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NEWS RELEASE

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“Legendary Heroes”
by Senator Larry Craig

“God bless this brave Regiment; God bless the families who dedicated these brave men and women...To the families of those who have given their holy blood for our land, we all bow to you in reverence and to the souls of your loved ones. Their sacrifice was not in vain. They are not dead, but alive, and their souls hovering around us every second of every minute. They will never be forgotten for giving their precious lives. They have sacrificed that which is most valuable. We see them in the smile of every child, and in every flower growing in this land. Let America, their families, and the world be proud of their sacrifice for humanity and life...I pray to God to grant happiness and health to these legendary heroes and their brave families.”

These words could have been written about any number of U.S. Army and Marine regiments in battle throughout history: at Bunker Hill, Anzio, Chosin Reservoir, Khe Sanh and many more. But these words were written about the brave officers and soldiers of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) who recently wrapped up their tour of duty in Iraq. The Mayor of Tall ‘Afar, Najim Abdullah Abid Al-Jibouri, was the author.

I hope that fact doesn’t surprise you too much, or at all. Family members of our men and women in uniform are well aware of the outstanding work their loved ones are doing or have done in Iraq. In fact, because of the recent return of the Idaho National Guard’s 116th Cavalry Brigade from active duty in Iraq, many Idahoans have heard or read quite a lot about the heroic deeds of their neighbors and family members over there.

Unfortunately, those stories are mostly passed on through word of mouth, and few of them are told in news reports. Many of our media outlets have aggressively covered the Iraq war, bringing us stories of attacks, explosions, firefights, casualties. War is truly gruesome at times, and the media have more than adequately relayed this fact to the American public.

However, there is more to the story of Iraq. Thousands of schools have been rebuilt or renovated. Neighborhoods that previously had electricity for just a few hours a day now have it almost full time, and sewage no longer runs openly down the streets. Garbage is collected regularly. Millions of women and children have been inoculated against diseases.

All of this has been made possible by the men and women of our military.

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Problems persist in Iraq, there is no doubt. To suggest otherwise is an irresponsible denial of reality. But so is the suggestion that Iraq is lost and the United States was wrong to go there.

Iraq is a culturally fractured country. Tensions remain between Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds, Christians, and others, and may for years or decades to come. However, they are all Iraqis, and overwhelmingly, they wish to remain Iraqis. To that end, they have held three elections in just over a year, each one more successful and inclusive than the last. Many Iraqis from all walks of life are grateful for our presence there and our assistance in setting Iraq on a more hopeful path.

We continue to make progress in Iraq. At the same time, progress continues to be difficult. That has been the case throughout our time there. But Americans don't shirk a task because it seems tough, and I don't believe we'll start any time soon. Success will come, but only if we see the task through.

Like the officers and soldiers of the 3rd ACR, Idaho's 116th formed a bond of respect with Iraqis in Kirkuk. Those soldiers, and all Idahoans, can be proud of all we have accomplished in Iraq. I know I am.



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR CITY OF TALL 'AFAR



In the Name of God the Compassionate and Merciful

To the Courageous Men and Women of the 3^d Armored Cavalry Regiment, who have changed the city of Tall' Afar from a ghost town, in which terrorists spread death and destruction, to a secure city flourishing with life.

To the lion-hearts who liberated our city from the grasp of terrorists who were beheading men, women and children in the streets for many months.

To those who spread smiles on the faces of our children, and gave us restored hope, through their personal sacrifice and brave fighting, and gave new life to the city after hopelessness darkened our days, and stole our confidence in our ability to reestablish our city.

Our city was the main base of operations for Abu Mousab Al Zarqawi. The city was completely held hostage in the hands of his henchmen. Our schools, governmental services, businesses and offices were closed. Our streets were silent, and no one dared to walk them. Our people were barricaded in their homes out of fear; death awaited them around every corner. Terrorists occupied and controlled the only hospital in the city. Their savagery reached such a level that they stuffed the corpses of children with explosives and tossed them into the streets in order to kill grieving parents attempting to retrieve the bodies of their young. This was the situation of our city until God prepared and delivered unto them the courageous soldiers of the 3^d Armored Cavalry Regiment, who liberated this city, ridding it of Zarqawi's followers after harsh fighting, killing many terrorists, and forcing the remaining butchers to flee the city like rats to the surrounding areas, where the bravery of other 3^d ACR soldiers in Sinjar, Rabiah, Zumar and Avgani finally destroyed them.

I have met many soldiers of the 3^d Armored Cavalry Regiment; they are not only courageous men and women, but avenging angels sent by The God Himself to fight the evil of terrorism.

The leaders of this Regiment; COL McMaster, COL Armstrong, LTC Hickey, LTC Gibson, and LTC Reilly embody courage, strength, vision and wisdom. Officers and soldiers alike bristle with the confidence and character of knights in a bygone era. The mission they have accomplished, by means of a unique military operation, stands among the finest military feats to date in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and truly deserves to be studied in military science. This military operation was clean, with little collateral damage, despite the ferocity of the enemy. With the skill and precision of surgeons they dealt with the terrorist cancers in the city without causing unnecessary damage.

God bless this brave Regiment; God bless the families who dedicated these brave men and women. From the bottom of our hearts we thank the families. They have given us something we will never forget. To the families of those who have given their holy blood for our land, we all bow to you in reverence and to the souls of your loved ones. Their sacrifice was not in vain. They are not dead, but alive, and their souls hovering around us every second of every minute. They will never be forgotten for giving their precious lives. They have sacrificed that which is most valuable. We see them in the smile of every child, and in every flower growing in this land. Let America, their families, and the world be proud of their sacrifice for humanity and life.

Finally, no matter how much I write or speak about this brave Regiment, I haven't the words to describe the courage of its officers and soldiers. I pray to God to grant happiness and health to these legendary heroes and their brave families.

NAJIM ABDULLAH ABID AL-JIBOURI
Mayor of Tall 'Afar, Ninewa, Iraq