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Dear Eagle Strike families and friends,

Greetings from deep in the heart of Mesopotamia, the region thought by many to be the cradle of civilization. Our mission has brought us deep into Iraq, as we support the Division's operations in and around Baghdad. We've been moving and working steadily since the war started, and now find ourselves south of the Iraqi capital. We've crossed a varied landscape—dry, dusty desert plains with no plant or animal life in sight; scrub-brush desert reminiscent of west Texas; and fertile river valley with forests of palm trees and cultivated farmland. The desert conditions are relatively harsh, but our soldiers are dealing with each adversity and making themselves as comfortable as possible while supporting the mission to the highest standards. Their innovation would make you proud: well-constructed porta-potties, showers, benches, and other comforts of life we take for granted back in the states. Many of the tents are carpeted with astro-turf the S4 bought before we moved out into Iraq. We're still eating only MRE's, but have high hopes for hot chow in a few days. Mail trickles in, and is always appreciated. It comes in on the same limited trucks and helicopters that bring in food, water, ammunition, and spare parts, so some delays are understandable. Many packages have arrived, so we're swimming in diaper wipes and goodies.

The discipline and training of our soldiers is easy to see. They know their jobs, and do them without complaint, allowing the battalion to fly 3 times as many hours as normal in the harshest of conditions. They have moved over 3500 soldiers throughout southern and central Iraq along with tons of cargo and supplies. They have driven hundreds of miles with little rest, dug countless fox-holes, packed and unpacked and repacked, all without serious injury. You can and should be proud.

I probably can't tell you more about the war than you already know. Most of the news we get comes from Fox News Channel on a satellite dish we acquired in Kuwait. Our soldiers are excited about the role they played in this momentous effort, and are as anxious to know what the future holds for us and the Division as I'm sure you are. It is still too soon to tell, or even speculate. For now, we must be satisfied with the fact that most of the Iraqi people we see are smiling and waving, celebrating their new-found freedom.

As we prepare to celebrate Easter here in the land of the Old Testament, it is with a feeling of purpose and thanksgiving: the knowledge that we have made a difference by our presence and our actions, and thankfulness that we accomplishing our purpose safely and deliberately.

LTC Timothy A. Jones

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