

IRAQI DESTINY

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For the children...

One soldier's compassion sparks a change

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Commentary

Moment of truth: In a Black Hawk with Saddam

By Pfc. Chris Jones
40th PAD

I am cradled in straps and buckles, looking out a window into darkness. My earplugs fade the roar of the Black Hawk to a light murmur, and any other sound in the world is beyond my senses. Seven of the eight seats in the rear of the chopper are bare, and I fill the eighth. The country of Iraq will never again offer me such isolation.

Exhaustion takes me, and I tremble near sleep, until a human voice overcomes the sound of the engine. I look right. Murky brown eyes gaze through me, and a terrible tranquility consumes me. The drone of the engine dies. Silence is everywhere.

The face of Saddam Hussein is just what I had imagined, a man whose evil cannot be seen or heard, but whose eyes release ingrained gloom.

"What do you fear?" he asks in scarred English.

I break for my rifle.

"Evil," I answer.

"Then you fear me."

"I fear evil only in strength."

"Am I not strong?" he asks.

"In the shelter of the sky, you cannot see my strength. You see lights below, from cities in my kingdom. From here

you cannot see my devastation."

I unclench my hand from my rifle.

"What I fear – what I fear is the end of life," I say.

"Of course you do," he whistles back. "We all fear death. It is the strongest of all fears, and I will hold it over your head, long after mine arrives. Death is the vague, influential factor in this crusade, the only sacrifice that cannot be undone."

"I do fear death," I maintain, every nerve in my body blown, every blood cell in my veins cracked or broken.

"I fear death as well," Saddam says. "I am hidden. I am hidden because I fear my death. And yet the Americans – the Americans, my friend – are the ones who are dying. Your friends, you call them brothers here, because their blood is shed with yours. Tell me, soldier, where does this blood go? A body full of blood cut open to an empty carcass. This blood that spills, private, where does it go?"

"It trickles down drains. It dries on concrete."

"More than 400 of these brothers of yours have spilled their blood on my land in route to death," he says. "And you are right, their blood trickles down drains or dries on pavement. That blood will stay on my land forever. It will never

return with its body. It will never go home. Why are you here? To spill your blood and come back as an empty body, of course. But why? Have you any reason to die?"

"None," I say. "I have no reason."

"I know," he assures. "I do know. No one has a reason to die. We are born to live, not to die. Go home. Go home alive and save your blood to be spilled on your own land. I was born here. This is my land. These are my people. You know these things, and it haunts you. You know life, and you know death. Could you hand death to a man? Could you hand death to me?"

"Yes," I respond. "You have earned death, and I would hand it to you." Saddam watches me keenly, then nods.

"I do not think so," he says. "Why?"

"Look at me," he says with a distorted grin. "Now, look at your rifle. You have the chance now. And I am alive. As I said, no one has a reason to die. We are born to live, not to die."

I do look at him. I do look at my rifle. I close my eyes. I shiver. The sounds of the helicopter gradually return. I turn back to look at Saddam but find only a vacant seat.

At last, the chopper descends to the ground, and I sprint

out, a camera in my left hand and my rifle slung around my shoulder.

Soon, I am lying on a bare cot with my feet drooping over the frame, far from sleep. A brain burdened with insecurity, I examine my ability to kill. For hours, I try to recreate my dream, but to little avail. Under my cot lies my rifle. With a tired left hand, I calmly clasp the stock.

The sound of rotary blades steadily materializes. My chest is bound by belts. Whose dream have I strayed into? Whose breath awakens the cold darkness surrounding me? I know this is a dream. I know this is my dream. I know the gray mist drifting in the air is my own.

I glance around the cabin for evidence of my existence, and I find it at last standing between my feet – my rifle. It looks at once proud, sad and helpless.

I hold my weapon steady, and I slowly turn my head right. However, my gaze finds no evil. I am looking at my brother Josh, who lends me a strange, funny smile. My heart feels overwhelmingly peaceful by his presence, the cool nostalgia of naïve memories made outside of dreams. Beside Josh sits my father, and beside him my mother, and it becomes suddenly clear what I would kill for and what I would die for.

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101st mourns loss of artilleryman

By Pfc. Chris Jones
40th PAD

MOSUL, Iraq -- Troops gathered behind one of ousted Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's palaces in the Division Main compound here Tuesday to pay tribute to a soldier killed by mortar fire at a nearby dining facility Friday.

Sgt. Ariel Rico, an artilleryman with Battery C, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), was the sole fatality in an attack near the Kellogg Brown and Root Dining Facility mid-day Friday.

Staff Sgt. Scott Bengé, a fellow artilleryman in Battery C, said the pain upon

losing a fellow soldier can never be lessened, and the shock cannot be averted.

"All my guys were gonna walk off the plane together, hugging our children and kissing our wives," said Bengé, referring to the first few days upon returning the United States. "We were going to have a barbecue and talk about everything that happened to us – funny, sad, even things that don't sit well with us. Today I realize there'll be one empty chair. Conversations will go on, the times we shared together will be talked about, but that chair will remain empty, and no one will ever fill it."

In his highly-decorated five years of military service, Rico served in two field artillery regiments – the 320th at Fort Campbell, Ky., and the 15th at Camp Casey, South Korea. He first served with

the 320th, and then took a one-year tour to Korea between January 2002 and 2003. When he returned to the Fort Campbell, he requested to return to his former unit. Capt. Steven Fahlenkamp, commander, Battery C, 3rd Bn, 320th, said he was hounded by soldiers pleading for him to bring Rico back into the unit. When Fahlenkamp finally got him back into Battery C, he said it was obvious why so many soldiers wanted him back.

"[The soldiers] were right," Fahlenkamp said, "Sgt. Rico has to be one of the most amazing soldiers I've ever worked with."

According to his fellow soldiers, Rico was one of the brightest, bravest and most spirited soldiers in the unit. He is survived by his wife, Jessica, and his 7-year-old daughter, Jadelyn.



Pfc. Chris Jones

Staff Sgt. Scott Bengé of Battery C, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), speaks at the memorial ceremony for Sgt. Ariel Rico, an artilleryman killed by mortar fire at the Division Main compound in Mosul Friday. The ceremony for Rico was held behind the main palace (background) at D-Main, less than one hundred meters where the mortar attack took place.

Teach their children well

Small band of soldiers rally to bring orphaned Iraqis back to school

by Pfc. Chris Jones
40th PAD

SINJAR, Iraq -- With dizzy passion, Spc. David McCorkle spills his guts. Resting his 46-year-old body against his team's armored Humvee by a helicopter pad on a U.S. Army compound near Sinjar, McCorkle chats with such boyish zeal he may as well be talking about how he's going to spend his first few days after he redeployes back to America.

After noting the still-astonishing proximity of the planet Mars to Earth, then diving into a sermon contrasting his civilian job to his role in the Army Reserve, he finally lands on one topic – a side-project he's been working on while in Northern Iraq. He uses the word "hope" four times in three sentences, then "Iraqi orphans" three times in the next two. His project is just this – hope for Iraqi orphans.

"I think every soldier in Iraq has at one time or another been surrounded by hundreds of kids on the city streets," he says. "Well, every once in a while, there's one that tugs at your heart and makes you want to change their life, give them a better opportunity. What I want is to affect American citizens so that they want to help out the children here."

McCorkle is, quite simply, trying to change the future for all orphans in Northern Iraq. He says many fatherless or motherless children in the country are out of school because they need to work all day in order to survive.

"I don't want a single orphaned kid here to not be in school," he says. "There's just so many – so many children here who spend their entire childhood on the streets here, trying desperately to sell something to keep from going hungry. I can't tell you how sad it makes me. Many of these children have no hope for a better future. Can you imagine not having the hope to make a better future for yourself?"

McCorkle has not taken his project humbly – in three months he has exhausted more than \$5,000, helped set up a company website, assembled a board of



Courtesy photo

Spc. David McCorkle of the 318th Tactical Psychological Operations Battalion, an Army Reserve unit out of St. Louis, Mo., poses with an orphaned Iraqi boy near the lean-to shop where the boy works selling goods to soldiers and other passers-by. While in Iraq, McCorkle has launched American Aid for Children of Nineveh Iraq, a large charity corporation to keep orphaned Iraqi children off the streets and into classrooms.

directors from diverse backgrounds, hired an agent to file paperwork for beginning a United States nonprofit corporation, and requested publicity support from American first-lady Laura Bush. And he's done this all while in Iraq.

"I've been busy," he huffs.

August was the culprit for McCorkle's ambition. While on a mission in Mosul with fellow soldiers from his unit, the 318th Tactical Psychological Operations Company, an Army Reserve unit out of St. Louis, Mo., McCorkle met a young Iraqi boy who later became his friend and inspiration.

"He was selling small items on the street in the Mosul University area to soldiers, stuff like chocolate and Pepsi, just like thousands of other Iraqi children," he says. "I began to notice he was there all the time, every day. We became friends since I saw him there all the time. He is a small boy, too small to be working on the streets."

As days went by, the 9-year-old boy, Yahya, began to affect McCorkle, evoking the question – what if he was my son?

"When he smiled, he reminded me of my

two young sons back home," McCorkle says. "I thought about how I would feel if my sons were in Yahya's situation. He always wore the same exact clothes every day, and when I would speak to my wife about him I would call him 'the boy in the purple shirt.' Somehow my heart went out to this particular boy, and I knew I had to help him."

Assisted by an Iraqi translator, McCorkle learned the boy's father had recently died, and he was forced to assume the role of household supplier by selling goods to soldiers and other passersby.

"I found out he had been out of school for several years and he would have trouble returning, even if he had the chance," McCorkle says. "The translator, an Iraqi teacher and I went to [Yahya's] house to tell his mother I would help support them financially if he would agree to return to school."

McCorkle was now left at a crossroads

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– affected by Yahya’s story, yet tired from the war in Iraq and the ongoing peace-keeping mission.

His daily routine began to wear on him. He soon became “uninspired.” After McCorkle’s team relocated to Tallafar, a large city west of Mosul housing the 101st Airborne Division’s 3rd Brigade, the idea finally crossed him that his efforts in helping orphaned Iraqi children don’t have to end with Yahya – thus begun the plan for American Aid for Children of Nineveh Iraq (AA-CNI), an online charity organization sparked by “the boy in the purple shirt.”

In a matter of days, McCorkle was sending letters, e-mails and telephone calls across the Atlantic Ocean to agents in Missouri, Washington, D.C. and New York, requesting support in launching a large non-profit corporation to keep parentless Iraqi children off the streets and into classrooms. The design of AA-CNI calls for American citizens to

donate \$50 per month to sponsor an orphaned Iraqi child. The money would supply all critical school items such as books and writing material, but can also be used to purchase clothing, backpacks and other needs.

“Once I got it in my mind, there was no turning back,” McCorkle says. “I knew it was all or nothing.”

Kurt Unruh, a member of Nonprofit Online, a company dedicated to helping nonprofit organizations get up and running, immediately responded to McCorkle’s request for assistance.

“I knew I could do it, but I knew I couldn’t do it alone,” McCorkle says.

Unruh, whose office is stationed in Missouri where AA-CNI will also be headquartered, helped get the corporation on its feet, filing paperwork to agencies across the state requesting expedited assistance for what McCorkle calls “exceptional need for humanitarian assistance in Iraq.”

Unruh says the first major insecurity blockading the launch of AA-CNI was

the enduring hostility in Iraq causing donation money to stray away from the orphans.

“One potential snag we may run into is in regards to scrutiny over terrorist activities and funds falling into the wrong hands,” Unruh wrote in an e-mail to McCorkle. “For the U.S., it’s a double-edged sword. On one hand, we want to get relief dollars into the country, so charitable work is a great means of doing so. On the other hand, we don’t want the wrong people setting up charities to funnel funds into Iraq for non-charitable purposes.”

While this rift may never be fully mended, McCorkle has signed several representatives all over Northern Iraq – primarily in Sinjar, Tallafar and Mosul – who will act as overseas delegates when McCorkle and other soldiers with the 101st Airborne Division return home. A trust of teachers and bankers throughout Nineveh Province will ensure that all donation

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Pfc. Chris Jones

An orphaned Iraqi boy tries to sell an already-opened can of Coca Cola to a 101st Airborne Division soldier currently serving in Northern Iraq. Orphaned children such as these affected Spc. David McCorkle of the 318th Tactical Psychological Operations Company to the point where he took the steps in forming American Aid for Children of Nineveh Iraq, a humanitarian assistance corporation set to keep these children off the streets selling goods and back to school.

Kurdish airport built jointly by Iraqis and US Soldiers

by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson
101st Abn. Div. (AAst.) PAO

MOSUL, Iraq -- A ribbon cutting ceremony was held Monday to celebrate the completion of the 101st Airborne Division's involvement in renovations of the Hawler International Airport in Erbil, Iraq.

High-ranking members of the Kurdish Regional Government, including the ministers of Agriculture, and Public Works and Housing and Prime Minister Nichirwan Barzani, attended the ceremony.

Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and other leaders from the division also attended the ceremony.

"(The ceremony) recognizes the start of another chapter in the long history of this city," Petraeus said, speaking to those assembled.

The construction at the airfield was a four-month project, undertaken jointly by civilian engineers and construction workers, Kurdish Peshmerga Special Forces, and soldiers from four engineer units; the 37th Engineer Battalion, 926th Eng. Group, 877th Eng. Bn. and 52nd Eng. Bn., all of which are attached to the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

"This is a joint triumph," Petraeus said. "(The soldiers) and their Kurdish partners have been the key to this endeavor."

"I would like to thank all the (people) who worked on this project," said Prime Minister Barzani. "The soldiers who worked here will have a special place in our hearts and minds."

The work done at the airport was divided into three major projects, all conducted simultaneously. The first project was the construction of a three-kilometer ring road to connect the airport to high-traffic roads. Its function is to provide expanded access to the airport and serve as a gate to commercial development on the northwest side of the city, said Maj. Benjamin Bigelow, operations officer, 37th Eng. Bn.

The second project was the construction of an 18-kilometer perimeter road around the entire airport property. The third project was the expansion and improvement of a cargo parking apron accessed by two taxiways, Bigelow said.

In an effort to give back to the Kurds, who helped fight along side coalition forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the military engineers worked long hours in

the heat, rain and cold to build roads for the airport, said Capt. Jason Talliaferro, commander, C Company, 37th Eng. Bn. "We really appreciate the help," said Sardar Barzani, airport commissioner.

Barzani hopes that by creating an international airport in Hawler, he will be able to improve the economy with tourism, exporting, importing, and jobs.

"It's a great way to get tourists to Kurdistan," he said. "It's a gate for this region."

Erbil is the biggest city in Kurdistan, with a population of one and a half million, an airport would bring a large revenue to the city. Plus, its location is central to most of the large cities in northern Iraq, he said.

"The expansion of Hawler International Airport will open a door for this region to the rest of the world," Petraeus said.

Both coalition forces and the Kurdish government supplied the equipment used

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Spc. Joshua Hutcheson

Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) speaks to the assembled military leaders and members of the Kurdish Regional Government at the ribbon cutting ceremony marking the completion of the division's involvement in the renovations of the Hawler International Airport.

Engineers build dam, provide safe drinking water

by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson
101st Abn. Div. (AAst.) PAO

MOSUL, Iraq -- American engineers in northern Iraq are using their skills to keep the water flowing into the houses of the people of the city of Mosul, and keep the oil out.

In October a crude oil pipe running ruptured, spilling an "unknown quantity" of oil into a dry creek bed 15 kilometers above the Tigris River.

The Tigris is the source of water for millions of people in northern Iraq, said Maj. Scott Vick, group plans officer, 926th Engineer Group, attached to the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

The oil pooled in the creek bed until Thanksgiving weekend, when large torrents of rain created an intermittent creek, flushing much of the oil into the Tigris, Vick said.

The oil was sucked into the intake duct filters at the nearby water treatment plant. The crude clogged the system and forced the workers of the plant to temporarily shut it down, said Maj. John Gossett, chemical officer, 926th Eng. Group.

The treatment plant is the source of clean water for Mosul and the surrounding region. Shutting down the plant, even temporary, affected food preparation, and people's ability to drink and bathe.

Cleaning oil out of the water tanks was a complicated job. Because the treatment plant was built on an old design, the water tanks are concrete. The oil soaked into the concrete and made the scrubbing process more difficult, Gossett said.

To keep that incident from repeating, engineers attached to the 101st built a dam to keep the water from being contaminated again, Vick said.

Using their own construction equipment and with supplies provided by the Mosul government, engineers from the 926th Eng. Group and 877th Engineer Battalion, were able to build a dam in two days.

"Everyone agrees that this is the best alternative to prevent oil from reaching the Tigris," Vick said.

The dam was built using three 12-inch diameter pipes placed on the creek bottom, then rocks no larger than 16 inches were dropped on top of the pipes. Because oil floats on top of water, the

rocks will collect the crude and keep it from going any further. The water will be able to flow through the submerged pipes, Vick said.

The engineers coordinated with Task Force RIO to get equipment and supplies to clean the creek.

More than \$98,000 is supposed to be spent on absorbent booms and pads to stop the oil, skimmers to get the oil out of the water, four sets of protective suits for the

people who will work to clean the Tigris, and other tools to treat the water, Vick said.

"This will be the only source of petroleum remediation equipment in northern Iraq," Vick said.

Crude oil flow through the ruptured pipe was halted in October, shortly after the break.

It is unknown at this time when flow will be resumed.



Spc. Joshua Hutcheson

A soldier with the 877th Eng. Bn., 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) uses an excavator to make space for a dam to be built by the engineers.

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funds reach their respective "adopted orphans."

McCorkle claims October and November as two of the most industrious, demanding months of his life. In addition to initiating AA-CNI and continuing to look after his young friend Yahya, McCorkle had still to continue performing his daily mission as a soldier in a combat zone. It was after his team relocated for the third time in three months, from Tall Afar to Sinjar, when McCorkle encountered Sgt. James Harrelson, a fellow PSYOPS soldier, and spoke with him about AA-CNI.

"He told me about what he was doing," Harrelson says, "and I was like, are you kidding?"

McCorkle and Harrelson, who deem themselves "complete opposites," soon began exchanging ideas for AA-CNI.

"I was the believer and he was cynic," declares McCorkle, "so it just made sense to team up."

"He got me on board because I knew he wouldn't quit," laughs Harrelson. "He told me I was just suspicious enough to help him. He was very willing to trust, and I'm the guy who says, 'I don't believe you.'"

Harrelson rounded out McCorkle's unsuspecting optimism with a sense of skepticism, ensuring fluidity in the entire contribution process.

"I wanted to make sure the entire procedure is completely smooth," Harrelson says. "That includes making sure that when you're sponsoring a child to stay in school that he or she stays in school, instead of just taking the money and working on the side. So we developed a plan to keep the teachers or schoolmasters sending AA-CNI a monthly report card of the child being sponsored. That way the person in America who pays money to keep their adopted orphan in school can have complete confirmation that his money is being well spent."

Despite the amount of work McCorkle and Harrelson have done from Iraq, all legal facets involved in starting AA-CNI can only be performed within U.S. borders. Bruce Gikes, who works beside McCorkle in his civilian job with IBM, has stepped up as another key player in the launching of AA-CNI.

"He's really been a big boost," says McCorkle of Gikes. "He's been developing the company website with material that I've gathered here in Iraq. He is also handling a lot of other things that can't be done overseas."

Though Gikes was quick to help, he says it took him some time to fully grasp the scope of the project McCorkle was founding.

"When David McCorkle first proposed the idea, it sounded like a worthwhile cause, but I was really just interested in helping a good friend who was in a bad situation," Gikes says. "Then as I spoke more with David about the children in Iraq and what they are going through and when I began to see some of the pictures that David sent to me, it really sank in and my heart went out to those suffering children. All politics aside, this organization and David's goals are about helping an unfortunate group of children that through no fault of their own have been subjected to unspeakable horrors and a standard of living that is beyond anything I could imagine or truly understand."

"Some onlookers might ask, 'well, what about the children of America?' They are right to some level, but we have to remember to forget about race, creed or nationality when we speak of children. They do not have a choice where they were born or where they grow up."

The AA-CNI team rounded out to five with the addition of Sgt. James Sikes, also of the 318th, and McCorkle's wife, Maureen. With additional support from the Service Corps of Retired Executives and the New York Foundation Center, McCorkle's would-be naïve hope has now evolved into a corporation set out to improve the futures of perhaps thousands of Iraqi children.

As for Yahya, he's now back in school, but struggling to catch up for lost time. McCorkle says he remains in close contact with Yahya, and he hopes to one day bring him to the U.S. to meet Laura Bush at the White House.

"I wrote to the First Lady, telling her about what I am doing both with Yahya and as a charity to help other kids and schools. She has been very supportive of educational programs in the U.S., and I hope she would be supportive of helping Iraqi children. I have asked her about bringing Yahya to the U.S. for a visit and about the possibility of him meeting her. This would be outstanding publicity for the charity as a whole as well as an incredible opportunity for Yahya."

McCorkle says he also intends to take Yahya to Disneyland.

In a little more than three years, McCorkle will turn 50 years old. As an E-4, he is both the oldest and lowest-

ranking soldier on his team. He says he feels his age mostly in the morning, when his body takes a little longer to wake than his mind. He joined the Army Reserve shortly after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11. McCorkle's 5 feet, 10 inch body weighed nearly 350 pounds then, but the disaster weighed so heavily on him that in order to join the military he lost nearly half of it in the next three months.

"Before 9/11, I was having a terrible mid-life crisis," he says. "I was in that time in my life when I began to wonder where my youth went. I knew I wasn't old, but I knew I couldn't keep calling myself young. Then 9/11 happened, and I just snapped," he says. "I knew what I wanted to do, and that was join the Army. I was so heavy though, about 350 pounds. I knew I had to work it off somehow."

In a little more than one year after joining, he deployed to Iraq. This meant leaving behind his job at IBM, where his role as chief salesman earned him approximately \$250,000 per year.

As McCorkle leans his body against the Humvee, both Mars and the Moon are staring at him on a black horizon outside Sinjar.

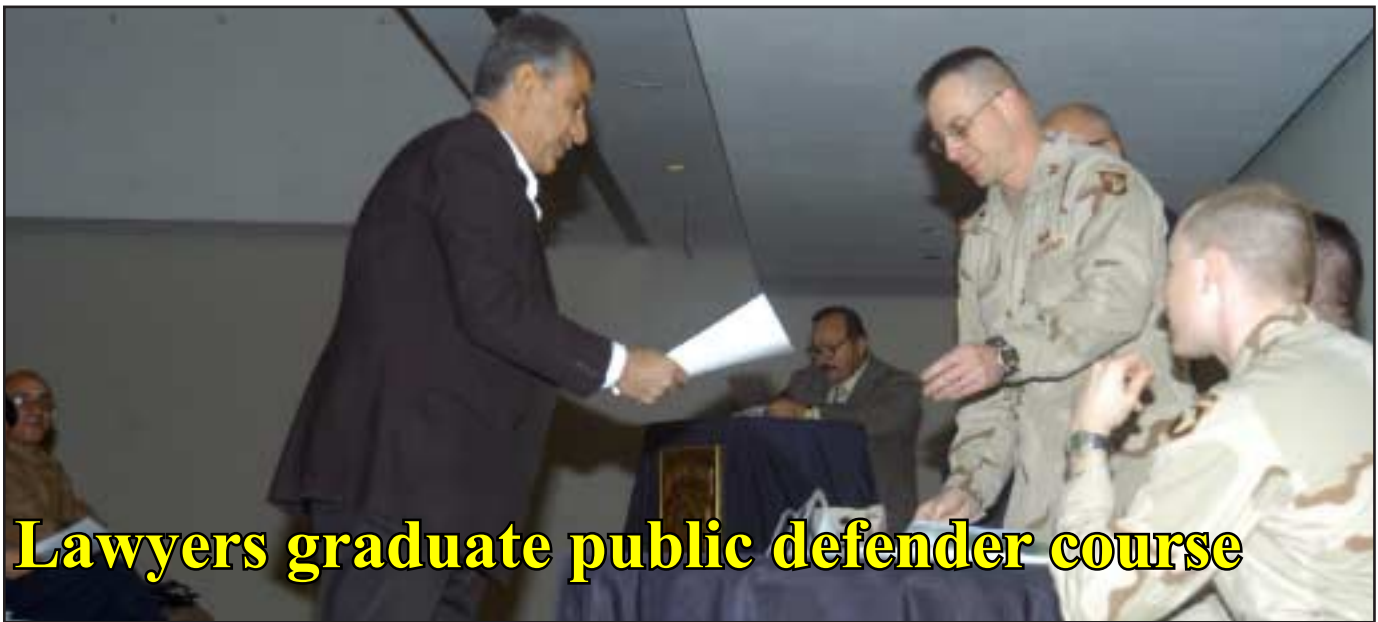
He exchanges glances between the two far-away worlds. He's been talking for two hours, and he's finally tired. It's only a few minutes to midnight. Harrelson stands beside McCorkle, head tilted back, eyes on the stars, mouth slightly open.

In two days, Harrelson will be back in the U.S. on mid-tour leave. He reminds himself of this every 41 seconds.

In two days, McCorkle will be at a bank in Tallafar, finishing talks with local bank reps about his AA-CNI strategy.

"Maybe I'm just like Rhett Butler in *Gone With the Wind* – 'a sucker for a lost cause'," says McCorkle, linking himself to the famous movie character. "I've had my share of naysayers. They're everywhere. You can never get away from them, no matter how hard you try. I know what I'm doing, and I know it won't be easy. I might just be that sucker for a lost cause, but I'm not about to stop trying."

(Editor's Note: For information on how to sponsor a child, please visit the AA-CNI website, www.iraqkids.org or contact the board of directors at dmccorkle@iraqkids.org or bgilkes@iraqkids.org)



Spc. Joshua M. Risner

Lawyers from throughout the Ninevah Province gathered at the Civil Military Operations Center Saturday to graduate from a course given by the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). The course was designed to give the lawyers skills they would need when defending people who could not afford representation in a court of law.

Lawyers graduate public defender course

The Judge Says...

Items of legal interest to soldiers

Q: What is bankruptcy? Will it help me or hurt my credit?

A: Bankruptcy is legal protection from your creditors.

Normally, a contract defines the duties and responsibilities between a borrower and a lender. Bankruptcy, however, can require a lender to accept a lower payment or eliminate the debt entirely.

Two different types of bankruptcy are available to individuals. The first is Chapter 7, often called a "straight" bankruptcy. Under Chapter 7, all nonexempt assets are applied to all debts, and the debts are eliminated. For example, \$5,000 in assets might be applied to \$30,000 in debts, and the other \$25,000 is cancelled.

The second is Chapter 13, often called a "reorganization" bankruptcy. Under Chapter 13, the court approves a 3-5 year repayment plan which the creditors must accept. Some people claim Chapter 13 is less damaging to your credit than Chapter 7, because debts are repaid and not discharged.

Bankruptcy can be expensive though, and not all debts can be discharged (such as child support arrearages). Consult with an attorney if you are having diffi-

culty paying your bills and you think bankruptcy is an option.

Q: Can I be punished for bankruptcy?

A: Soldiers are required by AR 600-15 to pay their just debts, and can be punished under Article 134, UCMJ, for dishonorably failing to pay a debt.

Soldiers cannot be punished for filing for bankruptcy, however. Bankruptcy is a perfectly legal proceeding, and soldiers cannot be prosecuted for seeking protection from their creditors.

Preventive law tip of the week:

Don't borrow more than you can repay. That sounds like common sense advice, but aside from extraordinary circumstances, bankruptcy only becomes a consideration when you have borrowed beyond your ability to repay.

So when it comes to consumer debt, avoid the temptation to take on a new line of credit or carry a large balance on an account. Some purchases such as houses or vehicles virtually require buying on credit, so reduce your borrowing elsewhere.

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to work on the project. More than 50 pieces of equipment came from military engineers. The regional government supplied another 40 vehicles and other pieces construction equipment.

"This was our first road project," said Spc. Sean Bailey, combat engineer, C Co. 37th Eng. Bn. "It just shows you the versatility of the engineers."

There are other projects that need to be completed before the airport will be open for business. Fences need to be built around the ring road and the rest of the airfield. A traffic control tower also needs to be built.

The Coalition Provisional Authority is providing \$120,000 to fence the airfield, and \$200,000 for the traffic control tower, Bigelow said.

Additionally the Erbil Airport Commission is providing the funding for a second, larger runway to accommodate larger commercial aircraft.

The soldiers of the 37th Eng. Bn. enjoyed working in Erbil.

"It's nice to see a community that really appreciates our help," Talliaferro said.

Man on the Street

What has been your biggest challenge thus far in Iraq?



“Getting on the Internet.”

- Staff Sgt. Richard Janasik,
Headquarters and Headquarters
Company, 101st Air-
borne Division (Air Assault)
G-3 Office



“Keeping positive rela-
tionships at home.”

- Cpl. Donald Johnston,
404th Civil Affairs Bat-
talion, Special Opera-
tions

“Wanting to do more for
the people than I can.”

- Spc. Elizabeth Burn-
ham, 404th Civil Affairs
Battalion



“The day-to-day routine,
eight-hour guard duty,
convoys.”

- Pfc. Anthony Duncan,
Battery C, 3rd Battalion,
320th Field Artillery Reg-
iment



“Making sure our equip-
ment is straight, doing our
jobs and staying safe.”

- Sgt. Gabriel Delgado, Co.
A, 501st Signal Battalion



“Staying busy.”

- Sgt. Matthew D.
Searcy, HHC, 101st Abn.
Div. (AAslt.) Staff Judge
Advocate Office