



Multi-National Corps – Iraq

Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory
APO AE 09342

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
RELEASE No. 20080528-13
May 28, 2008

Memorial honors 1-8 Infantry's fallen

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MOSUL, Iraq – For many, Memorial Day is a time for barbeques, spending time with family and taking the first dip in the pool. For Soldiers with Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, Memorial Day has a much more significant meaning.

“This is a day to reflect upon sacrifices our brothers and sisters have made,” said Lt. Col. Christopher Johns, commander of 1-8 Inf. Regt.

Since the company touched ground in late December 2007, the Soldiers have fought for the freedoms of the Iraqi people. But those freedoms have come at a price.

The company rolled out of Forward Operating Base Marez into the city of Mosul to conduct a combat patrol Jan. 28. During the patrol, one of their vehicles was struck by an improvised explosive device, killing five Soldiers of Company B.

“It was unreal at first,” said Sgt. Jason C. Staff, a Soldier formerly assigned to Company B. “I felt a lot of anger and grief. It hit home, hard.”

In wake of the deaths, Staff built a memorial inside 1-8 Inf. Regt. Headquarters to commemorate the company's fallen.

On display are photos of the five Soldiers killed in January and the traditional fallen Soldier's display; combat boots representing the final march of the last battle, the inverted rifle signaling a time of prayer, and the helmet and identification tags signifying the fallen Soldier.

Since Operation Iraqi Freedom kicked off in 2003, 15 Soldiers from 1-8 Inf. Regt. have lost their lives in combat. Now, their identification tags dangle from the handle of the inverted rifle on display.

"I wanted to do something special for my guys," Staff added. "I put a lot of extra work and detail into it."

"I hold Memorial Day dear to my heart," said Sgt. 1st Class John B. Guidry, a Soldier with Company B who worked with the five Soldiers. "They will never be forgotten with this memorial."



A Soldier with Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, goes one-by-one through the identification tags of his fallen comrades at Forward Operating Base Marez in Mosul May 26. A memorial was erected for five Soldiers who lost their lives during a combat patrol Jan. 28. To date, 15 Soldiers from 1-8 inf. Regt. have died in combat since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom. (U.S. Army photo)