

## U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

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### **KARKH MISSION GIVES STRYKER SOLDIERS A CHANCE TO LIVE, WORK AMONG IRAQIS WHILE PATROLLING BAGHDAD**

#### **Multi-National Division – Baghdad release**

**COMBAT OUTPOST REMAGEN, BAGHDAD, Iraq --** "Iron Company" Soldiers from U.S. Army Europe's 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment are patrolling the streets of the Iraqi capital while rotating through this outpost where they live among the citizens of the city's Karkh District to deter would-be terrorists.

The Soldiers of Company I, 4th Squadron, 2nd SCR from Vilseck, Germany, are only about a month into their tour here. The Stryker troops say their first stay at the outpost wasn't quite what the infantrymen imagined when they learned they were headed for a 15-month deployment here.

Those who were here for the Strykers' last deployment were in Mosul fighting a much different battle, so they don't take

their time at Remagen or the few amenities the outpost has to offer for granted.



SPC ALEXIS HARRISON

A Soldier from Company I, 4th Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, scans a street during a recent patrol in the Karkh District of Baghdad, Iraq.

The Stryker Soldiers can expect no showers for days and no internet to surf during their four-day stay in the neighborhood. The only "frill" here is air conditioning. So Soldiers pack their bags full for what usually amounts to four days of comparative "roughing it." Laptops, DVD players and music top the packing list of stuff to provide entertainment when the cavalymen are not on patrols.



SPC ALEXIS HARRISON

Sgt. 1st Class Stanford Cunningham, a platoon sergeant with the 1st platoon of Company I, 4th Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, watches an Iraqi boy pound steel into chain links during a patrol through the market area of the Karkh District of Baghdad, Iraq.

Hot chow is another highlight. Brought to the outpost once a day, the Soldiers generally scarf down their meals before heading out on the streets to interact with locals to find out what their neighbors have on the minds.

"This rotation is more about the hearts and minds of people in Iraq," said weapons platoon leader Staff Sgt. Anthony Torrescanu. "Now that we're not fighting constantly, we can find out the needs of the people and how to fulfill those needs."

1st platoon leader 1st Lt. Ken Schmidt said the area is calm enough for them to start getting locals the things they need.



SPC ALEXIS HARRISON

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Robertson of Company I, 4th Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, makes a radio call during a patrol on Haifa Street in the Karkh District of Baghdad, Iraq.

"I wasn't expecting to be in an area as calm as this," Schmidt said. "But now we're able to focus on projects that bring a little comfort to the people because of the security in the area."

Schmidt said he is frequently stopped by Karkh residents willing to talk for a few minutes, to say thanks to the troops being here to keep them safe; to tell them what needs to be fixed, and to discuss who might be causing trouble.

This is the first tour in Iraq for Schmidt and many of the troops in his platoon. Although the area is relatively safe, the veterans of the Mosul days remind the young Soldiers to remain vigilant and always be prepared for the worst.

First-timer Pfc. Michael Anastasio said many of the things he sees are more amazing than he ever imagined. Kids play in the streets without care and fearlessly ask the Soldiers for candy and soccer balls. He admits that none of this matches the stories of the hard fighting the infantrymen faced last time in Mosul.

The troops trek many of the streets and alleys of this old city, including the infamous Haifa Street, where fierce gun battles tore apart the area last winter.

Along the way are several blacksmith and woodworking shops that keep regular hours despite the sometimes blistering heat. The Soldiers regularly take a few moments to watch the shopkeepers perform their skills. As the troops make the rounds they chat with people and get mobbed by children.

When their stint to the outpost is complete, the Soldiers mount up on their Stryker armored combat vehicles and head back to Forward Operating Base Prosperity, their more permanent home in the city. Along the way the cavalymen debate what to do first when they get there. A shower, food, sleep and calls to home top the list of things to do before another patrol tomorrow.

"We don't take the little perks on the FOB for granted after living out at the COP," said Pfc. Lucas Morse, an M-240 machine gunner on his first tour here. "We just take it one day at a time."



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