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### STRYKER SOLDIERS MAKING EAST RASHID SAFER ONE STREET AND ONE HOUSE AT A TIME

By Sgt. Mark B. Matthews  
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**CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq --** The sun begins to peek over the Baghdad horizon as the Soldiers slowly creep into the neighborhood, their weapons loaded, their minds focused on the day's objective. Everything is eerily quiet as they move, watching every corner, window and rooftop.



SGT MARK MATTHEWS

Sgt. Brandon Kramer, a squad leader with U.S. Army Europe's Company G, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, takes down a barrier to allow the unit to enter an abandoned house during clearing operations in the East Rashid District of Baghdad Oct 11.

The Soldiers, from U.S. Army Europe's Ghost Rider Company, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment conducted operations in neighborhoods of the East Rashid District of Baghdad Oct 11. Their purpose was to clear the area of al-Qaida forces; search for bombs and bomb-making materials; uncover weapons caches and counteract any improvised explosive devices they discovered.

"We have been taking out one of the last al-Qaida enclaves and basically clearing the area, which is going home-to-home and street-to-street and trying to get rid of all the weapon caches and al-Qaida members in the area," said Ghost Riders platoon leader 1st Lt. Jonathan. "The biggest initial challenge is getting a foothold in the area so we can begin talking with the people to get intelligence on where IEDs and al-Qaida members are."

The Soldiers began searching houses one street at a time. One unit provided security as another searched. Many times the houses they planned to search were abandoned, and they must be extra

cautious as they enter.

The company is supported by its sister companies in the regiment, explosive detection dogs and explosive ordnance disposal teams that work to find explosive devices before they become deadly.

When operations first began in the area, Soldiers in the unit said they were receiving gunfire every day. Now, they go days without taking a shot, Peterson said.

This mission has been a learning experience for many of the Soldiers, who pass what they learn to help other units with similar missions.

“When we first got into sector, the procedure of clearing a house was to get in quickly, clear the home of any explosives and disable any weapons. Now, due to the threat of (explosive devices), we use many more precautions,” said Spc. Dustin Cason of the company’s 1st platoon.

As the Soldiers continue to make more areas of East Rashid safe for residents, they hope more people will bring information to coalition forces that will help them provide better security and save lives.

“We have a lot of great Soldiers here who love the tough missions. They live for them,” Peterson said. “All of the Soldiers want to be the tip of the spear and serve their country in the best way they know how.”



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