

# Families rejoice as POWs head home

By Chris Roberts  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EL PASO, Texas — Just two days after Fort Bliss tearfully mourned the deaths of nine soldiers from the 507th Maintenance Company, sunshine burst through the gloom with word that five others taken prisoner in Iraq are now free.

"I'm going to have a heart attack here with so much happiness," said Maria De La Luz Hernandez, whose son, Army Spc. Edgar Alan Hernandez, was among the group picked up by U.S. military troops advancing toward Tikrit.

A total of seven former prisoners were found Sunday. Some families of the former POWs first got word their loved ones were free from watching live television reports.

"When I saw him, it was like somebody had won the World Series. Everybody was jumping around and hollering," said Ron Young Sr., of Lithia Springs, Ga., about his son, Chief Warrant Officer Ronald Young Jr. "It may have been the greatest point in my life."

The joy was tempered by the fact that two members of the 507th — Spc. James Kiehl, of Comfort, Texas and Pvt. Ruben Estrella-Soto, of El Paso, are to be buried Monday.

"We were happy for the rest of the POWs because we thought they were dead as well," said Alma Wallace, a cousin of Estrella-Soto, as his family prepared for his funeral.

The Pentagon confirmed the rescue of six men and one woman — five from the 507th and two downed Apache pilots from Fort Hood near Killeen. The helicopter was forced down March 24 during heavy fighting in Iraq.

It was only Friday that smiling photos of nine slain members of the 507th, each draped with posthumously awarded Purple Hearts, were displayed at a memorial that drew thousands.

In that tearful remembrance, the unit's command sergeant major called out the names of the dead, three times each. Grizzled veterans struggled to hold back tears and others dabbed their eyes with tissues.

A total of 15 soldiers with the 507th, based at Fort Bliss, were ambushed March



Spc. Joseph Hudson of New Mexico, left, gets off of a CH46 helicopter in Numaniyah, Iraq en route to Kuwait City, Kuwait on Sunday. Hudson and six other American prisoners were found alive and well on Sunday after their captors fled from U.S. Marines advancing towards Tikrit.

23 near Nasiriyah, northwest of Basra. Pfc. Jessica Lynch, a 19-year-old supply clerk with the 507th, was rescued last week; nine others died.

The newly freed members of the 507th were Hernandez, 21, of Mission; Spc. Joseph Hudson, 23, of Alamogordo, N.M.; Spc. Shoshana Johnson, 30, of Fort Bliss; Pfc. Patrick Miller, 23, of Park City, Kan.; and Sgt. James Riley, 31, of Pennsauken, N.J. The two downed pilots freed were Young Jr. and Chief Warrant Officer David S. Williams, 30, of Orlando, Fla.

"There was a burden lifted from my heart and from his family's heart," said Chief Warrant Officer Michelle Williams, describing the moment she learned that her husband, one of the two Fort Hood-based pilots, was safe.

But Michelle Williams, a blackhawk helicopter pilot, said she remained concerned for soldiers who still are missing in action.

"The war's not over. I know it's great, the progress that they've made, but there are still soldiers in harm's way. I ask for you to continue to pray for them," Williams said at

a Monday morning news conference.

"I've always remained positive," said Williams' father, David Williams Sr. "When you believe in God as I do and my son does, you know he will come back home safely."

After the capture of the 507th members, Iraqi TV showed some answering questions, darting their eyes back and forth between an interviewer and another person who couldn't be seen on camera.

Miller's mother said she was elated at the new television images of her son — wearing blue shorts and a long-sleeved shirt — being transferred from a helicopter into an ambulance.

"He looked great — just like he did before he left except that his hair was longer," Mary Pickering said. "I've been crying a lot today. It's been so stressful."

In front of Johnson's El Paso home, trucker Kenneth Wayne Krueger leapt out of his rig, unable to contain his happiness. Krueger had served two years at Fort Bliss with Shoshana Johnson's father.

"I'm just so happy!" Krueger shouted as he jumped up and down hugging Johnson's

# Poll: Most Americans say U.S. winning war on terror

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the military successes in Iraq comes a belief that the United States may finally be winning the war against terrorism — the first time a majority of Americans believe this, according to a CBS News-New York Times poll released Monday.

Some 62 percent of Americans say the war against terrorism is being won by the United States and its allies, up from 45 percent in a March 3 poll.

The poll also found more now favor U.S. intervention in cases like Iraq than they did at the end of the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Forty-eight percent think the United States should stay out of other countries, but 29 percent think it ought to try to change a dictatorship to a democracy where it can.

In 1991, a majority preferred the United States stay out of other countries' affairs, and only 17 percent supported

U.S. intervention.

The threat from North Korea is the most real to Americans, with 39 percent fearing it as posing a serious threat to the United States, followed by China (6 percent), Iraq (5 percent), and no country — getting 24 percent of the vote.

Fifty-three percent of Americans now believe Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, unchanged from the beginning of this month. This is somewhat higher than before the start of the war in Iraq, when 45 percent thought Saddam had personal involvement in the attack.

The poll was conducted among a nationwide random sample of 898 adults, interviewed by telephone April 13. The error, due to sampling, could be plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on the entire sample.

## War

Continued from page 1

efforts at renewing power, water, security and other vital services.

American forces found prodigious amounts of Iraqi weaponry, French-made missiles and Russian anti-tank rocket launchers among them. And Army troops discovered thousands of microfilm cartridges and hundreds of paper files inside a Baath Party enclave as the dead regime began yielding its secrets.

In Tikrit, about 90 miles north of Baghdad, "There was less resistance than we anticipated," Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks

told reporters, as American ground troops moved into city after days of punishing airstrikes.

American forces captured key Tigris River bridge in heart of town and seized presidential palace without fight as they rolled past abandoned Iraqi military equipment.

They set up checkpoints to keep prominent regime figures from leaving, and a line of armored vehicles was parked in front of a bazaar inside the city.

"We have had engagements and we have defeated an enemy in every one of the engagements," said Capt. Paul Thorp, a spokesman at the Central Command.

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