

BLOOD BROTHERS

The war hit Charlie 1-26 harder than any unit in Iraq. They have a story to tell. This is it.



'Not us. We're not going.'

Spcs. Gerry DeNardi, near right, and Armando Cardenas, and others in Charlie 1-26, frustrated at what they saw as restraints against fighting insurgents effectively, refused to roll on a patrol in an area where they had lost many friends to hostile fire.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPC. ARMANDO CARDENAS

Soldiers in 2nd Platoon, Charlie 1-26 stage a 'mutiny' that pulls the unit apart

Spc. Gerry DeNardi stood at the on-base Burger King, just a few miles from downtown Baghdad, hoping for a quick taste of home.

Camp Taji encompasses miles of scrapped Iraqi tanks, a busy U.S. airstrip and thousands of soldiers living in row upon row of identical trailers. Several fast-food stands, a PX and a dining facility the size of a football field compose Taji's social hub. The base had been struck by an occasional mortar round, and a rocket

had hit the airfield two weeks before and killed an American helicopter pilot. But the quiet base brought on a sense of being far from roadside bombs, far from rocket-propelled grenades and far from the daily gunfire that rained down on the soldiers of Charlie 1-26 as they patrolled Adhamiya, a violent Sunni neighborhood in northeastern Baghdad.

Just two weeks earlier, the 20-year-old DeNardi had lost five good friends, killed together as

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