



Ironhorse Desert News

Operation Iraqi Freedom

“Steadfast & Loyal”



16 June 2003

Volume 1 Issue 5

By SPC Derek Dexter

AD DULUIYAH, Iraq -- A half moon shown down over a scattering of rooftops in a city nestled on the edge of Tigris River. The air was thick with humidity, coating the faces of soldiers with sweat as they moved down the streets. Operation Peninsula Strike, one of the largest raids conducted since the end of the ground war in Iraq, was underway.

In a textbook-style, joint operation, the 4th Infantry Division and supporting units from Task Force Ironhorse, concluded an extensive raid on June 12, 2003. Operation Peninsula Strike, involved thousands of soldiers from 4th Infantry Division's 3rd Brigade; the 173rd Airborne Brigade; and 3rd Infantry Division's 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment.

The operation took place in two major stages. The first stage involved moving soldiers and equipment into strike positions, intelligence gathering, and coordination with local police.

During the second stage, soldiers conducted coordinated raids within the target area via land, air and water to capture or destroy terrorist elements. Air assault teams, ground attack forces, raid teams, river patrol boats and local security combined forces to block off escape routes and operate check points and systematically sweep the areas suspected of housing terrorists.

In the early morning hours, coalition forces converged on the city of Ad Duluiyah with the goal of arresting five people on the top 55 most wanted list of former Ba'ath party members and of removing any paramilitary personnel in the area. The operation led to the capture of approximately 400 detainees and the seizure of numerous weapons systems and ammunition. Detainees were screened and questioned, with approximately 60 detainees being released.

Two former Iraqi generals surrendered to military forces during the raids. MG Abul Ali Jasmin, Secretary of Defense Ministry, and BG Abdullah Ali Jasmin, Head of the Iraqi Military Academy, are now being detained and questioned.

During the operation, the 1/8th Infantry Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, worked hand-in-hand with the 720th Military Police Battalion scouring the streets and looking for people attempting to escape by vehicle. Infantrymen, MPs, and combat engineers conducted house searches in targeted areas. Members of the 57th Aviation and 159th Aviation Battalions provided air support.

“This is an area where a lot of violence against U.S. troops is originating from,” said LTC Philip Battaglia, commanding officer, 1/8th Infantry. “What we wanted to do was [establish] a presence and maintain a [level of] security, which I think we have done.”

During the operation, four U.S. soldiers were injured and evacuated out of the area and are listed in stable condition. There were no U.S. soldiers killed during the operation. Two hostile Iraqi civilians were wounded, treated and sent to medical facilities.

“The soldiers did magnificently,” said Battaglia. “They seized the objectives they were assigned and did it extremely well.”

The success of Operation Peninsula Strike marks a significant step forward in the ongoing journey toward a safe, secure and free Iraq.



Senior leaders look over a model of Operation Peninsula Strike.

Grand Opening Camp Ironhorse PX

By CPL Gabe Nix

CAMP IRONHORSE, TIKRIT, Iraq – What does an air defense artillery battalion do when the threat it encounters changes from air to ground?

The 1st Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery Regiment from Fort Hood, Texas, has been tasked with providing force protection for the combat brigades of the 4th Infantry Division. The focus for the 1/44th is now aimed at ground objectives and its soldiers have adjusted quickly to their new assignment.

“It was a compliment when the commanding general tasked us with the mission,” said LTC Rick Starkey, battalion commander. The 1/44th has a big job, but Starkey said it’s up to the challenge.

“The Division’s footprint is our footprint. More than 550 of our soldiers are out in the brigades, working hard every day providing protection,” said Starkey.

The 1/44th has had a big impact on the Tikrit area, as well. According to Starkey, the 1/44th is responsible for several force protection improvements at Camp Ironhorse, Camp Speicher, and around the city of Taji.

Camp Ironhorse improvements include fortifying the front gate with additional layers of concertina wire and extra bunkers, as well as implementing an alert system for the compound.

Other force protection measures include patrols and raids that resulted in the capture of over 80 Enemy Prisoners of War and destruction of four tons of enemy ammunition.

Not only is force protection a priority with 1/44th, the safety of individual soldiers is also stressed and practiced. According to Starkey, there have been no injuries during their patrols.

The battalion provides greater flexibility for the combat brigades as well. Brigades are able to keep more of their combat assets to perform their missions, because the 1/44th carries more of the force protection roles for them.

“Force protection is our highest priority. We do so many things at Camp Ironhorse, but protecting our soldiers is most important,” said 1/44th CSM Lloyd Coley.

The ADA battalion also operated Tactical Assembly Area Ironhorse, a rest and refueling stop along the main supply route from Kuwait. “More than 600 vehicles passed through our assembly area while we were operating TAA Ironhorse,” said Starkey.

Even with the additional roles, 1/44th manages to perform some of its primary air defense mission by providing air pictures for all of the brigades’ Tactical Operations Centers.

As if the 1/44th didn’t have enough responsibility, the battalion also has the title of “mayor” for Camp Ironhorse. That means the 1/44th is responsible for the lodging, utilities and water-level maintenance of the lake.

The 1/44th also coordinates all of the duties involved with opening Soldiers’ Inn, an R & R center for soldiers located at Camp Ironhorse. According to Coley, soldiers will be able to spend up to four days away from normal duty locations to recharge at the facility.

While the ADA battalion’s soldiers perform many jobs, their marksmanship skills remain on target. “Soldiers shoot at slower targets now—ground instead of aircraft,” said Starkey.



Top: SPC Don Bowick, a PX volunteer, stocks soda in a cooler;

Center: SGT Christina Stewart runs the cash register, while a customer readies his cash.

Bottom: Soldiers line up outside the PX waiting for their turn inside

By SPC Derek Dexter

TIKRIT, Iraq -- In an effort to help the citizens of Tikrit and the soldiers of Task Force Ironhorse, CSM Gary McElligott, 418th Civil Affairs Battalion, reached an agreement with the local directors of sewage and water.

The agreement calls for the Army to help fix one of the city’s sewage trucks, which has been broken since March. In return, the city will send the truck to Camp Ironhorse to clean out the compounds’ septic tanks.

Another city truck is already making stops at the compound, but the second truck will ensure all buildings are regularly serviced. The trucks will pay visits twice a week and cost \$50.00 per trip. McElligott is waiting on a list of necessary parts and labor costs to begin the work on the truck.

After much discussion and a short drive to inspect the broken-down truck, McElligott said he felt the missions was accomplish; the city will be better able to remove waste-water from its streets and soldiers will have better living conditions.

Task Force News

By MSG Dave Johnson

CAMP IRONHORSE, TIKRIT, Iraq – CSMs love soldiers, especially those who volunteer for every mission that needs to be completed. When those soldiers come from a single unit, soaring accolades and a reputation for being reliable soon follows. Unique names are sometimes created to describe such units.

“The O Team--I can count on those guys to do any job, complete high-risk missions, do them right, and come back and ask for more,” said SGM Michael R. Urich, 4th Infantry Division’s G3 Operation’s SGM.

According to SSG Barry Graham, a tanker from the Ohio National Guard, the nickname ‘O Team’ was coined by Urich because all the guys in the unit are from Ohio and they exhibit a strong camaraderie and displayed so much enthusiasm.

Urich is not the only 4th ID member to notice the synchronized solidarity and dedication to duty displayed by the Ohio National Guard soldiers.

“Teamwork,” said Donnie Robinson, Sr., civilian safety specialist, 4th ID. “Those guys are team players. That’s why I call them the Ohio Players.”

Whether they work under the name O Team or Ohio Players, these soldiers are highly regarded when it comes to accomplishing any and all assigned missions. The soldiers were selected to be LNOs (Liaison Officers) for the 4th ID because of their combat operations training. All the Ohio soldiers are either infantry or tankers.

“LNOs are the conduit between the combat brigades and the Division,” said Graham. “They are information gatherers, and plot important information on the maps.” Graham is from C Troop, 2nd Squadron, 107th Cavalry Regiment from Sandusky, Ohio.

Forty-two soldiers volunteered to become LNOs for 4th ID when the call came just after Christmas, 2002. Because 4th ID filled some of the LNO positions for Operation Iraqi Freedom internally, there were 15 soldiers who were not used strictly as LNOs. Those 15 were not about to be left out of any operation. They volunteered for every mission and task they could. The soldiers started by providing armed escorts for convoys.

When vehicles broke down during convoys from Kuwait to Iraq and required quick repairs, O Team jumped in and repaired Humvees and five-ton trucks, without Army-issued tool kits or spare parts.

Many Reserve and Guard soldiers bring civilian-acquired skills to the Army and the O Team in no exception. Not only were they force protection experts, but also skilled computer technicians, vehicle mechanics, forklift drivers, plumbers, and electricians.

“We’re handymen,” said Graham. “We help people when we can. We don’t quit until we get everything working,” said Graham, as he tinkered with an air conditioner. ”

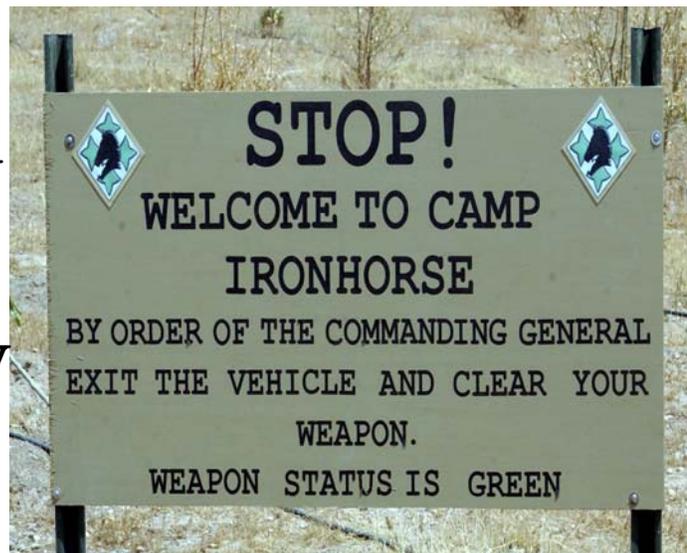
Most buildings on the Camp Ironhorse complex needed repairs and basic utilities. Calls for the O Team soon rang out. “It kind of snowballed on us,” said SSG William T. Ryan, an electrician by trade. “I do a lot of things in the buildings now. I’ve learned a lot that will help me in my civilian job in Cleveland.”

Now firmly settled at Camp Ironhorse, the O Team performs a myriad of operations. “Our guys are motivated,” said Soblosky. “You can throw that term, ‘weekend warrior’ out the window,” said Robinson. “These guys show so much competence and enthusiasm for their jobs. And they have so many additional skills, they’re invaluable to us.”

The Ohio National Guard has made its mark on the 4th ID, and left its signature all over the palace grounds once occupied by Saddam Hussein in central Iraq.



Clear
Your
Weapon



Task Force News



SSG Isidro Beley, 2nd Platoon, 38th Engineer Company, places a bolt in one of the cross members of the Mabey-Johnson bridge over the Tigris River.



SPC Jared Medrano, 2nd Platoon, 38th Engineer Company, waits to place a pin into a section of the Mabey-Johnson bridge.

The system she and her soldiers are using to span the gaps is a civilian bridge used widely all over the world. It is made by Maybe-Johnson and is typically used as a temporary bridge while repairs are made to the main structure. In this case, the Maybe-Johnson Compact 200 will be a permanent fixture to the bridge.

"It will last just as long as traditional bridging methods," said Robert Rayman, a civilian technician with Maybe Bridge and Shore hired by the Army to help soldiers with the installation.

"We spent a lot of time training," said SGT Christopher Davis. "It has really paid off. (The Army) brought down people from Maybe-Johnson and trained the noncommissioned officers and upper specialists how to build the bridge and how to do site layouts and prep the site."

Davis' only complaint, along with SSG Isidro Beley's, was the worksite area was too restrictive. Railing lined each side of the bridge, which limited the swing of the large crane used to maneuver bridge panels. Also, there was no room to down load all the building materials, so they had to be brought up one truckload at a time.

Fortunately, the bridge was closed to vehicles; only pedestrians and the occasional goat were allowed to cross. All traffic was directed across a military float bridge constructed weeks earlier in a combined effort by engineers from Fort Hood, Texas, Fort Polk, La., and from Hanau, Germany.

Despite the training, the on-site guidance, and the 24-hour work cycle, the process took longer than expected. Not only did soldiers have to contend with a restricted worksite, but also daytime temperatures averaging over 100 degrees.

"The heat and sun are the most challenging part and wearing all our gear," said SPC Jared Medrano, a bridge builder with 2nd Platoon. "Everything else is a piece of cake. Everyone knows his or her jobs.

By SSG Craig Pickett

TIKRIT, Iraq—After many days of working under the scorching sun and moonlit nights, members of the 38th Engineer Co., from Hanau, Germany, completed their work on the Tikrit Bridge.

During the early stages of the war, the Air Force bombed Saddam Hussein's palatial grounds and left two gaping holes in the nearby bridge over the Tigris River. It is the only crossing for 60 kilometers north or south of the city.

Before repairs were made eastbound traffic had been using the left lane and westbound traffic used the sidewalk. Pedestrians took their chances on either side.

The engineers were tasked with repairing the bridge for local traffic use and for ensuring it could handle a military load class of 70. In other words, it needed to be able to bear the load of an M1A1 Abrams tank.

For 2LT Viki Binstock, the officer in charge of the bridge project, the biggest challenge was the stringer bearings. These support the weight of the entire bridge and had been damaged at each blast site. It took four, 35-ton jacks to lift the bridge and fabricate new bearings that would support the repairs and future traffic, she explained.

Task Force News

By SSG Craig Pickett

TIKRIT, Iraq—An entire family of mechanics moved into the maintenance area at the Division Support Element (DSE); there is not a traditional mom or dad, but a family nonetheless. They are members of Charlie Co., 704th Division Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Division from Fort Hood, Texas.

“We all work together as a family,” explained SGT Billie Wesseling. “We all have our quirks and we have our days; but if one person is down, we lift them up and if someone has a problem, we all have a problem.”

Wesseling says that’s why they work so well together. They rely on each other and everyone is willing to work with everyone else to get the job done. And jobs are aplenty, explained SFC Donald Williams Jr., non-commissioned officer in charge of the section.

“We’re servicing about 130 vehicles, anywhere from five-ton trucks to generators,” said Williams. “The command put a priority on maintenance, and they have been good at keeping us off details so we can focus on maintenance.”

With a crew of only seven, Williams said every last one of them is busy. “Air conditioning is always going out with this heat, and we have to keep the generators up 24 hours a day.”

Air conditioning mechanic, SPC James Brander, said the number of jobs could be overwhelming; he deals with it by taking it one job at a time. Brander also relies on his family members, like SPC Ruben Ramirez. Even though Ramirez is a generator mechanic, Brander knows he is a whiz at electrical things and has him help him when he’s stuck on a job.

There is another force at work on this family of mechanics. Not only do they rely on each other, they continually assess their situation and try to make it better. “What keeps us focused and our heads above water is a positive mental attitude,” said Williams. “We constantly improve our working and living conditions. These things keep our motivation up.”

This effort can be seen in their office area. The family pulled together and erected a tent over an expando-van and acquired a swing somewhere along the way. With a couple plastic chairs and a few palm leaves thrown in for affect, they have a cozy area for customers to wait while their vehicles are being repaired.

The team recently pulled together again and acquired two ceiling fans and installed them in their living quarters. They have already fabricated a window air conditioning unit and a small corner shower.

Future plans include a picket fence and maybe some flowers said Williams. Ramirez said he has more amenities here than he usually does in other field settings. That’s why the generator mechanic has no complaints when they come and wake him up at 2 a.m.

“This is the best deployment I’ve been on,” said Ramirez.

By SPC Derek Dexter

TIKRIT, Iraq –It’s late at night, but not everyone in the city of Tikrit is asleep. While some may be businessmen who are getting ready for the next workday, others moving about in the dark have less peaceful intentions. Members of the 64th Military Police Company from Fort Hood, Texas, are also awake and are on patrol to help keep the soldiers and residents of Tikrit safe.

“Our job is to check out anything suspicious,” said SPC Kenny Cox, a military policeman with the 64th. “We also have the right to pull over cars.” Cox said the MPs respond to calls, mortar fire or small arms fire.

The MPs patrol the city day and night, looking for Ba’ath Party members. Cox said they tend to drive “high value cars” such as BMWs or Mercedes. When the MP’s spot a suspicious vehicle they search it for weapons, ammunition, cell phones, or other contraband.

According to Cox, cell phones are confiscated to try to prevent communication between Ba’ath party members. When contraband is found, the person is given a receipt for their item and then detained for questioning by MPs, or counterintelligence personnel.

SPC Kevin Martin, also an MP with the 64th, said some nights the sound of small arms, grenades, and possibly mortar fire can be heard. “There’s no such thing as a routine night. Something different happens every night out here on patrol,” he said.

Cox added “It’s just hit and run. It’s to see how fast we can respond. They’ve been doing it for over a month now.” The key to being safe, the MPs agree, is being vigilant. “You can never get to the point where you don’t think you’ll get fired upon,” said Martin. “Because when it does happen, then you won’t be expecting it.”

Despite the danger and challenge of the mission, both MPs agree being out on patrol is worth the risk. “I feel like I’ve accomplished something every night, even if we don’t see anything,” said Cox.

“It’s the kids,” said Martin. He added seeing the kids excited about seeing American soldiers and knowing the United States helped them to get a better life made it worthwhile.



PFC Miki Barkley, a gunner with 64th MP Co., listens to the radio while on guard patrol.

Task Force News



Above: A mother and her children wait to see the doctor at Tikrit Hospital

Upper Right: An Iraqi baby suffering with diarrhea rests under the watchful eyes of its mother.

Right: An Iraqi mother comforts her baby. The Public Health Team, 418th Civil Affairs Battalion, helped re-open the Tikrit Hospital for the community.

By MSG Dave Johnson

TIKRIT, Iraq -- On May 24th, the Tikrit Hospital reopened its doors to patients. Babies were crying, and mothers were smiling as their children received much-needed care. Doctors were working in their specialties and practicing medicine for the first time in two months.

The Public Health Team of the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion from Belton, Mo., coordinated payments and labor to get the hospital running again. The windows were broken during the war, so a sterile environment was impossible to maintain until repairs were made.

Not only was there structural damage, but there were added problems because the former Iraqi Government had not paid the staff for months.

"Staffing the hospital was a problem," said SSG Dustin M. Graybill, non-commissioned officer in charge of the Public Health Team.

According to Graybill, the hospital had been providing only limited emergency care, staffed by volunteers who worked without pay. Even before the war, doctors who belonged to the Ba'ath Party were paid incentives. Doctors who were not party members were paid a rate of approximately \$30 per month.

The Civil Affairs Public Health Team members went to the Iraqi banks to coordinate getting the staff paid. The banks had to unfreeze government assets to make payments. Now that the staff is being paid again, the 418th is working with OCPA (Office of Coalition Provisional Authority) to increase doctors' pay.

Getting the medical staff paid solved many problems, but making repairs to the hospital was also imperative to its reopening.

"We pull from all our assets to get help where it is needed," said Graybill. "We get Army engineers and Iraqi civilians to help. The civilians volunteered to do most of the repair work on the hospital."

According to Graybill, the doctors are elated to be in business again and are looking forward to a close relationship with the United States to improve conditions and medical care for the local populace.

The past two months have been difficult for the Iraqi people, but thanks to the combined efforts of the United States Army and local civilians, the future holds hope.

News Briefs

SEOUL, South Korea — The United States agreed Thursday to dismantle bases and withdraw American troops from positions they have occupied for decades near the tense Demilitarized Zone separating South Korea from communist North Korea. The troops will eventually be moved to "hub bases" at least 75 miles south of the Demilitarized Zone, according to a joint statement after two days of talks between U.S. and South Korean officials. Even after the redeployment, U.S. troops will continue to train north of Seoul and close to the DMZ, the statement said.

AGABAH, Jordan — Three leaders, three substantive, even somewhat startling statements of determination to see a settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict finally concluded. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas and U.S. President George Bush infused their words with optimism after concluding their first summit meeting in the Jordanian city of Aqaba on Wednesday. But their words are being scrutinized and deconstructed by Jews, Arabs and Americans with myriad opinions on how and even if the conflict should end.

WASHINGTON— Attorney General John Ashcroft urged Congress on Thursday to expand the USA Patriot Act to permit the government to hold more suspects indefinitely and to extend the death penalty to more people accused of terrorist crimes.

ETHIOPIA--Scientists have unearthed three 160,000-year-old human skulls in Ethiopia that are the oldest known and best-preserved fossils of modern humans' immediate predecessors. The nearly complete skulls of an adult male and a child and the partial skull of a second adult appear to represent a crucial stage of human evolution when the facial features of modern humans arose...

BAGHDAD, Iraq – U.S. jets bombed what the military called "a terrorist training camp" in central Iraq on Thursday, while ground forces pressed forward with a massive sweep north of Baghdad aimed at finding militants organizing attacks on occupation forces...

HOUSTON, Texas – David Brinkley died Wednesday night at his home in Houston. He was 82. Considered by many to be the premier broadcast journalist of his time, Brinkley covered every president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt. His career spanned more than 50 years, most of it in Washington, much of it spent hosting what became a Sunday morning staple, ABCNEWS' *This Week With David Brinkley*

Few People Likely to Escape Higher Taxes – Fines, fees, surcharges, taxes: Whatever you call it, the bottom line is that cash-strapped states are seeking billions of new dollars from their citizens, enough to potentially double the load of new taxes this year and erase much of the windfall American taxpayers enjoyed in the 1990s...

SPORTS ZONE

HOCKEY--Goaltender Martin Brodeur captured the silverware he really wanted --the Stanley Cup -- on Monday when his Devils shutout the Mighty Ducks in Game 7. As a finalist for the Hart and Vezina Trophies, he'll have the chance to add to his trophy case at the annual NHL Awards Show. ESPN analysts pick their winners from this year's crop of candidates.

BASKETBALL--If the action of the NBA Finals isn't going to be pretty, it should at least be intense, Ric Bucher writes. In the Nets' 77-76 win over the Spurs Wednesday, tempers flared, giving us something to watch other than heinous hoops.

BASEBALL--It was 65 years ago that Johnny Vander Meer began what may be the game's greatest feat: back-to-back no-hitters. Tim Kurkjian writes major-league history is littered with no-nos that are simply inexplicable, like Wednesday's astonishing Astros' tag-team effort over the Yankees.

FOOTBALL -- Barret Robbins was stepping on the field Thursday with his teammates at Raiders' minicamp. The next step will be proving to them that he can still play, writes Ray Ratto. Earlier, in an exclusive interview, Robbins talked with ESPN's Andrea Kremer about what caused him to go AWOL and miss the biggest game of his life, Super Bowl XXXVII.

AUTO RACING--Oh, Canada. Formula One heads to Montreal this weekend for Sunday's Canadian Grand Prix at Gilles Villeneuve, where Jacques Villeneuve will look to better his fortune at his home track. The 32-year-old Quebec native is struggling with BAR, and it's no certainty that the 1997 Formula One champ will return to the team next season.

GOLF-- Brett Quigley (-5) has a one-shot lead over Justin Leonard and Jay Don Blake in the first-round of the U.S. Open. Tom Watson (-2), Jim Furyk (-2) and Ernie Els (-1) are also under par. Tiger Woods is five shots back at even par

TENNIS-- Hard-serving Andy Roddick, the No. 3 seed, showed he is ready to compete on grass as he and top-seeded Lleyton Hewitt played through their struggles to reach the quarterfinals at the Queen's Club, a Wimbledon tuneup. No. 2 seed Andre Agassi won easily.

HORSE RACING--One week after winning the 135th Belmont Stakes with Empire Maker, trainer Bobby Frankel will start Met Mile winner Aldebaran in Saturday's \$750,000 Stephen Foster Handicap. The son of Mr. Prospector, who is making his first start over a mile on the dirt, will face nine others, including Mineshaft, who dominated in the May 16 Pimlico Special.

Change of Command



LTC Aubrey Garner receives the battalion colors from COL Fred Rudesheim during a change of command ceremony at Tuz Airfield. LTC Richard Piscal passed the mantel of command for 1/68th Armor Regiment to LTC Aubrey Garner.



LTC Catherine Reese accepts the battalion colors from CSM Diedra Jones during a change of command ceremony for the 704th Division Support Battalion. LTC Terence Hermans relinquished command during the event held at an airfield North of Tikrit, Iraq.

Soldiers' Inn Movies



- 16 Jun The Rookie
- 17 Jun A Beautiful Mind
- 18 Jun American Graffiti
- 19 Jun Maid in Manhattan
- 20 Jun Red Dragon
- 21 Jun Mob Justice
- 22 Jun Urban Crossfire
- 23 Jun Ice Age
- 24 Jun K-9 P.I.

Shows Begin at 8:00 p.m.

Religious Services Sunday

- Protestant- 9:30 a.m.
- LDS- Noon - DFAC
- Gospel- 11:00 a.m.
- Catholic- 1:00 p.m.

Friday

- Jewish- 7:30 p.m.
- Muslim 12:25 p.m.

Wednesday

- Prayer & Praise
6:30 p.m.
- Bible Study
7:00 p.m.

Happy 228th Birthday Army!



CSM Charles Fuss (left) and MG Raymond Odierno cut the cake at the Army Birthday Celebration held at the Ironhorse Soldiers' Center



CSM Charles Fuss (right) leads the group in singing a rousing medley of Army songs during the celebration.



Soldiers join in singing a Happy 228th Birthday tribute to the Army on June 14.

Local Happenings