

# AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

Page 3 • Wednesday, April 16, 2003

## Never leave a man behind

### Rescuers find seven American POWs as captors flee in troop advance

By KRT Campus and  
The Associated Press

IRAQ — U.S. Marines were about to call off their search for seven American POWs, unable to find house No. 13 and edgy about the growing knots of civilians watching them from surrounding rooftops when one of the scouts heard a shout. "Hey, we're Americans! We're over here!" It was Chief Warrant Officer David Williams, one of seven missing soldiers.

"I said, 'Let's get them the hell out of here before we start taking fire,'" said Cpl. Christopher Castro, 21, of San Antonio, head of one of the eight-man units rushed into the Iraqi town of Samarra on Sunday to hunt for the POWs.

Castro recalled the events Tuesday after he and Cpl. Curney Russell returned from escorting the former POWs to a U.S. military hospital in Kuwait.

"We thought it could be a 'Black Hawk Down' situation," said Russell, 18, of Manchester, N.H., referring to the movie and book recounting American soldiers surrounded in Mogadishu, Somalia.

Castro's unit, Delta Company of the 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, was supporting the Marine assault on Saddam Hussein's northern redoubt of Tikrit when company commander Capt. Gordon Miller summoned his officers to an emergency meeting.

Word had reached the Marines — exactly how remains unclear — that the Iraqi men guarding the Americans wanted to surrender their prisoners in house No. 13 of one neighborhood.

The Marines should knock three times on the door, and the guards would surrender, Delta Company was told.

Miller ordered two of his platoons to secure the area while Castro's platoon with five armored vehicles plus an Arabic translator and an intelligence officer looked for the house.

One platoon reported receiving sniper fire,



JUAN TOMAYO • KRT CAMPUS

NUMANIYAH, IRAQ — Spc. Shoshana Johnson, 30, of El Paso, Texas, right, is escorted to a C-130 transport en route to Kuwait, Sunday April 13. Johnson and six other American prisoners were found alive and well Sunday after their captors fled from U.S. Marines advancing towards Tikrit.

but the order was to be careful.

"They didn't want any firing," Castro said.

Castro's platoon reached the right area, with the help of the translator and a map sketched by Miller. But 30 to 45 minutes into the search they could not find the house.

"We were going building to building. We found 11 and we found 12," he recalled, describing a warren of alleys off the empty lot.

Then civilians started to appear.

"I was thinking it was maybe a setup," said Castro, whose four-year enlistment runs out this summer.

Miller was about to order his men to withdraw when Lance Cpl. Aaron Greenleaf heard Williams, an Apache helicopter pilot, shout

from behind a window of a two-story house, Castro said.

Russell said he entered the house's front yard and knocked three times but got no answer. "So I kicked it in," and shouted "Everyone on the ground!"

Three guards stood inside the house, no weapons near them, in civilian clothes, he said. The Americans were in two rooms to the right of a hallway. Russell gave another shout. "If you're American, get up and get out."

Out came Williams, his gunner, Chief Warrant Officer Ronald Young, and five members of the 507th Maintenance Battalion: Sgt. James Riley, Pfc. Patrick Miller and Spcs. Joseph Hudson, Edgar Hernandez and Shoshana

Johnson.

Castro quoted one of the POWs as urging him to protect the guards. "Don't hurt them. These are our friends. They helped us out." The Marines offered to take the guards with them for their own protection.

"They were scared for their lives and scared for their families' lives," Castro said, but they decided to remain in Samarra, telling the Marines, "This is our house, and we want to stay."

The Americans were packed into one of the Marine vehicles and driven three miles out of town, where a team of POW specialists debriefed them for about one hour, they said.

Ordered to protect the POWs until they were turned over to a colonel or higher, Castro and Russell joined them in the two Marine CH-46 helicopters that flew them to the Numaniyah airfield southeast of Baghdad.

They stuck with the POWs until they were flown to a U.S. military hospital in Germany on Monday morning.

Castro said one of the POWs told him that he had always made fun of his ex-Marine father. "He said he's never making fun of the Marines ever again," Castro said.

The POWs are currently in Kuwait, and the military has not said when they will be flying home.

Joseph's wife, Natalie, said military officials gave her information about what Hudson will undergo as a returning prisoner of war. That each will undergo a military debriefing and the mental and emotion process of reintegration after the trauma of being held prisoner, she said. When Chief Warrant Officer David Williams gets home, his wife will be waiting to listen. Michelle Williams finally heard her husband's voice Sunday on the phone at her home in Killeen, Texas.

"I was so teary, he probably didn't understand anything I said," Michelle said. "And I said, 'Sweetie, you don't have to tell me anything. When you're really ready to talk, when we can be together, you can talk. I'm here to listen.'"



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William Lane Craig earned a Ph.D. from the University of Birmingham and another Ph.D. from the Universität München. He has been Professor of Philosophy of Religion at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Dr. Craig is the author of numerous books including *The Son Rises*, *Reasonable Faith* and *The Existence of God and the Beginning of the Universe*. He is internationally renowned speaker and scholar.

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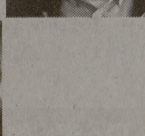
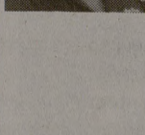
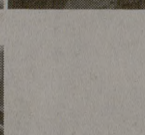
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