Virginia museum hosts “Gathering of Eagles”
Museum showcases 115 working pieces of military armor

By Philip Schreier
Special to the Iraqi Destiny

NOKESVILLE, Va. - Saturday, Oct. 25 was a warm and sunny day in the midlands of Northern Virginia where the Virginia Museum of Military Vehicles hosted its annual open house event.

Nearly 600 visitors roamed around the lush green fields inspecting many of the museum’s 115 working pieces of military armor and listened attentively as Screaming Eagle veterans of past and present conflicts recalled some of the historic events in which they personally participated.

Highlighted guests included two members of the 101st Division’s Easy Company, of the famed 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, the unit made famous by Stephen Ambrose’s 1992 best selling book Band of Brothers (and subsequently a 10-hour HBO movie) as well as two 101st battalion commanders recently returned from Iraq.

Sgt. Darrell “Shifty” Powers and CPL Forrest Guth (Co. E, 506th PIR) both spoke of the D-Day airborne jump into Normandy on June 6, 1944 as well as the fierce fighting they witnessed in Holland, Haganeau and Bastogne.

Reflections on spending Christmas in Belgium and various souvenirs they continue to treasure made for an interesting question and answer session following their initial presentations.

Former modern-day battalion commanders, Lt. Col. Christopher Hughes (2nd Bn, 327th Inf.) and Lt. Col. Lee Fetterman (3rd Bn., 187th Inf.) then spoke of their units involvement in the attacks on An Najaf and southern Baghdad, respectively.

Both officers praised the courage and discipline of their men in combat and expressed their heartfelt desire to rejoin units that they most recently rotated out of, following their traditional two-year tours as commanders.

Currently they are both working at the Pentagon.

The formal scheduled presentations drew to a close following a small ceremony at the museum’s impressive flagpole. Each of the four guests were given a small handful of soil or sand from battlefields where they had fought, and together they mixed it with the soil at the base of the flag pole. SGT Powers and CPL Guth passed on their good wishes to those currently serving in Iraq by saying, “Hang Tough”, a traditional 506th salutation.