

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 6, 2008

**Contact:**

Maj. Craig Heathscott  
Public Affairs Officer (*deployed*)  
39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team  
Arkansas Army National Guard  
[craig.heathscott@us.army.mil](mailto:craig.heathscott@us.army.mil)

**39<sup>th</sup> Brigade Soldiers welcome familiar faces in Iraq**  
**~ Arkansas' Adjutant General visits deployed Soldiers overseas**

*Story and photos by Maj. Craig Heathscott*  
*39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs Office*

BAGHDAD, Iraq - With temperatures well into 100-degrees inside the tower overlooking his assigned battle space outside Victory Base Complex, the young specialist takes a deep breath, looks over at the most familiar face of the Arkansas National Guard—Maj. Gen. William Wofford—and begins to recite his duties. It's obvious the Soldier is very knowledgeable; however, his speech is strained from nervousness. Prior to this moment, the only time this 19-year-old has seen this general officer has been limited to the picture on the wall in his armory.

With so many ranks and years of experience separating these two Soldiers, the task of briefing the two-star general seems as monumental as anything he will experience on his eight-hour shift in the tower. But, the experienced leader interrupts Spc. Cody Woodall of New Hope for a moment and gives him the advice that almost instantly clears up his speech and allows his talent to shine, "It's ok; calm down and just talk to me."

Wofford, the adjutant general for the Arkansas National Guard, was on a three-day trip here to meet with the leadership of the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team as well as the activity he enjoys most—talking with troops. He's what most troops would consider the Soldier's general.

"It's important for our troops to realize folks back home really care about what they are doing here in Iraq. I mean, really care," said Wofford. "And, I think it's even more important now since this is a different mission than the last deployment. We've got troops that have deployed two, three times and their effort, their commitment to the nation and the state doesn't go unnoticed. Regardless of the mission of each individual company, each Soldier, we are performing missions that are important for the overall effort here in Iraq.

"It's good for me to take back to the senior staff in Arkansas what's going on here in Iraq, because the dynamics of this war are changing. I have every confidence

in the leadership of the 39<sup>th</sup> and all the 3,000 plus Soldiers that are here ensuring this mission is a success. And now, I've seen with my own eyes dedicated troops like Spc. Woodall who want nothing more than to serve their country and make their Family proud. That's encouraging."

At the direction of Woodall, Wofford looks past the barrel of the mounted 50-caliber machine gun pointed in the direction of the village of Al Furat that the Soldiers in this tower call their battle space. Woodall's nervousness has dissipated, and he's, now, in his element. He knows the maximum effective range of his 50 cal is approximately 1850 meters. He knows it can shoot 550 rounds per minute. He knows his job, and he now tells the 'man from the picture frame' everything he wants to know.

"I had only known him from his picture in the drill hall. I mean, I knew he was the highest ranking officer in the state, our adjutant general, but I didn't 'know him.' He was the first general I ever talked to, and I knew he was going to be hard going, but he just told me to calm down. I quit giving a speech and just started to talk to him," said Woodall. "My heart rate went down, and I talked to him like I would anyone. I knew all the answers."

Only two years into his military career, Woodall joined immediately after graduating from Umpire High School in southwest Arkansas where he lays claim to being in the top ten of his class. He immediately follows with a laugh that he only had six in his graduating class.

"The better half of my career has been on active duty. I got home from AIT (Advanced Individual Training) on September 24<sup>th</sup> and went on active duty for this deployment on October one, and I have no regrets," he said, suggesting that he hopes to find another deployment opportunity upon his return home.

After a quick handshake with Woodall and the other troops, Wofford leaves the tower. Somewhat relieved from what he perceived as a rather daunting task, Woodall turns back to his weapon and gets back to his job of providing protection for some 50,000 plus Soldiers and contractors that live and work on Victory Base Complex on a daily basis. All in all, it was a very challenging and memorable day for this 19-year-old Soldier from New Hope, Arkansas.

Joining Wofford on the trip, the state's top enlisted Soldier—Command Sgt. Maj. Deborah Collins—was proud to see the young Soldier handle such responsibility so well.

"I can't say enough about the heart and soul of our Soldiers," said a tired sergeant major who was still feeling the effects of jetlag from the day prior. "They give 110-percent, and they give much more than they'll ever get back—that's the quality of our Soldiers in Arkansas.

"They'll tell you, 'sergeant major we wish there was a little more action' but I just tell them you better be glad there's not. I encourage them to talk more with the Soldiers that deployed last time, and they'll change their mind. This is a good mission, and it's still a dangerous environment here in Iraq."

On her third trip to Iraq for the purpose of visiting troops since 2005, Collins saw this as a reunion of sorts as she visited the 39<sup>th</sup> Brigade during their first deployment along with the adjutant general at the time—Maj. Gen. Don Morrow. She followed up that trip in early 2007 when she joined Maj. Gen. Ronald Chastain, former adjutant general and 39<sup>th</sup> Brigade commander, to meet with troops from Troop Command (875<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion) as well as units from the 77<sup>th</sup> Aviation Brigade.

The purpose of the trips are important to help the leadership stay abreast of the status of the troops and their morale, but it also gives Soldiers an opportunity to see a 'familiar face,' according to Collins.

"It just amazes me how much a familiar face can help the morale of the troops," said Collins. "Think about it, you're here with all your fellow Soldiers so you've got a large Family here but there is something about seeing a familiar face. It means a lot to our Soldiers, and equally, it means a lot to us to see these Soldiers—Soldiers that are so committed to do a great job, so committed to representing their state and Family in such a positive manner."

The sergeant major's comments were indicative of the way Sgt. Ryan Schwarz viewed the visit by the top leadership. The two distinguished visitors made an appearance in his office, and he was excited to see the familiar faces.

"It's a big morale boost," he said. "These are the highest ranking people we report to on the military side of the house, and it makes you feel good that folks back home are willing to check on you. Most of the Soldiers don't view this as a 'dog and pony show,' it really means something that they would travel here to meet with us."

On his second deployment to the desert, Schwarz might have felt a bit of déjà vu when Collins walked into his workplace as she visited him during her 2005 trip to Iraq. He spent ten minutes explaining his job which involves granting temporary access to Victory Base.

Serving as a "last line of defense" before entering the base, Schwarz and those working with him verify credentials of local and third party nationals, contractors and others trying to gain access. As he explained his daily activities, Schwarz seemed very comfortable.

"It's not like seeing old friends, but they are familiar faces that genuinely care about what their Soldiers are doing," he said.

Upon arriving in Iraq in April, the 39<sup>th</sup> Brigade was broken apart and assigned to several different locations to include Baghdad, Al Asad, Tallil and Taji. The missions; however, are primarily the same—convoy security and force protection. In many cases, the battalions fall under different command structures other than the 39<sup>th</sup> Brigade and, oftentimes, each battalion finds itself in command of elements from outside the Brigade.

A prime example of the diversity of the command structure, the headquarters element of the 39<sup>th</sup> Brigade—commanded by Col. Kendall Penn—has active duty Army, Navy and even international military units under his watch as the Base Defense commander for Victory Base. Over 600 Soldiers from Uganda assist in the base defense operations—providing security in the perimeter towers. Wofford and Collins were introduced to many of the Ugandan Soldiers who work closely with members of the 39<sup>th</sup>'s 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 153<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment.

The different locations proved a challenge for this leadership visit as they were only able to make it to Baghdad and Taji during their time here. A quick trip to Tallil was cancelled due to the all-to-common sandstorms that halted air transport. Nonetheless, the visit gave the adjutant general a good understanding of what the troops from the 39<sup>th</sup> Brigade are experiencing here and gave him the opportunity to meet with Penn and his leadership team to discuss one very important topic—redeployment.

The Brigade is still several months away from their return; however, the planning for such a large movement begins immediately. It is anticipated that the Brigade will begin returning sometime in December as their one-year deployment will be complete in January 2009.

“Everyone can appreciate discussions about our return,” said Penn. “It’s no different than preparing to move the Brigade to Iraq. It took several months in advance to make the move happen and a lot of hard work by some very dedicated and talented Soldiers.”

A quick reflection on this visit before boarding a plane and returning stateside, Wofford was quick to point out the good living and working conditions as well as technology improvements over previous wars. He even took the opportunity to compare it to his time in the desert some 17 years earlier during the first Gulf War. He served as the battalion commander for the 142<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery during the early 90’s.

“As I flew over the desert from Kuwait to Baghdad, I couldn’t help but notice the environment—everything about it—had not changed,” he said. “That’s where I lived for several months in a tent out in the sand. I can personally attest to the much improved living conditions of our troops. You’ve got the ability to call home on a regular basis and then there’s video cams. Even in the workplace, you’ve

got video screens to conduct meetings whereas I used a grease pen and acetate.

"Improved living conditions, no doubt; however, it in no way lessens the commitment that these Soldiers make by leaving their Families and employers behind," he said. "This has been a very encouraging trip, and while short, it's one I'm glad I was able to make."

With 'wheels up' and the flight home underway, the adjutant general and command sergeant major for the Arkansas National Guard get one last view of the desert before hopefully sitting back and getting some much needed rest from a whirlwind tour.

And on the ground, Soldiers like Spc. Woodall get the opportunity to tell all his friends about his memorable experience 'talking' to the general. But tomorrow, it's just another day in Baghdad and less than 200 or so days before the 39<sup>th</sup> Brigade—Bowie Team—will get the opportunity to be greeted by these distinguished visitors and Family again. This time, however, on the home turf—Arkansas.

- 30 -

### **Photo Cutlines**

**Command Group.** Pictured from left to right, Lt. Col. Scott Stanger (executive officer for the 39<sup>th</sup>), Col. Kendall Penn (commander), Maj. Gen. William Wofford (adjutant general of the Arkansas National Guard), Command Sgt. Maj. Deborah Collins (state command sergeant major), and Command Sgt. Maj. Steven Veazey (command sergeant major for the 39<sup>th</sup>) pose for a picture at the headquarters for base defense at Victory Base Complex where Penn is in command.

**Visiting the Troops.** Maj. Gen. William Wofford, adjutant general of the Arkansas Army National Guard (right) and Command Sgt. Maj. Debbie Collins, command sergeant major for the Arkansas National Guard visit with Sgt. Ryan Schwarz in Baghdad, Iraq at Camp Victory. "It's a big morale boost," said Schwarz. "These are the highest ranking people we report to on the military side of the house, and it makes you feel good that folks back home are willing to check on you."

**Long Flight.** Maj. Gen. William Wofford arrives in Baghdad to visit with his Soldiers who are deployed with the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team. "It's important for our troops to realize folks back home really care about what they are doing here in Iraq. I mean, really care," said Wofford. "It's good for me to take back to the senior staff in Arkansas what's going on here in Iraq, because the dynamics of this war are changing."

**Top Chef.** Staff Sgt. Chris Platt, from Heber Springs, takes a break from his job to visit with the adjutant general of Arkansas, Maj. Gen. William D. Wofford. Platt, who is deployed to Iraq as a member of the 39<sup>th</sup> Brigade's Company C, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 153<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, is serving as the chef for the Joint Visitor's Bureau hotel in Baghdad.

**On the Move.** Maj. Gen. William Wofford and Command Sgt. Maj. Debbie Collins return to their vehicle after visiting Soldiers in a base defense tower. "I can't say enough about the heart and soul of our Soldiers," said a tired sergeant major who was still feeling the effects of jetlag from the day prior. "They give 110-percent, and they give much more than they'll ever get back—that's the quality of our Soldiers in Arkansas.

**Ugandan Soldier.** Maj. Gen. William Wofford and Command Sgt. Major Debbie Collins visit with a Soldier from Uganda who works with the 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team at Victory Base in Baghdad, Iraq. Over 600 Soldiers from Uganda assist in the base defense operations—providing security in the perimeter towers.

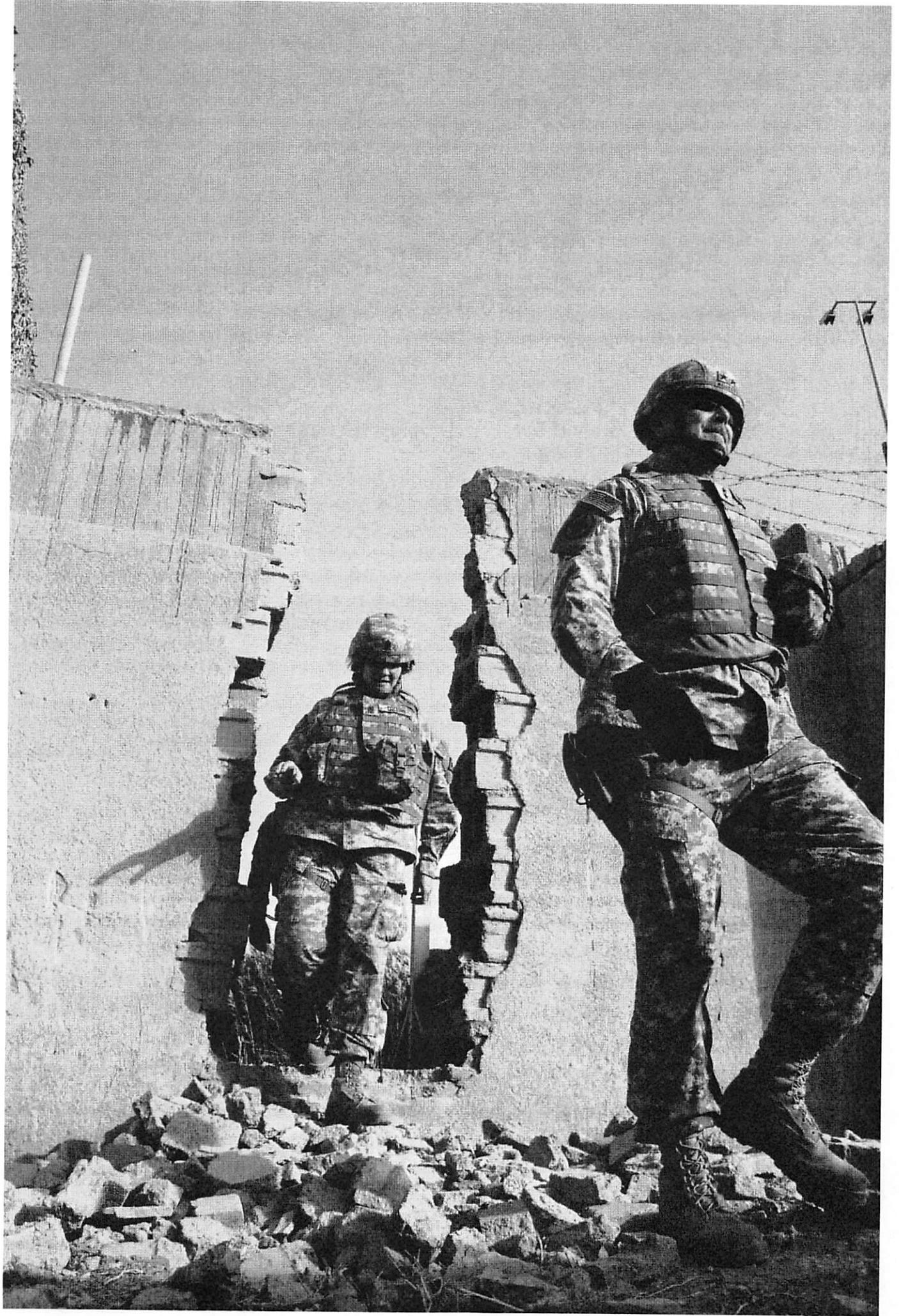
**Briefing the General.** Spc. Cody Woodall, of New Hope, Ark., and a member of the 39<sup>th</sup>'s 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 153<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, shows Maj. Gen. William Wofford the view of his battlespace from inside his tower position. "Regardless of the mission of each individual company, each Soldier, we are performing missions that are important for the overall effort here in Iraq," said General Wofford. "And now I've seen, with my own eyes, dedicated troops like Spc. Woodall who want nothing more than to serve their country and make their Family proud. That's encouraging."



Arkansas  
Arkansas  
Arkansas













SCHWELL

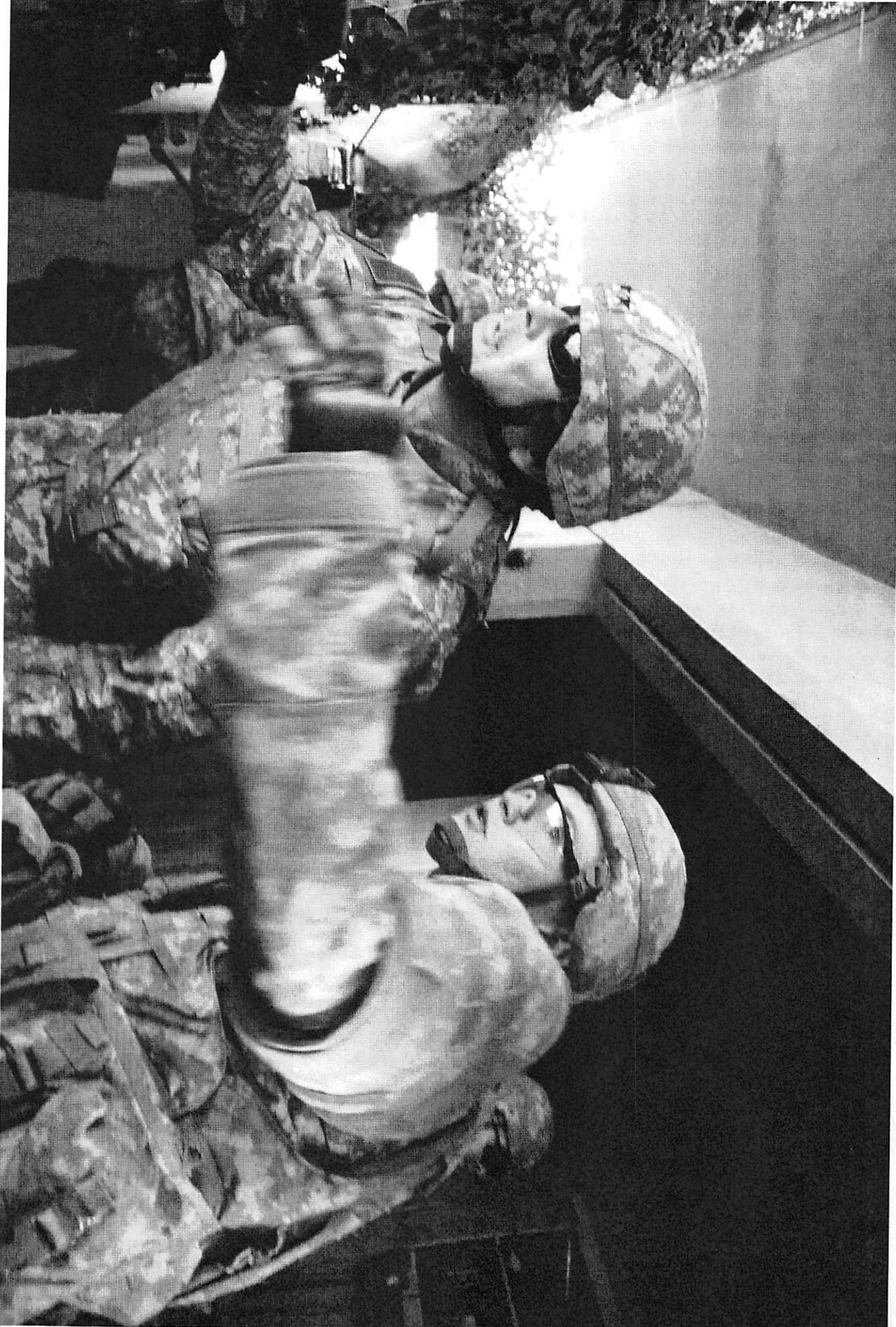
U.S. ARMY

COLLINE

JUNE 2008  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
8 9 10 11 12 13 14  
15 16 17 18 19 20 21  
22 23 24 25 26 27 28  
29 30  
27 30

JULY 2008  
1 2 3 4 5  
6 7 8 9 10 11 12  
13 14 15 16 17 18 19  
20 21 22 23 24 25 26  
27 28 29 30 31

AUGUST 2008  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

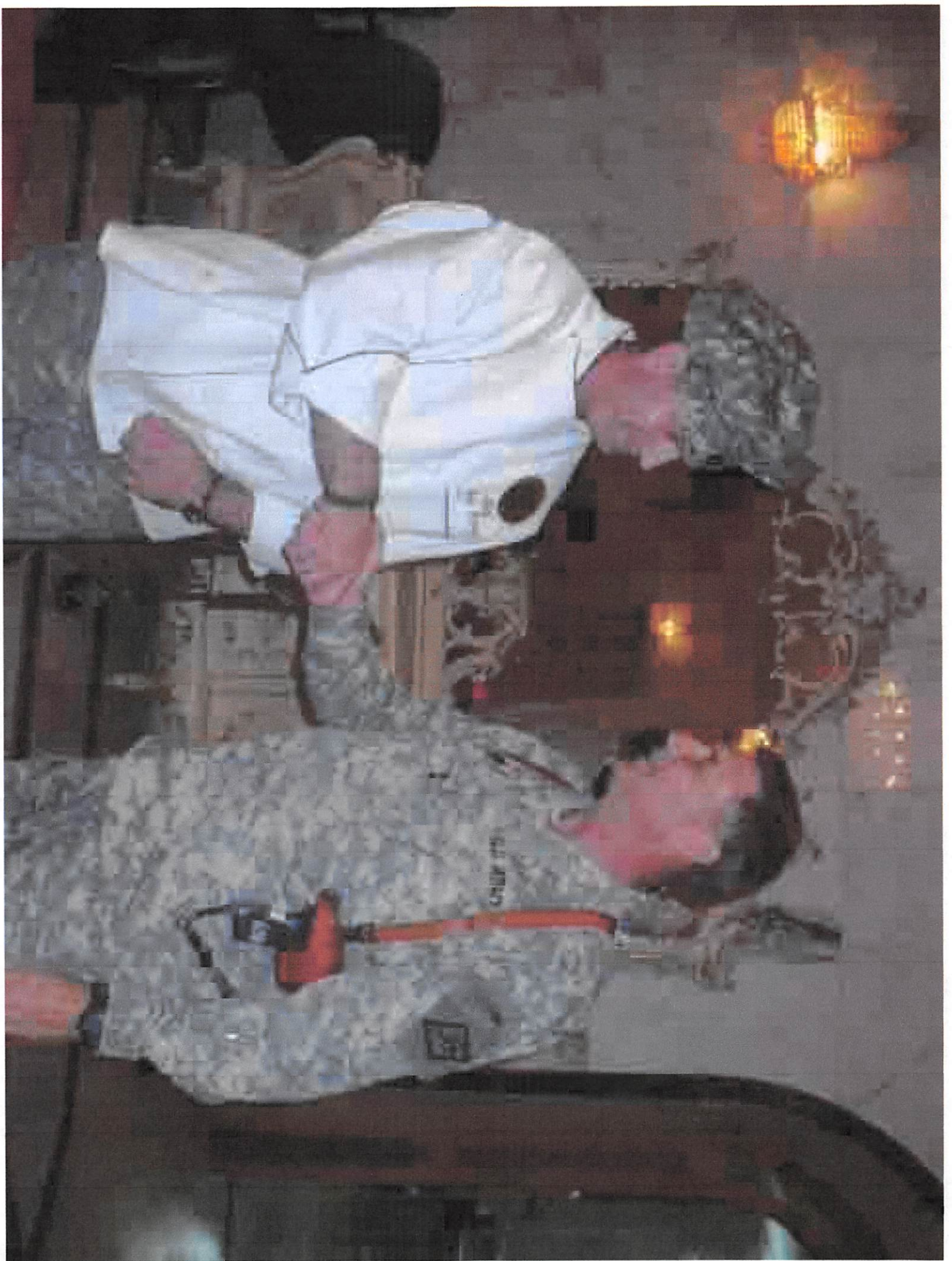
















520	521	522	523	524	525	526	527	528	529
530	531	532	533	534	535	536	537	538	539

JUNE 2008						
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

AUGUST 2008						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

