



## *Alphas in Iraq*

*By: Kathy Taylor Dejoie and LTC Ivery Taylor*

These men are the Soldiers of the 13<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) mostly from Fort Hood, Texas commanded by Brigadier General Michael J. Terry. Their mission is to provide combat service support to over 200,000 Soldiers throughout Iraq. They are a small part of the 20,000 Soldiers providing logistical support which sustains the troops.



*Front: Major(P) Harlan Ware (Edinboro University of Pennsylvania), Lt. Shan Bagby (University of Pittsburg), Lt. Ivery Taylor (Paul Quinn College), SPC George Irby (Hampton University), 1LT Christopher Mark (Lincoln University)  
Back: Captain Perry M. Jarmon (University of North Alabama), Captain Michael Shaw (Mississippi Valley State), Major James Martin (McDaniel College), Captain James Word (Middle Tennessee State University), LTC Tracy Brown (Alcorn State University)*

About four years ago, **James Amps** took up the sport of golf as a means to de-stress and to increase networking opportunities with potential participants for his project, [A.M.P.S. Entrepreneurship/Leadership Institute](#). The Institute organizes retreats and workshops where teenagers, adults, teachers, youth leaders and parents are partnered with community and business leaders who, over the course of the event, are equipped with financial and leadership development tools which they can carry with them throughout their lives.

Last year, Amps began playing in South Florida with the **T&T Group**. Led by President **Larry Hall**, the group is comprised of retired and active military personnel, band leaders, educators, consultants and administrators. Among them was **Lt. Colonel Ivery Taylor**, who is currently stationed in Iraq. (pictured at right are President of T&T Larry Hall, James Amps III and Major General James W. Monroe (ret) Photo by



*Dalhou Johnson Studios)*

A member of **Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity**, LTC Taylor soon learned that nine other soldiers in the 13<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) were Alphas as well. To pull them all together, 1LT Christopher Mark sent an email inviting all the Alphas to meet for Sunday Dinner. According to LTC Taylor, "Hard times make one search for common ground. We began to search each other out and as a result, we Alphas now meet weekly for dinner and fellowship. It helps us deal with the rigors of family separation and war."

**A message from James W. Monroe  
Major General, U.S. Army (Ret)**

"As our Black brothers and sisters helped build the United States of America as slaves, we as Black Americans have continued to be the backbone of our country's progress throughout history whether we've agreed with the process or not. That's what we do as a strong culture and race. In spite of all of the alternatives, our soldiers serving in Iraq continue serving and building our country with honor and with pride. And for that, we are proud and grateful."

"To my young brothers and great Alpha Phi Alpha men, keep up the tradition. May God continue to be in your winds..." (MG James W. Monroe (Ret), an Omega man, 1960)

Respectfully,

James W. Monroe  
Major General  
U.S. Army (Ret)

*Monroe served as Brigadier General in Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990/1991. He served in Saudi, Kuwait and Iraq as the U.S. Army's Logistic Planner for the entire U.S. Army war effort in the area. He retired with the rank of Major General in 1998*

As we celebrate Black History Month, we must acknowledge the contributions of the African-American soldiers who participated in every major campaign our nation has ever fought. Despite having played a vital role in birthing this nation, history glosses over their accomplishments. From the Buffalo Soldiers and the Tuskegee Airmen, to the Soldiers of the 13<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Command, Black men and women soldiers are still shaping America's future.

Stationed in Balad, Iraq on Life Support Area ANANCONDA, is the 13<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) from Fort Hood, Texas, whose mission is to sustain a fighting force of a few hundred thousand soldiers throughout Iraq to include coalition forces. Said LTC Taylor, "OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) is a long fight that we will win. History may overlook us, and there may not be much written about us. But we want Black America to know we are here, and you can be proud of us."

These soldiers seek neither fame, fortune nor special recognition. They, in the words of LTC Taylor, "are not only proud of our African-American legacy, but are deeply devoted to duty and selfless service. We are also bound by another fact; and that is we are all members of **Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity**."

After being introduced to Lt. Colonel Taylor via email, I soon began corresponding with the other soldiers of the 13th Sustainment Command while working on this story, which initially focused on the fraternity. After weeks of "talking" via email, I gained a new level of respect and admiration for, not only these proud members of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, but for all our soldiers serving in Iraq. Communicating

with these men, some of whom are not much older than my own sons, shifted my view of them from "soldiers on a mission" to sons, brothers, nephews, dads and cousins. I enjoyed my many emails with them, and in fact, rushed to check my email daily, hoping for a new message from one of them. I have enjoyed working on this story, and am extremely proud of each and every one of my new friends – the very brave **Alphas in Iraq**.



**Lieutenant Colonel Shan Kevin Bagby**, *Commander of the 561st Medical Company – a dental services unit based in Germany. He is a career active duty (full-time) army officer and board-certified oral and maxillofacial surgeon. He is from Newark, New Jersey*

**BC:** *Tell us a little about yourself.*

I earned my Bachelor's degree in physics from Rutgers University in 1989, and dental degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1993. I completed residency training in oral and maxillofacial surgery (OMFS) at MLK Jr/Drew Medical Center in Los Angeles, CA in 1997. I completed a fellowship in maxillofacial trauma surgery at the University of Texas Health Sciences Center at Houston in 2002, in between teaching and staff assignments at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC and Brooke Army Medical Center in Texas. I have had a fun career so far and wouldn't change a thing.

I have a wonderful and supportive wife of 14 years. She is a successful attorney and we have a two-year-old daughter. My hobbies include auto repair and music.

**BC:** *What made you the join the military?*

My father and older brothers served so it seemed like a natural choice growing up. Finances were very tight, so I attended college on an Army ROTC scholarship. After graduation from college and receiving a commission, I served in the reserves while completing dental school and residency. I volunteered for active duty service because I found within the army a diverse group of honest, hard working and like-minded people focused on a common purpose. That really appealed to me and still does. I have enjoyed my time in the army immensely.

**BC:** *Do you feel a sense of accomplishment in what you're doing? How so?*

Yes, I feel a sense of accomplishment in my work. As a commander, every day I am charged with making decisions that potentially affect people's well-being. As a clinician and soldier, I enjoy having the opportunity to help improve the lives of the soldiers, accomplish the army's mission and preserve our country's freedom. I don't know another job that would provide the same sense of satisfaction. As an oral and maxillofacial surgeon I enjoy the group practice aspect of my

clinical specialty.

**BC:** *What about the loved ones you left behind? Are you getting a lot of support from home?*

My wife and I communicate in some form almost daily. We have always led busy lives but work very hard to put our relationship, our daughter and God at the center. I could not ask for a more supportive family.

**BC:** *What lessons have you learned in Iraq that you will carry with you always?*

- 1) You don't need a lot to be content, and sometimes the less "stuff" you have the happier you are - so keep life simple.
- 2) We in the West consume more than our fair share of natural resources and the global effect is politically, socially and economically tangible.
- 3) As you go higher on the food chain, the call for moral courage is ubiquitous while physical courage becomes secondary. At the highest levels of management, the ability to make solid arguments and defend positions seems to win more battles than does intimidation.

**BC:** *What can we do to show our support?*

You're doing it now. Thank you for pursuing a story about the brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha here in Iraq.

**BC:** *Do you have a message for your young Alpha brothers back home?*

Take advantage of the freedoms we enjoy in the US by exploiting the opportunity to do well in life. When we achieve we honor our ancestors and our community and provide strength to those who follow. Go as far as you can in school. Education is a privilege reserved only for the wealthy in most countries, but is quite obtainable in the US. Live by example and always do what is right even if (you think) nobody's watching.

Look beyond the popular, the fashionable and the immediate. Most of all, turn off the television – it's all just pabulum. Always question why things happen, rather than simply accepting that they do. As you learn to question, new possibilities will present themselves that you didn't expect. Excellence is a journey, not a destination.



**Lieutenant Tracy Brown** of Monticello, MS played football and ran track while at Monticello High School. Lt. Brown enrolled in Alcorn State University, where he says his life was changed forever. He pledged Alpha in the spring of 1988 while enrolled at Alcorn State, and has met great brothers all over the world. Says Lieutenant Brown, "No matter where I go I can always find an Alphan!"

**BC:** *What made you the join the military?*

I joined the military after college for the money, and because it was fast way for me to find employment. Now, however, it is not about the money; I do it because I want my family and all Americans to have freedom.

**BC:** *Do you feel a sense of accomplishment in what you're doing in Iraq? How so?*

I believe we are fighting for groups of people who have been living in fear all of their lives. Yes, there are people who still believe in a dictatorship style of leadership, however; I think they are the only ones reaping the benefits of that type of leadership. We are fighting to give the less fortunate an opportunity to voice their opinions.

**BC:** *Is there anything you need – something we can send to help make life easier there?*

If you have something that can stop the violence here, send it ASAP.

*Do you have a message for your young Alpha brothers back home?*

My message to my Alpha brothers back home is to continue to live up to the Alpha principles of "**Manly Deeds, Scholarship and Love for All Mankind.**"



**1LT Christopher Mark** grew up in New Orleans, LA. He attended Lincoln University in Jefferson City, MO, and was in the marine corps for twelve years before receiving his commission in the army. He is the proud father of three sons.

**BC:** *What made you the join the military?*

I first joined the military as a promise to my grandfather. I remember as a kid, him teaching me drill movements that he had learned while serving in World War II.

**BC:** *What do you want to say to the loved ones you left behind?*

Grammy Time! First I would like to thank God, because without Him this wouldn't be possible. I want to thank my mom for being there for me even when I was out of control. To my kids; I love you, and stop showing out because I am not around! I won't be in Iraq forever. To all my church family and

friends; I love you all. Thanks for all of the support and to those who are not supporting, you need to get it together. Love you all.

**BC:** *Have you begun doing things as a group that are not war-related? What?*

I have spearheaded an event called "Just Came Here to Chill." The event is held on the Sundays when we are not having dinner and consists of open mic poetry, jazz, and old school R&B music. The purpose is to give soldiers a chance to relax and talk about whatever is on their minds. I find this helps the soldiers deal with the stresses of war.

**BC:** *How else do you support one another?*

We support each other by standing in as family. Having someone you are familiar with when times get rough helps us to cope with the stresses of being away from family. I, personally, look to the older brothers for mentorship. If I am having problems, I go to one of my brothers for advice.

**BC:** *What do you miss most about home?*

Besides family I miss not being able to wake up in the middle of the night and walk to the bathroom without having to get completely dressed and walking 100 yards.

**BC:** *What can we do to show our support?*

Just don't forget us. Even if you may not agree with the war.

**BC:** *Is there anything you need – something we can send to help make life easier there?*

It would be nice to receive some of the latest movies like "Stomp the Yard," and other African-American films.

**BC:** *If I could send you one thing, what would it be and why?*

I would love some Tyler Perry Plays. No matter what, something is always done or said in his plays that make me laugh.

**BC:** *Do you have a message for your young Alpha brothers back home?*

No matter where you are you can always let the light of Alpha shine.



**Captain Michael Shaw** is from Milwaukee, WI. He attended Mississippi Valley State University. He enjoys bowling, basketball, and spending time with family. He is married to Margetta Shaw (formerly Webster) and is the father of twins – a boy and girl.

**BC:** *What made you the join the military?*

A childhood friend joined and talked me into it. I thought that it would be a good idea.

**BC:** *What about the loved ones you left behind? Are you getting a lot of support from home?*

I really miss my family, but I think that this time helps us grow indirectly. I had the opportunity to visit my family during Christmas; it went really fast, but it was a good time.

**BC:** *How do you feel about their mission in Iraq?*

It's a mission that we have to accomplish

**BC:** *Who's taken the lead as the "big brother"?*

We all are big brothers but Harlan Ware is like the gate keeper.



**Lieutenant Colonel Ivery J. Taylor** is from Waco, Texas. He is a graduate of Paul Quinn College, with a BS in accounting. He has been married for 23 years, and has two children in college. His hobbies include golf, fishing, writing, sports, and designing leather jackets.

**BC:** *What made you join the military?*

I joined the military for two reasons. First, I wanted to continue my education and second, I wanted to travel. As for my travels, I have experienced many different cultures. I have been to Japan, Germany, Poland, Ireland, Ukraine, Kosovo, Turkey and now Iraq. I knew there was much more under God's creation than Texas and I wanted to expose myself to it. For that, I am very grateful to the Army.

**BC:** *Do you feel a sense of accomplishment in what you're doing? How so?*

I enlisted in the Army in 1983 as a Private First Class and have served almost 24 years. I still feel I am making a vital contribution, and if I did not feel this way I could have retired after 20 years. As an adjutant general corps officer, I touch not only the lives of my soldiers but also their families. Every soldier who comes through my door is a customer who I served with enthusiasm.

However, I am a soldier first, and there is a national objective here to reduce the sectarian violence, stabilize the country and ensure a strong Iraqi government is in control. I am helping to bring peace to a people where there has not always been peace. I am reminded of a passage in the Bible, "Blessed are the peacemakers—for they shall be called the children of God."

**BC: When do you expect to return?**

Whenever a soldier deploys it is never certain when or if we will return. Currently, my unit came for a one-year deployment. We do not deploy looking for a return date. And if you watch the clock, you make the deployment worse. We deploy with a specific mission in mind. We will stay until mission completion or properly relieved.

**BC: How do you feel about the mission in Iraq?**

I am a soldier with a mission and failure does not enter my mind. We are bringing freedom to a country that has not experienced it in quite a while. The media focuses so much on the negative aspects such as the number of soldiers deaths or have been injured. Every soldier, sailor, airman, marine, or coast guardsman is a volunteer. There are so many positive things the soldiers do such as construction projects, provide medical and dental care to people who really need it and assisting in establishing the infrastructure. The Iraqi people deserve to have the chance to become a self-sustaining government. It has been said so many times that "freedom is not free." No one knows this more than soldiers and their families, especially those who have lost loved ones. Look how long it took the Cold War to end and we still have soldiers in Korea. Anyone who tries to put a clock or date on freedom is fooling themselves. We have to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people. Once we have done that, there will be a significant decrease in the sectarian violence. It will not be the US military that stops the violence; it will be the Iraqis themselves. However, we will do whatever we can to prevent Civil War. The irony of the matter is America had a Civil War so we know first-hand how devastating it can be. **Mission Impossible—No; Difficult—Yes; Worth It—Hell Yes.**

**BC: How did you guys hook up?**

A few of the brothers (Captain Shaw and First Lieutenant (1LT) Mark) already knew each other and have been in the unit longer than me and a few others. So 1LT Mark sent an email with a flyer asking for all Alphas to meet for Sunday Dinner. We then started searching for other Alphas on Balad and we grew from there.

**BC: How did the word spread that there were so many Alphas in the house?**

I don't think there are many Alphas here. We started asking questions whenever we met. Since we are a small group we have invited other Greeks to meet with us on other occasions such as Poetry Night. The other frats are represented as well as some sororities. During our 100<sup>th</sup> Year Celebration of Alpha, the other Greeks participated too.

**BC: Do you hold meetings?**

Our work days are intense and we work 7 days a week. We do not have formal meetings as our operational tempo does not allow it. The average work day is 12 hours long and that is a good day. The Alphas host a poetry night as I previously mentioned, bi-weekly on Sundays. Sundays are usually a little slower than the other days. On Sundays when there is no poetry night, the Alphas meet for Sunday Dinner at 1906 hours (7:06 pm).

**BC: Have you begun doing things as a group that are not war-related?**

Recently, we participated in the Christmas Program for the church. I was the master of ceremonies. 1LT Mark is the choir director for our Sunday gospel service. And of course, there is poetry night.

**BC: How do you support one another?**

We use Sunday Dinner as a way to listen, mentor and support each other. It is all good. When we meet for Sunday Dinner, we take off the rank. We come together as Alphas and brothers. For about 2 hours we try to forget the war. The bottom-line is if need be I would risk my life for any one of them. If anyone starts complaining too much, I tell them to go visit the base hospital.

**BC: What do you miss more about home?**

This one is easy. I miss family, friends and golf. I miss Friday night high school football games. I even miss stupid TV commercials and I can't believe I'm saying this—MTV. Everything here is military even the commercials. My joke is I want to play golf on a course that has no sand traps. I have seen enough sand to last me the rest of my days.

**BC: What lessons have you learned in Iraq that you will carry with you always?**

The lesson I will always carry with me is that in bad times you can see the best in people.

**A LETTER HOME**

Dear Mrs. Jones,

I sit here with a heavy heart  
I'm at a loss for words  
For I don't know where to start

There are no words I can write in this letter  
To ease your pain  
Or make you feel better

I am writing about your son, Johnny  
A member of my command  
I remember the day he arrived  
Not a boy and not yet a man

Some of the guys teased him  
On the way he walked  
I chuckled myself  
The first time I heard him talk

Johnny did not care  
And he took it all in stride  
Deep down I knew he was laughing too  
But at us on the inside

I remember the day  
Johnny earned his stripes  
We were out on a mission  
And there was An IED strike

Two hundred meters to our left  
Where the ground was much higher  
Our patrol was hailed with small arms fire

Johnny manned a machine gun  
And amidst all the strife  
He gallantly fought back the enemy  
And he even saved my life

It was a proud day when the general  
Pinned a medal on his chest  
He received a medal for valor  
Signifying the army's best

Johnny never stood taller  
When he walked with his friends  
And when he shouted "Hooah"  
We all had to grin

It wasn't long after that  
I think it was soon  
I made the right decision  
And gave Johnny his own platoon

It was amazing in this foreign land  
I witnessed a miracle before my eyes  
A boy becoming a man

He led from the front  
And demanded to take the lead  
He told me once that he'd never give an  
order  
He himself would not heed

We received the order  
To conduct a routine mission  
We did our combat checks  
And passed out ammunition

We had not been out long  
In vicinity of truck 3  
I heard a frantic scream  
IED...IED!

I got to the front vehicle  
Through the blowing sand  
And there lay a soldier

I have seen how life can be taken in a blink of an eye. I receive the casualty reports of kids younger than my son who will never see the age of 20. My lesson is, live for today for tomorrow is not promised to any of us. I will remember my Alpha Brothers in combat and how we bonded. And I learned no matter what title you use—Allah, Jehovah, or Jesus—we are all praying to the same God. Stay in prayer not only for our soldiers but for the Iraqi people.

**BC:** *What can we do to show our support?*

I think you are doing it by allowing this article in your magazine. If I were king for a day, I would ensure every service member received some sort of benefit for serving this country. It could be something as simple as reduced taxes on their property, free college tuition or reduced interest bearing loans. If a parent was killed while serving this country, then his/her children should receive a free college education, and the spouse's mortgage should be paid-off.

I attended a ceremony a few years ago while assigned to US SOUTHERN COMMAND in Miami, FL. Governor Jeb Bush visited our command that day. On this day, he recognized the families who had lost loved-ones in this war. He awarded full scholarships to the surviving children. I saw a two-year-old receive a full scholarship to college when she reached the appropriate age. It would be such a blessing if America did this for all families who have lost loved ones. I see the TV commercials which say, "America Supports You." A wise man once said, "Action speaks louder than words." Governor Bush took action. Of course, this was not front page news. This was something positive. So support us because "All Gave Some but Some Gave All."

**BC:** *Is there anything you need—something we can send to help make life easier there?*

All I ask for is your prayers to keep the soldiers safe. AAFES has done very well in meeting the needs of African-American soldiers. However, send us a few copies of the magazine: c/o LTC Ivery J. Taylor, HHC, 13<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), APO AE 09391.

**BC:** *If I could send you one thing, what would it be and why?*

Wow, I have always put my soldiers first. Ms. Kathy, if God would allow me to be selfish for just a few moments and say the impossible. I would like to have a conversation with my mother (deceased 1989). I would tell her I try to live as she taught me. I would tell her that I think about her daily and I will never get over her passing because I was not there. I would tell her how much I still love her and thank her for putting me on the right path. It is her voice that calms me when danger is near. I would want to thank her teaching me how to be a leader and follower. You can't be one without the other. I would tell her, "Mama, I hope you are proud of me."

**BC:** *Do you have a message for your young Alpha brothers back home?*

Yes, to the Men of Distinction—Uphold the light for all to see. Yours is an honors fraternity. The Alpha legacy is great and so are You. We the men and soldiers of Alpha salute--You.

Not a boy  
And not yet a man

There is much I could tell you  
But a piece of me too has gone  
It's my unpleasant duty to inform you  
Your Johnny is coming home

Sincerely,  
Johnny's Commander 1-34 BCT

*Inspired by the death of every Soldier,  
Sailor, Airman  
and Marine who died in Iraq.*

By: LTC I.J. Taylor  
1 NOV 06 Balad, Iraq



**Harlan T. Ware** was born and raised in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, and graduated from Edinboro University. He played four years of college football and received a bachelor's degree in Speech Communications. He's been married for eighteen years to Crystal Rhae Ware, and they have a nine-year-old daughter, Madison Mckenzie. Lieutenant Colonel Ware was initiated into Alpha Phi Alpha in the Spring of 1985 and holds life membership status. In his spare time he enjoys reading and fishing. He served in the first Gulf War and is on his second back-to-back tour, having served over 18 consecutive months so far in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

**BC:** *What made you join the military?*

"First of all I want to thank you so much for taking the time to write about us. Your efforts rejuvenate my faith that people have not forgotten about us. I joined the military because I wanted to serve our country and hone my leadership skills.

**BC:** *Do you feel a sense of accomplishment in what you're doing? How so?*

My military specialty is Transportation and Logistics and I have been involved in moving thousands of trucks hauling cargo throughout Iraq. My sense of accomplishment lies in knowing that I got the supplies that the war fighters needed.

**BC:** *How do you feel about the mission in Iraq?*

As a soldier I reserve the right to make comments on the mission in Iraq, I support my chain of command and keep my personal feelings to myself.

**BC:** *How did you guys hook up?*

As Alpha men we all have similar character traits that are easily identified by our attitude and the way we carry ourselves in public.

**BC:** *What do you miss most about home?*

I miss cooking. At my home I do most of the cooking for the household.

**BC:** *What can we do to show our support?*

If you see a soldier in uniform simply walk up to him or her and say, "thank you for your service to our country."

**BC:** *Is there anything you need – something we can send to help make life easier there?*

I have everything I need, we get care packages all of the time and most soldiers share everything they get with others. You could send me trail mix, I really like it.

**BC:** *Do you have a message for your young Alpha brothers back home?*

To my brothers back home, continue to hold Alpha high.



**James Eric Word**, who prefers to go by "Eric," grew up in Hermitage, Tennessee. He holds a degree in Psychology with minors in Social Work and Military Science from Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). Captain Word pledged Alpha at the Kappa Xi Chapter at MTSU in 2001. A 25-year-old bachelor, Captain Word enjoys riding his motorcycle, going out, traveling with friends, and sports.

**BC:** *What made you the join the military?*

I joined the military because I wanted to use it as a potential resume' builder, and as a potential career opportunity immediately following college.

**BC:** *Do you feel a sense of accomplishment in what you're doing? How so?*

I personally feel a great sense of accomplishment. I have had the opportunity to travel throughout the U.S. for leisure and mission, have lived in different states and cities, have led men and women in garrison and in combat operations, and have lived through events and situations that future generations will read about in history books. I have gained an appreciation for what I, and others in uniform, have done and know that we have accomplished things most only see on television, in movies, or in video games.

**BC:** *What about the loved ones you left behind? Are you getting a lot of support from home?*

My support from my family is exceptional. I think about them often and don't want them to worry. They know the nature of my work and after my first deployment, they've gotten a little more used to the fact that I'm deployed and may get deployed again. My situation is a little easier than others given the fact I'm not married nor do I have children. It's easier for me to pick up and move out than others with those familial obligations.

**BC:** *How do you feel about the mission in Iraq?*

I would prefer to keep my specific personal feeling about Iraq to myself. Overall, I try to focus on my mission and how it affects my people and the people associated with our mission. I know that each soldier plays a part in the larger scheme of things and we all have to accomplish our mission so that we all can get home safely.

**BC:** *How did the word spread that there were so many Alphas in the house?*

The word spread through general conversation with associates and other brothers. A standard question asked between many African-American officers is "did you pledge in school" or "are you Greek?" Even if you don't run into a brother, the person you're speaking to may know one and direct you to him. Additionally, we've organized a biweekly event here and have Alpha on the advertisements. That was a more direct way of attracting the attention of brothers.

**BC:** *How do you support one another?*

We support each other simply by being brothers in Alpha and internalizing what that means.

**BC:** *What do you miss most about home?*

Mainly I miss my family and being with friends. Also, I miss the simple things such as indoor plumbing, having a weekend, wearing civilian clothes, food choices, and other such things. It's nothing so earth shattering that I daydream about being home daily, but I do miss many such things none the less. On my previous deployment I was involved in more direct combat operations. My personal opinion is that soldiers in combat sometimes miss different things than soldiers that mainly stay on post. Moreover, the stress is different. This deployment, I'm more in tune with the garrison soldier's concerns and stresses than in the past.

**BC:** *What lessons have you learned in Iraq that you will carry with you always?*

I've learned most people back at home will never be able to do anything close to what we've done over here or experience what we've experienced. We've had the opportunity to work with extraordinary people and do extraordinary things. No matter how this chapter is written in the history books, we'll be a part of it. We are making history. I've also learned how to make the tough decision and not to fear being in front.

**BC:** *What can we do to show our support?*

I never really know how to answer this question. If I had to say something, I would say vote, educate yourself, become

active, and know that even with all the things that are happening in our country, we still live in the greatest one in the world. Appreciate that and take advantage of all the opportunities others have sacrificed for because most will never know what the cost really was and is.

**BC:** *Is there anything you need – something we can send to help make life easier there?*

Personally I don't need too much of anything. I can say that even the hardest soldier over here appreciates a hand written letter specifically addressed to him/her even if it's from someone they don't even know.

**BC:** *If I could send you one thing, what would it be and why?*

I would like a copy of the Magazine. It would be nice to see our words in print.

**BC:** *Do you have a message for your young Alpha brothers back home?*

Brothers, you are members of the greatest fraternity in the world. You all are leaders, scholars, and strong men. You have what it takes to change the world for the better. Change is not always an easy thing to cause or to accept, but it may only take one act to start it all off. Don't look for others to act, you must take the lead and act first. With that one show of leadership and initiative, others will fall in place and your dream for something different will grow into something great. We acted first in creating a fraternity and look what's grown from that great idea. Many of our distinguished brothers were the first to act and now we read about them in history books, study their words, honor them throughout the year, and continue to march on with their ideas. You all are history makers, you are leaders of men, and you are Alpha. In you rests the future of our fraternity and our country.



*Note: SPC Irby has completed his tour of duty and is now back home in the states. MAJ Martin was on Rest and Recuperation (R&R) Leave at the time of the interview and was unavailable for comment. We wish them well!*

The men love receiving letters, postcards, and treats from home. Please write to them in care of:

LTC Ivery J. Taylor, HHC

13<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)

APO AE 09391



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