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V CORPS SPECIALIST FINDS ONE SOLDIER CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN IRAQ

By Capt. Ryan M. Rooney

Task Force 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, 1st Infantry Division

BAYJI, Iraq — When Spc. Michael Tingue arrived in Bayji in March with Task Force 1-7 of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division, he saw the conditions children live in here. More importantly, he saw that he had the opportunity to help improve those conditions.

YOU CAN HELP

To make a donation of clothes, school supplies or toys to Spc. Michael Tingue's efforts to help Iraqi children in need, mail:

SPC Michael Tingue
HHB/TF 1-7
OIF 2 (FOB Summerall)
APO AE 09392

Donations of school supplies for Iraqi children can also be made through 1st Infantry Division's 'Operation I Can.' [Click here for details.](#)

Tingue soon set out on a personal campaign to gather clothes, toys and school supplies for the impoverished people of Iraq. He knew that many Americans are willing and able to help as well, but he didn't know how to get that assistance to those who needed it.

In an attempt to get his efforts rolling he wrote to his hometown newspaper, the Albany (Oregon) Democrat-Herald. He explained how people in his hometown area could help by sending clothes, school supplies and toys. The letter then made its way to Oregon's largest city, Portland, and its newspaper, The Oregonian. After that Tingue's plea then took off, sent along by eager supporters to places as far off as Chicago, Connecticut and Louisiana.

As word spread, the project gained momentum, and its inertia continues as boxes still continue to pile in here. At its peak, Tingue got about 20 boxes every other day for almost two weeks. The rate has now slowed to about five boxes a week, but they still continue to come in months after that first letter.

While he may not have known how to get things started, Tingue, a supply specialist for the task force, knows how to manage the inventory, storage and distribution of large amounts of supplies.

"As a quartermaster, it's my job to support the warfighter. I saw this as a chance to show Iraqis we're here to help, and to possibly take away some of the hate towards Americans," says Tingue.

So far he estimates that more than 200 boxes of donations for Iraqi children have come in.

And though he never thought his singular effort to help would grow to such proportions, Tingue says he is pretty happy with how his project turned out.

Tingue's efforts have not gone unnoticed by the chain of command. His selfless effort was recognized by task force commander Lt. Col. Kyle M. McClelland, who presented the specialist with a task force certificate of achievement and coin, as well as recommending him for similar honors from his brigade combat team commander.

"Spc. Tingue determined that he could make a difference and took a personal interest in establishing an 'irreversible momentum' of the humanitarian kind," said McClelland.

"I admire his personal drive and dedication to making a difference. That is why we are here -- to help the Iraqi people help themselves. This is a positive step in that direction. Every little bit counts towards bridging the gap building trust and confidence. Spc. Tingue is a Soldier with a mission and focus. He is making a difference every day."

Tingue said he hopes his project will outlive his time in Iraq, and looking for someone to take it on when the division leaves here early next year.

In the meantime, he has found another humanitarian goal -- to get a young Iraqi girl with a severe cardiac ailment to the United States for surgery that should save her life. His latest letter-writing campaign has begun in earnest.

