

# OrdnanceReports

News updates from around the world



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## A famous fight, an unsung hero

*Iraq: During one of the war's bloodiest battles, a young private saved fellow soldiers and then kept cool amid weeks of captivity. His name is Patrick Miller.*

by Tom Bowman, Sun National Staff

FORT CARSON, Colo. — Pfc. Jessica Lynch is the celebrity soldier of the Iraq war. Pfc. Patrick Miller, a member of the same company captured with her in a ferocious firefight, remains one of its unsung heroes.

Lynch, Miller and others in their convoy mistakenly drove into the vipers' nest of Nasiriyah in southern Iraq, early on a March morning and were encircled by Iraqi fighters. In the ensuing swirl of chaos and shouting, wrong turns and unrelenting fire, Lynch's Humvee crashed, and she lay unconscious among her dead and dying comrades.

It was Miller, a 23-year-old Army welder from Kansas, who single-handedly took on several Iraqis, manually slamming rounds into his assault rifle and firing as they prepared to lob mortar rounds at Lynch and other soldiers from the 507th Maintenance Company.

"He's one of my heroes," said Army Spc. Shoshana Johnson, who was wounded and leaning against her truck as Miller dashed past her up a dusty road toward the Iraqi mortar pit. "His actions may have saved my life."

Miller was the sole member of the unit to receive the Silver Star, one of the military's highest awards for valor. Nearly 130,000 Army troops served in the Iraq war and its aftermath, but only 86 Silver Stars had been awarded through mid-September, according to the Army Personnel Command. Lynch and other members of the 507th received Bronze Stars, a notch below the Silver Star.

"Shoshana yelled at him, 'Get down, Miller! Get down! You're going to get hit!'" said another soldier, Spc. Edgar Hernandez, describing how Miller charged toward the Iraqis. Hernandez recalled hearing automatic fire from Iraqi AK-47s and the single shots of Miller's M-16 rifle.

As a prisoner of war, Miller badgered his interrogators for three weeks, singing an off-key rendition of country singer Toby Keith's anti-terrorist song, "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue." And he fooled them.



*At his home in Fort Carson, Colo., Pfc. Patrick Miller adjusts his framed Silver Star, one of the military's highest awards for valor. (Sun photo by Jed Kirschbaum)*

The Iraqis pressed him to explain a series of numbers and code words scratched on a piece of paper inside his helmet. Prices for power-steering pumps, he told them. The soldiers tossed the paper into a small campfire, unaware that they had destroyed information vital to an enemy: radio frequencies for an invading unit.

"He's a Pfc. in the Army and he exposed himself without hesitation to the enemy to save his comrades," said Col. Heidi V. Brown, who commanded the Army task force in Iraq that included Miller's unit and who wrote his medal citation, based on interviews with U.S. soldiers and Iraqis. "It doesn't get more heroic than that."

All the witnesses corroborated the tale of Miller's charging toward a mortar pit and shooting at the enemy, said Brown in a telephone interview, though no one could agree on a precise number of enemy

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# Wartime maintenance boosts depots' workload

by David Phinney, FederalTimes

If a soldier shoots, drives, flies, wears or eats it, more than likely it passes through the Army Materiel Command first. And since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the 50,000 civilian and 1,422 military employees at AMC have been working in overdrive.

That includes Gary Motsek. After 27 years in uniform, he retired from AMC in July 2001 only to return as a civilian less than three months later when the country braced itself for the war on terrorism.

Now a key deputy for support operations, Motsek is enthusiastic in his profession, but he also takes the job at AMC headquarters in Alexandria, Va., personally. A son recently returned from Afghanistan and will soon be deployed to Iraq.

"I believe in this," Motsek said in an interview Sept. 16 about AMC's major challenges in sustaining the war on terrorism and meeting transformation goals. "After doing this for 27 years and then having a son do the same thing, you can recognize people need this support and what happens if you have a shortfall."

The job is also like juggling the flying pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Feeding and equipping 180,000 troops in Iraq is just one of the many moving parts. There's also the servicing of the thousands of trucks, tanks and helicopters going through rotation to make sure everything is maintained and returned to optimal performance for another fight.

AMC's five depots round the country — the heart of the service's industrial base — are already preparing to shift into high gear. Normally, the depot system does about \$1.6 billion a year in peacetime business. In the coming year, that sum will jump to more than \$3.2 billion to service equipment used in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia,

Kosovo and the Philippines.

Adding to the burden is the fact that AMC has established maintenance operations in Iraq and Kuwait to support the forward troops. That spreads thin the existing resources, technical expertise and equipment for work that will be done at the depots.

"Fiscal year '04 will be an extraordinary challenge," Motsek said. "We're anticipating a workload of about 2,000 man hours — the equivalent of about two new Toyota assembly plants."

Depots — in Corpus Christi and Red River, Texas; Tobyhanna and Letterkenny, Pa.; and Anniston, Ala. — are ramping up to overhaul and rebuild more than 1,000 helicopters; 26,000 trucks, Humvees and other transport units; 3,000 tanks and heavy track combat vehicles; and countless small pieces of electronic equipment and gear.

Depot workers will be working overtime and night shifts, and additional workers are also being called back — hundreds who retired just three or four years ago.

"They're a tremendous resource, and they're coming back," Motsek said. "We have had skilled ammunition specialists who are annuitants, and they have been working all year. Their eyeglasses may be a half-inch thicker, but they are climbing all over the stacks and doing as good a job now as they did before."

The retiree work force is an unexpected part of the military's transformation that took many by surprise — just-in-time specialists with superior job skills who happen to be available because they are retired.

"We just discovered this," Motsek admitted.

Depot commanders are also running apprenticeship programs with local trade schools. Although established to help fill the coming retirement wave of older workers, the program is paying an early dividend. Many students are already getting their first full-time taste of the shop. Of course, they may be laid off on Sept. 30 and rehired in October as regulations for temporary workers require, Motsek said.

Contractors are also set to pick up a bigger portion from an additional \$1.3 billion in work that is expected and which will be divided with the depot system.

Although law dictates that no more than 50 percent of spending on maintenance work can go to contractors, the rule may be lifted this year if the Pentagon decides circumstances warrant it, Motsek said.

"The biggest strength the military has in the industrial base right now is the partnership with contractors," he said, adding that 40 to 50 firms — including General Dynamics, Raytheon and Sikorski — have been working side by side with depot workers and will continue to do so in the coming year. "They can ramp up skills faster than we can because of our hiring practices."



*Soldiers arriving at Baltimore-Washington International Airport hurry to their destinations to begin the 15-day U.S. Central Command-sponsored R&R leave program. Photo by Donna Miles*

Met in Ordnance Officer Career Course

## Friends return to site of meeting

by E.C. Starnes, U.S. Army Ordnance Corps

When William Paris and Phan Van Tai first met both were students in the Ordnance Officer Career Course at Aberdeen Proving Ground.

One was an American officer who moved on to a peacetime assignment in Korea. The other returned to war. Some 38 years later they returned for a tour of where they first met. One was retired from the U.S. Army and from a second career as a consultant. The other is now a U.S. citizen, following the fall of his country and 13 years in a prison camp and still struggling to reunite his family”.

Paris was a first lieutenant and served as Tai’s sponsor during the course and the two became friends. Tai visited with Paris’s family during the course, which ran from April 2 to September 8, 1965.

For Paris it was a professional development course leading to his follow-on assignment in Korea. For Tai, it was a break from the war raging in his homeland, Vietnam.

In fact, by the time Tai returned to Vietnam major events had taken place that had taken the war to new levels.

From April to September 1965 U.S. military presence in South Vietnam had increased from some 33,000 troops to some 140,000 plus troops with the total expected to reach nearly 200,000 by year’s end. President Lyndon Johnson had asked for an increase of \$1.7 billion in military aid to South Vietnam. And U.S. military forces were authorized to carry out combat missions. In fact, the first joint operation between U.S. and South Vietnamese government forces took place in June and the first solely American action took place in August as the U.S. Marines killed nearly 600 enemy soldiers during an unsuccessful attack near Chu Lai.

There were also many changes that would affect Tai’s role as an ammunition officer as the U.S. First Logistical Command was established at Long Binh and the U.S. Headquarters in Vietnam also opened its doors in Long Binh.

Also, the enemy had not been quiet. Communist forces had conducted successful raids in Pleiku, Phu Bon, Darlac and Kontum Provinces, the heart of the Central Highlands. Terrorists attacks had occurred in Saigon as two floating restaurants were bombed. The Viet Cong (VC) attacked the Da Nang air base. And, within a month of his return, the VC increased their attacks at Da Nang and Chu Lai and mounted an extended attack on a U.S. Special Forces camp at Plei Me.

While Tai’s primary role was as an ammunition officer, he and his troops were called on to fight off VC incursions. It wasn’t something new. In the early 60s he had been the commander of the 50<sup>th</sup> Ammunition Storage Base Depot and encountered VC operations in the nearby village.

“The VC would come in at night and kill villagers. The villagers were afraid of the VC,” Tai explained. “You could send in 100 men, 200



*Phan Van Tai (left) and William Parris talk about their first meeting at Aberdeen Proving Ground during a recent visit to the post after 38 years. Photo by E.C. Starnes.*

men into the village and it would be quiet because the VC could see you and they would hide.”

So, Tai decided to follow a campaign of guerilla warfare of his own. He assigned 3 or 4-man teams to move into the village. They would remain overnight. When the VC came in at night, his soldiers would fire on them.

“After a few times, the VC would not come back,” he said.

During Tet 1968, he was working in Saigon as a staff officer when the VC pulled their infamous Tet Offensive. He was again placed in the middle of combat.

“I was in a military arsenal,” he explained. There was an armor unit assigned to the arsenal. Many of the soldiers were on “New Year vacation,” he noted. When the VC attacked the commander of the armor unit was killed within the first hour. Tai took command and rallied the 50 soldiers and held the VC off for three days until they pulled back.

Tai continued working with ammunition and closely with the Americans in Saigon. He eventually became the senior ammunition officer with the South Vietnamese Army.

Tai explained that his father had not wanted him to have anything to do with the Army. His father was a veteran of the French Army and had been a prisoner of war of the Japanese in 1945. He retired from the French Army in 1950 after 25 years of service. He told Tai, based on his experiences, that he didn’t want his son to join the Army.

But Tai did. He earned his commission in 1951 following graduation from the Dalat Military Academy. He then completed the Ordnance

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## Friends return to site of meeting continued

Branch Basic course in Vietnam in 1951 and the Ammunition Officer course in France in 1956.

Prior to coming to the Career Course at APG he had served as an ammunition company commander, chief of an ammunition battalion, commander of an ammunition depot and assistant to the chief of ammunition services.

Paris and Tai were reunited in 1971 when the American officer was assigned to Long Binh where he served with the Ammunition Division, Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, U.S. Army Vietnam. "I was pushing ammo for U.S. and Allied forces," Paris explained. "I handled about 1/3 of the American ammunition stockpile."

He began searching for Tai as soon as he arrived in-country. "I asked people I worked with if they knew him and I was told, 'Sure. We know him. He's the South Vietnamese Army's ammo officer.'" Paris finally caught up with his old friend about a month later. The two socialized and Paris met Tai's family.

Paris knew that there was an annual ammunition conference in Honolulu and that Tai would be attending. Since the American officer wasn't an attendee, he conspired to surprise his wife and Tai at the conference. He called his wife and said he planned to take R&R in Honolulu the week of the conference. He didn't tell his wife about the conference.

When she arrived in Honolulu he asked her if she wanted to go to the cocktail party preceding the conference. She was at first reluctant, but reconsidered. At the party he reunited his wife and Tai. "It was a big reunion," Paris said.

Tai would return to the annual conference in March of 1975. This time he came as the Chief of Ammunition Services, Central Logistics Command. He came to the U.S. Army Pacific conference to plea for help. Ammunition supplies, as well as the overall military budget, had been drastically cut back. While ammunition still flowed into the country, it was not enough to sustain full operations. Tai explained that they were rationing ammunition supplies to the South Vietnamese units.

Also, the ammunition was so precious, Tai explained, that they were not storing it in the ammunition depots due to the increased guerilla threat, but were sending it out to units across the country.

Tai's pleas went unheeded. In fact, President Gerald Ford was asking Congress for increased aid to the Saigon government. He told Congress and the American people that the failure of the U.S. government to meet its commitments to Saigon led to "this present tragic situation" in South Vietnam. The Senate Armed Forces Committee rejected Ford's request for military assistance.

Tai returned to a country facing defeat.

It was not a surprise. Earlier in the year Chinese and Russian ammunition supplies to North Vietnam topped U.S. supplies to South Vietnam for the first time. Tai and his fellow officers knew they were in for trouble.

Tai noted that there were other signs. "When we returned from Honolulu and board the connecting flight from Manila to Saigon, the crew of the 747 outnumbered the passengers. There were 20 people in the crew and the only passengers were South Vietnamese officers and journalists."

As he returned home during the first week of April, the fall of his homeland reached a whirlwind pace. Within days three of the largest cities in South Vietnam were abandoned or fell to the enemy. The cities were major ports (Da Nang, Nha Trang and Qui Nhon).

Tai continued to work at moving ammunition to the troops. On April 28, a convoy was sent in motion toward the Delta region, south of Saigon. There were rumors of a last ditch defense in the Delta area. Tai wanted to get ammunition to the area to support the effort. As the convoy moved south, South Vietnamese commanders were grabbing some of the ammunition to support their defense as they pulled back.

Tai was in contact with one American counterpart, Lt. Col. James Ball (Ball would later become a major general and the Chief of Ordnance). Ball was working hard to get support for the evacuation of his forces as well as the South Vietnamese who were working with him. Ball's secretary was slated to fly out with an Operation Baby Lift flight that was carrying Vietnamese orphans.

"I met Ball's secretary that morning," Tai said, recalling his last visit with her. She was aboard a C-130 that crashed shortly after take off, killing 200 of the 300 aboard. She was among those who didn't make it.

On the morning of April 29, Ball called Tai and said he had a spot for him on an American evacuation helicopter. Tai asked if there was room for his family. There was not.

"I chose to stay with my family," Tai said. He continued working as the Americans and South Vietnamese continued to flee Saigon. "When the new president (Gen. Duon Van Minh) said the war was over, I left my office and went home."

Minh surrendered the city unconditionally to the enemy. Tai stayed at home with his family until mid-June. The communist government called for all South Vietnamese Army officers and government officials to report to them on June 13, 14 or 15<sup>th</sup>.

"There were some 200,000 people rounded up by the new government," Paris explained. Tai was one of them.

He was shipped off to a prison camp south of Saigon. He had no communication with his family. His wife and children remained at home in Saigon.

In July of 1976 it was announced that North and South Vietnam were reunified as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and Hanoi was the new capital city. That month Tai and his fellow officer-prisoners

# Camp Casey soldiers get lesson in tactics from paintball guns

Story and photos by [Jeremy Kirk](#), Stars and Stripes

SOYO MOUNTAIN, South Korea — Sgt. John Thompson learned the hard way Thursday not to stand up when the enemy is firing.

Thompson, spitting out blood and green paint, had been nailed in the mouth with a paintball during a unique force-on-force training exercise Thursday in which 5th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery Regiment soldiers used paintball guns.

“I wanted to fall backwards and die,” Thompson said.

He and four others were defending their post against eight soldiers creeping through the lush wood and frothy streams of Soyo Mountain, just north of Camp Casey.

Most of the unit’s soldiers are mechanics who work on Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Humvees. They rarely get in the field for infantry work, but those skills are just as important as their normal jobs, said Sgt. 1st Class James Harris.

Soldiers who have used other simulated combat gear raved about the realistic paintballs.

The military typically employs a laser-engagement system called MILES, which features bulky sensors that produce a dull bleep when a kill is registered.

Paintball has a more organic feel: The gun gives a satisfying pop when a ball discharges, compliments of a carbon-dioxide canister.

When they hit a target, the paintballs break apart, leaving a splotch on green battle dress uniforms.

“I’ve done plenty of MILES, but that is far better,” Harris said. “They [soldiers] literally don’t want to get hit. I think they try a little harder.”

Pvt. David Vancena was carefully firing from a ravine below the post. But he came back with a green ear, a clear hit from the defense soldiers above.

“I came up the side, and [the enemy] was standing in the building,” Vancena said. “He shot me in the head.”

Vancena praised the authenticity of the paintballs: “It’s a lot better than MILES gear. MILES gear doesn’t work half the time.”

The field exercise was only part of the training. Before the soldiers hit the woods, many got their first lecture on terrorism, counterterrorism and force protection from a former division soldier with 15 years of Army experience.

Robert M. Brandt spent seven years with the Army in South Korea and now works for a contractor that deals with fixing tracked vehicles and ordering parts. Brandt, 33, also is close to a master’s degree in



*Sgt. John Thompson holds his Avenger XT paintball gun Thursday before a force-on-force infantry exercise at Soyo Mountain just north of Camp Casey. Soldiers from 5th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery Regiment practiced infantry techniques and also learned about terrorism and counterterrorism.*

antiterrorism.

In a thorough briefing, Brandt brought soldiers from the roots of terrorism during the French Revolution through Khobar Towers and the World Trade Center attack. The training focused on the mentality of terrorists, their ability to adapt seemingly innocuous roles in society and how soldiers can be vigilant.

“I want you to understand this is a real serious thing that is happening today,” Brandt said. “This doesn’t mean you have to be scared. All I’m saying is be aware.”

For some soldiers, it was their first introduction to terrorism and counterterrorism training.

“I think its something that should be mandatory,” Harris said. “I though it was very helpful.”



*Pvt. David Vancena crouches in the woods Thursday during a paintball force-on-force infantry exercise at Soyo Mountain just north of Camp Casey. Soldiers from 5th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery Regiment practiced infantry techniques and also learned about terrorism and counterterrorism.*

**Two work in the motor pool**

# Military family serves together in Iraq

by Spc. Petersi Liu, USA  
Special to American Forces Press Service

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait, Sept. 4, 2003 — At least one family in a unit deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom isn't complaining much about family separation. That's because most of the family found themselves together here. A father, his two sons, and a daughter-in-law work in the same unit.

The National Guard's 211th Military Police Company of Clyde, N.C., was reactivated for Operation Iraqi Freedom in June, just five months after returning home from Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. The family father is Staff Sgt. Michael Coggins, noncommissioned officer in charge of the company's motor pool. His first son, Spc. Jason Coggins, a military policeman, is married to Sgt. Vicky Coggins, an administrative clerk in the unit. Their son was born two days before Jason left for Operation Iraqi Freedom. His second son, Sgt. Ryan Coggins, a mechanic with two children of his own, works under his father's supervision at the motor pool.

"My old man is very old. He has been in the Army since 1972," said Ryan with a laugh. "Our grandfather is Furman Coggins, and he was a private in the Korean War," said Jason.

The family intended to fight terrorism together. Michael and Jason served together for Enduring Freedom. Ryan had belonged to the 210th Military Police Company, but upon hearing that the 211th was being reactivated for Iraqi Freedom in March, he volunteered to join the unit to serve with his father and brother.

In civilian life, Ryan worked as a direct-care provider for youths who have been in trouble. "I joined the National Guard for education benefits. It is one weekend a month and two weekends a year. You can't beat that," he said with a laugh. He has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and psychology. Jason worked as an independent



*Sgt. Ryan Coggins, left, a mechanic with the National Guard's 211th Military Police Company, shares a light moment with his brother, Spc. Jason Coggins, a military policeman assigned to the company. The brothers serve with their father, Staff Sgt. Michael Coggins, noncommissioned officer in charge of the unit's motor pool. The family members are deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom. Photo by Spc. Petersi Liu*

contractor with a landscaping company.

The staff sergeant and his sons used to enjoy fishing together, they said. But until their forward deployment to Iraq in August, they had to settle for spending their off-duty time at the air-conditioned Morale, Welfare and Recreation tents at Camp Kohema, a small camp adjacent to Camp Arifjan.

*(Army Spc. Petersi Liu is assigned to the Coalition Forces Land Component Command in Kuwait.)*

## Army to shut down equipment storage sites in Netherlands

by Rick Scavetta, Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Army Materiel Command will shut down operations at two bases in the Netherlands early next year, Defense Department officials announced late last week.

Combat equipment storage sites at Brunssum and Almelo will cease operations by Feb. 29, according to a DOD news release.

The sites are used to store Army pre-positioned stocks. Built in 1983, the facilities once held a brigade's worth of weapons, vehicles and equipment in case U.S. troops needed gear to defend Cold War allies.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and because of greater threats surfacing in other parts of the world, the Army began to relocate the mothballed armament in places closer to hot spots.

"They created pre-positioned [sites] in other parts of the world," said Chuck Fick, materiel command spokesman. "We were a source for those sites."

Since then, the Netherlands sites still have been used to maintain, repair and store combat equipment, Fick said, but in smaller amounts.

When the 1st Infantry Division deployed from Kosovo in 2000, the command replaced the division's equipment in Germany, allowing the Big Red One to leave much of its gear in the Balkans for future rotations, Fick said.

About 10 U.S. troops and two civilians are assigned to the two bases. They will be reassigned once the operation ends, Fick said.

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## **Friends return to site of meeting continued**

were shipped to a prison camp northwest of Hanoi, near the Chinese border. The prison camps were established by rank. Colonels and generals were in Tai's camp.

"The camps were modeled after the Russian gulags," Paris explained.

"It was very hard labor," Tai explained. "We were cutting trees in the mountains. I thought I would be in prison forever. There were some who thought we would be released, but I never did. The communist said if you were good they would release you. I didn't believe them."

Communications with his family or anyone else did not come for 5 years. And then the first visit was disappointing. It lasted 5 minutes and a guard stayed nearby the entire time.

Supplies for the prisoners were short. Tai's mother sent some supplies but it was expensive. Tai said the second year's visit was "better," but it was too expensive for his family to make the trip. His wife, with some family, managed to get out of Vietnam and settled in San Francisco.

Tai's camp was closed and the prisoners were moved closer to Hanoi when the Chinese invaded Vietnam in February of 1977. Tai would remain a prisoner for 10 more years.

"When they moved us closer to Hanoi they moved us in with common criminals," he said. Hard labor remained the way of the camps. Plus the Communists included political reeducation. "It was propaganda," Tai said.

Tai's last day in camp would come about because he was sick. "I was moved to a hospital. They released me because they didn't like to have people dying in the camps."

It was September 1987. Tai returned to his home in Saigon. He showed up unannounced. He and his family still struggled. His children were not allowed to attend universities because their father had been in the South Vietnamese Army.

Tai made a living buying "wholesale" from the market each day and then reselling the items. "It was a good day when I made a dollar," he said. In the meantime, the government was offering him an opportunity to leave Vietnam. "In 1989 or 1990 I got on the list because of the intervention of the U.N. The communist government gave me an application and I filled it in. I was interviewed by representatives from the United States, the communist government, and the High Commission on Refugees."

In the meantime, Paris had not given up on finding his old friend.

His last job with the Army was with the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Lt. Gen. Benjamin Register. Register had worked with Tai in Vietnam when Register was a colonel. Paris contacted his old boss to find out if he had heard anything about Tai. Register responded that he thought Tai had died.

Paris got in touch with an organization in the Washington, D.C. area

called the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association. Working with Khuc Minh Tho, the president of the organization, he came in contact with many members of the Vietnamese community in the D.C.-Virginia area and even talked with some of the former prisoners who had been with Tai in the camps. He learned about Tai's wife being in San Francisco and with the assistance of Tho arranged to talk to her.

Once he knew where Tai was, he struggled to find a way to communicate with his old friend. He was afraid that any identification of himself as a former soldier might bring punishment to Tai.

"I went on vacation to Paris and from there sent Tai a letter. I put no return address on it and didn't mention names in the letter. I found out later that Tai received the letter."

When Tai was finally permitted to leave Vietnam, he journeyed to San Francisco and a reunion with his wife in 1993. To celebrate his friend's release, Paris put together a welcome packet.

Included were letters from himself, as well as from two Vietnamese officers who were in the Ordnance Career course with them and who are now residents of the United States. Also included was a letter from retired Lt. Gen. Register; from Jim Voss, who knew Tai while Voss was a captain working in Vietnam from 1967-1968 and was employed with the Science Applications International Corporation.

Tai and his family have since moved to northern Virginia with Paris as a sponsor. Tai has been sending money to his family in Vietnam and hopes that they will all be together again soon in the United States. He has been working several jobs at the same time in order to support his family and to show that he can provide for his children if they are permitted to immigrate to the United States. He noted that he has now been working for 53 years and still can't stop.

He has become a U.S. citizen and wants to be reunited with his children, grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

Tai noted that since his arrival in the United States, he has been able to see not only this country, but to travel to other countries as well.

"The U.S. is a very nice country," Tai said, "even a paradise in which to live. I repeat, it's a paradise."

Paris and Tai were at APG to revisit the place of their meeting. The building in which they were students no longer stands, but the BOQ where Tai lived still stands. The Officers Club, now the Top of the Bay, also brought back memories as the two old friends enjoyed a long lunch overlooking the Bay.

Tai grew solemn as he addressed the question about whether he hoped to see the rest of his family in the country soon. Having spent 13 years in camps wondering if he ever would see even his home in Saigon again, he wants to believe it will happen soon. But he also knows he has to wait and see.

# Longer stay takes a toll on Army's equipment

*Military commanders didn't figure a lengthy stay in Iraq's harsh conditions when calculating costs of maintenance.*

by Joseph L. Galloway, Miami Herald

WASHINGTON — The Army's Bradley fighting vehicles and M1 Abrams tanks are eating up the tracks they run on at an astounding rate in Iraq.

Humvee tires are wearing out much more quickly as well, and harsh desert conditions are taking a toll on helicopter blades and engines.

The Army's chief logistics and materiel commanders said that although they try to prepare for the worst, few saw any need for

130,000 troops in Iraq this long after the war, and no one anticipated that mines and rocket-propelled grenade attacks would require Bradley fighting vehicles to escort every convoy running from Kuwait into Iraq.

"Did we do enough? Probably not," said Gen. Paul Kern of Army Materiel Command. "Did we plan for this many people, this long? Some did; some didn't."

"The cost is in the billions. We ate up our stockpiles," Kern said at a recent Pentagon briefing.

Despite the logistical problems, no one has run out of fuel or ammunition, nor will that ever be allowed to happen, Kern said.

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## Army to shut down equipment storage sites in Netherlands continued

But the closures will have a much bigger impact on the 440 Dutch civilians who do much of the Army's work there, said Dutch defense spokesman Klaas Meijer.

The Dutch workers run maintenance programs, logistics and administration for the U.S. operation.

In May, base employees learned that the U.S. was looking to cut back. The Netherlands, an ally in U.S.-led operations in Iraq and the Balkans, is already cutting 11,500 defense jobs due to budget cuts,

Meijer said.

"It's going to be difficult," Meijer said. "We'll look for other jobs in the Army. If not, we're going to help them find work outside, offering training and education."

Because the U.S. operations are on Dutch bases, nothing needs to be actually closed down or turned over, Fick said. The Dutch government will decide what happens to their facilities, he said.

## Wear-out date for gray PTs approaches

by Staff Sgt. Marcia Triggs

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, Sept. 23, 2003) - Beginning Oct. 1 the Army's old, gray physical fitness uniform will no longer be authorized, and all Soldiers must own the improved PT uniform, which hit the shelves three years ago.

The decision to put soldiers in a uniform that was lighter, washes better and sharper looking was made in 1999 by retired Gen. Dennis J. Reimer, former chief of staff of the Army.

Soldiers were given a grace period of more than three years to purchase the new Improved Physical Fitness Uniform, but some are still scurrying to the Military Clothing Sales Store to purchase the five-piece ensemble.

"I have members of my squad who still have to purchase the new PTs, said Pfc. Brian Knolen from Fort McPherson, Ga. However, Knolen doesn't have to worry about meeting the deadline. He is among the soldiers who entered the Army after May 2000, and was issued the uniform after graduating from Initial Entry Training.

The improved uniforms hit Military Clothing Sales Stores October 2000, and most store managers said sales have been continuous with no peak, even though the deadline approaches.

"I always keep a back order in the stock room, but I haven't seen

an increase in sales," said Estella Gholston, the store manager at Fort McPherson, Ga.

A local store manager at Fort Belvoir, Va., said she didn't expect to see more purchases and didn't order extra to meet an increased demand.

"Since 2001, my store has already been meeting a high demand for the new PTs, and we've been helping to get the word out," said Savannah Hudson, the assistant manager at the Fort Belvoir store.

To make sure that every Soldier is in the right uniform Oct. 1, the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, G1, printed the wear-out date for the old PTs in the revised Army Regulation 670-1. But some junior soldiers, who look for guidance from supervisors, said they aren't sure what the cut-off date is.

"I know that the cut-off is approaching, but I haven't heard when," said a specialist from Fort Riley, Kan. "I don't have anything to worry about though because I've been wearing the new uniform for over a year."

The IPFU includes a t-shirt, long sleeve shirt, jacket, pants and shorts. The suit costs almost double the old uniform that was first issued to Soldiers in 1986. The total cost is about \$140, according to a price list on the Army and Air Force Exchange Service Web page.

# Sand traps a drawback, no water hazards to be found

by U.S. Army Spc. Joshua Hutcheson, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)

QAYYARAH WEST AIRFIELD, Iraq — The days can be long and hard at Qayyarah West Airfield in Northern Iraq, full of dust and camel spiders. And what relaxes a person after a hot sweaty day better than a game of golf at the first golf course in Iraq?

1st Lt. Jesse White, shop officer, Bravo Company, 426th Forward Support Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), created the course in May. In an area full of waist-high dirt piles and holes big enough to fall into, White made a course 150 yards long, with just one hole. His idea was to have a place where he could relax and get in a few practice swings when possible. But one hole wasn't enough, soon other people wanted to play games there, and for that more holes would be needed.

"As it turned out, the new battalion commander was a golfer," White said. "He asked me what the chances were of expanding it."

The chances were good. Soon two more holes were added to the makeshift course. Then, after less than a month three more holes were added, to make the course a total of six holes, "ranging from 50 to 250 yards," White said.

It was there that construction halted, only because they ran out of room.

"We'd like to add three more holes but we're out of space, if you can believe that out in the desert," White quipped.

As for it being the first course in the country, White claimed to have looked on the Internet to find others. "I researched it, and as far as I know it's the only golf course in Iraq," he said.

The golf clubs and balls have been scrounged from many sources: people's personal collections as well as donations from places back in America.

Of the equipment, 25 clubs and a few flags were donated from a country club in the Signal Mountains of Tennessee, where the battalion commander's father is a member.

Besides clubs they also donated "a whole lot of golf balls because we easily lose those things," said Lt. Col. Jeffrey Kelley, 426th Forward Support Battalion commander.

Kelley plays at the golf course every Saturday at 6:30 a.m. along with people from all over Q-West airfield who enjoy playing a short game.

"It's a great time for everybody to unwind and just have a good time," Kelley said.

Just because the course was made by soldiers in the middle of a desert doesn't mean that it's an easy one. The terrain presents its own unique challenges.



*1st Lt. Jesse White, shop officer, 426th Forward Support Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), tees off at the a golf course he created to help the soldiers of Q-West relax during their time off. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson*

Most of the holes are par-3, and besides the normal hazards found on a golf course there are a few additions particular to the environment, such as old military equipment.

"It's challenging because of the greens," Kelley said. "There's no straight putts, there are rocks, holes and all kinds of debris in the way."

The course is open to all the soldiers at Q-West, and all the soldiers who can make the trip are invited to enjoy a game or two.

"We have a good time and that's the bottom line," Kelley said.

## Army Announces Mobilization of Two National Guard Brigades

The Secretary of Defense today approved the Army's request to mobilize two U.S. Army National Guard brigades that on July 26 were alerted to participate in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade from North Carolina will mobilize effective Oct. 1, 2003, and the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade from Arkansas will mobilize effective Oct. 12, 2003.

As previously announced on Sept. 9, these units can expect to be in the Iraqi theater for up to 12 months. The total length of mobilization is up to 18 months to allow time for equipping, training, mobilizing, leave, and demobilizing activities.

These mobilizations are part of the force rotation plan announced on July 23, 2003. The Army has made this announcement to provide predictability in the lives of soldiers and their families as they serve the nation fighting the global war on terrorism.

The Army also announced that the 81<sup>st</sup> Army National Guard Infantry Brigade from Washington State has been alerted in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

## **Longer stay takes a toll on Army's equipment continued**

But Kern also said that things were better for soldiers now, about six months after the war began.

He said that widespread soldier complaints in the spring about slow mail delivery, an endless diet of Meals Ready-to-Eat (MREs) and a shortage of bottled water have largely been dealt with.

Mail delivery now takes an average of 10 days from the United States to a soldier serving in Iraq. And each soldier should be getting four bottles of water per day in addition to a veritable river of purified water that's being produced by portable reverse osmosis purification plants.

Acting Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee told Knight Ridder that a private contractor, Kellogg Brown and Root, built and staffed almost all of the 32 dining halls where most American troops deployed to Iraq now get two hot meals per day. Brownlee added that 13 newly built ice plants would be operational in Iraq in October. Kellogg Brown and Root is a subsidiary of Halliburton Co., which Vice President Dick Cheney ran before he became the Republican vice presidential candidate in 2000.

'Soldiers' quality of life is less than adequate overall. We have guys living in tents in the dirt. The units on the ground are living hard; others are living in air-conditioned palaces,' said Maj. Gen. Chris Christianson, the new chief of Army logistics, who was on the staff of Lt. Gen. Dave McKiernan, the ground commander in Iraq during the war.

He said Kellogg Brown and Root had the single-source contract for food, laundry, showers, toilets and bug control for American troops in Iraq and is the contractor for transportation and distribution of food, water and mail.

Christianson noted that today almost 90 percent of all soldiers' mail consists of packages from home, while personal communication is almost entirely by e-mail.

'This is a huge volume; six or seven trucks with two containers of mail per truck goes to each brigade every three days,' he said. 'Some folks are even mailing air conditioners to their soldiers.'

Kern said that the most critical shortage is track and suspension systems for the Bradley fighting vehicles, which normally run only 800 miles in an average year but are running 1,200 miles per month escorting convoys in Iraq.

'They are changing track every 60 days when normally they would do that only once a year,' Kern said. 'We are air shipping replacement track to Iraq now.'

A complete set of new tracks, metal and rubber for one Bradley fighting vehicle costs \$22,576.

'Our predictions were for higher use of these vehicles, but we did not foresee the need to secure all our convoys with Bradleys,' Kern said.

He added that the prediction was that Army's Red River Depot, which rebuilds worn-out track, and Goodyear and United Defense, which manufacture new track, would catch up on the backlog orders in about three months.

The commander added that there was a major shortage of power generators. 'It's a demand problem,' Kern said.

'It gets to 140 or 150 degrees inside a tank or a tent. The locals don't do anything during the day due to the heat, but we work days. There is a huge demand for power to provide cool areas for our computers and our people' and to power refrigerated trucks storing frozen food.

Kern said the brigade of Stryker wheeled fighting vehicles scheduled to deploy to Iraq in October could prove to be 'a better fit for convoy duty than the Bradleys — they have good armor, good weapons, good speed and a good ride.'

## **\$5,000 re-enlistment bonus offered to GIs in terror war, Korea**

By Lisa Burgess, Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — Soldiers in Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq or Korea who are up for reenlistment can score an additional \$5,000 bonus if they do the deed by Sept. 30 and commit another three years to the Army.

The short-term addition to the Army's Selective Reenlistment Bonus program began Sept. 19, and ends on Tuesday, Sheryl Carroll, the Army's Selective Reenlistment Bonus program manager, said in a Friday telephone interview.

Soldiers who are eligible for the lump-sum bonus are mid-term active-duty troops in the ranks of E-4 through E-8, as well as privates first class (E-2s) who are wrapping up two-year enlistments, Carroll said.

A soldier's military occupational specialty (MOS) doesn't matter, but he or she must be currently deployed to Afghanistan, Kuwait or Iraq, or assigned to Korea, in order to qualify for the money.

To get the bonus, soldiers must complete their deployment with their current unit, or, if they are in Korea, must voluntarily extend their Korea assignment by an additional six months from the date they are scheduled to move to another assignment, Carroll said.

The extra six-month commitment 'reduces turbulence, stabilizes the soldier, and [temporarily] eliminates the [Army's] requirement to replace that soldier in Korea,' Carroll said.

The minimum re-enlistment is three years. Soldiers who don't

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## **A famous fight, an unsung hero continued**

dead. An Army investigative report said it could have been as many as nine. “Absolutely, he killed some Iraqis,” Brown said.

## **A myth is born**

The story of Lynch, then a 19-year-old Army supply clerk from West Virginia, began as a piece of faulty information. An intercepted Iraqi radio transmission referred to a blond American woman who repeatedly fired on her attackers, despite bullet and stab wounds.

The inaccuracy was passed on to reporters, and the myth of a slightly built clerk who morphed into a fierce warrior quickly circulated. Her legend only grew when Special Operations soldiers stormed a hospital in early April and rescued her. But to this day, according to Army investigators, there is no known evidence that she ever fired her weapon or killed any Iraqis.

Lynch, who left the Army with a medical discharge this summer, never portrayed herself as a hero. When she returned home to West Virginia in July, she thanked those who rescued her and said she regretted that some in her company never made it home.

“Patrick is a brave soldier, risking his life as he did to save others. I am proud of his courage,” Lynch said Friday, in remarks relayed through Paul Bogaards, a spokesman for Alfred A. Knopf. The publishing house signed her to a \$1 million book deal for her wartime experiences titled *I am a Soldier, Too: The Jessica Lynch Story*.

She will also be the subject of a network TV movie, with a young Canadian portraying her. An industrial area in Dallas has been converted into a fictional Nasiriyah — complete with Saddam Hussein bas-reliefs.

Early this month, ABC News personality Diane Sawyer scored the first on-air interview with Lynch. It is scheduled for November, the same month her memoir will arrive in bookstores.

There are no agents, books or movie deals for Miller, whom the Army transferred last month from Texas to this wind-swept military base hard up against the forested mountains of the Rampart Range in central Colorado. In May, he was grand marshal at an Armed Forces Day parade in Topeka, Kan., up the interstate from Valley Center, his rural hometown of about 5,000. Several weeks later he threw out the first ball at a Kansas City Royals baseball game.

Miller appeared on the NBC News show *Dateline* last month with four other prisoners of war from the 507th — minus Jessica Lynch — though his story was lost among the recollections of his comrades. One of his few interviews was with a small newspaper in Alabama, when he traveled there this summer for an Army event.

Gangly and bespectacled, with a loping gait, Miller speaks in a broad Kansas drawl that enlivens his casual grammar and the occasional



*Pfc. Patrick Miller (left) and Sgt. Arthur Teschke (center) laugh as Miller takes some good-natured ribbing from one his superiors, Sgt. William Wolfe (seated). (Sun photo by Jed Kirschbaum)*

“dang.” His lower lip bulges with an ever-present wad of chewing tobacco.

Johnson, his fellow POW from the 507th, couldn’t recall anything particularly special about Miller when they were stationed together at Fort Bliss, Texas, in the months before they headed off to war. “A down-to-earth country boy,” Johnson remembered with a laugh. “He likes his chew. That’s all I remember about Pat: He had that chew in his mouth.”

Miller now spends his days toiling in a motor pool as part of the 2nd Company of the 43rd Area Support Group. Because most of the unit’s heavy equipment has been shipped over to Iraq, his welding torch has been cold. Recently, he has been cutting the grass and slathering brown and white paint on the building’s interior walls. Every so often, a fellow soldier will quiz him about his service in Iraq.

A \$25,000-a-year private first class, Miller lives in a modest three-bedroom townhouse on base with his wife, Jessa, and two children, 4-year-old Tyler and 14-month-old Makenzie. The children are in day care while his wife works making glasses for LensCrafters. One day, Miller hopes to rise to a higher enlisted rank — an Army warrant officer — and oversee a maintenance shop, perhaps putting in 20 years.

He brushed aside talk of heroism in an interview and recounted his actions in a matter-of-fact tone, as if the conversation had turned to the coming season for Kansas State football or needed repairs on his brown and dented 1989 Chevrolet Corsica. All but the most personal elements of his account were confirmed in other interviews by *The Sun* and the Army and official Army documents.

## A famous fight, an unsung hero continued

“I was doing what I get paid to do,” he said. His Army training “kicked in” when he faced enemy fighters.

But the fact that Miller remains an unknown grates on Johnson and some in Miller’s family.

“Jessica’s a wonderful girl, and we’re happy she’s OK,” Johnson said. “But it was Patrick; it wasn’t Jessica. His weapon was working. He was doing everything possible. Patrick deserves so much, and he’s not getting the recognition. He’s still a private first class. He hasn’t even been promoted.”

### ‘A miracle he’s alive’

Miller’s mother, Mary Pickering, agreed. “Nobody’s focusing on it. If it hadn’t been for Pat, some or most would have died, including Jessica Lynch,” Pickering said in a phone interview. “It’s a miracle he’s alive.”

On resentment from her fellow soldiers that she has grabbed all the limelight, Lynch said: “I won’t ever forget the brave soldiers of the 507th. I think about them every day.”

Miller did not seem destined for battlefield heroics when he enlisted in the Army in May of last year. At basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., he scored an unimpressive 26 on the M-16 qualification on the rifle range, enough to earn a “marksman” badge, the lowest qualifying designation. At Fort Bliss, he honed his skills as a welder, a trade he learned at a community college in Kansas.

Before he raised his M-16 rifle toward that mortar pit in March, he had not fired his weapon since the previous August at the practice range.

At the same time, Miller has a strong sense of self-reliance and responsibility, say those who know him. He endured his parents’ divorce when he was 6 and became a father while in his late teens, marrying a girl he met while a cook at a burger joint in Kansas.

“Most of the stuff I’ve done in life, I’ve done myself,” he said. “The ability to be a good leader is built while you’re growing up.”

## A wrong turn in the dark

On March 23, the 507th Maintenance Company missed the route that was supposed to take them around Nasiriyah. Instead, Pfc. Patrick Miller and his unit, including Pfc. Jessica Lynch, ended up in a gunfight with Iraqis. Here’s a look at what happened:

**1** After realizing they are on the wrong road, the convoy turns around. Iraqi gunfire has disabled some vehicles, including the truck driven by Miller, and caused others to crash.

**2** Miller jumps from his truck taking an M-16 rifle and ammunition. Sgt. James Riley is with him as they run toward other vehicles in their convoy.

**3** In their search for survivors, Miller sees Lynch. She is unconscious in the back of a demolished Humvee. Spc. Shoshanna Johnson and Spc. Edgar Hernandez are also wounded.

**4** While Riley stays with the wounded, Miller spots an Iraqi dump truck and runs toward it, hoping to commandeer it. With rocket-propelled grenades whizzing by, he reaches an earthen berm.

**5** Miller sees seven Iraqis in front of the truck setting up a mortar. When his rifle jams, Miller manually feeds rounds into his M-16 rifle. He shoots the Iraqi holding the mortar.

As another Iraqi tries to load the tube, Miller fires again. He eventually shoots each Iraqi soldier. The entire ambush on the 507th lasts a little more than an hour before Miller is taken captive.

Source: Sun research, Army investigations

SOB STAFF

There is also a quiet tenacity and stubbornness to Miller. He will quickly tell you that he doesn’t much like Army officers, or any kind of authority figures, for that matter. And those personality traits helped him in the harrowing days after the 507th left Camp Virginia in Kuwait and rumbled north into the vast and lonely desert of Iraq.

### The battle at Nasiriyah

The lights of Nasiriyah were twinkling in the distant blackness as the 33 soldiers in the 18-truck convoy rolled along. There was an assortment of heavy vehicles, from Humvees to tractor-trailers and 2 1/2-ton rigs. Miller was far to the rear inside the cab of a 5-ton wrecker pulling a water trailer.

Miller and the other soldiers assumed the illumination marked their planned staging area. But when the convoy crossed the Euphrates River and headed deep into the city, it soon dawned on the 507th that they were on the wrong road.

The Army later determined that a “navigational error” — caused by the combined effects of “operational pace, acute fatigue, isolation and harsh environmental conditions” — led the company to miss the route that was meant to take them around Nasiriyah and onto a highway north toward Baghdad.

The sun was just rising on March 23 when Miller spotted men carrying AK-47s strolling along Nasiriyah’s narrow streets. The long line of American military trucks rolled through an Iraqi checkpoint,

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## **A famous fight, an unsung hero continued**

and two men with pistols simply watched them pass. Other armed men on the street waved.

"I was worried but not super-worried," Miller said. Then the company commander, Capt. Troy King, drove up alongside in his Humvee and appeared nervous. They would have to turn around and head south to find the right road, the captain said.

"We're in an unsecured area. Stay alert. Keep your eyes peeled," King told them, Miller recalled.

The Kansas welder grew even more skittish when he saw a small Iraqi civilian truck with a .50-caliber machine gun attached driving back and forth beside the convoy.

"Just watch it and make sure it doesn't do anything," said Sgt. James Riley, who sat beside Miller in the wrecker.

Suddenly the tell-tale pop, pop, pop of automatic weapons fire erupted.

"We're getting shot at!" Miller shouted and slammed his boot into the gas pedal. The truck surged forward, and the engine whined, the speedometer quickly arcing from 40 mph to 65. But the convoy soon overshot a turn and was forced to drive off the road.

Two soldiers in a 5-ton tractor-trailer, Pvt. Brandon U. Sloan and Sgt. Donald R. Walters, were stuck in the soft sand. Miller screamed for Sloan, a 19-year-old logistics specialist from Cleveland, to get into the wrecker. When Miller looked around for Walters, he was nowhere in sight.

The Army report later said, "There is some information to suggest that a U.S. soldier that could have been Walters fought his way south of Highway 16 toward a canal and was killed in action." The report also said, "The circumstances of his death cannot be conclusively determined," although his body was found in a shallow grave with bullet and stab wounds. Walters' family in Oregon believes that the blond, wiry soldier may have been mistaken for Jessica Lynch in the intercepted Iraqi radio transmission that referred to a blond American woman heroically battling attackers.

As Miller wheeled his wrecker around, he could spot Iraqis on the barren plain about a mile away, hurriedly setting up artillery and mortars and shouldering rocket-propelled grenade launchers. "We had to go through the kill zone to get out," he said.

In front of Miller was a Humvee driven by Pfc. Lori Ann Piestewa, according to the Army's investigative report of the battle. First Sgt. Robert J. Dowdy rode in the front passenger seat, firing his M-16 rifle out the window. Two other soldiers, Spc. Edward Anguiano and Sgt. George Buggs shot from each side of the rear seat with heavier weaponry, M249 Squad Automatic Weapons. Lynch sat between them.

Shells and grenades sailed toward the convoy and shattered with deafening explosions just 30 yards away from the line of American trucks. Bullets began to ping off Miller's rig from all directions. He

reached out to adjust his side-view mirror just as a bullet shattered the glass. He then ducked close to the dash as he drove, while Riley loaded M-16 rifles in the middle seat and Sloan sat next to the window.

A bullet zipped into the cab and slammed into Sloan's forehead, just under his helmet, killing him instantly. "Never said a word," Miller said of Sloan.

The withering fire finally struck the wrecker's transmission. The rig slowed, then rolled to a stop, barely making it over the bridge spanning the Euphrates River. Miller turned to see several white Iraqi taxis on the road behind them, with gunmen spilling out and training their AK-47s on the fleeing American soldiers.

Grabbing his ammunition vest and rifle, Miller jumped from the wrecker. He and Riley raced forward to reach the others in the convoy, several hundred yards up the road. A tractor-trailer with Johnson and Hernandez in the cab had swerved off the road and stopped, while the Humvee driven at a high speed by Piestewa had crashed into the truck's rear, leaving only a tangle of metal and bodies. All five soldiers inside the wreckage appeared dead or nearly so. Miller saw Lynch's foot twitch and assumed she was in her death throes.

Miller and Riley stumbled ahead and found Johnson and Hernandez, both wounded, huddled in their truck. Riley, whose weapon had malfunctioned, tried desperately to grab an M-16 rifle from the demolished Humvee but was unsuccessful. He then tried to fire the rifles of Johnson and Hernandez, but they jammed, according to the Army's investigative report. Many of the company's rifles jammed because of the dusty conditions and lack of maintenance, the Army later found. The sergeant told his wounded subordinates to take cover, then stayed with them to protect them.

Miller, meanwhile, spotted an Iraqi dump truck and raced toward it, hoping to commandeer it and drive the survivors to safety. As he ran, he could see the smoky tails of rocket-propelled grenades sail past him. Bullets kicked up dirt on the road.

Miller reached an earthen berm just across the road from the Iraqi truck. Then he noticed a group of Iraqis in front of the dump truck, some 50 feet away, setting up a mortar tube. A rocket-propelled grenade slammed into the far side of the berm, and Miller rolled out the other side. When he crawled back inside and peered over the top, he could see an Iraqi ready to drop a mortar round into the tube.

But Miller's rifle was jammed. A spent round would eject, but the new round would only go halfway into the chamber. Miller slammed his palm into a lever on the side of the gun, and the bullet slid into place. He raised his rifle and fired. The Iraqi collapsed in a heap before he could fire the mortar round.

Riley, in a telephone interview from Aberdeen Proving Ground where he is now an instructor at the Ordnance Center and School, said Miller "was behind a berm returning fire while the berm was being shot at. ... He'd pop up and fire." Bullets and RPG rounds "were

## **A famous fight, an unsung hero continued**

smacking into everything all around.”

Miller said he was never scared or even thinking about what he was doing, just reacting. His Army training returned: how to breathe, aim and squeeze the trigger. “The only thing I was thinking was if they don’t get a mortar loaded, they can’t blow them up,” Miller said.

The remaining Iraqis jumped up and started firing their rifles at Miller, all missing. But their attack was never coordinated by having one take on Miller while the others launched mortar rounds at the remaining Americans.

One by one, Miller, by his count, shot seven Iraqis as each popped up and tried to work the mortar. After it was over, a large bruise spread over Miller’s palm from the constant slapping against the rifle.

When the mortar pit fell silent, Miller turned around and saw an armed man running along a tree line behind him, shielded by two women. He shot toward them, and they all folded into the ground.

Then the two women suddenly rose and dashed away, with the man lagging behind. Miller aimed once more and squeezed the trigger. The man fell forward. It was Miller’s final shot of the war.

The attack on the 507th lasted a little over an hour. Of 33 soldiers in the convoy, 11 were killed (including two from another unit), six were captured and nine were wounded, including some of those captured.

### **Weeks of captivity**

More than two dozen Iraqi men, all in civilian clothes and carrying assault rifles, surged toward Miller. He dropped his M-16 rifle in the dirt and raised his hands. One man punched him in the mouth, splitting his lip, while two others angrily pulled at his arms. Still another tried to hit him with a stick. A frenzied argument broke out in Arabic, and Miller realized they were talking about his fate.

“I thought they were going to shoot,” he said. “I was just scared.”

The group hustled Miller off to a nearby house, just as a car pulled up with uniformed Iraqi officers. They pulled off Miller’s vest and helmet, fishing through his pockets and grabbing his cigarettes and chewing tobacco.

The Iraqis found a slip of paper inside his helmet, three series of four numbers. Each line had a code word, including “Vulture” and “Scavenger.” They were the battalion’s frequencies for emergencies and MedEvacs.

“I told them they were prices for power steering pumps,” he said, holding his clenched hands in front of him to mimic driving. “Drive, you know?”

Power steering had been on his mind. Before leaving for Iraq, his Chevy Corsica blew its power steering pump as he placed it in storage. The Iraqis tossed the paper into a small fire in the middle of the floor.

Pulled from the house, Miller was placed in a Mitsubishi truck, with five Iraqis, for a silent drive to downtown Nasiriyah. He was paraded in front of a military headquarters building, a small crowd cheering as he was led inside. Taken into a small room with greenish white walls that held a couch, chairs and a desk, he was reunited with Hernandez and Riley as well as another member of the 507th, Spc. Joseph Hudson.

A man with a TV camera came in and identified himself as a reporter for Al-Jazeera, Miller remembered. An Iraqi officer took a seat behind the desk, coaching the reporter in Arabic about what to ask.

The Al-Jazeera tape, which appeared on Iraqi television, with excerpts later on American TV, shows a nervous and bewildered Miller in a sweaty Army-issue T-shirt. His eyes dart about, and he swallows hard. “Why do you come?” barked the questioner in heavily accented English.

“Cause I was told to come here,” Miller said, stumbling over his words. “I was just following orders. I came to fix broke stuff.”

“You came to kill Iraqi people!” the questioner demanded.

“I’m told to shoot only if I’m shot at,” Miller replied plaintively. “They shot at me. I shot back.”

Although clearly frightened, Miller recalled that he actually felt better that there would now be televised pictures of him and his fellow soldiers. The tape would be seen by the Americans, he believed. “President Bush would tell them they’re responsible,” he said.

They were all led into another room, where Miller once again saw Johnson. “She was in pain. Shot in both ankles,” he said.

The five soldiers from the 507th were loaded into a Toyota 4Runner, which turned north toward Baghdad, several hours away. All during the ride, the Iraqis hollered at the soldiers in a mixture of English and Arabic. “Why do you come here!” they kept shouting.

Miller and the others were blindfolded and led into a prison on the outskirts of Baghdad. Their uniforms were exchanged for yellow-and-white pajamas. Each soldier was placed in an 8-foot-by-6-foot cell with no furniture.

The only opening in the cell was a small, porthole-like window eight feet above the floor where a shaft of light streamed in. Miller was able to tear a piece of metal off the rusty cell door. He scratched three names on the wall: Jessa. Tyler. Makenzie.

Over the next three weeks, the American soldiers would be moved to seven locations. Each time, he would carve his wife’s and children’s names on the wall with the metal shard he hid in his pocket. “I wanted to make sure if I didn’t come home and the Americans came they would see them,” he said quietly, fearing he would die by the Iraqis or an errant U.S. bomb. “You never know if they’ll kill you or your own people will kill you.”

## **A famous fight, an unsung hero continued**

Johnson said Miller told her he was especially worried about never again seeing 8-month-old Makenzie. “She wouldn’t even remember him,” Johnson said.

On a diet of boiled chicken scraps, rice and hard bread, Miller came down with diarrhea and lost weight. All the while he alternated between defiance and despair, yearning for his family and having a few angry monologues with God. Inside his cells, he at times belted out the lyrics to “Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue.”

“This big dog will fight when you rattle his cage. And you’ll be sorry that you messed with The U.S. of A....”

“Sit down! Shut up!” the Iraqi guards would shout whenever he sang.

Johnson and the other soldiers later joked that Miller’s croaking rendition was a form of torture. “He sang it all the time,” she said.

Through it all the Iraqi guards never mistreated them, Miller said, and shared cigarettes with their captives. Miller was puffing on a Viceroy one April morning at a private house outside Tikrit when a door burst open with a shout, “Get down!” The soldiers dropped to the floor and a squad of Marines charged into the room. “If you’re American, stand up!” one of the Marines shouted.

The prisoners all stood and were quickly moved to an armored vehicle. No one said a word. Finally, when they were inside a helicopter, thumping toward an American airbase at the southern Iraqi city of Talil, Miller turned to Johnson and muttered, “We’re really going home.”

## **Returning to normal**

Miller walked briskly toward his brick and wood townhouse complex, set on a treeless patch of prairie at the edge of Fort Carson. The small back yards are wreathed in chain-link fences. Children dashed about while young mothers sat and chatted on the stoops. A small blond child teetered down the concrete path. Miller bent over and lifted the child above his head. “Hello, Makenzie!”

Opening his front door, Miller strolled inside the tiny living room, where one wall is a patchwork of framed citations. Prisoner of War Medal. Purple Heart. Silver Star. “PFC Miller served heroically in combat,” reads the Silver Star citation. “PFC Miller dismounted the vehicle and began firing on a mortar position that he determined was going to open fire at any minute on the convoy.”

Set in the middle of the wall is a large framed picture with the words 507th Maintenance Company. There are nine head-and-shoulder portraits of soldiers in the unit who perished in Iraq, all cast in a ghostly white.

Miller flopped on the plaid couch. He said he wants to put the entire Iraqi episode behind him and get on with his life. Play with his kids. Work on his car. Complete the paperwork for the warrant officer program.

He is asked about the fame of Lynch and how her celebrity has eclipsed his heroics. He summed it all up with a shrug. “She’s female. I’m male. It’s expected of me,” he said. Still, like some others in his company, he harbors a gnawing resentment that Lynch has emerged as the only story in the 507th.

“It just gets me how she gets credit for something she didn’t do,” he finally said. “We were all in the same unit.”

Miller may lack national celebrity, but he has found a small, not insignificant, following at Fort Bliss, an Army post in the west Texas desert where Brown, the colonel who vetted his Silver Star, is stationed. She said she uses Miller’s story as a leadership teaching tool for her officers. Recently, she gathered together 80 of them and told his tale in vivid detail.

Closing her presentation, she eyed her audience. “Would you do the things he did? Would you? Could you?”

## **\$5,000 re-enlistment bonus offered to GIs in terror war, Korea continued**

complete that commitment risk having to pay back some or the entire bonus, depending on circumstances, Carroll said.

The bonus is not retroactive for deployed soldiers who reenlisted before Sept. 19, Carroll said.

Word of the bonus went out to commanders in the field via an Army personnel message.

Carroll said she did not have data available on the number of soldiers who have signed up under the bonus program since Sept. 19.



*A farmer in Corona, Calif., honored U.S. troops by creating a maze in his cornfield. This image was captured Sept. 18 by DigitalGlobe’s commercial satellite using the QuickBird high-resolution imaging system.*

## 3rd COSCOM soliders train volunteer security

(CENTCOM News Release)

BALAD, Iraq – Iraqis will soon assist 3rd Corps Support Command soldiers in keeping Logistical Support Area Anaconda in Balad safe.

A security patrol is being trained to assist guards at the front gate of the installation. These guards will conduct pre-inspections before civilian non-tactical vehicles enter the gate of LSA Anaconda.

The volunteers are mostly former Iraqi soldiers. Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Aubain, 3rd COSCOM sergeant major, spearheads the program that he and a team of soldiers developed.

Training includes elements of drill and ceremony, necessary commands, voice inflections and taking charge of situations. The focus remains on the proper procedures for searching vehicles.

Instead of focusing on how to guard the installation, they concentrate

on recognizing when something is out of the ordinary, identifying objects out of place and taking command of situations when something doesn't seem right.

Near the end of the training, the military police will come to observe the progress and help fine-tune some of the techniques if necessary. The MPs are the final word on ultimately certifying them as inspectors.

The inspectors who've finished this first class will also be used to help train the next group that comes through. Eventually, about 40 Iraqis will be hired as security inspectors. They'll receive badges that expire in six months from issue. They will then go through re-certification.

The group will pick their uniform, establish their creed and have a graduation where their family members are invited. As their motto goes: Fakhor (pride in self).

## Local Iraqis spin wrenches to keep coalistion rolling

(CENTCOM News Release)

MOSUL, Iraq – Soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and local Iraqis are making lighter work with many hands by working together in the motor pool to change out engines and repair hundreds of tires.

Local Iraqis, that had been working with the unit to do repair jobs around their area, were trained in a new skill when they were given a class on how to rebuild spare tires. The men can now break down an average of about 22 tires a day.

The men were hired from the local unemployment office on a weekly basis. They are paid \$4 a day, plus an extra dollar for being able to come to the motor pool every morning to go to work instead of being picked up. The men are all from the same village near Mosul.

The Iraqi men hope to be able to work with the motor pool for at least another month and the motor pool is working to keep the men employed for as long as possible. Next, they will be painting the motor-pool facilities.



*An Army robot is sent down a Baghdad street on its way into a tunnel during an investigation for explosive devices Wednesday. U.S. forces have been increasingly attacked by roadside bombs, most of them remotely controlled so attackers can detonate them from a distance as American convoys pass. Photo by Samir Mezban, AP.*