



## Task Force 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 37<sup>th</sup> Armored Regiment “Iron Dukes”



**COMMANDER**  
LTC John K. Tien



### MISSION

TF 2-37 AR conducts full-spectrum counter-insurgency operations in partnership with ISF to neutralize AIF in Jazeera to enable a secure environment that supports economic and political development and further transition to independent ISF control.

### MOTTO

*Courage Conquers*

**COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR**  
CSM Gary L. Williams



### Task Force 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 37<sup>th</sup> Armored Regiment OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM 05-07

On 12 January 2006, the “Iron Dukes” of 2-37 Armor Battalion deployed to Kuwait in preparation for combat operations in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. Following two weeks of reception and staging operations, including an accident-free off-load of the battalion’s equipment at the Port of Ash Shuaybah, the unit stood poised just kilometers south of the Iraqi border at Camp Buerhing. On 28 January, the Task Force began air movement and ground assault convoys for 800 kilometer movement into hostile territory, which ended at Forward Operating Base Sykes. Upon conducting a Relief in Place with 2/3 ACR on 13 FEB 06, TF 2-37 took over all Coalition forces operating bases in Area of operations SABRE to include Tal Afar and areas surrounding Tal Afar (key cities of Avgani, Kisik, Abu Mariyah, Al Ashiq, Tuam/Majerin, Muhallibiyah, and Sheik Ibrahim).

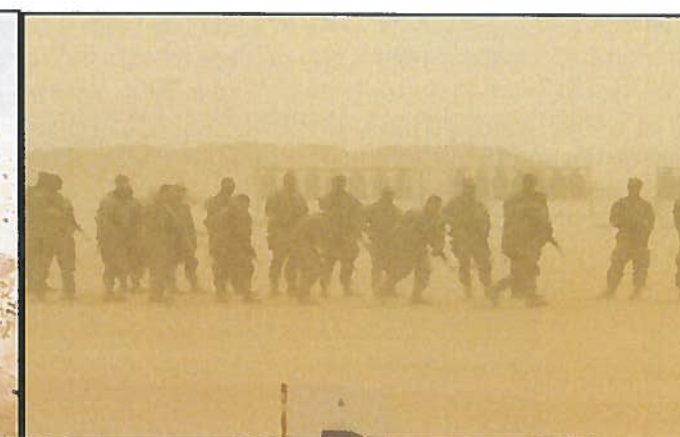


A/2-37 AR, “Aggressor Company” was chosen as the main effort company in the brigade with the toughest mission: secure the Qadisiyah neighborhood of Tal Afar, Iraq, which averaged three significant enemy actions per day and which the previous unit placed off-limits for dismounted patrolling. The company leadership realized immediately that they needed to engage this neighborhood both on the ground and through discussions with the people. As a result, Aggressor Company began dismounted operations in the sector and protected their forces through a combination of mutually supporting mounted and dismounted patrols, observation posts, bounding overwatch and optimal positioning of his anti-IED signal defeating systems. The result was transformative and the neighborhood significant activities dropped from 3 per day to 3 per week. Aggressor Company continued with this offensive mindset by conducting a cordon and search in the worst part of the city in the first week following transfer of authority and then led the battalion on the biggest cordon and search operation in MNF-N which resulted in the capture of 75 insurgents, the #2 ranked terrorist in Tal Afar, and the capture and destruction of four IEDs and

numerous arms caches. As a result of the company’s dedicated partnership with COL Kareem and 3<sup>rd</sup> Iraqi Army Battalion and COL Zadon of the Al Salam IP station and sustained partnership operations, both IA and IP assumed control in their respective areas months ahead of the previous schedule. Forward deployed in sector, Aggressor company secured the company outpost at the geographic center of Tal Afar and twenty-four hours a day projected power into the neighborhood providing security and stability to this embattled city which in turn, has allowed civil-military operations to flourish.



A CO, 2nd platoon, above



Aggressors training during a sandstorm in Kuwait

B/2-37 AR, “Battle Company,” took charge of an area of operations in western Tal Afar, which included the extremely volatile Hai Al Saad neighborhood that had the highest US and Iraqi Security Force casualty rate in all Western Nineveh Province for the past three years to include PFC Jody Missildine who was killed in action there on 8 April 2006. Refusing to allow that area to stand as an insurgent bed-down and arms cache holding area, Battle Company developed a plan that would remigrate the Coalition Force friendly Shia tribes back in to that neighborhood. Through intense negotiations with Sheikhs, Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army, Battle was able to first establish a US Patrol Base, repel a VBIED, re-establish another US Patrol Base, and then transition authority of that base to the Iraqi Police once the neighborhood had been cleared of over 100 detained insurgents and over a dozen different IED and arms cache sites. Under Battle Company’s watch, the neighborhood achieved a balanced mixture of Shia and Sunni families and there have been zero significant enemy actions in that neighborhood in three weeks. On 7 May 2006, Battle Company conducted a dismounted raid into a house which their unit had taken sustained enemy fire from. Due the actions of the Soldiers of Battle, SSG Emmanuel Legaspi posthumously received the Silver Star and 4 other soldiers were decorated for valor. As a result of Battle Company’s tactical support to 1<sup>st</sup> Iraqi Army Battalion and three different Iraqi Police stations, the Iraqi Security Forces took over in the Area of operations months ahead of schedule. Forward deployed in sector at the Granary, Battle Company also housed and directly supported the battalion’s forward aid station (and helipad) which treated over 1000 patients during the battalion’s tenure in Tal Afar to include dealing with over thirty mass casualty events of vehicle borne IEDs and suicide events that often killed or wounded 50-100 civilians at a time.



Battle 6 “Ancient” and Company out at Cop Granary

C/2-37 AR, “Warlord Company” ensured that the key Corps supply routes along ASRs Reno and Santa Fe remained secured. During Warlord’s time along the ASRs, IEDs along these two routes decreased from one per week to zero during their last month overwatching and patrolling the ASRs. PFC Ricky Salas, Jr. gave his life defending this road and the villages around it on 6 March 2006. Warlord Company established an outstanding partnership relationship with Iraqi Army



battalion commander LTC Farhang of the 1/1/3rd IA Division and CPT Saleh of the Abu Mariyah Iraqi Police Station to provide key checkpoints and overwatch along the routes as well as conduct several cordon and searches in the dozens of small villages that lined the route to gain human intelligence and deny the enemy freedom of movement in those towns. Using the TF scouts, Warlords set up an ambush position in a former Iraqi Army arms depot where suspected insurgents had been pilfering IED making materials for the past year. This resulted in the direct wounding of a known insurgent and eventually led to the destruction of that particular IED cell. Warlord reacted professionally and effectively in several high stress situations to include responding to a fatal IED attack on one of his patrols, a VBIED in the sector, and a suicide vest at an Iraqi Army recruiting event. Based on their success in Western Nineveh, the Warlords were chosen to move with the Brigade Combat Team to Ramadi and on 5 June 2006 resumed operations at Camp Correigdor in eastern Ramadi under the control of 1-506<sup>th</sup> PIR and then 1-9 IN Battalion. Acknowledged by many to have fired the most rounds and endured the greatest amount of enemy contact in the brigade in Ramadi, the Warlords worked tirelessly to support their infantry and Marine brethren and as a result, SPC Douglas Desjardins gave his "last full measure" as he was killed in action on 5 November 2006 in eastern Ramadi in direct contact with the enemy.



A large cache found north of Tal Afar on a Joint Patrol

'Cold Steel,' 3rd platoon, C CO

In February 2006, B/1-36 IN, "Warrior Company" took charge of the most violent area in Tal Afar assuming COP BWMRA from G Troop/2/3 ACR. Team Warrior immediately began aggressively patrolling both mounted and dismounted, finding dozens of caches. Throughout their tour in Tal Afar, Warrior Company executed several cordon and searches and conducted a 100% census of all civilians living in the area. They also emplaced the first ever Iraqi Police Patrol Base in Tal Afar at map designated location called AY 10 which was located at the nexus of three of the worst neighborhoods in Tal Afar and abutting a major wadi system that often housed enemy arms caches and offered concealed routes for the terrorists to move in. The partnership of Warrior Blue Platoon stationed at Fort Defiance and co-located with Hassan Qoi IP station had great and lasting effects on moving that IP station from being barely non-existent to independent operations by the time the Task Force departed in October 2006. On 7 April, a patrol from Warrior was engaged by insurgents with a hand grenade and small arms fire from a house in their area of operations. Immediately the patrol leader began engaging with small arms and crew served weapons and suppressed the location. Calling for the QRF, Team Warrior entered the house, and after a significant firefight, Team Warrior had killed the insurgent in his bunker with no loss of friendly troops. Due the actions of the Soldiers of Warrior, several of their Soldiers were decorated for valor to include a BSM-V for CPT McCusker and ARCOM-Vs for the accompanying US Special Warfare Navy EOD team. In June 2006, Warrior was detached to Ramadi in support of the Ready First Combat Team.



Above left: The Soldiers of Warrior get ready for Tal Afar. Above right: CPT McCusker receives his Bronze Star with Valor from MG Turner

A/2-3 FA "Assassin Battery" joined TF 2-37 AR in May, relieving B/1-36 IN, at COP BWMRA on the eastern side of Tal Afar and easily the most dangerous part of the city. Despite operating from the less armored platform of the HMMWV vs. Warrior's Bradleys, the Assassin's compensated by "flooding the zone" and patrolling every portion of their sector day

and night. After several early IED attacks in which some of the Assassins earned the Purple Heart but with none having to evacuate beyond Iraq, the Assassins proved to the enemy that they could and would dominate the sector. As a result of TF Duke being told to take over all of Western Nineveh (an area the size of New Jersey), the TF Commander re-tasked A/2-3 FA to FOB NIMR (Arabic for The Lion) at the base of the Sinjar Mountain which is also purportedly to be one of the possible landing sites for Noah's Ark and which does hold atop of it a famous Yemeni shrine. The Assassin's new mission was to provide partnership to the Iraqi Border Police, the Sinjar District Police, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> IA Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> ID Division as they all screened the Syrian border in order to deter/disrupt Al Qaeda "ratlines" of infiltration. In August, Assassin Battery took over the BDOC on Fob Sykes, controlling the entry control point, towers, and patrolling the perimeter to ensure security for the 3 task forces and civilians that lived on Fob Sykes.



Assassin Battery's change of Command

Assassin Battery's SKT in March

In February 2006, C/1-36IN, "Hard Rock" company relieved 2/3 ACR's engineer and infantry team at COP Mansion and immediately renamed it Hard Rock Café improving living and security conditions quickly and effectively. They attacked their sector with the same energy and in partnership with COL Loqueman of 2<sup>nd</sup> IA BN and the Sarai IP station, transformed what had been the main effort search area for the White Falcon battalion from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division into the most permissive area in all of Tal Afar with a record number of caches found and no CF injuries experienced in their first 5 months. In July 2006, when TF Duke had to expand operations to include all of Western Nineveh, Hard Rock assumed the area of operations of what had been Warrior and then Assassin's area of operations and brought their same aggressive dismounted patrolling approach to tame the neighborhoods of Hassan Qoi and Hai Al Salam. Hard Rock had incredible success in both the kinetic and non-kinetic operations, engaging the local leadership in civic proposals to help the people of Tal Afar. The leadership of Hard Rock worked hand in hand with the Iraqi Police in their sector, improving the security and infrastructure. To date, their find of a hidden room filled with over a thousand pounds of various explosives, military grade ordinance and weapons is the biggest cache ever found north of Baghdad during Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Above left: 2nd PLT, B CO, part of TM Hard Rock show money they uncovered in a raid in southeastern Tal Afar; Above right: A large cache found in Tal Afar by Charlie Company, 1-36 IN

In February 2006, C/16thEN "Charlie Rock" company took charge of a myriad of tasks in the Tal Afar, but most importantly helped ensure that CF would have freedom of movement throughout the city. The company helped achieve this by strategically emplacing obstacles along some routes, and fixing roads in other places. Trafficability became even more important as the fall months approached and through a careful analysis of drainage issues, the company ensured all living and armored vehicle staging areas were prepared more than adequately for the winter rainy season. In June 2006, Rock also took over route clearance operations in all of Western Nineveh with their A&O platoon operating the famous Buffalo vehicle as it moved throughout Tal Afar and Western Nineveh "interrogating" potential IEDs. As a result, MSRs Santa Fe, Reno, Naples, Daytona, and all routes leading up north towards Turkey and west towards Syria were patrolled 24/7 by the A&O platoon helping those routes to be the safest in all of Iraq. The expanded TF Duke AO also forced Rock to expand its



area of general engineering support from just Tal Afar to FOB NIMR at Sinjar, Sinjar Mountain RETRANS site, Kisik IA Division HQ, and Rabiya Port of Entry near Syria. Upon reaching Ramadi in late October 2006, 2/C/16 EN was detached to 1-9 IN BN in eastern Ramadi stationed at Camp Correigdor. One month after moving from Tal Afar to Ramadi, SSG Robert Love, Jr. was killed in action while securing routes near COP Eagle's Nest for his fellow Soldiers.

Below left: Rock 1st PLT takes a photo together at the Granary in Tal Afar Below right: LT Vandergoot gives a patrol brief to his route clearance team



HHC/2-37 AR, "Headhunter Company" and the Support platoon daily organized and conducted resupply convoys into sector despite traveling on the highest casualty Tier I IED sites in the brigade Area of operations. As the most forward deployed and widely dispersed combat battalion in the 101st Air Assault Division in northern Iraq, Task Force 2-37 required steady and reliable support from the established FOB twenty kilometers to our south. As a result, Headhunters served as the battalion command and control node on FOB Sykes, as the Battalion staff and leadership were forward deployed in the city of Tal Afar. The Headhunters ensured that key enablers such as the EOD, Tactical HUMINT, PSYOP, JTAC, and SF ODA teams remained integrated into the Task Force combat operations. On April 15, 2006, HHC ran the battalion's command and control site for the biggest cordon and search in the division's area of operations in three months that resulted in the capture of the #2 targeted insurgent in Western Nineveh Province, eventual Abu Gharib detention of 61 insurgents, discovery and destruction of over a dozen IED caches, and the screening of over 1200 military aged-males. Forward deployed in sector at the Granary, the Medic platoon at the battalion's forward aid station (and helipad) treated over 1000 patients during the battalion's tenure in Tal Afar to include dealing with over thirty mass casualty events of vehicle borne IEDs and suicide events that often killed or wounded 50-100 civilians at a time. The Mortars secured not only the TOC, but also the entire Castle compound which housed the seat of city government, the IP District HQ, and the IA BDE HQ; and for their last two months in Tal Afar, supported with indirect fires from Fort Tal Afar. The Scouts conducted operations from Avgani, Fort Tal Afar, and Fort Defiance in support of three different companies and the task force overall. Their missions included standard counterinsurgency operations of raids, cordon and searches, and patrols as well as sniper operations along Route Santa Fe resulting in at least one confirmed kill and defeat of an enemy IED cell vicinity of the Badoush Ammunition Supply Point.



Above left: Mortars wait in line to "congratulate" their newly promoted Mortar PL, CPT Fineran.

Above right: Duke 3, 5, 6, and 7 'on a mission' at FOB Sykes

As early as late January 2006, the Task Force leadership immediately and aggressively engaged local civic officials, tribal mullahs and sheiks, and mosque imams. These efforts served both to build strong relationships between the unit and

the local residents as well as to help assess the climate among the area's populace. Meanwhile, dedicated intelligence gathering and analysis activities provided the basis for dozens of precise intelligence-based cordon and search operations to detain targeted individuals and contraband.



Above left: The Battalion Recovery section says "If you get it stuck, we'll get you out...but you owe us a case of near beer!"

Above right: The Castle Crew takes a break for a photo op

On 25 May 2006, 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division was re-tasked to Area of operations Ramadi. TF 2-37 was reduced by two maneuver companies (B/1-36 IN and C/2-37 AR) and in place, received A/2-3 FA motorized. All other brigade elements departed. Over the next five months, 2-37 AR was officially attached to 172<sup>nd</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team from Fort Wainwright, Alaska and the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Air Assault Division from Fort Campbell, Kentucky and then in August, to 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division Stryker Brigade Combat Team from Fort Lewis, Washington and 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. TF No Mercy Aviation remained as did all of the Corps enablers. Operations from 13 FEB 2006 to 18 OCT 2006 had primarily been in the "build" phase of the MNF-I strategy of "Clear-Hold-Build." TF 2-37, however, continued with the build strategy and built along all lines of operation and in priority: (1) Iraqi Army development; (2) Iraqi Police development; and (3) Civil Military Operations. In order to support these three lines of operation, TF 2-37 used Information Operations and Combat Operations to create an environment that allowed for continued progress. From Feb to May 2006, TF 2-37 conducted several clear missions based on intelligence in order to continue to demonstrate to the AIF that even though 3rd ACR had departed, the coalition forces' commitment to the city's security and its progress remained the same. In the first three months, every neighborhood in Tal Afar was cordoned and searched north of Routes Chevelle-Barracuda. Based on intelligence and historical settlement patterns these were the AIF support zone. To the south were the Shia dominated areas and intelligence did not indicate any AIF presence. Moreover, the Shia were clearly pro-coalition forces in terms of incredibly permissive operating areas and as a source for intelligence. TF 2-37 AR also conducted several raids in the outlying areas to include a 12 March 2006 TF (-) air assault on the city of Sheik Ibrahim in order to disrupt enemy bed-down operations in that small rural village. Perhaps the greatest accomplishment in Tal Afar was the stabilization of the Hai Al Saad neighborhood in northeast Tal Afar. From summer 2004 to April 2006, ten COALITION FORCES Soldiers died in this neighborhood due to enemy initiated actions (usually IEDs). B/2-37 AR (Team Battle) took a very deliberate approach to this neighborhood: (1) clearing; (2) installment of coalition forces Patrol Base; (3) installment of IP Patrol Base; (4) reorganization of IA Patrol Bases; (5) resettlement of Shia families; (6) CMO projects to include a water well and refurbishment of schools; (7) installment of a neighborhood council; (8) retrograde of the coalition forces Patrol Base to publicly demonstrate the effectiveness and independence of the IP and to a lesser extent the IA; and then (9) installment of a major IP station under the control of a IP LTC (LTC Ali). From 15 May 2006 until October 2006, there had been no major enemy significant activities in this neighborhood and the population in that neighborhood has been reestablished to pre-OIF levels: 50% Shia and 50% Sunni.

From June to September 2006 and with a significant activity rate reduced to 1 per day (the lowest in Tal Afar since summer 2004), TF 2-37 focused heavily on IA, IP, and CMO development. Specifically, the goal to put Brigadier General Qias and 2/3 IA BDE and 1/1/3 IA BN (stationed at Fort Tal Afar) in the lead was critical to ensure the city could eventually stand on its own security forces. On 17 October 2006, 2/3 IA BDE took the lead for security in Tal Afar and on 30 September 2006, 1/1/3 IA BN took the lead in their area of operations. IP development, although always progressing, has been delayed due to lack of logistical support from the Ministry of Interior and lack of personnel (especially assignment of new officers) support from the Ministry of Interior. Nonetheless, TF 2-37 was able to open three major IP stations bringing the total to eight in the city and establish 10 Iraqi Police patrol bases. Perhaps the greatest success of the task force was the close partnership with the city's municipal leader, Mayor Najim Al Jabourri. Between him and LTC



Tien, the Task Force Commander, they led the city through a rebuilding phase that concluded with fresh water being available to all citizens, all schools remaining opened, an operating city council, an operating city courts system, unemployment down to almost 65%, and a city almost free of terrorist presence. In all, TF 2-37 AR was able to bring in over \$10 million in reconstruction funds for the great city of Tal Afar and its citizens.

On 18 October 2006, LTG Chiarelli, MNC-I Corps Commander, re-tasked the Iron Dukes from Tal Afar to Ramadi to rejoin the Ready First Brigade Combat Team who were then serving under the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force from Camp Pendleton, California. And on 6 November 2006, the Iron Dukes assumed control of the area of operations just north of Ramadi and the Euphrates River. For the next four months, the Iron Dukes patrolled their area of operations, defeating anti-Iraqi forces, disabling IEDs, and building infrastructure through civil military affairs projects. C/2-37 AR remained detached to 1-9 IN BN at Camp Correigdor where they were joined in November by 2/C/16 EN platoon. 3/A/2-37 AR BN platoon was also detached in November as the heavy quick reaction tank force in support of the 1/6 Marine Infantry Battalion located at Hurricane Point in west Ramadi. The Dukes' new area of operations, known as Jazeerah, contained a mixture of terrain ranging from dense urban neighborhoods to sprawling rural plots of land. Like Vietnam, there were criss-crossing irrigation canals making mounted movements almost impossible and dismounted movements through muddy farm paddies difficult and challenging. Nonetheless, TF Duke was able to not only secure their new area of operations, but in less than four months transform it into one of the safest areas in all of the OIF theater for not only CF and ISF, but also the civilian population who in turn, rewarded the task force with a wealth of useful human intelligence as well as providing their sons to the IP forces. Additionally, through an aggressive civil-military operations program, the Dukes were able to inject \$3 million into the area and start a small business center, an adult literacy program, an internet center, a public library, and the Jazeerah municipal council. Perhaps their crowning achievement was the establishment of six new Iraqi Police and Emergency Response Battalion bases that helped the local Iraqi men stand up to the terrorists and secure their own neighborhoods. Of all of those stations, the Hamdiyah Iraqi Police Force became the center of gravity and the shining example to its neighboring tribes who had been intimidated for the past three years by Al Qaeda insurgents. Within 45 days of helping the Albu Fahad tribe secure their Hamdiyah neighborhood, their local sheik, Sheik Jabbar, and his force of 170 policemen had transformed their area into one of the most secure areas in all of greater Ramadi. For the first time in three years, Coalition Force vehicles could now travel unimpeded and without fear of an IED strike fifty kilometers along the road that ran north of the Euphrates River known as Route Fiat/Duster and also the major highway known as MSR Mobile. Partnering with over 1800 Iraqi Policemen and ten Iraqi Police stations to include Jazeerah and Faraj stations where two of their platoons were forward positioned, A/2-3 FA executed Police Training Team missions often patrolling alongside of them during SAF and IED contacts with the enemy. Operating in the C-Lake area and out of the forward deployed COP ANVIL in the west, B/2-37 AR partnered with the Shaban Tribe IP force and raided several areas resulting in the capture of at least three top ten high valued targets and denying the enemy the opportunity to have a safe haven in the west. In the center of the sector at forward deployed COP AGGRESSOR, C/16 EN took on the maneuver company mission of disrupting Al Qaeda infiltration from the infamous Lake Thar Thar region from north to south as well as being the key maneuver asset to help stand up and then fully develop the Hamdiyah Iraqi Police force. Operating in the far east at WARRIOR STRONGPOINT, C/1-36 IN was the main effort company and provided the secure flank needed for the people in the east to eventually feel secure enough to not only stand up to the insurgents in Hamdiyah but also the previously very dangerous area in the Albu Obaid tribal area. Additionally, Hard Rock had to deal with the most dangerous routes in to their outpost and while securing their lines of resupply and local security, defeated the enemy in several direct fire engagements using all weapon systems available to include tank main gun and BFV 25 mm chain gun ammunition. Spanning the entire sector, A/2-37 AR secured the main MSR, MSR Mobile, along a six-lane east-west running highway using a series of fixed OP's, 24/7 patrolling, and a number of ambush sites. Responsible for 50 kilometers of road, the Aggressors along with direct support from the Task Force Scouts and Mortars effectively denied the enemy any ability to target or destroy CF or ISF vehicles. Operating out of Firebase Dragon, the Mortars also provided over a hundred indirect fire missions, firing both high explosive and illumination rounds in support of troops in contact. HHC and the Support Platoon continued to provide extended logistic and daily support to five company sized COP's as well as being in charge of base defense operations at Camp Blue Diamond. Blue Diamond, named after the original Marine Division HQ that was once housed there, contained several tenant units to include the 7<sup>th</sup> IA Division HQ, the Al Anbar Provincial Police HQ, USMC Team 3 of the 4<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs Group, and several smaller USMC and Army units. At the task force level, the TF leadership led by the TF Commander and the TF S3, MAJ Wawrzyniak, for security operations and the TF XO, MAJ Callis, for civil-military operations exponentially increased the outreach to the local area sheiks which helped ensure a true representation and support across the breadth of the AO and ultimately helped win the real victory in the OIF counterinsurgency fight: security and stability for the people.



Above left: "Merry Christmas" from Battle Company at COP ANVIL;

Above right: Aggressor Company dominates MSR MOBILE;



Above left: Dec 31, 2006 - "Happy New Year's" from the Commanders of TF Duke at the TOC. Above right: TF 2-37 AR BN Scout Platoon after a long patrol.



Above left: Rock 6 briefs Ready 6 on BAE Roller at Hamdiyah;

Above right: Hard Rock out in force in Hamdiyah