1ST ARMORED DIVISION
AMERICA'S TANK DIVISION
OLD IRONSIDES

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"All-American" Range Opens for Paratroopers and Iraqi Security Forces

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BAGHDAD, Iraq—As coalition forces patrol the streets of Baghdad, working to ensure a safe environment for the people of Iraq, it is important for soldiers to maintain the most fundamental of their skills, basic rifle marksmanship.

The All-American Range is a facility, approved by the 1st Armored Division, used to train paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team and some others.

Practicing at the range will help coalition forces deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom to maintain a high standard of "zero" (adjusting the weapon's sights for the individual soldier) and weapons proficiency.

In a hostile environment, if a soldier needs to engage the enemy, he needs to engage with one shot -- an accurate shot -- to neutralize the enemy, said Staff Sgt. Ralph D. Jacobs, brigade master gunner and the noncommissioned officer in charge of building the range.

"We needed a facility to start training Iraqi security forces," Jacobs said, "and an area where U.S. soldiers can go to keep weapons proficiency to standard."

In its most basic form, the range provides soldiers deployed to support Coalition Joint Task Force-7, the opportunity to practice their marksmanship, zero, re-zero and conduct function checks on their weapons systems, said Staff Sgt. Quintin Evans, battalion master gunner, 3rd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment.

Soldiers usually practice a firing range at least once every six months, and light infantry paratroopers conduct weapons training and exercises regularly, said Evans.

Many of the soldiers in the 2nd Brigade Combat Team had not fired their weapons since the battle for As Samawah in early April (of this year), he said.

Jacobs, charged with building the range for Task Force Falcon and the paratroopers of the 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, worked through the heat of the Iraqi summer overcoming issues of labor, transportation and supplies to build two firing ranges.

Using bulldozers to dig into the ground and to build up the berm behind the targets, Jacobs and a crew of volunteers constructed targets, lanes, firing posts and limits, measuring the area to hold 10 lanes for rifles and squad automatic weapons. Jacobs also created another, smaller range for pistols.

To date, more than 300 individuals, the majority of 2nd Battalion soldiers, some from other units in Baghdad and some Iraqi security forces have trained on the range.

"We have plans for more outside units to use it in the coming months," Jacobs said.

The plans don't stop there, explained Jacobs, who is vying for the funding to expand the range to meet the specific needs of soldiers operating in an urban environment.

Looking to build upon fixed sites within the range complex, Jacobs and Evans are hoping to create a small-scale replica of an Iraqi neighborhood. Known as a Military Operations in Urban Terrain, or MOUT, training facility, the buildings, modeled after typical buildings in Baghdad, will be a blank-fire training range for soldiers to prepare for urban combat.

The MOUT site will include six buildings laid out like a city block with a marketplace in the center and a street that can accommodate Humvees for soldiers conducting mounted patrols and moving through populated areas, said Evans.

Staff Sgt. Ralph D. Jacobs, brigade master gunner, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, fires an Iraqi AK-47 rifle for familiarization at a target on the All-American Range. Jacobs designed and built the range with approval from the 1st Armored Division. The range is a training facility for coalition forces and has even hosted some Iraqi security forces. Jacobs intends to make the All-American Range a multi-complex range for different weapons systems training.

Plans for a "tire house," a live-fire, MOUT structure, where targets are placed on tires to absorb the impact of the fired round, are also in the works, said Jacobs.

The soldiers will have the opportunity to partake in realistic training that replicates the conditions of an Iraqi neighborhood, said Evans.

"We want to provide a spot for units to train, where new people can get a feel for the Iraqi civilian environment," Evans said. "If we get the funding we need, this range will be a standard for ranges in Baghdad and Iraq."

Many soldiers, new to operations in Iraq, are learning how to operate in an urban environment carrying their heavy, often cumbersome, equipment, said Evans.

While negotiating obstacles, such as high walls and steel gates, troops in the streets have encountered Iraqis fleeing search-and-seizure operations, running across rooftops, and hiding weapons and ammunition in nearby houses and yards, said Evans.

Scaling walls and gates, climbing narrow stairways, and clearing rooftops, balconies, and doorways can be challenging, while carrying equipment, weapons and the heavy body armor.

"A MOUT training facility normally will not replicate the rubble, the shards, the holes in the walls -- all the things common to the environment we are currently working in," Evans said. "The new MOUT site on the All-American Range will allow the soldiers to train to negotiate the gates, and to utilize alternate routes and new tactics. The MOUT training facility will also allow the soldiers to familiarize themselves more with their weapons and equipment."

With the onset of America's involvement in the war against terrorism and against Iraq, soldiers in the U. S. Army are facing deployments of a year, and while the change in operations has stopped soldier movements from post to post and individuals exiting military service, deployments will not stop training, said Jacobs.

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NEWS

U.S. Gas Prices Make Record Jump

CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP) - Gasoline prices around the country jumped to record highs during the past two weeks as the nation's epic blackout temporarily shut down some refineries and a broken pipeline caused shortages in Arizona. The shortages pushed average retail gasoline prices up more than 15 cents a gallon nationally, the biggest two-week hike since the Lundberg Survey began keeping records 50 years ago.

Hurricane Ignacio Sweeps Into Baja

LA PAZ, Mexico (AP) - Nearly 3,000 people took refuge in shelters as Hurricane Ignacio roared along the coast of Baja California on Monday, bending palm trees with winds topping 90 mph and lashing tourist resorts with sheets of rain. The hurricane knocked down trees, signs and power poles in the fishing port of La Paz and cut power to part of the city.

A Smart Tip from 1AD Safety

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

- ✓ Check all electrical equipment for damage to cords, and receptacles.
- ✓ Use Power Strips and not extension cords – Power strips have a fuse or circuit breaker which prevents electrical surges and overloads.
- ✓ Do not twist, bend or walk on electrical cords – the wires and insulation inside the covering can break causing the current to arc which could result in a fire.
- ✓ Only qualified electricians will work on the wiring systems.

Chaplain's thought for the day:

Ebb and Flow

Large streams from little fountains flow.
--David Everett

Somewhere nearby, no matter where we are, runs a creek. We've seen plenty of them, narrow and rocky. In summer it's hardly a creek at all, but in the spring, it feeds a mighty river. Each of us is like that creek, a trickle contributing to some greater plan. Sometimes we feel dried up, contributing nothing. Often we feel small, rocky, not up to the task--when we can understand what the task is. Sometimes the task seems too simple--get up each morning, love and work and live the day as honestly as we can. What kind of contribution is that? Sometimes it seems too complicated. How much more we could contribute if we could see the whole river--where it begins and ends--if we knew what would happen tomorrow. So we ebb and flow. And in our moments of contentment, we know we are doing the best we can each day. That's all that God asks of us to do, the best we can each day. God will provide the rest by giving us the strength we need for the day.

SPORTS

Vento-Kabchi Upsets Rubin at U.S. Open

NEW YORK (AP) - Chanda Rubin sprayed forehands long and wide, hit backhands into the bottom of the net, and never quite looked comfortable in the confines of Arthur Ashe Stadium. Maria Vento-Kabchi sent the eighth-seeded Rubin to a first-round exit at the U.S. Open on Monday, defeating the inconsistent American 6-4, 6-4 for her first Grand Slam victory since she reached the second round of the Australian Open in 2002.

Oddly Enough:

Wallet Missing Almost 50 Years Returned

FALFURRIAS, Texas (AP) -- Casimiro Naranjo III has some new memorabilia for his U.S. Marine scrapbook that chronicles the nine months he spent in Japan in 1957. It's all from the wallet he lost almost 50 years ago. Members of a Japanese construction crew renovating the theater at Camp Foster, once Camp Hague, found the leather wallet in May among some mud and rubble. The wallet apparently was in a ventilation duct at the Okinawa base where Naranjo was stationed as a 19-year-old. The wallet contained Naranjo's military ID, a ration card, a pass to the enlisted men's mess hall, a selective service card, photos of his sister Mary and brother Robert and a pawn ticket. Camp Foster base officials traced the ration card and military ID to Naranjo, 66, and notified him at his home in Falfurrias. It was mailed to him earlier this month. "They told us we could have four hours of liberty in town," Naranjo said. "I didn't have any money, and I didn't know anything about Okinawa." He pawned his Falfurrias High School ring for 1,780 yen, which was the equivalent to about $5 in 1957, he said. "We got a taste of the Far East that night," Naranjo said, remembering the strong taste of Nippon beer with his teriyaki steak. "I had a lot of yen in my pocket." "It's so hard to believe that the wallet was there for so many years," Naranjo said in a story in Monday's Corpus Christi Caller-Times. He said he thought he left his wallet in the barracks and doesn't know how it ended up in the air duct.

On This Day In History:

August 26th 1967

Badly injured after ejecting when his North American F-100F is shot down over North Vietnam, Major George E. Day is captured and severely tortured. He later managed to escape and eventually made it to the DMZ. After several attempts to signal U.S. aircraft, he was ambushed and recaptured, and was later moved to prison in Hanoi, where he continued to strongly resist to his captors. Finally released in 1973, Major Day was awarded the Medal of Honor for his conspicuous gallantry while a POW.