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1st Brigade in Iraq Has Sturgis Party

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By Bryan Harley

Quotes and captions courtesy of Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

Members of the 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 1st Cavalry Division got to hang out at the Broken Spoke Saloon and participate in the revelry that is Sturgis Monday night, Aug.6 thanks to a live satellite feed that allowed the soldiers to take in the sights and sounds of the biggest biker bash around.

For a few hours, soldiers at Camp Taji, Iraq, got to put the perils of war in the back of the minds and soak in some live music, watch motorcycle-themed events and interact with fellow bikers thanks to the live video feed. A handful of soldiers were also able to send messages to their families.

"This type of event brings peoples' spirits up and their morale, giving us a little taste of home," said Pfc. Valentin Alvarado, an infantryman, Headquarters Troop, 1st BCT, who hails from Roswell, N.M. "The fact that the folks in Sturgis took the time to set this up for us shows that they appreciate what we're doing out here."

Soldiers clapped and whistled in response to the action on the big screen from the Broken Spoke Saloon. The "Ironhorse" Brigade also had their own live entertainment provided by a rock band comprised of soldiers that jammed out for about 30 minutes before the telecast started to get everybody primed for the event.

"It feels nice to be a part of something like this. The only thing missing is some barbecue and it would feel exactly like home," said Pfc. Thomas Gutierrez, also of Headquarters Troop and a Lockport, Ill., native.

And though there isn't a plethora of motorcycles on-base, Alvarado and Gutierrez have been able to make some cool low-rider bicycles while in Iraq and have started a club on Camp Taji. They were able to show off their work to a receptive crowd in Sturgis who could appreciate the craftsmanship the club has put into their rides.

"We like to show off our bikes and we think it's great for our bike club to be able to have the opportunity to participate in this," said Gutierrez, who explained that the club takes great pride in its bikes in much the same way that motorcycle enthusiasts take pride in their machines.

The event was a success all the way around. Many bikers are ex-vets and appreciate the sacrifices our men and women in Iraq make on a daily basis. The soldiers received some much-needed down time and the support of people back home.

"Being able to interact with folks (in Sturgis) makes us feel good, especially with us being out here in a combat zone," said Sgt. Chris Delacruz of Company B, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, who is also a member of the low-rider club. "It helps to break up the monotony of working eight to 12 hours a day with no days off and allows us to relieve a lot of stress."

The broadcast was made possible by [Digital Video and Imagery Distribution System](#) (DVIDS), a company that provides news, images, audio, video and publications from U.S. military operations from around the world. It provides an invaluable service as liaison between the military and the people back home.

The event is the brainstorm of Jason Esparza, the producer of [Texas Roadhouse Live](#), a Houston-based production company and Jay Allen, owner of the [Broken Spoke Saloon](#). The pair met at the Hawgs of Texas Rally where they broadcast a smaller-scaled production. The initial event was a streamed image using a wifi connection viewed by the soldiers over a cell phone.



Soldiers from the 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division get into the spirit of the Sturgis Bike Rally at Camp Taji, Iraq, Aug. 6.

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Low-rider bicycle enthusiasts, all Soldiers from the 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, at Camp Taji, Iraq, prepare for a chance to speak with bikers at the Sturgis Bike Rally in Sturgis, S.D. Pictured (left to right): Los Angeles native Pfc. Mario Morales, Company B, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion; Pfc. Valentin Alvarado of Headquarters Troop, 1st BCT, from Roswell, N.M.; Lockport, Ill., native Pfc. Thomas Gutierrez also of HHT, 1st BCT, and Sgt. Chris Delacruz, Co. B, 1st BSTB, a native of Colorado Springs, Colo.

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This time Esparza arranged a satellite uplink via Crawford Communications that allowed for better interpersonal interaction. Texas Roadhouse Productions has more events planned for the future, including a delayed broadcast through DVIDS featuring the Fabulous Thunderbirds, War, Eddie Money and other celebrity shoutouts in support of the troops that will be combined with the Aug. 6 live feed.

Talk Back

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