

Fewer Indirect Fire Attacks, More Caches Found

By Capt. Dawn Williams
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Despite recent drops in overall attacks against Coalition Forces, Iraqi Security Forces and innocent Iraqi civilians, extremist groups continue to

launch rocket and mortar attacks landing within residential neighborhoods and commercial areas of the Iraqi capital.

Iraqi citizens, however, are fighting back and leading Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces to the source of these

attacks: weapons caches.

The total number of attacks in the Baghdad Security Districts dropped significantly during the month of November, with 25 total attacks, compared to the 49 attacks in October. Since Nov. 1, joint forces, often paired with concerned local cit-

izens have found more than 200 weapons caches.

"Despite fewer total indirect fire attacks in the past month, innocent civilians are still affected by these ruthless extremist acts, said Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl, spokesperson for Multi-National Division Baghdad and the 1st Cavalry Division.

"Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces continue to work with concerned local citizens in gathering intelligence on these groups, enabling them to locate and destroy weapons caches before such attacks can occur," he said.

During the first week of December, seven indirect fire attacks landed within the Iraqi capital. Six of the attacks landed in residential areas.

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers paired with their Iraqi Security Force and volunteer counterparts have found more than 1,500 mortar and rocket rounds in and around the Iraqi capital since Nov. 1.

The number of weapons caches found has continued to steadily increase in recent months, with a majority of caches uncovered thanks to tips by area residents.

"Our joint forces are aided tremendously by the rising number of concerned local citizens stepping up against insurgent and extremist violence," Bleichwehl said. "Together, we remain committed to intercepting, responding and protecting Baghdad citizens from these types of extremist groups and militant acts."



(Photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter, 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

Wiping the Mud Away...

Chicago native Pfc. Geraldo Quinones, Company B, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), wipes a young Iraqi boy's soccer ball free of mud while at Coalition Outpost Lion in western Baghdad's Jamia neighborhood, Dec. 4.

Experts Help Soldiers Understand Culture

By Sgt. Mike Pryor
2-82 Abn. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – On a bright afternoon, Dr. Dave Matsuda went with a group of U.S. Soldiers to tour a food distribution depot in the Ur neighborhood. The Soldiers were worried about how to keep the warehouse from being infiltrated by Moqtada Al Sadr's Shi'ite militia army, which controls that part of the Iraqi Capital. The chief of security at the depot, however, assured them that the warehouse was safe, because his "organization" protected it from Sadr's influence.

The Soldiers were doubtful. The chief's independence seemed inexplicable given what they knew about the area – it was a puzzling anomaly in a sea of data pointing in the other direction. Matsuda, though, believed he could put the pieces of the puzzle together. He began asking the chief questions about his family, his extended family, his tribe, and the tribe's affiliations with other tribes. Later, he was able to chart the relationships on a diagram to show how the chief's tribal hierarchy operated, giving the Soldiers a rare glimpse into the complicated inner workings of Iraqi society.

It was a valuable insight drawn not

from standard military intelligence gathering techniques, but from the science of anthropology.

"A military person would say 'Let's look at this in political or military terms,'" Matsuda said, "but an anthropologist says,



'Let's look at the tribal relationships that are underneath everything.'

There's a reason Matsuda knows what an anthropologist would look for: he is one. Back in the states, Matsuda, 51, is a professor at California State University – East Bay. He holds a double doctorate in anthropology and developmental psychology. Tall, soft-spoken, and bespectacled, he seems to fit image of the bookish professor perfectly. But these days, Matsuda has traded in his professor's tweeds for combat

boots and a bullet-proof vest. In September, he brought his expertise to Iraq as part of a small group of cultural experts called the Human Terrain Team. Matsuda's HTT is attached to the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, which operates in Northeast Baghdad and Sadr City.

The HTT's mission is to diagram Iraq's cultural landscape – its "human terrain" – in the same way intelligence analysts map out its cities, roads, and rivers. It's a function that has become increasingly important as the U.S. military has turned its focus to counterinsurgency operations, in which cultural understanding is the key, said the team's leader, Lt. Col. Edward Villacres, of Denver, Colo.

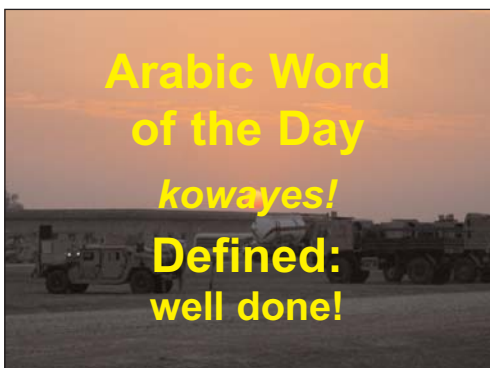
"In counterinsurgency operations, knowing the human terrain is absolutely essential," Villacres said.

The Team

The 2nd BCT's Human Terrain Team uses history and social science to provide cultural awareness that supports the brigade's operations, Villacres said.

The team consists of the team chief, an

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Iraq 3-Day Weather Report

	Today	Tomorrow	Friday
High:	69	69	71
Low:	50	53	55

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Cultural Experts:

Helping Troops in Iraq Understand the Cultural Landscape

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area specialist, a social scientist, and a research manager. Matsuda, the social scientist, is a civilian, while the other members are active duty army. All the team members have specialized knowledge, and two – Matsuda and Villacres – are college professors.

“We’ve got people who know the culture in and out,” said 1st Lt. Sami Tioni, the team’s research manager and a native Arabic speaker.

To accomplish its mission, the team draws on two pools of knowledge: information that has already been collected and information that the team members collect themselves. They then analyze the information and present their conclusions and advice to the brigade commander.

“It gives him an additional level of insight as he prepares to make decisions,” Villacres said.

Officials with the 2nd BCT said they appreciate the contributions the HTT has made to the brigade’s operations so far.

“It’s great having them. They add a critical dimension to the fight, one that has been missing up to now” said Lt. Col. David Oclander, the 2nd BCT’s executive officer.

Outside the military, however, the teams have sparked some controversy. Much of the opposition has come from people in the academic world, who, according to Matsuda, fear that the army will misuse the knowledge offered by



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

San Francisco native Dr. Dave Matsuda, a professor of anthropology working as a cultural analyst with the Human Terrain Team attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, returns to his teaching roots while playfully instructing a class during a visit to a school in Baghdad’s Sadr City district Oct. 31.

social scientists.

“(Some are) saying anthropology can’t be part of the Army without being corrupted,” he said.

Matsuda said some of the concerns are valid, and some are motivated by knee-jerk anti-militarism. Regardless, he said, the stakes are too high in Iraq right now to sit on the sidelines.

Knowing the Script

Even though Operation Iraqi Freedom is in its fifth year, Villacres said many in the U.S. military still fail to appreciate the differences between Arab and Western culture.

“Arab society doesn’t have any of the common foundations that we have,” he said.

As a result, it can be difficult for Iraqis and U.S. Soldiers to find common ground, despite good intentions on both sides. Matsuda gave as an example an instance where

U.S. Soldiers thought they had settled a dispute with people in a village by making a condolence payment. But when the Soldiers returned a few days after making the payment, they were attacked. The Soldiers thought they had been betrayed, but in the villagers’ eyes, the agreement had never been valid because the traditional reconciliation ritual hadn’t been conducted, Matsuda explained.

Anthropologists believe that all societies operate according to a certain “script,” Matsuda said. Iraqis have one script, Americans have another. The HTT’s mission is to provide an interpretation of the Iraqi cultural script that will help Soldiers make the right decisions.

The team has carried out that task in ways both small and large. One small way they

affected operations came when the brigade was about to put out a wanted poster featuring an image of the scales of justice. Matsuda pointed out that the idea of the scales of justice was a Greek-derived, Western concept that meant nothing to Iraqis. Instead he proposed changing the poster to show two open hands – an image drawn from ideas in the Quran – in order to make it more resonant with Iraqis.

“We try to find the assumptions and motivations behind what people do,” Matsuda said.

Why it Matters

Tioni said the value of insights that the HTT offers shouldn’t be underestimated.

“We fight an enemy that is very fluid, and the only way we’re going to defeat them is by knowing the culture,” he said.

The team’s work isn’t simply an academic exercise, team members said. Tioni said he is convinced greater cultural awareness will help protect Soldiers out on the streets.

“That’s what is going to save lives: knowing how to interact with the population,” Tioni said.

In justifying his work in Iraq, Matsuda returned to the example of the Soldiers who were attacked even after making a condolence payment because they didn’t understand the importance of cultural traditions.

“I don’t want those guys going into that village thinking they got it all taken care of and they end up getting shot,” Matsuda said. “I want everyone to come home.”

'Rough Riders' Get Ready to Dismount

By Spc. Nathaniel Smith
4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – For 15 months, the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi National Police Transition Team “Rough Riders” were focused on one thing: handing the reins of security in Baghdad over to the ‘shurta,’ or police.

Now, at the end of their tour, they have to focus on a different kind of transition: going home.

Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Lowery, the 1-2-1 NPTT assistant intelligence noncommissioned officer from Decatur, Ala., said redeploying, while everybody’s been looking forward to it, might be one of the most difficult parts of his deployment.

“It’s something you’ve been looking forward to for 15 months,” he said, “but I think the hardest part of this deployment is the going home process when you’ve got an 11-man family that’s fixing to spread its wings and go to all four corners of the United States.”

The familial bond among the team members was formed through facing the challenges that come with training Iraqi National Police in four different locations over 12 months after having known each other only 90 days.

Lt. Col. Andy Yerkes, the 1-2-1 NPTT team chief from Cincinnati said while he was concerned about the hasty assembly of the team, he had confidence from the beginning when the team started training at Fort Riley, Kan.

“The first thing that I was concerned about at Riley was building a team rapidly. Ultimately, you can only depend on yourself here. We’ve had support from other units, but ultimately we’re 11 men trying to accomplish a mission,” he said. “We’re 11 men who have to trust each other and understand we have to work together. I knew right off that I’m very lucky; I’ve got a very strong team.

“We’re all different but we all understand each other’s capabilities and limitations.”

For Lowery, who served as a drill sergeant prior to working with the 1-2-1



(Photo by Spc. Nathaniel Smith, 4-1 Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

The “Roughriders” of the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi National Police Division Transition Team at the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division’s headquarters on Forward Operating Base Falcon.

NPTT, adapting to the cultural differences in training the police as opposed to American Soldiers was one of his primary obstacles.

“For an American Soldier that’s doing something that’s not what needs to be done, you just walk up and stick both feet in his tail. Here you can’t do that. You have to try to play a little chess with them, and they have to figure out what the right thing to do is,” he said. “Sometimes with the officers, they know what to do and you’ve got to convince them your decision is the best decision, and you have to make them think it’s their decision.”

“I’ve transitioned away from the role of an operations officer or an executive officer where I can say, ‘Hey, you’re going to do this right now,’” Yerkes added. “Now, I don’t have that ability. Now I’ve got to convince somebody else that this is a good thing. Instead of going this way and pushing them, it’s kind of coaching them.

“All people are the same: they only want to do something they’ve bought into themselves.”

While their deployment had its fair share of challenges, Lowery said one of the biggest things he learned from the Iraqis he worked with was patience.

“I learned sometimes it’s better to just shut your mouth and work at it. Sometimes

right now is not the best time to fix something; sometimes it might take a day or so,” he said. “With that patience, you learn you’ve got a goal you’re not going to achieve today; you’re going to achieve it in a year. Patience to keep working at it, patience to stay focused on it, and patience to not just go crazy and just slap the hell out of the person you’re working with because you’re stuck with them 24/7.

“I can’t think of more than 30 minutes since I’ve showed up in October that I’ve been without seeing one of the other 10 guys on my team.”

Now, as the team prepares to head home to their families in a variety of different places, they will have stories to tell their loved ones from their time in Rashid. One of the most inspirational stories, Lowery said, comes from one of the darkest days of their deployment: a day in late July when one of their National Policemen found the abandoned Baby Fatimah under a pile of trash in Saydiyah.

“I think about that baby that we found. The impact we had on her,” he said. “There’s a life in this world that’s still walking around because we were there, because somebody cared enough to look under something.

“You see warriors, people you know are capable of doing violent things, and they pick up a baby and they’re crying their eyes out. You know they’re real people.”

“The fact that she was able to live is a highlight. We can’t help the fact that terrorists took the parents she was living with,” Yerkes added. “We can help mitigate the effects, and we’ve done that.”

On the other side of the coin, that ugly side of war that all Soldiers must deal with on some level, Yerkes said.

He added that he will lean on his better half for support.

“I will probably tell my wife more than I should. She’s somebody who I’ll spend the rest of my life with,” he said. “I will tell her everything I can, stuff that relates to me; events that made me feel a certain way that might come back.

“My wife needs to understand that part about me.”