabriel, who performed the surgery. Williams has won singles titles in five of her past six Grand Slam tournaments. She beat older sister Venus in last year's U.S. Open final.

RACING--Rookie Carl Edwards' stretched his gas to the end Friday night to win the Craftsman Truck series Power Stroke Diesel 200 at Indianapolis Raceway Park.

FOOTBALL -- When the Dallas Cowboys travel to Arizona next weekend to play Emmitt Smith and the Cardinals, the NFL's career rushing leader might have some explaining to do to his former teammates. Smith is quoted in the latest edition of *Sports Illustrated* as saying that last season, his 13th and final one in Dallas, "was the worst year I even went through playing football." "Too much damn drama. Too much selfishness by too many guys on the team. Too much media frenzy around the team," Smith said. "People always looking to me for answers, and I didn't have the answers for them about why we were so bad. It felt like being a diamond surrounded by trash."

GOLF -- Tiger Woods threw his hands in the air, smiled and laughed. His eagle from a bunker on his first hole Friday still wasn't nearly enough to close the big gap between himself and Buick Open leader Chris DiMarco, who is 13 under after an 8-under 64 in the rain-delayed second round.

FOOTBALL--Dallas Cowboy running back Ennis Haywood died accidentally from a mixture of drugs and ethanol complicated by his asthma, the Tarrant County medical examiner's office has ruled. "Although the mixed ethanol and drug ingestion was the primary cause of death, a significant condition contributing to the death was bronchial asthma," the office said in a statement issued Friday.

BASEBALL--Aramis Ramirez hit an RBI single in the 14th inning and the Chicago Cubs beat the Arizona Diamondbacks 4-3 Friday in a game that included a three-hour rain delay. Ramirez barely scored on pinch-hitter Troy O'Leary's tying, two-out, two-run double in the 11th. Then in the 14th, Ramirez singled home Sammy Sosa to extend Arizona's team-record road losing streak to 10.