

Soldiers become detectives in Operation Pericles

ABU KARMAH, Iraq Aug 16th, 2007— Troops are taking a slow, deliberate approach in tracking down the enemy in this Iraqi village.



Sgt. Nick Cooley, 21, of Lancaster, Wisc., leads men of the 82nd Airborne Division on a search for hidden weapons in the palm groves of Abu Karmah.

A mission launched as part of Operation Lightning Hammer was moving at a slow, steady pace, with some dozen suspected al-Qaida in Iraq fighters arrested, officials said.

The operation began early Tuesday morning with two U.S. Army battalions from the 1st Cavalry and 82nd Airborne divisions surrounding the village of Abu Karmah in what was called Operation Pericles. As many as 16,000 Iraqi and U.S. troops are taking part in the overall mission in Diyala province.

By late Tuesday evening, approximately a dozen men had been arrested, according to U.S. Army Capt. Gregory Sakimura.

Soldier who fought fifth deployment deemed medically unfit

ARLINGTON, Va. Aug 16th, 2007 — The Florida reservist who asked federal courts to block the Army from sending him to Iraq on a fifth deployment was excused from active service after being found medically unfit. He is still seeking an honorable discharge to prevent another call-up, according to his lawyer.

"Now we're working to put the icing on the cake and get him out of the IRR," or Individual Ready Reserve, Fayetteville, N.C.-based attorney Mark Waple said.

Sgt. Erik Botta, 26, of Port St. Lucie, Fla., won't be finished with his eight-year obligation until October 2008, so he is asking for the discharge to ensure he will not get another call-up to Iraq, Waple said.

Agreements set for Romania deployment

STUTTGART, Germany Aug 15th, 2007 — What happens when a truck full of sand rolls up to the security gate and needs to get inside? Who pays for asbestos to be hauled away? What kind of bombs can we drop?

Even as the first rotation of U.S. troops arrives in Romania as part of a historic deployment, the former Soviet bloc nation and the U.S. are working out details on how their shared military facilities will operate for years to come.

Eight agreements were signed last month in Bucharest, the Romanian capital, while another nine have been agreed upon by negotiators.

It is hoped that the contracts will answer questions when they arise as the U.S. and Romanian militaries embark on a partnership expected to last at least 10 years.

About 1,000 mostly Europe-based personnel will be the United States' first deployment to Joint Task Force East.

The task force, headquartered at Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base near Constanta, will coordinate the deployments of battalion- and brigade-sized U.S. forces to Romania and Bulgaria.



Country star Michael Peterson to serve as spokesman for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund

INDIANAPOLIS, Aug. 2, 2007 - Michael Peterson will serve as the national spokesman for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund.

"Michael Peterson is a staunch supporter of this cause," said National Commander Paul A. Morin. "I am delighted that he has agreed to champion this great program that benefits the children of our fallen heroes."

The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund provides college scholarships for children of military personnel killed on duty since Sept. 11, 2001. Peterson has pledged that 50 percent of the profits of his upcoming DVD, "It's Who We Are," will go to the fund.

VFW Applauds Commission Recommendations; Total Change to Disability System Won't Work

WASHINGTON, Aug 10th, 2007-- The VFW is applauding most of the recommendations released yesterday by the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors.

The nine-member commission, co-chaired by former Sen. Bob Dole (R-KS) and former Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala, was created in March to examine the whole continuum of care and programs for wounded servicemembers, as well as what is needed to assure their successful return to military duty or civilian life.

Merchant Mariner Pension Bill Ill-Advised

The Disabled American Veterans is in the unenviable position of opposing legislation authorizing the Department of Veterans Affairs to pay a \$1,000 monthly pension to civilian Merchant Mariners who played a critical role delivering troops, military equipment, food, fuel and other needed supplies during World War II.

"While the DAV acknowledges the bravery, sacrifice and contributions of those Merchant Mariners, we oppose offsetting the costs associated with the measure against other VA programs," said Washington Headquarters Executive Director David W. Gorman.

The monthly pension payments to Merchant Mariners exceeds the amount of compensation the VA pays to a 60 percent service-connected combat-disabled veteran with an above-the-knee amputation, for example. The only other group of veterans receiving a pension for service is the exclusive group of veterans who have been awarded the Medal of Honor.