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Galva Guardsmen featured on CNN special

By DAVE CLARKE Regional Coordinator

CAMP VICTORY NORTH, Baghdad, Iraq -- Two members of Battery F, 202nd Air Defense Artillery of the Illinois National Guard were recently featured on CNN. The news special by CNN correspondent Anderson Cooper aired on Thursday, June 24, and focused on a day in the life of a particular unit as the U.S.-led coalition prepared to hand over the government to the Iraqis.

Cooper accompanied the Galva unit's third platoon and included comments from commander Maj. Michael Kessel and Sgt. Ryan Peterson of LaFayette, who recounted an ambush he experienced in April, telling CNN "You see the guys pop up with the RPGs as I was trying to reload. That was probably the most scary moment." By comparison, Peterson and others pointed out that patrols are now often boring.

Maj. Kessel talked about being accompanied by Cooper and the CNN crew, and the level of activity following the transfer of government to the Iraqis on June 28 in his weekly report from Iraq.

Greetings from FREE BAGHDAD,

Well the Transfer of Sovereignty has taken place and, so far, the new government appears to have little or no resistance. Yesterday was surprisingly quiet, today is a little more active than yesterday, but nothing is like we were expecting. At least not yet.

Many of the Iraqis in our zones appear to be very happy that they are now in control, but we have been

telling them that with the freedom comes a lot of responsibility. Prayfully, we hope that everything will just continue to get better for the people.

We are continuing our missions as before, conducting patrols 24/7, but most of our civil-military projects have been given a rest for a week, so we can use the combat power to protect the government if we need to.

On the CNN piece, soldiers from F/202 ADA were featured on Anderson Cooper's "360" special leading up to the handover in Baghdad. Cooper spent several hours with the patrol on a water mission. They had a chance to talk to the soldiers and get a feel for what we are doing.

Incidentally, we were the only unit Cooper was going to be visiting while he is here. The rest were CPA, military, and Iraqi Interim Government officials.

The piece aired on Thursday night before we were even aware, so that is why there was no warning out about it.

We do water missions about four times a week to a couple of different villages. The water buffalo holds 400 gallons of water. It is sometimes the only fresh, clean water the people have had in years.

The missions can be time consuming and are labor intensive, but in the long run they are worth it.

Major Michael W. Kessel,

AD, ILARNG, Commanding

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