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# IRAQI DESTINY

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## First class service to soldiers

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By Pfc. Thomas Day  
40th PAD

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With soldiers previously receiving packages more than a month from the day they were mailed, the 129<sup>th</sup> Postal Company out of Fort Bragg, N.C., has decreased turnover rates in half as it catches up with the backlog accumulated during the war.

“Because of the backlog of mail, anytime we moved, we had to stop mail,” said 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Paula Thompson of Dewitt, Mich, who is operating both with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division (Mechanized) and the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault) here in Mosul.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> platoons, attached with the 101<sup>st</sup>, have moved eight times since the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The mail load, according to Thompson, sometimes totaled “75,000 pounds a day...all by hand, one by one.”

Soldiers now looking to take advantage of the new, faster mail service must also take heed in policies governing what can be sent from Mosul.

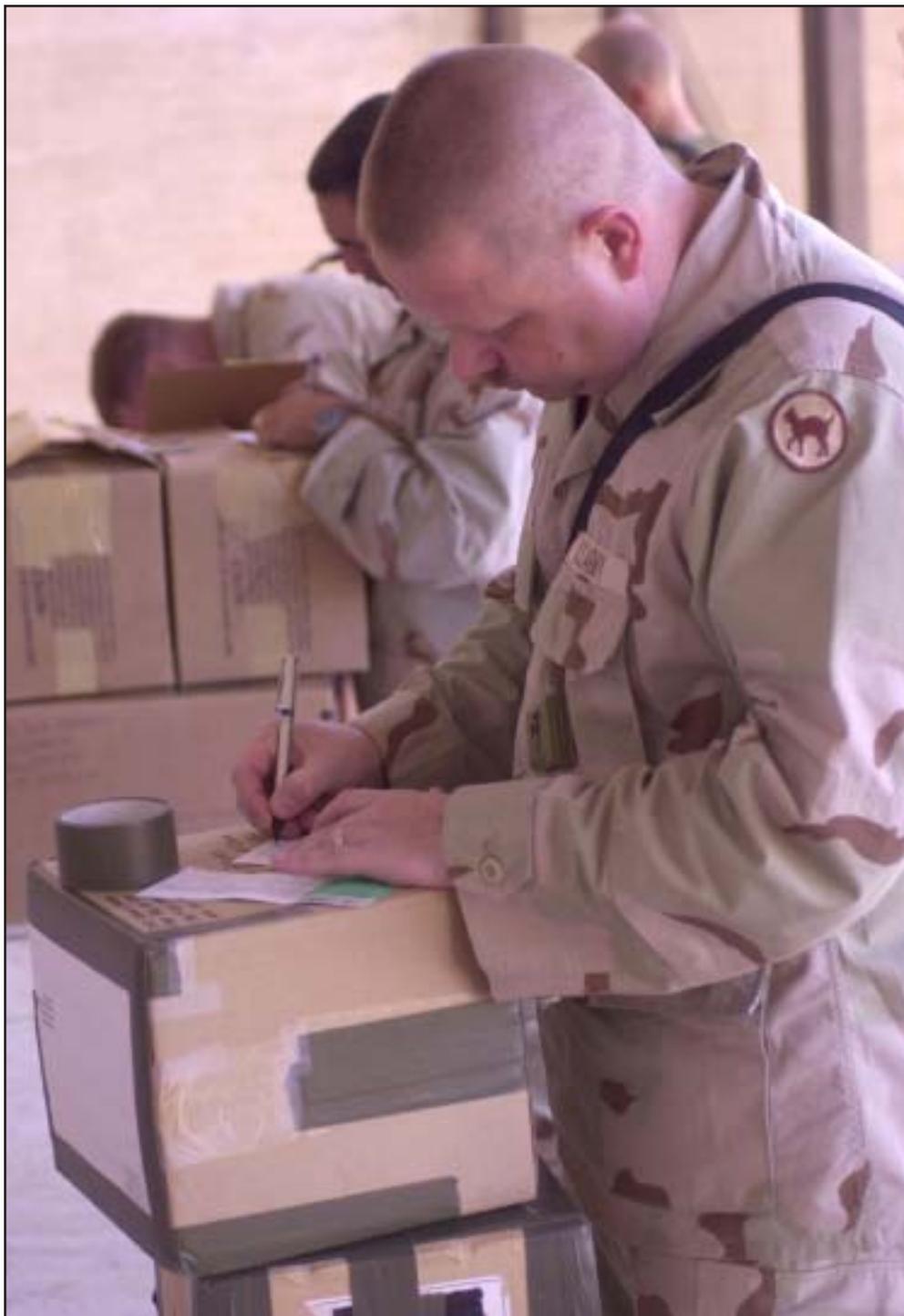
Guidance from Fifth Corps tell soldiers what can and cannot be sent through the mail service it prohibits the packaging of, among other things, alcoholic beverages, pork products and “all captured enemy equipment.”

In addition, soldiers “are not authorized to mail duffel bags, foot lockers and TA-50.”

Packages must also not exceed “72 inches in height and girth” and also must not weigh over 70 pounds.

Thompson and her soldiers are now holding daily mail calls at the 101<sup>st</sup> airfield in Mosul as well as regular mail drops at all other 101<sup>st</sup> bases in the city.

“I have the best job in the Army,” Thompson said. “I bring smiles to the desert.”



Pfc. Thomas Day

Staff Sgt. James Akers of Jonesborough, Tenn., 926th Engineer Group, prepares a package to be mailed home Thursday from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Civilian/Military Operations Center.

# Students benefit from network

By Spc. Joshua M. Risner  
40th PAD

Soldiers with the 431<sup>st</sup> Civil Affairs Battalion and 159<sup>th</sup> Aviation Brigade helped set up a computer network at the Mosul University, June 4.

"We're networking 24 computers in this location," said Maj. Grant Fondaw, 431<sup>st</sup> CA Bn.

"We are also going to install 32 other computers in other buildings across the campus and link them by microwave. This will serve not just the computer science department, but the entire university," Fondaw said.

Prior to the setup, soldiers gave a class to students and university employees so they would understand the procedures, according to Fondaw. "We're familiarizing them so that they can do it for themselves if they ever decide to expand," he said.

Soldiers worked alongside civilians as they made the goal a

reality. "There are some really good people here," Fondaw said.

The point is to give the university access to the internet, Fondaw pointed out. It will also give them unrestricted access perhaps for the first time, he added. "We're providing them with a filter and a firewall, but it will be their choice as to what sites they will block, not Baghdad's," he said.

The project has been underway for some time, but still lacks much before it is completed.

"The major equipment purchases such as satellite dishes are in the final stages," Fondaw said. "We still have to wire four more buildings with eight computers each

and get them to be able to communicate with each other and here at the computer center."

On top of that, the main building that housed the computer center was looted and burned for three days before being extinguished, according to Fondaw.

"We have just gotten through cleaning the building out and now we are going to get a detailed structural analysis to find out just how much damage has been done," he said.

Fondaw added that this operation has been a personal project of Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, (Air Assault). "He has been instrumental in clearing away roadblocks

and keeping things rolling along," he said.

The end result will provide the university something it has never had before.

"Before the war, everything came through Baghdad," Fondaw explained. "You essentially had to be approved by the Ba'ath Party to be able to use the internet. That will go away now."



Spc. Joshua M. Risner

Soldiers of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, (Air Assault) and the 431<sup>st</sup> Civil Affairs Battalion set up a computer network at the Mosul University computer center June 4.

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# *Train back on track to Syria*

Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault) and the interim mayor of Mosul, Ghanim Al-Baso headed west toward the Syrian border as another sign, life is returning back to normal for the Nineveh province.

On board for the first post war passenger train ride to Rebeaa, they experienced a rail system that works, but is in need of extensive repair.

When the soldiers and city council members boarded the train's only passenger car they found seat cushions torn or missing all together.

Puddles from leaking roofs filled the holes left by missing seat cushions. Passengers watched the northern Iraq country side pass by through cracked windows.

"Unfortunately, a number of the rail cars were looted or damaged, during the period people were taking illegal action," Petraeus said.

He also added, "In fact, the rail cars are being rehabilitated or repaired in Baghdad. And so we should hope to see the newer rail cars soon."

Other than the cosmetic faults of the passenger cab, the two and half hour trip was completed with no problems.

The rail system which already runs between Baghdad and Mosul is used to ship supplies from the south.

The positive affects of a functioning Rebeaa to Mosul line are more than reaching more passengers.

"The UN wants to use the rail system to bring grain and wheat in from Syria," Command Sgt. Maj. Edward Barnhill, sergeant major, Civil/Military Operations Center.

Contributed by  
Sgt. Raymond Flores  
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

## School supplies keep flowing into Mosul



Spc. Joshua M. Risner

Soldiers and local citizens help unload school supplies for a village outside Mosul, June 4. The supplies were donated by the 159th Aviation Brigade.

## Man on the Street

What thing would give the biggest morale boost?



"Seeing a movie; I would really like to see the new Matrix." - Capt. Heath Wells of Washington, D.C., 404th Civil Affairs Battalion



"A volleyball net." - Sgt. Patrick Pitts of Little Rock, Ark., 431st CA Bn.



"A definite date (to redeploy)." - Sgt. Matthew Loring of Abidjan, Penn., 3rd Battalion, 327 Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)



"Probably real food." - Maj. Greg Cordray of Texicana, Texas, 431st Civil Affairs

## Commentary

# Iraq is business, not pleasure

By Pfc. Mary Rose Xenikakis  
22nd MPAD

A domestic abuse situation between two Iraqis outside of the Civil Military Operations Center in Mosul, Iraq, on Friday is a reminder to all soldiers to stay on their toes.

A group of four soldiers, some from non-combat arms backgrounds, on a routine run to another location in the city found themselves stopped just feet from the compound they were leaving. The two vehicle convoy came to a halt when a woman moving quickly from a small white car and being followed by a man ran up to the leading vehicle, begging for help. The soldiers jumped to the call of duty by offering the hysterical woman security.

After separating the couple and calling for help from a translator and other soldiers, two of the soldiers went to inspect the vehicle, which was left on the side of the road with its doors wide open.

In the car they found two AK-47s with fully loaded magazines. The heat in the situation went from warm to hot. With a shout from a soldier at the car, the man who allegedly owned these weapons and who was beating his wife was on his stomach being arrested by the U.S. Army.

The soldiers had no way of knowing what this man's intentions were.

This situation could have turned many different directions, but thankfully for the quick show of authority and responsibility on the part of these soldiers, it had a successful ending.

Not all soldiers have been this fortunate though. With the increase of small arms fire that can be heard every night in the Mosul area, soldiers are still operating under war-like situations. Commands throughout the northern Iraqi area have been directing their soldiers to stay aware of their surroundings at all times.

Many have increased security in their area of operations because of the influx of small arms and RPG fire in the area.

Soldiers should not become complacent in their living conditions and surroundings. It's common place for soldiers to be mobbed by children. It's common place for soldiers to stop and buy food from local restaurants. It's common place that soldiers are losing their situational awareness.

Soldiers are frequently in places where they aren't in complete control of the situation because of the amount of activity surrounding them – sensory overload.

Rules of engagement still apply as when the Army stepped into Iraq. Even though many soldiers are making friends with Iraqis, there are many enemies still out there looking for a target with a smile on their faces.

The Army needs to continue letting people know we're here for business not pleasure.