

# IRAQI DESTINY

Volume 1, Issue 20

June 13, 2003

## Pathfinders guard scenic Iraqi frontier

The Northwest region of Iraq is reminiscent of the American Old West. It bursts with mountains, valleys and prairies. Majestic sunsets fade into a horizon of pink skies, purple clouds, golden stalks of wheat and fields of green grass.

In a fort 500 meters from the Syrian border, 60 kilometers from the nearest U.S. military outpost, and surrounded by nothing but hills, the soldiers of the Pathfinder Company, 6th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), have a job to do.

"We're watching the Syrian border for personnel moving across," said Staff Sgt. Kevin Wettschreck, team leader, Pathfinder Co., 6th Bn., 101st Avn. Rgt. "We're watching for illegal activity."

The Pathfinders are the first line of notification in case anything happens at the border. Their mission is to watch and record without engaging in combat.

"We're just observing, we'll let (people) go and try to get their routine," Wettschreck said.

The 10-man team lives in an Iraqi border control point, where they have a 360-degree view of their environment. The other 30-40 soldiers in the company operate out of an Iraqi television station on top of a mountain, 60 kilometers away. Every three days the team at the fort rotates with another team from the TV station. Once a team goes out to the border, they're on their own. They bring a supply of MREs, water and fresh fruit, Wettschreck said.

At the border, the Pathfinders work on two-hour shifts, which doesn't give them much downtime, Wettschreck said.

At night, the routine varies just enough to keep anybody watching on the Syrian side on their toes.

"In the evenings I tend to put teams out on the border to watch any persons trying to cross, or any movement," Wettschreck said.

The area is sparsely populated. Villages are located many kilometers apart, with nothing between but dirt, rocks and grass. It's easy to feel small and alone amidst the sweeping vistas.

Because the fort is centrally located along

the border, the Pathfinders can better control the whole mountainous range where the two countries meet, Wettschreck said.

*"Pathfinders" continued on page 2*



Spc. Joshua Hutcheson

Soldiers from the Pathfinder Company, 6th Battalion, 101st Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, (Air Assault), speak to locals on the Syrian, Iraq border, June 2, who point the location of an Iraqi who has been stealing telephone polls.

# Fallen soldier remembered

On a sun-drenched riverbank in Al Fallujah, what some call the most dangerous town in Iraq, soldiers of Company B, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 502<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment paid tribute to one of their fallen soldiers, Spc. Branden Oberleitner, a native of Worthington, Ohio. He was with a group of soldiers who were attacked by an assailant in the early morning of June 5.

Oberleitner, or Obie, as he was known to those in his unit, was "a shining example of what a soldier should be," said Capt. William Riley, commander, Company B. Riley called Oberleitner "tactically and technically proficient... the kind of soldier every team leader wanted as their own." His application for Officer Candidate School was endorsed by all in his chain of command, and Riley said while no one will know what kind of officer he would have made, everyone would have wanted to be in his platoon.

Pfc. Jason Resnic, Oberleitner's

roommate, offered a few words written by other members of Company B about his friend. Fighting tears, he read a note urging the other members of the company to live up to Obie's example, to be good soldiers and to look out for one another.

Chap. (Capt.) Kenneth Haftorson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, counseled the soldiers away from acting out in anger at Oberleitner's death.

"Even in death he would not want his name besmirched with acts of hostility towards anyone who was innocent," Haftorson said. "Branden would want everyone to remain professional."

Gunfire shattered the afternoon air and as Taps faded into the wind, the soldiers of Company B lined up to pay one last tribute to their friend. One by one they approached Oberleitner's rifle, boots and helmet.

Many knelt and placed a hand on the helmet, their faces full of emotion as they

paused to say a few last words to their friend.

After each had said goodbye, a folded American flag was placed at the foot of the memorial, and the soldiers of Company B once again took their weapons to continue their job the way Obie would have wanted them to.

Five other soldiers were wounded during the attack.

The town of Al Fallujah is approximately 30 miles west of Baghdad.

U.S. military representatives said the town of Al Fallujah has been opposed to American forces showing vocal and violent disapproval.

This assault came only one day after about 1,500 soldiers with the 3rd Infantry Division occupied Al Fallujah and other areas in central Iraq.

Contributed by  
Spc. Catherine Talento  
101st Abn. Div. (AAslt.) PAO

## "Pathfinders" continued from page 1

The job is in no way glamorous, often days go by with no activity at the four outposts on the Syrian side. At those times it's an exercise in patience and stamina, Wettschreck said.

"It doesn't feel bad at all," said Sgt Bryan Beville, rifleman, Pathfinder Co. 6th Bn. 101st Avn. Rgt. "I've got my teammates here, it gives me ample time to think of good things: my home, my wife and my kids."

In the middle of a hot, languid afternoon a black car is spotted on a road one kilometer away on the Iraqi side. It's headed toward the Pathfinder's lonely outpost. When the car arrives at the fort three Iraqis emerge, and in halting English, tell the Pathfinders that a local man responsible for cutting down about 20 telephone poles the previous day will be driving close to them with a truck to collect his booty. The description of the truck changes several times during the conversation, confusing the soldiers. First it's a white pickup truck, then it transforms into a white flatbed semi. The

inaccuracies make the Pathfinders' job of identifying and halting the person harder.

Within five minutes a truck is seen on the road, but from the lookout's information, they're able to conclude that it isn't the vehicle the Iraqis were talking about. Ten minutes later, another truck is spotted. The Pathfinders send a team of four in anticipation of intercepting the truck at its destination. In less than a minute, the team is on the road. They're back in another ten minutes, slightly disappointed; it was the wrong vehicle. The incident with the truck was a welcome distraction for the Pathfinders, but it isn't typical of their watching experience.

Soon it's in the past, as they return to their posts and continue to watch; the road, the border and everything in between.

Contributed by  
Spc. Joshua Hutcheson  
101st Arb. Div. (AAslt.)

## Iraqi Destiny Staff

**Commanding General**  
Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus

**Div. Public Affairs Officer**  
Maj. Carl Purvis

**CMOC Public Affairs Officer**  
Maj. Charmaine Means

**CMOC PAO NCOIC**  
1st Sgt. Ken S. Heller

**Editor**  
Sgt. Jason L. Austin

**Journalists**  
Pfc. Thomas Day  
Spc. Blake Kent  
Spc. Joshua M. Risner  
Pfc. Mary Rose Xenikakis

This Army funded newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army overseas. Contents of the "Iraqi Destiny" are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, or the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). The "Iraqi Destiny" is a joint venture between the 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Fort Bragg, N.C. and the 40th Public Affairs Detachment, Fort Campbell, KY. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Public Affairs Officer. It is published three times a week by the Civil Military Operations Center Public Affairs Office (CMOC-PAO), Unit 96044, APO AE 09325-6044. Contact us at: ken.heller@us.army.mil or at DNV 581-6723

# Music to make the time go by

By Spc. Joshua M. Risner  
40th PAD

To a musician, music can do much more than calm the savage beast. It can help express a feeling or get them through a difficult time. They pour all of their emotions and troubles into a song and it somehow relieves them of the tension that those feelings cause.

This is what helps Pfc. David Casper, Fire Support Element, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault), a native of Novato, Calif., get through his days in Iraq.

While serving with the 101<sup>st</sup> in Operation Iraqi Freedom, he wrote a song about the events going on around him. The song, a soulful ballad, is called "Think of a Soldier."

The 24-year-old Casper says that his love for music started in his childhood. "I always loved being on stage, performing for my family and at church," he said. "My mom and my sister listened to a lot of music and I just started falling in love with it."

His earliest musical influences ranged from classic Mo-Town to newer acts at the time like Michael Jackson. He says that now his biggest sources of inspiration are Brian McKnight, Babyface, Boyz II Men and Billy Joel.

Casper's songwriting craft was forged and nurtured by rap music. "I was into rap at the time and would write little songs and poetry," he said. "It wasn't much more than that at first."

Casper realized his gift for vocals when he auditioned for a school play in the eighth grade. "I tried out for 'The Sound of Music' and didn't know how it would go," he said. "I ended up getting the male lead."

The transition from middle to high school threatened to be a difficult one, for Casper. "I was going from a private Christian school to a public high school and I didn't know anybody there," he said. In the face of adversity however, he fought back in the best way he knew. "I joined the school choir and just kept performing."

While in high school, Casper's vocal talents began getting serious recognition. "In 1995, I got third place in the California Teen Vocal Championships and for three

consecutive years I got gold medals at the World Championship of Performing Arts in Los Angeles." In addition to these achievements, Casper has performed the National Anthem for the Oakland Athletics and the Oakland Raiders.

Casper's talent for songwriting was reawakened during his junior year of high school, 1995. It was then that he started getting more serious, writing rhythm and blues and pop songs.

After high school, he started chasing the dream so many aspiring musicians reach for: the quest of getting signed by a record label. "It has always been my dream to become a singer/songwriter," Casper said. He added that it would still be awesome if he had to forego the spotlight and just write songs and produce music.

"I started a group called Pleasure Point and started investing in studio time," Casper said.

"I have my sister Victoria to thank for the money it took to buy that first studio project though. She also helped me buy the sound system that I use for shows. It seems like she's always putting herself second when it comes to my music and I want to thank her for that."

Casper got involved with a group of studio musicians and together they started making music. It just so happens that a number of them played in Mariah Carey's band. One in particular took Casper under his wing.



**Pfc. David Casper**

"Scott Urquhart, the bass player, was nominated for a Grammy in 1998 for a song he wrote for the Temptations called 'Stay,'" he said. "He pulled me aside one day and told me that he liked my style of writing and we started working together from there."

Casper, with the help of Urquhart, began cutting demos and submitting them to the record companies. While things were looking promising, however, nothing seemed to pan out. "I came pretty close to signing a few times," he said, "but it kept falling through at the last minute. It's a tough business to get your foot in the door."

**"Music" continued on page 6**

## Around Iraq

Coalition Forces continue to aggressively patrol Iraq to eliminate crimes against people and property, rid populated areas of weapons, ammunition and explosives, and stop the black market trade in fuel and other commodities. Coalition Forces have also continued to conduct joint security patrols with Iraqi police to increase the professionalism of the police force and prepare them for their role in a self-governed Iraq.

### Weapons Turn-In Program:

Iraqi citizens voluntarily turned in a variety of weapons under the Weapons Turn-In Program that began June 1.

As of today, Iraqi citizens have delivered to Weapons Collection Points a total of 44 pistols, 69 semi-automatic rifles or shotguns, 240 automatic rifles, 25 machine guns, 78 anti-tank weapons (i.e., rocket-propelled grenade launchers), 122 grenades and other explosive devices.

The amnesty period for the Weapons Turn-In Program will run through June 14.

### Coalition Activity:

4th Infantry Division continued in their efforts to locate remaining pockets of Paramilitary Forces and Ba'ath Party Loyalists to create a secure and stable environment north of Baghdad.

Three-hundred-and-eighty-four people have been detained for interrogation, 30 are confirmed as pro-regime. Twelve individuals attempted to escape by boat, but were captured. Four soldiers were wounded, though none of their injuries were life threatening.

Soldiers of the 4th Inf. Div. conducted a raid on a house believed to hold the individuals responsible for an attack on Coalition Forces June 7.

They detained two individuals and were informed four more were at a local hospital. Upon inspection of the hospital, soldiers detained two other individuals.

The 4th Inf. Div. also conducted a raid in at a weapons market in Tayji, detaining three individuals selling detonation cord and explosives.

They also conducted a raid on a

suspected arms cache in Baqubah, where they detained 31 individuals, and confiscated 13 rocket-propelled grenades and various small arms. Finally, they raided a site in Taji, detaining six people, seizing 40 grenades, 90 rocket-propelled grenades, four boxes of anti-tank mines, and associated small arms.

4th Inf. Div. patrols detained 120 individuals for illegal activity and small arms fire near Tikrit. Fourteen were detained for further investigation and the other 106 performed two hours community



service work prior to release. Looters traveling in seven vehicles fired at a 4th Inf. Div. patrol in Bayji.

The patrol returned fire, and captured one vehicle, while the other six vehicles attempted to escape.

The fleeing vehicles were located by an AH-64 Apache helicopter, and a flash checkpoint was established which captured the remaining vehicles, detaining nine individuals, and seizing anti-tank mines in their possession.

Forty Seersucker anti-ship missiles were discovered and confiscated by the 1st Armored Division in a Baghdad suburb. Coalition forces will destroy the missiles.

Soldiers of the 101st Airborne division (Air Assault) investigated possible mortar fire in Mosul, and subsequently discovered and seized a 120mm mortar with 39

rounds, and a number of enemy fortifications.

Soldiers also received small arms direct fire while traveling in a two-vehicle convoy passing through a Mosul traffic circle, slightly injuring one soldier.

A soldier operated patrol searched the site, and detained two Iraqi gunmen armed with five AK-47s, and two-Propelled Grenades.

Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) conducted a cordon and search of a suspect weapons market in Mosul, where they detained five personnel and confiscated two 9mm sub-machine guns, approximately 6,000 rounds of ammunition, numerous magazines, and approximately 1,434,400 Dinar.

### Police Activity June 10:

Coalition Forces conducted 11 raids and a total of 2,444 patrols throughout Iraq. Of those patrols, they conducted 250 joint Iraqi and Coalition patrols.

They also detained or arrested 189 individuals for a variety of criminal activities including looting, curfew violations, weapons violations, theft, larceny and dealing drugs.

### Recent Police Activity:

US military police in east Baghdad noticed six males carrying weapons. The patrol stopped the individuals and confiscated three AK-47s. The individuals were transported to the Althawra Police Station for questioning.

US forces detained 52 people in northwest Baghdad for attempting to loot a local warehouse and storage complex thought to contain munitions. US forces on the scene reported receiving fire from a crowd of approximately 300 people.

Although the situation was volatile, there were no reported injuries. Explosive ordnance specialist determined that all the munitions at the complex were harmless.

A murder suspect was apprehended and taken to the Al-Kerreda police station by a joint police patrol. An AK-47 bayonet and 29 rounds of 7.62 were seized during the search of the suspect's residence.

Contributed by  
Coalition Joint Task Force - Seven

# Locals go through registration process

By Spc. Joshua M. Risner  
40th PAD

Soldiers with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault), registered the weapons of city council members and their bodyguards, June 11.

To get permits to carry the weapons, individuals had to go through a process of rules, regulations and requirements, according to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Nicole A. Elwell, Company B, 311<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Battalion.

"To register, first of all, the applicants must bring their weapons in and have the serial numbers recorded for our records," Elwell said. "That's for safety, in case the weapons were to get stolen."

At the moment, those who register are only allowed to carry handguns, Elwell added.

The registration process includes a list of rules that applicants must read and understand before they can continue.

Some of the rules include only using their weapon for self-defense and keeping the weapons card on their person at all times.

Also included in the process is a statement that the individuals must sign before their cards are given to them. "They must sign a statement that says they disavow any association with the Ba'ath Party," Elwell said.

After the paperwork is filled out, applicants have their pictures made for the temporary weapons card.

Once the photo is incorporated into the card and given over, the individuals have the right and authorization to carry weapons in public places. They must however keep the card on them at all times or face possible jail time, according to Elwell.



Spc. Joshua M. Risner

Citizens register their weapons as soldiers with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault) guide them through the process. Applicants have to abide by a list of rules as well as disavow any association with the Ba'ath Party. A weapons card is issued to them that must be carried at all times.

## Soldier of the Week



Spc. Davida E. Barber

Born - March 11, 1982  
Hometown - Cleveland, Ohio  
Time in Service - 3 years (1 as a reservist)  
Unit - 526<sup>th</sup> Forward Support Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault)

## "I joined for the challenge"

By Pfc. Thomas Day  
40th PAD

She waited two years for this, now Spc. Davida Barber is getting the opportunity she wanted when she left her reserve unit to join active duty service at Fort Campbell, Ky.

"I joined for the challenge," Barber said, a paralegal for the 526<sup>th</sup> Forward Support Battalion.

"I wanted to help change

a country," she said.

Barber now finds herself managing a database that accounts for every detained prisoner who is or has been incarcerated by allied forces in Mosul.

On top of creating the prisoner database, Barber also will remember the deployment for a hair-raising experience last month at the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault) airfield in Mosul.

"When the buildings started shaking," she recalls of the Ammunition Supply Point fire in May, "that's when we knew it wasn't Explosive Ordnance Detachment over there." Barber immediately assisted in helping move soldiers out of the area and towards the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 320<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment quarters.

"Now I know what it was

like to be in a war zone."

It's good experience for a young woman that aspires to one day work for the FBI.

Barber is currently a student at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tenn., majoring in Criminal Justice. After she completes her active duty service, and when she returns to the United States from Iraq, Barber plans on transferring to Lynn University in Boca Raton, Fla., to complete her undergraduate studies. "I want to be a criminal investigator."

Barber also has a passion for jazz music, tennis and her family back in Cleveland. Barber's mother is a native of Somalia and her first name, Davida, comes after her father David. "Home to me means my family, my friends," according to Barber, a Cleveland native, "and lots of good food!"

# Man on the Street

How is the moral in your unit?



"Morale in our unit is relatively high for what we're going through," Sgt. Jason Budnick, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment.



"Well, I think we need a little more entertainment to take our minds off being away from home," Pfc. Jose Miranda, 716th Military Police Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).



"I think morale is low in this unit because my soldiers are overworked, overtasked and don't get enough down time to recuperate," Staff Sgt. Robert Roberts, Company B, 426th Forward Support Battalion.



"I guess it's okay, I haven't seen anyone too disheartened," Capt. Michael Sabatini, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

## "Music" continued from page 3

After a few let downs, Casper decided to take a different route. "I wanted to get the ball in my own court, so I decided to enroll in a music school," he said.

His dream was thwarted by the cost of tuition and though he was able to get a few scholarships, they wouldn't cover the mounting cost. He was also employed as a singer at Paramount's Great America, an amusement park in San Jose, Calif., but it wasn't enough.

It was then that he turned to the military for assistance.

"I was looking at the Air Force or the Coast Guard, because my dad was in the Coast Guard for more than 20 years," said Casper. "I thought it would be a good way to help me pay for school."

His thoughts were abruptly changed following the events of Sept. 11, 2001. This inspired him to join the Army. "After I saw all that, I chose to be a soldier," he said.

Casper enlisted in the U.S. Army as a fire support specialist. The military apparently did nothing to hamper his talents. He wrote a song while in basic training to his future wife Courtney. They were married Nov. 2, 2002.

Casper found out that he was coming to the 101<sup>st</sup> while in airborne school. "I was bummed out at first because I thought I was going to Alaska, but some of my buddies changed my mind about that," he said "They told me 'Hey man, you're going to the 101<sup>st</sup>. That's a damn good unit and a highly deployed one. You're going to see a lot of cool stuff with those guys.'"

His friends' predictions proved right when the entire division deployed to the Middle East to prepare to oust Saddam Hussein from power in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"When we got here, I was hoping that I would be inspired to write something," Casper said. His inspiration would not occur during the war itself however.

As the coalition forces rained down hellfire on the Iraqi military, Casper did his part. "I was close to the action throughout the war, particularly in Karbala," he said. All the time, he was collecting tidbits that pooled in his mind, waiting for creativity to make sense of them.

"What affected me most was being with the people," Casper said. "As soon as I got to (Mosul) I saw the people and the situation they were in. I saw all these people in need, but I was being greeted by smiling faces. One civilian came up to me and told me that his life was so much more comfortable now that he didn't have to live in fear anymore."

For one thing, it strengthened his resolve. "This war, no matter what anyone says, is justified," he said. "I have known for a long time that this would have to be done and I have faith in the president's decision to send us here."

It also gave him the inspiration to express what he was seeing and feeling with the power of music. He wrote about the people he saw everyday, the people who greeted him with smiles and thanks even though they were destitute. He wrote about brothers and sisters in arms who had fallen while fighting for the cause of freedom and given the ultimate sacrifice. He wrote for those people at home who exercised their right of assembly to protest the war.

A line in Casper's song says, "America, a place where anyone can chase their dreams." One day, he will have fulfilled his commitment to the armed forces and continue on to college and continue chasing his dream. However, even if one day, his name isn't written in lights in front of some amphitheater, he will always be remembered as a soldier.