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CG: Mission Continues

2nd BCT feeds Fallujah

Medics treat Habbaniyah citizens

Dam decision pushed back

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On the cover: Physicians Assistant 1st Lt. Monica Casmaer, C Co., 26th Forward Support Battalion (attached to 4-64 AR), treats patients in the village of Saqlawis – a suburb of Habbaniyah, July 8. Photo by Spc. Mason T. Lowery.

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CG: Mission continues

Army working hard to relieve 3ID

MSG EMMA KROUSER
3ID (M) PA NCOIC

With attacks against coalition forces increasing throughout Iraq, 3rd Infantry Division soldiers have been tasked to stay a little longer to help stabilize the country.

"For the spouses back home, I wish I could send their soldiers home — all of them home right now, but we cannot until our mission's finished here," said Maj. Gen. Buford C. Blount III, commanding general. "The Army is working very hard to get a replacement unit in here to take our place. As soon as that unit is here, we'll be rotating our soldiers back home."

File Photo

L. Paul Bremer, chief administrator in Iraq, and Maj. Gen. Buford C. Blount, commanding general, 3rd INf. Div. (Mech.), review mission locations on a map of Baghdad.

Although soldiers and families must endure separation a little longer, the division is working to try to close the communication gap.

"In realizing that communications with the families is very important, we're pushing more satellite phones down to each of the battalions," Blount said. "Additionally, about 10 days ago we started video teleconferencing. We devoted the military VTC to soldiers so they can see and talk with their families back at Fort Stewart and Hunter."

Another initiative the division is working on to keep families in touch with each other is a high-speed Internet satellite connectivity for each battalion. They are also getting more computers so more soldiers will have access and won't have to wait in long lines, according to Blount.

"This will enable soldiers to better communicate with their families back in the states, so they can get on the Internet and e-mail their families," he said.

While concentrating on helping soldiers communicate with family members is a high priority, so is morale, welfare and recreation for soldiers, according to Blount.

"Fifty to sixty percent of the soldiers have air conditioning in their living area and we will work to ensure air conditioning is installed everywhere we can," he said.

Another option is taking a short respite to another country. According to Blount, Central Command and the Coalition Joint Task Force – 7 have developed a program that will allow the division to send about 100 soldiers each week down to Qatar.

"We will fly the soldiers down and they will have four days off where they will be able to swim and scuba dive and go to a movie and eat in restaurants," he said. "This will allow them to get off the battlefield and get down there to rest and relax. We will be doing that throughout the division."

Improving meals and getting a variety of foods is also a top priority for the division.

"We're working hard to improve the rations. All our food is brought in from Kuwait," Blount added. "But soldiers are getting fresh fruit and they are getting one or two hot meals every day."

A couple of months ago, we had some water problems. We got those solved, now we have more bottled water for the soldiers, and plenty of ice for the soldiers, Blount said.

A lot of emphasis has been placed on when the division is going to redeploy. This has caused many soldiers and family members some disappointments.

"What the division and the coalition have done in liberating Iraq can all be lost if we pulled out now," Blount explained. "So we've got to stay and make sure that the democracy that's being set up in Iraq is successful."

Blount said that no dates are set yet and that he won't put dates out until the division is on its way back to Kuwait. "Then we'll start making some announcements," he said.

Leaders are working hard to keep morale up. It's important that soldiers understand why they're here and the importance of it (the mission), and that the Army is working hard to get them back home, according to Blount.

"It's understandable that the soldiers are disappointed. It's to be expected," Blount said while re-emphasizing that they're well trained and they have good leaders.

"They understand we're in a combat zone here, and there's still fighting going on," he said. "I am very proud of the job they do every day."

2nd BCT soldiers set out to feed Fallujah's needy

SPC. KATHERINE ROBINSON
50th PAD

FALLUJAH, Iraq – Winning hearts and minds … and feeding empty stomachs was 2nd Brigade Combat Team's focus when the BCT soldiers delivered thousands of frozen chickens to mosques in the Fallujah area.

Task Force 3-15 Inf. kicked off the three-day operation on July 14, delivering 2,000 chickens and canned meat to 20 mosques to be redistributed among the people. On July 15, Task Force 1-64 took over the mission, and on July 16, Task Force 4-64 took it to Habbaniyah.

The first day, 3-15 soldiers drove a refrigerator truck full of chickens from Baghdad to Fallujah, where the frozen fowl was moved into their interpreter's trucks for delivery.

The soldiers broke up in teams and, trucks packed with poultry, headed out to the neighborhood mosques.

When the delivery trucks arrived at the mosques, soldiers waited outside while the interpreter's delivered the chickens – they didn't enter the mosques out of respect for the wishes of the imams.

Spc. Katherine Robinson

1st Lt. Robert Woodruff, HHC, 3-15 Inf., hands an Iraqi a box of frozen chicken.

At most places the chickens were dropped off without a hitch, but there were a small group of imams who refused to accept the gifts.

"We'll eat rocks. We don't want your chickens," one imam told Sgt. Jason McGinn, a 346th Psychological Operations Company soldier, who led one of the delivery teams.

The people did seem to like rocks, since at another location, crowds of little children threw them at the soldiers driving by.

At another mosque, the imam was more polite, but still refused the 100 chickens the soldiers were offering. He said he didn't want to be blamed if there were any problems redistributing them.

"There are some people who like us and there are some who don't," McGinn said. "But the majority of people in Fallujah like us, and are very appreciative of what we are doing and are very grateful.

"It doesn't hurt our feelings. It's unfortunate because they're hurting their own people more than helping them," he added.

McGinn and his soldiers discussed delivering the chickens to the people directly, but at the translator's suggestion, took the issue to the mayor's cell instead. Eventually they decided to send the undelivered chickens back to the mosques with the interpreters, in hopes that the imams would be more willing to accept if soldiers weren't around.

As long as the food gets to Fallujah's needy citizens, the mission is a success, regardless of the delivery method, McGinn said.

"It's a slow process winning hearts and minds, but we're getting there," he said.

Infantrymen mourn loss of fellow paratrooper

SPC. JASON B. BAKER
49th PAD (Abn.)

The 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment mourned the loss of a fellow paratrooper with a memorial ceremony at the Battalion's headquarters July 11.

The paratroopers fondly remembered the friendship and personality of Spc. Chad L. Keith, 21, Batesville, Ind. Keith not only leaves behind his "airborne brothers," but also his brother, two sisters and parents back in Indiana.

The majority of the battalion's paratroopers stoically stood in formation at the steps of a large columned entryway of a former Ba'ath Party home, waiting for the start of the solemn ceremony.

The ceremony began with an invocation by Chaplain (Capt.) Edward Jackson, followed by Keith's Company Commander, Capt. Orlando Cosme, Company D, 2nd Bn., 325th AIR. Cosme's words were a testimony to Keith's ability to make a quick impression on those who had the chance to meet him.

"From the first day I met him I always called him 'Ranger Keith,'" Cosme said.

Cosme's nickname for Keith matched the soldier's ambition. Keith's goal was to become a Ranger, and he was making strides toward that goal when he was deployed.

Keith was attending the 82nd Airborne Division Pre-Ranger Course at Fort Bragg, when he was injured. Determined to earn the black and gold tab, Keith recovered from the injury and re-applied for PRC.

He had to wait a little longer to achieve his goal when he received the order to deploy.

Keith continued to express his desire to go to Ranger school and told Cosme he looked forward to going back and adding the tab to his Combat Infantryman's Badge and combat patch he would earn with his service here.

"He never gave up," Cosme said. "And he always insured he remained above the standards in every aspect. From (National Training Center) to Baghdad he strived to success.

"… Sgt Keith you are the Ranger you were always meant to be."

Sgt. James Christen, Co. D, 2nd Bn. 325th, AIR, Keith's best friend, reminded those in attendance that he will always be a friend to those who knew him.

"He was a man that leaves a lasting impression," Christen said. "Chad is the kind of guy, whenever you saw him you needed to say what's up to."

Christen reminded specific members of his platoon of their relationship with the fallen paratrooper. For one soldier it was the nights they spent at the club and for another he was a guy who always offered some good advice.

"For me," Christen said. "He was the man who introduced me to my wife and he is the best friend I've ever had."

Keith's life was lost during a night patrol through the Al Doura district of Baghdad. Keith was manning the MK-19 on the lead vehicle of a convoy when an explosive device was detonated about a meter off the road, ejecting and killing him.

Decision on dam generation pushed back

SPC. JACOB BOYER
3ID (M) PAO

Representatives from the Iraqi Ministries of Irrigation and Electricity and coalition forces decided to continue the Hadithah Dam's current amount of power generation at a meeting July 10.

The dam, which is currently the sole source of power for the Al Lumbar Province, may have to cut back on the amount of water it allows through its generators, said Col. Ed Cardon, commander, Engineer Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division (Mech). Less water will mean less electricity for the district, but Iraqis are unsure if they will have enough water for irrigation and other uses if too much is drained from the reservoir. The situation will be reevaluated at a meeting July 24.

"You have to have some water in reserve for irrigation," Cardon said. "And, they are concerned that if the dam continues to generate at the current level, they won't have enough."

Hadithah Dam has been generating more power than normal in recent months because of damage to electric lines throughout the country, Cardon said. The Al Lumbar Province stretches from western Baghdad to Iraq's western borders, and includes Ar Ramadi, Al Fallujah and several other small to mid-size cities. It normally draws power from plants in Baghdad as well as the dam. Iraqis in the region are currently getting power only 12 hours a day, and that situation could get worse.

Spc. Jacob Boyer

The Hadithah Dam is currently generating more power than normal, drawing down water reserves for irrigation in the region.

"The electric grid here is damaged to the point where the only power comes from the dam," he said. "If the dam has to reduce power, it's possible some cities in the region may not get any power at all. With the power they are getting now, the factories are unable to run."

Putting the decision off for two weeks will allow the Ministry of Electricity more time to try to repair the lines from Baghdad, Cardon said. It will also enable them to improve the quality of the power.

"Right now, there is no steady voltage or frequency to the power the people are getting," he said. "When that happens, things don't work well and equipment can be damaged. They need surge protectors for everything. They're working on a load-shed plan that will allow them to get extra megawatts from the power they're drawing now."

Help may also come in the form of more water for the reservoir, Cardon said. Either rain or more water flow from upriver nations like Syria and Turkey could help solve the problem, but both would take time.

Government support links Fallujah, 2nd BCT

SPC. KATHERINE ROBINSON
50th PAD

They speak different languages. Their cultures are worlds and centuries apart. But with open hearts and minds, the Iraqi citizens and coalition forces are not finding it difficult to work together.

Capt. John Ives, 2nd Brigade Combat Team's government support team leader spends his days at the Mayor's office, acting as a liaison between 2nd BCT, Mayor Taha Bedawi and the citizens of Fallujah.

"We (the government support team) handle everything from the smallest claims and complaints against U.S. forces, to ensuring the mayor's policies are looked at, identified and acted upon," Ives said.

Made up of 15 soldiers, including engineers who handle contract issues, the team also helps identify key figures in the community, keep up good relations with the local population, and make sure 2nd BCT commander's policies are effectively relayed to the mayor and the city's citizens, he added.

Ives and his team listen to all the concerns of the Fallujah residents and try to help them. There are some complaints he can do nothing about but offer his sympathy – such as complaints that tanks and Bradleys are too loud – but Ives said he deals with all issues as quickly as possible. Once he finds out something is wrong, he immediately brings it to the attention of Col. Joseph P. DiSalvo, 2nd BCT commander, so a remedy can begin.

"Because of that … they feel they can ask me anything, and tell me anything and in turn I feel the same about them, so we have a great working relationship now," Ives said.

Spc. Katherine Robinson

Capt. John Ives, government support team leader and Deputy Mayor Hussein Ali talk about areas in the city that need security guards.

"When we first got to town, there was still minor looting going on," Ives explained. The first day he walked into the mayor's office, Bedawi told him about a certain number of buildings being looted daily, and asked, "What can you do to help?"

"That's easy," Ives said. He called the commander, at the time Col. David G. Perkins, and arranged for quick reaction teams to be placed in the areas near the buildings until units began to patrol those areas.

"The looting stopped, and the mayor was incredibly surprised and excited by that," Ives said.

"(Ives) is a very good officer," said Fallujah's Deputy Mayor, Hussein Ali. "He's intelligent and he does his work in a super way."

Ives' campaign to win hearts and minds stretches beyond the mayor's cell, to people he's never met, Ali said. "So many families in Fallujah know his name although they didn't see him because he is dealing with our people in a very good way, so they tell their families and neighbors … people tell me, 'please give him our wishes.'"

Fallujah police request independence

SPC. KATHERINE ROBINSON
50th PAD

FALLUJAH, Iraq – Twenty five to 30 Fallujah police officers gathered outside the mayor's office July 10, requesting more equipment and more independence from American forces.

In a meeting with Deputy Mayor Hussein Ali and 2nd Brigade Combat Team's government support team leader, Capt. John Ives, the police representatives said the police feel American presence in their department may pose a danger to them as well as soldiers.

They said the Fallujah police are ready and capable of keeping the city safe without too much help from American forces.

The police requested that coalition forces leave the police station and allow the Fallujah police to patrol the streets themselves instead of jointly with military police. They also requested more vehicles so they could patrol more frequently and they asked that the military have a quick reaction team on call in case the police needed assistance with anything.

Spc. Katherine Robinson

A group of Fallujah police officers gather peacefully outside the mayor's office.

"Give us a chance," said police chief Brig. Gen. Riyadh Abbas Abdullatif Karbool through an interpreter. "We are grateful, you have done well. Now see what we can do. If we need you we will call you and we are sure you will be here in five minutes."

Karbool added that the demonstration was in no way anti-American or anti-coalition and it is in fact, a healthy step for new Iraq that the people feel they can speak their mind.

"I think this is a wonderful indicator of where we want Iraq to be," Ives said. "I think it's wonderful that they feel they can come talk to us.

"I completely respect their decision and I will talk to the colonel," he added.

Ives did bring the issue to the attention of Col. Joseph P. DiSalvo, 2nd Brigade Combat Team commander shortly after the demonstration.

"It really wasn't a demonstration," DiSalvo said. "They were just saying they are happy with the equipment we've given them, and they could use more, especially vehicles and we know that. They are anxious to be self-sufficient."

While granting some of these requests may take some time, DiSalvo said once American forces can get more equipment – including radios and weapons – there is no reason the police force shouldn't be completely self-sufficient.

Ives said the goal is to give the city entirely to the people. "This is a good, honorable city. The people are good people … I just want to make sure the police are safe."

DIVENG turns contracting over to Iraqis

SPC. JACOB BOYER
3ID (M) PAO

The reconstruction of Fallujah turned a corner July 12 when Engineer Brigade turned responsibility for choosing and monitoring contractors doing work in the city over to local Iraqis.

Although the brigade will continue to disburse money for municipal projects in the area, a team of three Iraqi engineers will now help the mayor prioritize the jobs and monitor those doing them, said Maj. Clint Pendergast, operations officer, Engineer Brigade.

"We decided it was a good time to turn over this part of the operation because we'd completed most of the easy, quick-fix contracts for the city," he said. "As the projects get bigger, Iraqis need to monitor the quality control of their construction projects.

"The engineers will be responsible for all aspects of choosing jobs and contractors to do them, Pendergast said. Engineer Brigade's Contracting and Infrastructure Repair Team has been acting in that capacity since early June, but the goal is to eventually turn all of their services over to the people.

"With them taking over, we will train them in fair business practices for contractors, issuing work orders and receiving bids and ensuring they get out and check the contractors' work for quality," he said. "We feel that this is an important step as we prepare the Iraqi people to run an Iraqi system of government."

The city's mayor, Taha Bedewi Hameed, chose the engineers, who went to work immediately.

"We want to check the contracts to limit the errors that may happen," said Yousif Abdull Whad Mansoull, one of the city's new engineers.

Pendergast said it takes time to pull away from the responsibilities the team has taken on, because the Iraqi people are not accustomed to handling municipal services and repairs for themselves.

"Under Saddam Hussein, Fallujah didn't have a budget to perform normal upgrades to the city," he said. "All they ever received was emergency repair funds. Even then, the money was sent from Baghdad to Ramadi to whoever was doing the project. The mayor never had a choice on where to spend money."

Mansoull, a college professor, said he took the job "to help the people of my city in their time of suffering.

"I want to make work for the people," he said. "When there is work here, it adds to the people's happiness. It is my fortune when the people of Fallujah are happy."

"The U.S. will not be here forever," he said. "Having the Iraqis check the work should increase the quality of the work. It will also decrease the cost as they do more work and train a new system of localized government."

Tusker medics treat Habbaniyah citizens

SPC. MASON T. LOWERY
50th PAD

HABBANIYAH, Iraq – With bullets and rocks still a constant threat, Tusker soldiers and medics go out almost every day and provide medical aid to Iraqis in villages near Habbaniyah.

They are providing emergency care, showing American soldiers' good faith, and helping the Iraqis get their medical system running efficiently again so they can rely on themselves, according to C Company (Cyclones), 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Commander Capt. Edward Ballanco.

"Helping these people does a lot, but they're always left wanting," he said.

The medical situation in this area, and much of Iraq is bleak. Medics with C Company, 26th Forward Support Battalion (attached to 4-64 AR), have helped eight clinics in the Habbaniyah area during the month they've been there.

Four of the eight clinics only had walls – looters had taken everything, according to 1st Lt. Monica Casmaer, C Co. physicians assistant.

Spc. James May, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor, hands medical supplies to a Habbaniyah citizen July 10.

The Tusker soldiers and medics have given these clinics approximately $500,000 dollars in medical and construction equipment; including air conditioning units, sinks, toilets, refrigerators, cleaning supplies, 50 stethoscopes, 40 blood pressure cuffs, 10 dotoscopes, four nebulizers, five dental chairs, four lab microscopes, exam tables, as well as thousands of pills.

More help is coming; the Cyclones just received $17,000 dollars to assist mosques, schools and clinics in the area, Casmaer said.

"We've been able to come in and get their clinics functional and better than pre-war levels. They've had more attention from us than their own government. That speaks volumes. I can't put an amount on how much they appreciate us," Casmaer explained.

Casmaer said the two biggest problems she and her soldiers faced when they first assessed the clinics were the lack of care to patients during the war, and the corruption and lack of coordination involved in getting medical supplies to the clinics from Baghdad.

Warehouses in Baghdad had enough medical supplies to stock clinics for a year, but the deliveries weren't being made. Tusker soldiers went to a warehouse, loaded four HEMMTS and three 5-ton trucks full of supplies and delivered them to the clinics.

They discovered stockpiled medical supplies in Saddam Hussein's former private hospital. Combat stress soldiers use that building as their headquarters now, and let the Tuskers take 2 more HEMMTS and 5-ton trucks full of supplies.

"These people went months without care. The people hurt most (during the war) were chronic patients. Being able to give them a nice, healthy stock of medicine really helped them," she said. One clinic had been out of medicine for so long that when Casmaer and her soldiers gave them a three-month supply, it ran out immediately.

Photos by Spc. Mason T. Lowery

Physicians Assistant 1st Lt. Monica Casmaer, C Co., 26th Forward Support Battalion (attached to 4-64 AR), treats patients in the village of Saqlawis – a suburb of Habbaniyah, July 8.

Casmaer and her soldiers discovered one flaw in all the help they were providing – they were disrupting the clinics' medical system; the people only wanted to see American doctors.

"Iraqis think American doctors are the best. Their doctors are more than adequate," she said. To fix this problem, she and her medics have shied away from treating patients in the clinics.

They still deliver supplies to the clinics, but now treat patients on unannounced visits in the streets. They don't announce the visits because too many people would leave the clinics for her treatment, and it also would be too dangerous – the lingering enemy elements could easily set up an ambush.

Now, they drive into a village in the evening. They stop where they see people gathered. Their interpreter announces that a doctor is present to see patients, and people line up.

On July 8, Casmaer and her medics, with Cyclone soldiers providing security, visited the village of Saqlawis – a suburb of Habbaniyah. Thirty or 40 people instantly lined up.

The first patient complained of stomach pain. Casmaer asked her questions through the interpreter, and prescribed her Poxidium. The second patient had eye swelling. Casmaer checked her eye and asked Spc. Lena Billingsley, a C Co. medic, to dig in their pill suitcase for the appropriate cure.

A man held his baby daughter as Casmaer checked her swollen stomach. Casmaer told the man to get his daughter to Al Fallujah or Baghdad as quickly as possible for a sonogram; her liver was hard and it was life threatening.

A woman asked Casmaer how much she owed her. Casmaer told her it was free.

As darkness and danger approached, Ballanco had to give the order to leave. Casmaer said, "We're never at a loss for patients – we only run out of time."

1-37 Armor honors fallen comrade

SPC. SHAUNA MCROBERTS
1 AD PAO

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 37th Armored Regiment, 1st Armored Division, bid goodbye to fellow "Bandit," Sgt. David B. Parson in a memorial service July 12.

Parson was a cavalry scout assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-37. He was killed July 7 while on patrol in Baghdad.

Called a "true American hero" by 1-37 commander Lt. Col. Gary Bishop, Parson was remembered by friends as an outstanding leader who was truly committed to his soldiers.

"It was for the men to his right and left that he made the ultimate sacrifice," said 1st Lt. Joseph Ruzicka, scout platoon leader with HHC, 1-37.

"He continually demonstrated what a non-commissioned officer in the United States Army should be," said Capt. Matthew Jesop, HHC, 1-37 company commander.

Sgt. David Parson was born July 28, 1972, in California. A former Marine, he joined the Army in 1995 as a power generation equipment repairer. In 2002, he attended the Armored Cavalry Scout Course at Fort Knox, Ky.

After graduation in February 2003, Parson reported to Ray Barracks, Friedberg, Germany and quickly became an integral part of the 1-37 scout platoon.

Parson was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star Medal and Purple Heart.

He is survived by his wife Mary, his children Haley, Fischer and Wilson, and his parents.

Spc. Andrew Meissner

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Bush, 1st AD sergeant major, pays his respects to Sgt. David Parson.

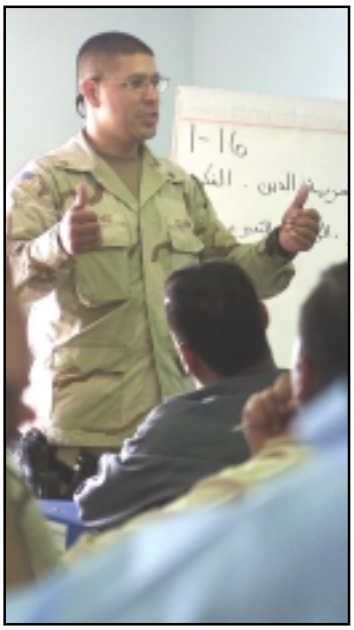
MPs teach Iraqis how to be police officers

SGT. MARK S. RICKERT
372nd MPAD

When 382nd Military Police Detachment entered the city, the Iraqi police force showed real enthusiasm. So much enthusiasm, in fact, that the MPs grew quickly concerned. One day they visited the jailhouse early in the morning and found two prisoners behind bars. Later that evening, they came back and found the bars of the jail cells practically bulging with prisoners.

This kind of over-enthusiasm spawned the present-day training courses presented by soldiers of the 382nd Military Police Detachment, an Army Reserve unit out of San Diego, Calif., who are now giving ground-floor training to the Iraqi police.

"If Sam here is my friend, and I raise the soles of my feet toward him, should you arrest me?" Martinez asks a classroom of about 25 Iraqi police. They are shoulder to shoulder in a cramped room, watching Martinez carefully. By the grumbles from the class, Martinez senses that the Iraqis aren't sure.



Sgt. Mark S. Rickert

Cpl. James Martinez and his class of Iraqi police officers come to an agreement and everyone gives the "thumbs up" gesture.

"No?" Martinez asked. "Why not? I'm not hurting him. That's my right to express myself," he said, helping them learn the lesson.

The three-week course focuses primarily on human rights laws.

Though freedom of speech seems natural to Americans, it seems foreign and possibly frightening to a people who have been oppressed for most of their lives.

According to Martinez the Iraqis' deep-rooted mindsets are hard to break. Martinez says that the Iraqi policemen are still heavily influenced by the former regime, riling up discrimination against age, sex and economic status.

"A lot of things determine the Iraqis' amount of respect. We have to teach them equal rights. Discriminating is against human rights," said Cpl. Kenneth Johnson, also an instructor with 382nd.

"I'm not trying to change your ways," Martinez says to the class. "I'm just trying to open your minds a little."

In a move toward reshaping their principles against women, the MPs gave Sgt. Emily L. Frasca a large responsibility.

"Every jaw hit the floor" when they learned that a female would teach a class, Frasca said.

"It's important to show the Iraqi police officers that a female can do the job," Frasca said. "That we are strong, both mentally and physically."

Frasca said when she began, eyes wondered and they seemed agitated, oftentimes requesting for an alternate perspective, or confirmation, from one of the male trainers. Now, the Iraqis are more receptive to her teachings.

"It's neat to be one of the first to broaden their horizons," Frasca said. "I'm showing them that they can have females in the workplace and it's OK."

The MPs must also overcome the crimps in the old justice system. According to the training officers, Iraqi police operated in a backward fashion relative to U.S. methods.

Once inside, prior Iraqi officers, learn of freedom of speech and human rights, while they gaze through the dusty windows, seeing the wide-open field of dirt and weeds, where they once marched back and forth along the sun-scorched earth.

1-9 FA treats children near Fallujah

SPC. KATHERINE ROBINSON
50th PAD

FALLUJAH, Iraq – In a small housing complex north of the village of Abu Nassir, the wind blew through a small crowd of robed women and small children waiting to receive medical treatment July 11.

A physician's assistant and several combat medics from 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, along with a pediatrician from 26th Forward Support Battalion, set up a small treatment facility for the children, after seeing several health problems on previous humanitarian visits.

Children suffering from ailments ranging from coughs and diarrhea to neural fibrosis and undernourishment alternately waited patiently with their parents and played with the other soldiers during the visit.

Over 200 little Iraqi boys and girls were seen, first by the medics, who checked their vital statistics and recorded their ailments, and then by the PA and the doctor. The soldiers handed out primarily cold medications, antibiotics and vitamins, as well as some antiparasitic medicine to fight worms and dysentery, according to the PA, who requested his name not be used.

The PA said most of the undernourishment cases were not serious, but 1-9 FA continues to hand out humanitarian rations in the area.

There were, however, children with more serious health problems, said Maj. Andrew Doyle, pediatrician and battalion surgeon for 26th FSB. "We saw chronic neurological diseases and thyroid diseases," he said. For such cases the doctors wrote diagnoses, recommendations for treatment, and told parents to bring the children to the local hospital.

The medical treatment the soldiers provided was a much-needed blessing according to the PA. "It's an underserved area that wouldn't have (much) medical care otherwise," he said. The nearest clinic is nearly three miles away and many parents don't have cars.

Doyle and the PA said the experience was a rewarding one. "That's why you're a doc or a PA, so you can make a positive impact in somebody's life everyday," the PA said.

"It's a different setting, but it's also rewarding to know you can get out and go do that. The Army gives you the opportunity to go help people who need it," Doyle added.

For the combat medics, who are trained to treat battlefield injuries under terrifying circumstances, the chance to treat children was a relieving change.

"It's different, but it was awesome," said Spc. Daniel Keene, who was attached to 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment during combat operations. "It makes me feel like I'm doing something out here.

"That one little time out there today makes all this Iraq stuff worth it," he added.

The PA said the soldiers were lucky they got the opportunity. They got many of the medications from an Iraqi hospital that was closing, and without that, they wouldn't have been able to do the mission.

"It's very difficult to get the appropriate medications for pediatrics through the Army system," Doyle said. The Army doctors deal more with soldiers than with children.

"I'm glad I got to go today," Keene said. "It's something I can take back home with me and never forget."

Photos by Spc. Katherine Robinson

(Above) Spc. Daniel Keene, a combat medic with A Battery, 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, checks a little boy's pulse at the battalion's medical treatment facility for children in a small village July 11.

(Right) A physician's assistant with 1-9 FA listens to a little girl's heartbeat in a village where A Btry, 1-9 FA and a pediatrician with 26th FSB set up the facility for children.

A physician's assistant with 1-9 FA listens to a little girl's heartbeat.

(Above) Capt. Bill Brodany, A Btry., 1-9 FA commander, teaches Iraqi children a new song and dance in a small village near Fallujah where the battery set up a medical treatment facility for children.

(Left) The commander tries to fix a bicycle tire for one of the children.

(Above) A little Iraqi boy awaiting medical treatment rests on his mother's shoulder July 11.

(Right) Maj. Andrew Doyle, 26th Forward Support Battalion surgeon, treats a little Iraqi boy. The boy's father assists the pediatrician with the treatment.

A physician's assistant with the field artillery battalion examines a little boy.

Task Force Falcon treats Iraqi veterans

SPC. JASON B. BAKER
49th PAD (Abn.)

Medics from Task Force Falcon facilitated physicals for Iraqi veterans of the Iraq-Iran War in Al Thawra, a veteran's community in the Al Rashid District.

For two days, Company C, 407th Forward Support Battalion, provided equipment and personnel to assist Iraqi and World Health Organization physicians conduct 137 physicals for disabled veterans.

The Iraqi veterans live in a retirement community created by the Ministry of Defense. The self-contained Al Thawra community provided the disabled veterans with a medical clinic and rehabilitation center, where they could receive regular medical attention.

During the war their medical records were destroyed and much of their facilities were looted. Without the support of the Ministry of Defense all medical care at the facility ended.

Spc. Jason B. Baker

A medic with 407th FSB checks the blood pressure of a veteran of the Iraq-Iran war

The brigade discovered the forgotten combat-wounded veterans during an Operation Scorpion Sting cordon and search mission.

"Once they have the baseline physical and we know what they need, the Ministry of Health will be able to provide them with medicine and supplies," said Capt. Randy Cote, physician's assistant, Co. C, 407th FSB.

The 407th provided the looted clinic with tables and chairs, and medical equipment during the physicals.

The condition of some of the vets prevented them from being able to reach the clinic, said Cote. The medics and physicians performed the physicals in the homes of these bed-ridden Iraqi men.

Medics checked the Iraqis' blood pressures and heart rates, and an Iraqi doctor interviewed each patient and assessed the individual's needs.

"Some of them have special needs," said Master Sgt. Dean Bissey, regimental medical non-commissioned officer in charge, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment. "Some of them are missing limbs and need motorized wheelchairs or have severe spinal injuries and need special wheelchairs and medications. The physicals will start their medical records, and they can start being taken care of."

The veterans' records will be sent to the Ministry of Health, and the veterans will start receiving regular care.

Meetings solve community's problems

SPC. RYAN SMITH
372nd MPAD

Community representatives and 1st Armored Division soldiers met together for dinner and discussed important community issues in Baghdad recently.

Members of a neighborhood advisory council from the Salhiya neighborhood in Baghdad met with soldiers from A Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment to discuss a variety of issues, including security and repairs to municipal services such as electricity, said Capt. Scott C. Nauman, A Company commander.

The meeting was the second between the neighborhood advisory council and the company. During the first, Nauman said, the community representatives identified problems within the Salhiya neighborhood, the area for which the unit is responsible.

Lack of electricity, water, sewage and trash removal are the top problems, he said.

The intent of the meetings, however, is not only to identify the problems, but also to look for solutions. Nauman's goal is for the community leaders to be able to take responsibility for solving their own problems within the neighborhood.

Spc. Ryan Smith

Iraqi community representatives meet with soldiers from A Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 1st Armored Division, to discuss community issues in Baghdad.

It's not always an easy process. One of the suggestions made by a member of the council was to have the Office of Coalition Provisional Authority purchase a separate generator for everyone in Baghdad, a city of five million people.

The meetings produce results, Nauman said. Security in the neighborhood has gotten considerably better and illegal gasoline sales and traffic problems in the neighborhood have both been reduced in Salhiya.

The A Company soldiers are continually working with Salhiya's residents to improve the community. Though there are many problems to be solved, Nauman views each improvement as a success.

"You eat an elephant one bite at a time," he said.

Female soldier patrols streets with 1AD

SPC. RYAN SMITH
372nd MPAD

The debate has gone on for years: should women serve with combat units in the military?

If the question asks whether female soldiers are up to the challenge and rigor of infantry duties, one woman serving in Iraq would answer with a definite "Yes."

Spc. Melissa Kranning, a petroleum supply specialist attached to A Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 1st Armored Division, is serving in what is regularly an all-male combat unit. Although not actually a part of the infantry unit, she and two other females are attached to the unit, for duty in Baghdad.

Due to religious and cultural beliefs in Iraq, female soldiers serving as de facto infantrymen have become a necessity. Soldiers serving as gate guards search civilians coming through the gate, while soldiers on patrol search people suspected of looting or other crimes.

Often, however, the people who are being searched are Muslim women who do not wish to be touched by men — especially American men, whom they do not know.

Therefore, Army leaders requested female soldiers to volunteer to work with infantry units. Thier duties include patrolling the streets and guarding the gates to coalition posts in Baghdad.

Kranning, 20, a Minerva, Ohio, native, deployed to Iraq with her unit, 47th Forward Support Battalion. When offered the opportunity, she volunteered to be attached to 2-6 Inf.

Kranning's regular unit is currently stationed at Baghdad International Airport, and many soldiers in 47th FSB do not have reason to leave the secured area there.

She saw this as her opportunity to experience something new and different from her life with her regular unit. "I get to go out and see the city," she said. "That's something a lot of people in my unit don't get to do."

Kranning also found that life with an infantry unit is much different from what she is used to. "It's a totally different world."

"They have a different way of thinking," she said. "They have a 'go out and get them' kind of attitude."

As far as duties are concerned, Kranning does not see a distinction between herself and the other soldiers in A Company.

Her job is to search women for weapons coming through the gate while she's on duty, and to interfere in any crime while she and other soldiers in the unit are on patrol. If women are suspected of a crime, Kranning searches them.

"She's a hard worker," said Staff Sgt. Julio Fortis, her squad leader from A Company, 2-6 Infantry. "She sticks with us in extreme heat, and long road marches while we're on patrol."

"The way she works, there should be females in the infantry," Fortis said.

Spc. Ryan Smith

Spc. Melissa Kranning, a petroleum supply specialist attached to A Co., 2nd Bn., 6th Inf., pulls security while on a patrol in Baghdad.

1-4 ADA Battalion ensures safety at BIAP

SPC. SHAUNA MCROBERTS
1 AD PAO

It's a sweltering day. Dust swirls in the wind. Cars and trucks line up to drive onto the grounds of Baghdad International Airport.

They're all trying to get through Checkpoint One and the soldiers of 1st Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Battalion.

The "Daring Deeds" Battalion is responsible for all the checkpoints for BIAP, but Checkpoint One sees the most traffic.

Hundreds of vehicles drive through the gates each day, according to 1st Lt. Jason Legro, a platoon leader with A Battery.

Spc. Shauna McRoberts

Spc. Marc Mensing, Bradley crewmember, A Battery, 1st Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery, checks a visitor's documents at Checkpoint One.

Vehicles carrying military personnel can enter as long as the passengers have identification, but every non-military vehicle has to be searched.

"We do thorough vehicle searches," said Legro. "One person will search and another will watch over him and pull security."

More than 20 soldiers man the checkpoint. Two Bradley Fighting Vehicles provide protection.

Each battery pulls a 24-hour shift every third day.

Soldiers spend their days off resting and preparing to go back out again.

Despite the heat and the dust, soldiers are focused on this mission.

They have put up camouflage net over their Bradleys to provide a little shade from the powerful sun. They are also provided with ice to keep their water cool.

"It's hot, but we're doing a good thing for BIAP," said Spc. Orbin Gonzalez, a Bradley driver with A Battery, 1-4ADA. "We're keeping the people inside safe, so they can focus on their own missions."

912th Postal Company keeps mail moving

SPC. ANTHONY K. REINOSO
372nd MPAD

Read any soldier novel, watch any war movie, and more often than not there is some reference to a soldier receiving a letter or package from home.

Whether it is good news or bad, soldiers look forward to seeing his or her name on a brown paper package or plain white envelope.

The 912th Postal Company, an Army Reserve unit from Orlando, Fla. is one of units at the Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) handling mail distribution for the 1st Armored Division.

The 912th has been in Iraq for more than 30 days and have been to three camps, Camp Virginia, Camp Pennsylvania in Kuwait and BIAP.

Spc. Anthony K. Reinoso

Sgt. Jerome Patterson, 834th Postal Company, Miami, Fl., unloads packages from a truck at Baghdad International Airport, Iraq. Patterson's unit is attached to the 912th Postal Co.

"It's been pretty tough. We haven't spent time in one place until we got to Camp Pennsylvania," said Capt. Steven King, company commander.

The postal unit followed the division in Kuwait and to Iraq, he said. Before the postal company made its move to Iraq, 18 soldiers were assigned to keep the division's mail moving.

"Those eighteen [soldiers] did all of the 1 AD mail from BIAP for two weeks, while we got prepared to move out," King said. The division's soldiers continued receiving their mail without a pause, he said.

King recommends unit's picking up mail at the post office "bring a staff or a team to help load [packages]. Because we are unloading it all day we do not have the resources to reload vehicles for pick up."

Getting the mail to the division's soldiers is the company's goal, King said.

"We do not mind working seven days a week. We know people are getting their mail because we know we are doing our job."

1 AD slingloads away danger to aviators

BY: SPC. CHRISTOPHER STANIS
1AD PAO

First Armored Division soldiers made the skies over Baghdad safer by collecting anti-aircraft weapons left over by the former Iraqi Army.

The operation, supported by UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters from 2nd Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment, conducted a sling load operation to remove five pieces of air defense artillery from the Iraqi community.

Sgt. 1st Class Fernando Alicea, sling load rigger for the operation, said clearing the weapons systems is extremely important, especially with the pending reopening of the airport to civilian air traffic.

"If the guns are serviceable, (someone) could fix them up and start firing rounds at the airplanes," he said. "That's exactly what we don't want."

This was the second sling load operation for the Division Artillery soldier since arriving to Iraq.

Sgt. 1st Class Hugo Vives, a communications platoon sergeant with Headquarters, Headquarters Battery, DIVARTY, and second rigger for the operation, said seeing American forces remove the anti-aircraft guns gives members of the community a sense of security.

"They're so happy we're here (removing the guns,)" Vives said, "that during the first operation, a couple of Iraqis tried to help us."

Vives, experienced through air assault and pathfinder schools, and Alicea, who spent eight years with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), rigged the loads, but six soldiers from HHB, DIVARTY, actually hooked the weapons to the helicopters.

Alicea gave the soldiers a three-hour class on sling loading procedures.

"I taught them basic air assault and basic rigging, but I focused on the process of the hook up since that is what they were doing," he said.

When it came down to it, the real thing was just like training.

"The class showed us how to do it, and it was executed exactly how we were shown," said Pfc. Quillon Soard, HHB, DIVARTY.

Soard said the force of the rotor wash from the helicopter made working difficult, but a team effort got the job done.

Spc. Christopher Stanis.

Soldiers from Headquarters, Headquarters Battery, 1st Armored Division Artillery, sling load an anti-aircraft gun to a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter. The gun was left behind by the former Iraqi army.

GLOBAL NEWS

North deploys artillery closer to border

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea has moved heavy artillery closer to the tense border with South Korea, and last year deployed more missiles that are capable of reaching Japan, South Korea said.

The report came amid a flurry of diplomatic efforts led by China to seek a peaceful resolution to a standoff over North Korea's suspected development of nuclear weapons. For decades, North Korea has deployed much of its conventional military force close to the border, and would be capable of inflicting devastation on Seoul in the early stages of any conflict.

U.S. and U.N. officials are now watching for signs that Pyongyang has begun reprocessing plutonium, a process that emits a kind of krypton gas that U.S. sensors can detect.

The New York Times said on its Web site Saturday that American officials confirmed that sensors on the North Korean border have detected elevated levels of krypton 85.

White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan pointed out North Korea "stated publicly last year that it did have a covert nuclear weapons program" and added that "they have taken a number of escalating steps in recent months, including expelling IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) inspectors and restarting their nuclear facilities."

The South Korean military did not alter its alert posture in response to the report on the North Korean artillery and missiles, indicating that a major escalation of tension was not imminent. Armies on both sides of the border have been in a high state of vigilance since the 1950-53 Korean War.

North Korea "has increased the threat on South Korea's capital by moving forward 170mm and 240mm long-range artillery," the South Korean Defense Ministry said in a policy report Friday. It did not say when the redeployment occurred, nor how many guns were shifted.

North Korea's artillery and rocket launchers could quickly shower thousands of shells on Seoul, only 37 miles south of the border.

The South Korean Defense Ministry also said the North in June last year deployed a "battalion" of Nodong missiles, which can hit targets as far as 810 miles away, including Japan, a U.S. ally.

North Korea shocked the region in 1998 by test-firing a Taepodong-1 missile over Japan and into the Pacific. The North said it was an attempt to insert a satellite into orbit.

In diplomacy on the nuclear issue, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo met with U.S. officials after talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il last week.

North Korea has demanded one-on-one discussions with the United States because it says the nuclear issue is bilateral. The United States says the issue is regional, and wants multilateral talks including both Koreas, Japan and China.

Militants attack West Bank governor, raise tensions

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NABLUS, West Bank — Palestinian militants beat and held the governor of a West Bank town for five hours on Saturday, raising tensions with Palestinian authorities under Israeli pressure to stop armed groups.

The attack on Haider Irsheid by the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade in Jenin came ahead of an expected meeting Sunday of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Premier Mahmoud Abbas to work on a U.S.-backed peace plan, which is stalled despite a 3-week-old truce declared by militant groups.

Al Aqsa's leader in Jenin, Zakariye Zubeydi, accused Irsheid of collaborating with Israel and demanded the Palestinian Authority send a mediator to question Irsheid and take him to be put on trial. Irsheid is the governor of Jenin.

But the militants freed Irsheid about five hours later, after a call from an unidentified official at Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's office. Al Aqsa is loosely affiliated with Arafat's Fatah movement.

AP

Haider Irsheid , center, was released after being held and beaten by the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade.

"For me, Arafat's order is not up for negotiation, so I released him immediately," Zubeydi told The Associated Press, adding that he would leave the responsibility for judging Irsheid to Arafat.

Zubeydi also accused Irsheid of involvement in a failed attempt to kill an Al Aqsa member on Friday.

Shortly after the governor's release, the office of Palestinian security chief Mohammed Dahlan issued a statement saying the government had started "a large-scale campaign" to bring law and order to the Gaza Strip. The statement gave no specifics on what had been done or what was planned.

Al Aqsa has been blamed for several small-scale attacks on Israelis since the main Palestinian militant groups declared the temporary cease-fire June 29. Although Fatah joined the truce, leaders of some branches refused to.

The attack on Irsheid follows months of tensions between militants and the governor, who townspeople say has worked well with Israeli authorities.

Eyewitnesses said gunmen pulled Irsheid, 50, from his van and beat him with their fists and gun butts before bundling him into another vehicle and driving off toward the city's refugee camp. He suffered bruises on his face and neck, witnesses said.

Iraq council fails to choose president

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraq's American-backed administration failed in its first week to choose a president, abandoning that mission in favor of a weak, three-man rotating leadership. The top U.S. official in Iraq — who hand-picked the Governing Council — returned to Washington while an insurgency killed another American soldier Saturday.

The council, agonizingly shepherded into existence by L. Paul Bremer, the U.S. administrator for Iraq, was announced last Sunday, saying its first order of business was the election of a president. When that did not happen after six days in session, officials of the Iraqi government told The Associated Press it would share the leadership job among at least three of 25 members.

Meanwhile, thousands of Shiites marched on the U.S. military and political headquarters in Baghdad. They were protesting because they said the U.S. military briefly surrounded the house of a Shiite cleric in the holy city of Najaf after he issued an anti-American sermon during Friday prayers.

AFP

Members of the new Iraqi governing group were cautiously received by their Arab neighbors.

The military said it was checking whether they had taken any action against the cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr, who called the governing council an assembly of "non-believers" and said he would form a rival political body.

Bremer had given Shiites — who were harshly oppressed by Saddam's Sunni-dominated regime — a slim majority on the governing council. But most of the Shiite members are secular figures or moderate clerics.

The U.S. administrator left Baghdad unannounced Friday and was expected to be in Washington for about a week. His Baghdad office said the 61-year-old former diplomat and counterterrorism expert would visit the U.S. capital for consultations. He also was scheduled to appear on three weekly U.S. television interview programs Sunday.

In Baghdad this week, Bremer nearly disappeared from public view after the council was announced, an apparent bid to diminish the widely held perception among Iraqis and the rest of the world that the new Governing Council was an American puppet.

Bremer's office did not respond to requests for an assessment of the council's first week in business, but a spokesman for one council member issued a short statement.

"There is a general agreement that the presidency should be on a rotational basis because each political group in the council should shoulder an equal role and equal responsibility," said Ali Abdul-Amir, spokesman for council-member Iyad Allawi of the Iraqi National Accord.

The three likely members of the rotating presidency will be a leading Shiite politician, a highly respected Shiite cleric and former Foreign Minister Adnan Pachachi, a council source told the AP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Liberia's Taylor vows to fight to the end

CNN

MONROVIA, Liberia — Liberian President Charles Taylor vowed to fight "to the end" as rebel forces advanced on the capital.

Taylor told a television reporter he would fight until "the hooligans are driven out of town" and said he has ordered his men to go house to house to make sure the city is safe.

He said he would not leave the country before an international peacekeeping force arrived. The rebel assault was the third since both sides agreed to a mid-June cease-fire when Taylor promised to resign.

The 3-year-old uprising is the latest in 14 years of almost continuous civil war that have seen perhaps 250,000 people killed.

CNN Correspondent Jeff Koinange, who was on the scene, said rebels at one point were within minutes of the government house and that resistance was very light.

Heavy fighting raged on the outskirts of the sprawling, chaotic city. Gun and mortar fire could be heard everywhere.

Injured Liberians were carted in wheelbarrows to hospitals staffed by nongovernmental organizations.

People fleeing the fighting rushed toward the city center and eastern neighborhoods, balancing mattresses, clothes and furniture atop their heads, The Associated Press reported.

Much of the fighting focused on two bridges into central Monrovia as rebels and government troops wearing flip-flops and shorts alike exchanged grenade and automatic weapons fire, the AP reported. Many government soldiers were seen retreating.

Patrick Robert, a French freelance news photographer on assignment for Time magazine, was shot in the chest in the fighting at one bridge. He was taken to a Red Cross trauma unit after being treated at the U.S. Embassy. His wounds were life threatening, a Time spokesman told the AP.

The main rebel group is Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, whose leaders were in Accra, Ghana, attending peace talks. They said they were provoked by government forces and were only defending positions.

"We're talking to our commanders and want to stabilize the situation and halt our men," LURD official Joe Wiley told the AP.

Market accident may not constitute a crime

USA TODAY

When George Russell Weller sped through the packed farmers market Wednesday in Santa Monica, the 86-year-old man apparently stomped on the gas pedal when he meant to hit the brake.

His confusion lasted for nearly three city blocks, cost 10 people their lives and injured dozens more. Even so, legal experts say, it might not constitute a crime.

Tests showed no signs that Weller was under the influence of drugs or alcohol. And his statements to police — that he tried to stop the car, not floor it — suggest that his actions were unintentional. Might then his age be to blame?

The accident has sparked just such a question and renewed the debate over whether states should take more steps to determine when to stop the elderly from getting behind the wheel. The issue promises to become significant as baby boomers grow older.

Still, federal officials caution against concluding that the skills of older drivers are suspect. "Just because you reach an age threshold doesn't mean your driving skills have diminished," says Rae Tyson, a spokesman for the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration. "Teenagers are responsible for far more fatal accidents."

NHTSA has suggested that states allow doctors, family members and friends to flag elderly drivers to the departments of motor vehicles, which could then test the seniors' vision and driving skills.

AP

The deaths of 10 people in an accident involving driver Russell Weller, 86, raises the question: How old is too old to drive?

The agency has not recommended mandatory testing for drivers who reach a certain age.

Weller had no accidents or violations on his record and had passed his vision and written tests at a California Department of Motor Vehicles office Nov. 28, 2000, according to DMV records.

"We always told the Wellers they were role models for how the rest of us should be when we're in our 80s," says longtime friend C. Richard Hulquist, an ophthalmologist and member of the church the Wellers attend. "They are active, kind, involved in the community — just very intelligent and very kind people, both of them. It's been a terrible shock."

In an effort to ensure that the government is careful about whom it allows to drive, the AAA believes states should stop allowing drivers to renew their licenses by mail and should require vision tests for all drivers.

"There are 28-year-olds who can't see well enough to drive," says AAA spokesman Mantill Williams. "We shouldn't be taking the licenses away from people because they turn a certain age. We should just be doing more testing — for everyone."

Focusing simply on the elderly might also prove politically perilous. As the elderly become a more powerful voting bloc, age-based licensing will likely be "politically impossible," says Barbara Harsha, executive director of the Governors Highway Safety Association, a group of state highway safety organizations.

Instead agencies will have to focus on making cars and roads safer for elderly motorists.

"Street signs have to be enlarged and made clearer and cars will have to be better designed to accommodate them," she says.

ATF investigating thefts of chemical explosive

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DENVER — Federal agents said they are investigating the theft of 1,100 pounds of an explosive chemical from construction companies in Colorado and California in the past week.

Both thefts involve ammonium nitrate, a key ingredient in the bomb that destroyed the Oklahoma City federal building in 1995.

In the first heist, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives issued a nationwide alert Monday after eight 50-pound bags of an ammonium nitrate-based explosive vanished from the Pike View Quarry near Colorado Springs.

Then 700 pounds of an ammonium nitrate product were stolen this week from a similar business in San Diego County, Calif., ATF agent Rich Marianos said.

"We're trying to check to see if it's similar or if we can rule out if it's involved in our theft," Marianos said.

The California theft from Tom C. Dyke Drilling and Blasting in Alpine, about 30 miles east of San Diego, happened Sunday or Monday, San Diego County sheriff's officials said. Thieves forced their way into a locked trailer and took 16 50-pound bags. Two of the bags have been found.

Authorities have not named any suspects in the thefts. A half-dozen homes and businesses in the Colorado Springs area have been searched.

"There really hasn't been much concrete information to go on in this case," Colorado Springs police Lt. Skip Arms said. "There's equally the possibility it was somebody who had a legitimate blasting job and didn't want to pay for the chemicals to someone with bad intentions."

Ammonium nitrate is used as fertilizer, but can become a powerful explosive when mixed with fuel oil. The government estimated about 4,800 pounds of ammonium nitrate fertilizer was used to make the bomb that killed 168 people in Oklahoma City.

Authorities had said the material stolen in Colorado was already mixed with fuel oil and had a strong diesel fuel odor. They were not immediately able to say whether the ammonium nitrate that vanished in California was also part of a mixture.

Sports Highlights

Tour de France

1. Lance Armstrong, United States **55:34.01**
2. Jan Ullrich, Germany **-00.15**
3. Alexandre Vinokourov, Kazakhstan **-1.01**
4. Haimar Zubeldia, Spain **-4.16**
5. Tyler Hamilton, United States **-4.25**
6. Iban Mayo, Spain **-5.20**
7. Ivan Basso, Italy **-7.01**
8. Francisco Mancebo, Spain **-7.02**
9. Carlos Sastre, Spain **-8.47**
10. Christophe Moreau, France **-9.19**

MLB

All-Star Game

Amer. League **7,** Nat. League **6**

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Thursday

Baltimore **2,** Anaheim **1**
Toronto **5,** Boston **2**
Texas **12,** Tampa Bay **6**
Detroit **9 ,** Chi White Sox **1**
Kansas City **7,** Seattle **1**
Minnesota **6,** Oakland **2**

Friday

Baltimore **6,** Anaheim **5**
Toronto **4,** Boston **1**
NY Yankees **10,** Cleveland **4**
Texas **2,** Tampa Bay **0**
Chi White Sox **7,** Detroit **5**
Seattle **6,** Kansas City **3**
Minnesota **3,** Oakland **2**

Saturday

Minnesota **9,** Oakland **4**
NY Yankees **7,** Cleveland **3**
Texas **7,** Tampa Bay **3**
Baltimore **8,** Anaheim **4**
Boston **5,** Toronto **4**
Chi White Sox **6,** Detroit **2**
Kansas City **5,** Seattle **1**

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Thursday

Arizona **9,** San Diego **1**
Philadelphia **5,** Montreal **2**
Milwaukee **7,** Pittsburgh **5**
Houston **5,** Cincinnati **4**
Atlanta **3,** NY Mets **2**
Los Angeles **6,** St. Louis **3**
San Francisco **8,** Colorado **4**

Friday

Arizona **6,** San Diego **0**
Montreal **3,** Philadelphia **1**
Pittsburgh **7,** Milwaukee **2**
Houston **5,** Cincinnati **3**
Atlanta **11,** NY Mets **4**
Los Angeles **7,** St. Louis **5**
San Francisco **7,** Colorado **0**

Saturday

Houston **9,** Cincinnati **8**
Atlanta **7,** NY Mets **4**
San Francisco **5,** Colorado **3**
St. Louis **3,** Los Angeles **1**
Chi Cubs **1,** Florida **0**
Philadelphia **4,** Montreal **3**
Milwaukee **1,** Pittsburgh **0**

WNBA

Friday

Detroit **74,** Seattle **61**
New York **56,** Charlotte **48**
Houston **79,** Los Angeles **74**

Saturday

Detroit **58,** Cleveland **57**
Washington **85,** San Antonio **77**
Connecticut **75,** Phoenix **67**
Houston **74,** Sacramento **71**

Eastern Conference

Detroit	12-5	.706
Charlotte	12-8	.600
Indiana	10-8	.556
Cleveland	9-9	.500
New York	8-8	.500
Connecticut	9-11	.450
Washington	4-14	.222

Western Conference

Los Angeles	16-4	.800
Houston	11-8	.579
Seattle	11-8	.579
Minnesota	10-9	.526
Sacramento	10-11	.476
San Antonio	6-13	.316
Phoenix	3-15	.167

Legal woes for Kobe

Kobe Bryant faces a charge of sexually assaulting a 19-year-old woman in a case bound to tarnish the career of one of the NBA's brightest stars.

The 24-year-old Lakers' guard faces four years to life in prison or 20 years to life on probation if convicted of the single felony count, Eagle County District Attorney Mark Hurlbert said.

Hurlbert also said Bryant forced the woman into "submission" through physical force but refused to disclose other details.

Blalock's HR lifts AL 7-6

Five home runs ... a stirring rally ... a dash of controversy ... and a bolt of lightning to win it in the end.

It all came true in the All-Star Game as Hank Blalock's two-run homer in the eighth inning gave the American League a 7-6 victory ... and home-field advantage in the World Series. Blalock's two-out shot to right off Eric Gagne completed a dramatic American League comeback, after falling behind 5-1 when the National League batted around in a five-run fifth.

U.S. routs Cuba in Gold Cup

After his fourth goal of the game, Landon Donovan stopped celebrating and started apologizing.

Donovan stepped in front of Steve Ralston and kicked in goal No. 4 to cement a 5-0 victory over Cuba on Saturday and put the United States in the CONCACAF Gold Cup semifinals.

The Cubans, who were in the quarterfinals for the first time in their history, got off just two shots in the game — both off-target.

Nadeau vows return

Nadeau sustained head, lung and rib injuries in a May 2 accident during a practice session at Richmond International Raceway. He spent 24 days in the hospital, another two weeks in a rehabilitation facility, and has been undergoing therapy on an outpatient basis since. Finally ready to return to the race track, he strolled through the garage July 18 at New Hampshire International Speedway eagerly accepting good wishes from his fellow competitors.

Lakers duo first to sign

True to their word, future Hall of Famers Karl Malone and Gary Payton signed contracts with the Los Angeles Lakers. And they did so at just about the earliest possible moment.

Lakers spokesman John Black said Malone and Payton, who verbally committed to join the team at discount prices last week, signed shortly after midnight ET July 16. The players were introduced July 17 at a news conference at Staples Center.

Armstrong clings to Jersey

A weary Lance Armstrong clung to a diminishing lead in the Tour de France as a surging Jan Ullrich powered away from him during Saturday's final punishing climb. For the first time since Armstrong won the first of his four consecutive titles in 1999, the Tour was entering its final week too close to call.

"At the start ... I thought, 'Uh-oh' it's going to be a bad day, but there are two more days left in the Pyrenees, and I still have a lot of chances," Armstrong said.