



USF-I staff advises Iraqi leadership

Story and photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

Every Saturday, the Iraq Ground Forces Command senior leadership and the senior staff members of United States Forces-Iraq find themselves packed tightly into a conference room at a local Iraqi camp. Iraqi staff officers present information the IGFC staff has consolidated during the week.

At a recent Super Battle Update Assessment, IGFC Chief of Staff, Maj. Gen. Amir, sat at the head of the conference table, his authoritative presence was felt by everyone in the room as he received updates on everything from terrorist activity and current operations to manpower and equipment issues facing the Iraqi Army



Staff Maj. Gen. Amir of the Iraqi Ground Forces Command (left) and Brig. Gen. Joseph DiSalvo, USF-I deputy chief of staff and III Corps chief of staff, listen to an explanation of a slide presented during a recent IGFC "Super Battlefield Update Assessment" at a local Iraqi camp. The USF-I staff advises the IGFC during the meetings, providing guidance on how to collect and distribute information critical to Iraq's security.

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Modern banking key to Iraq's economic future

Story and photo by
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With automated tellers and online banking, Americans often take for granted the ease with which money can be moved around in today's banking world. But in Iraq, electronic banking

has only just begun to find a firm foothold in an economy that United States forces have been working to rebuild.

As part of the effort to secure a solid and stable economy for Iraq's future, the 15th Financial Management Company brought Iraqi bankers and business owners together June 1, to focus on the

important role electronic funds transfer and modern core-banking systems play in strengthening the economy.

"One of the biggest things we're trying to do with the Iraqi banking system is to introduce more modern services, specifically electronic funds

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Chaplain's Corner

Live less materially to grow spiritually

By Chaplain (Maj.) Howard Fields
USF-I Jewish Chaplain

According to the Jewish calendar, the Festival of Passover is in the spring and the Festival of Sukkoth, also called the Feast of Booths, is in the fall.

At Passover we take stock of all of our possessions. We clean out our cupboards and put away all of the kitchen utensils we use the rest of the year.

We use other dishes and maintain a limited diet for eight days. This observance gives us perspective on all that we own and how we eat.

At Sukkoth, we build a booth and spend time in it for the one week festival.

This booth can be as elaborate or simple as you can make it, but it must have a roof made of a natural, grown material such as branches or straw. Building a sukkah and spending time in one, with its leaky roof, lack of climate control and leaves in your soup, gives you an appreciation of your permanent dwelling.

Here in Iraq at the time of these festivals, I think that some of the observances to our festivals are superfluous. We have neither a kitchen to clean nor possessions to take stock of at Passover.

At Sukkoth we are already living in a non-permanent

shelter, albeit one that shouldn't leak when it rains.

We live here less materially than at home and have constant reminders of how comfortable our lives at home are.

We don't need a festival to tell us to dwell in a rudimentary structure with no plumbing for a week.

Spiritually we can take advantage of not having all of the trappings of modern life here.

By living with less we have a greater appreciation for our possessions and realize they are just that: possessions. They are not the ground of our being or the intimate, ultimate truth. They are things.

Many of our possessions are not what we need, but what we desire.

None of our possessions are permanent. We have the opportunity to realize what is permanent in our lives: holiness, connection, meaning.

No matter our background, faith or tradition, we can use the time here to grow spiritually.

One of the greatest signs of spiritual growth is having a greater sense of perspective on what our priorities in life are.

Learning the difference between the permanent, unwavering center of our lives and that which is fleeting will bring us closer to God.

SARC Smarts

Common myths regarding sexual assault:

MYTH #1: The Rapist Is Usually a Stranger

FACT: Most victims know their assailants and most assaults occur in the victim's home/dorm
(FBI Uniform Crime Report)

MYTH #2: Sexual Assault Affects Only Women

FACT: While women 16-23 are particularly vulnerable-men suffer 10% of all reported sexual assaults

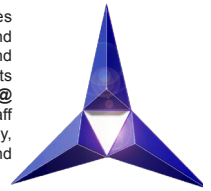
Call the USF-I Deployed Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (DSARC) at 485-5085 or 435-2235 for help. Army members should seek assistance with their Unit Victim Advocate (UVA) or DSARC.



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Taekwondo serves as bridge between cultures

Story and photo by Spc. Britney Bodner
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

“Hana!”

Students, dressed in white uniforms, shot their arms out simultaneously in swift, strong forward punches, then pulled their arms back, fists facing upward on their hips.

“Dool!”

The students repeated the movement and shouted out the number.

They continued the drill until they reached Yool, or 10, and moved on to practice their kicks.

This is the scene every Tuesday on Camp Victory as American service members, contractors, Iraqi Special Forces Soldiers and four children from the Boy and Girl Scouts of Iraq come together at Hope Chapel to train in taekwondo.

Differences in culture and language don't stop them from training together, or from strengthening friendships formed through the class.

Mogdad, a sergeant in the Iraqi Special Forces, teaches taekwondo to the Boy and Girl Scouts of Iraq every Saturday. When he comes to train with U.S. Forces, four of his most dedicated students join him for the additional training.

Mogdad, a black belt in taekwondo, comes to the class to continue his training.

“Taekwondo is my family,” said Mogdad. “Wherever in the world you go, the teaching is the same and language doesn't matter.”

“Some of the Iraqis may not speak English, but we can demonstrate the techniques and they can see what we're doing and continue to train,” said Maj. Malcolm Wise, United States Forces-Iraq 3rd Infantry Division liaison and the lead taekwondo instructor. “It's a different way to train and its rewarding to see somebody get what you are showing them, learn it, and

continue to progress.”

Wise, who is from Hinesville, Ga., and is stationed at Fort Stewart, Ga., said that learning taekwondo together gives service members and Iraqis common ground and reinforces the partnership.

“When you're training with somebody, you show respect toward each other and not separation,” Wise said.

“We get to talk here, work together, learn together... This does great things for our relations,” said Jerome Rogers, USF-I fielding manager. Rogers, a civilian contractor from Dover, Del., has a red belt in taekwondo.

Mogdad appreciates the relationships that have developed since he started coming to the classes.

“I came to get better at taekwondo,” he said. “Now, I also come because I have friends here and we are always welcome.”

“There are different sides to all cultures and we get to experience one of the many good sides in taekwondo,” said Spc. Tabinique Williams with the 156th Army Band. “Also, the Iraqis get to see us in a different light, not just as U.S. Soldiers, but as classmates and friends.”

“They bring something different to the class and as we train them, they train us right back,” Rogers said.

Wise said this type of experience helps the bond between Iraqis and U.S. troops grow even stronger.



Sgt. 1st Class Willie Clark, noncommissioned officer in charge of supply with the 392nd Expeditionary Signal Brigade out of Fort Meade, Md., pauses during a drill while training on Camp Victory May 25. U.S. Soldiers, civilians and Iraqi military and children meet each week to learn taekwondo.

Memorial Day observed on VBC with

Story by Spc. Britney Bodner
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

Shortly after the Battle of Gettysburg in 1864, the women of Pennsylvania who lost loved ones in the battle decorated the graves of those who had died.

The Civil War ended the following year and in April 1866 women from Columbus, Miss., decorated the graves of Confederate and Union Soldiers. Later that month, 219 Civil War veterans marched through Carbondale, Ill., in memory of their fallen comrades.

Major General John A. Logan, a Union hero, delivered a speech at that march and in May 1868 issued General Order No. 11, which stated that on May 30, the graves of the fallen would be decorated in remembrance. Logan hoped the observance would become a yearly tradition.

Logan's observance became known as Decoration Day, until federal law changed it to Memorial Day in 1967 and designated the last Monday in May as the observed federal holiday.

This year, on May 31, service members on Victory Base Complex were able to observe Memorial Day in several ways, including a memorial ceremony, the opportunity to fly a flag over the Victory Over America Palace, and an extended tour of palaces on Camp Slayer built during Saddam Hussein's reign.

At Camp Victory, Lt. Gen. Bob Cone, United States Forces-Iraq deputy commanding general for operations and III Corps commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur L. Coleman, Jr., his senior enlisted advisor, placed a wreath in the rotunda of Al Faw Palace during a memorial ceremony to honor fallen service members.

"Being deployed in a combat environment during Memorial Day means a lot," said Maj. Jahan Tolliver, commander of Company C, III Corps Special Troops Battalion, after the ceremony. "There are a lot of those who

paid the ultimate sacrifice so we can be here right now."

Spc. Dao Yang from Menomonie Wis., also with Company C, said he thought about his friends and family back home who had served in the military.

"One thing that went through my mind was my buddy who was shot during

the November 5th shooting at Fort Hood," Yang said. "I was thinking about what had happened to him and all other Soldiers who have served during this war."

At Camp Slayer, an extended tour explored the palaces built during the reign of Saddam Hussein, including



Photo by Staff Sgt. Dan Yarnall

Members of United States Forces-Iraq bow their heads during a Memorial Day ceremony May 31, in the rotunda of Al Faw Palace on Camp Victory.

ceremony, palace tour, and flag flying

rarely-visited sites such as Odai Hussein's palace and the Ba'ath Party house.

A separate event gave service members a rare opportunity to fly a flag over the Victory over America Palace.

"The Camp Slayer Mayor's Cell wanted to give people an additional opportunity to see firsthand why we are here in Iraq," said Lt. Col. Gary Scott Gray, Camp Slayer mayor.

Spc. Peter Carlo with the 502nd Maintenance Support Team from Fort Lewis, Wash., felt it was a special to see pieces of the past on Memorial Day and to be able to walk where service members may have fallen.

"The tour shows us what others have died for and what we are fighting for and helps us see where everything happened," said Carlo, "It gives you a new respect as we remember those who have fallen."

"As a Soldier who has lost several friends during this war, Memorial Day has a special meaning. This is our way to keep the tradition going so the fallen will not be forgotten," said Gray.



Photo by Spc. Britney Bodner

A Soldier poses for a photo in front of one of the two remaining murals on the backside of Odai Hussein's palace during a special Memorial Day tour of Camp Slayer palace. Odai was Saddam Hussein's oldest son.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Dan Yarnall

Staff Sgt. Stephanie Rangel from Molalla, Ore., with the 15th Military Intelligence Battalion, flies a flag on top of the Victory Over America Palace on Camp Slayer. USF-I personnel had a rare opportunity to fly a flag over the palace in honor of Memorial Day.



Photo by Lee Craker

▲Lt. Gen. Bob Cone, deputy commanding general for operations, United States Forces-Iraq, and III Corps commander (right), and his senior enlisted advisor, Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur L. Coleman Jr., place a wreath in the rotunda of the Al Faw Palace during a Memorial Day ceremony.

▶A Soldier folds a flag after flying it over the Victory Over America Palace on Camp Slayer.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Dan Yarnall

Bank, from Page 1

transfer and other services, like mobile banking,” said Capt. Eric LaBay, from Broomfield, Colo., the banking and e-commerce officer for the 15th FMC, “The more we introduce modern banking services to Iraq, the more comfortable investors are going to be to invest money in Iraq and help grow the economy.”

Hemin Qazi, from Nashville, Tenn., a project manager with the EFT Assistance Center, Task Force for Business and Stability Operations Banking and Financial Networks, says modern banking services help Iraqi businesses connect with vendors or companies from outside Iraq, who routinely use electronic means to make payments.

“It’s crucial in that vendors link themselves with the international community,” Qazi said. “There is more economic stability, there is more business and investment coming into Iraq and people are aware that there are banks that can do the job.”

The effort to help Iraqi banks move toward modern banking systems, which has been ongoing since 2003, made still more progress recently as U.S. forces stopped issuing U.S. dollars in theater, in favor of the Iraqi dinar.

“One of the things that we’re going to be doing is opening accounts with certain banks and cashing U.S. treasury checks for dinar, so that we can fund our finance offices,” LaBay said

According to Firas Obaid, a Baghdad native who works as an electronic funds transfer specialist with the EFT Assistance Center, a policy of using dinar instead of American dollars for

electronic funds transfers directly to vendors’ accounts also provides stability.

“It promotes confidence in the dinar” said Qazi, “This is Iraq. Iraqis should use their own currency. It was solid before; it’s getting a lot better.

“Confidence is key in terms of helping grow the economy,” LaBay said.

“Traditionally Iraqis have not trusted the banks,” he said. “When they don’t trust the banks they don’t put their money in because they think they’re going to lose it and not get it back.”

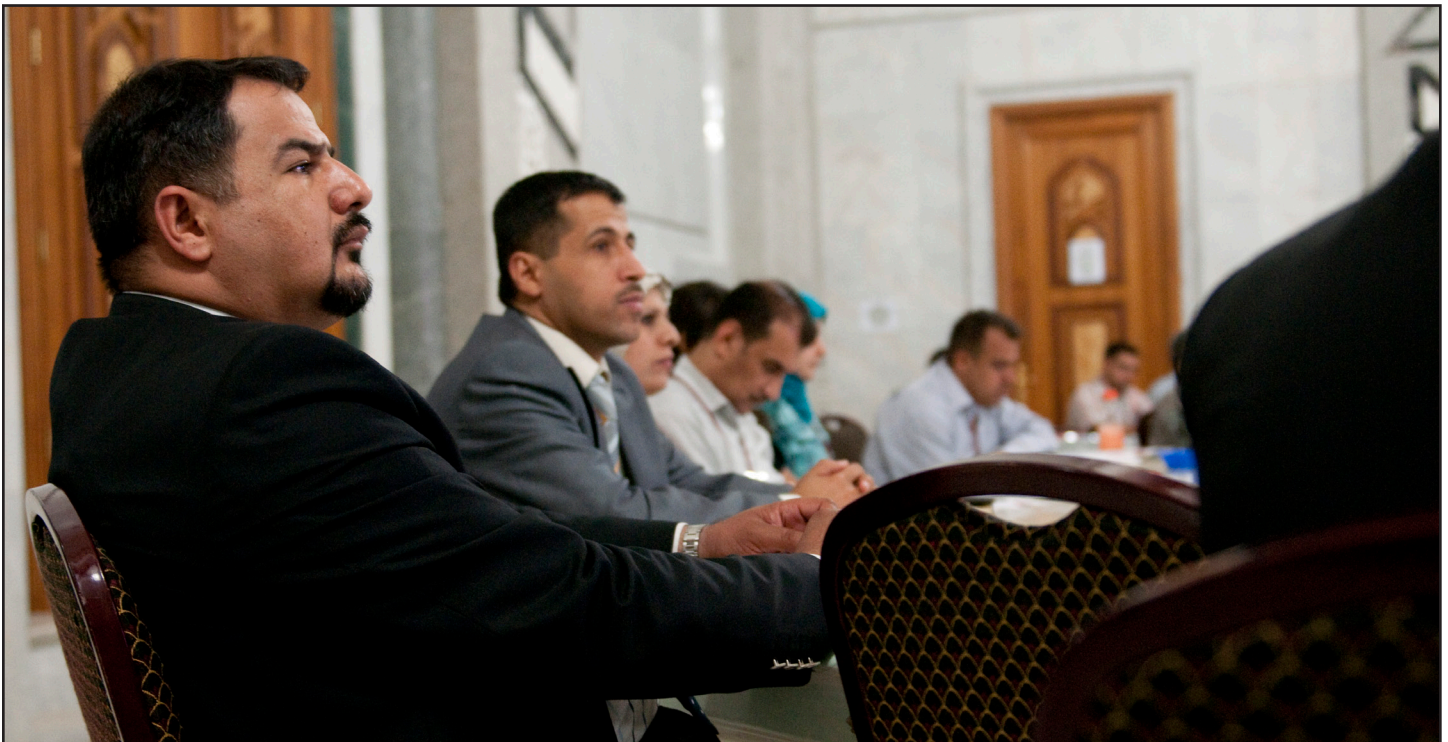
According to Obaid, the secure transmission of funds makes people more willing to open accounts with banks. As accounts are opened, he said cash comes off the street and the money can then be used by banks to promote and establish businesses, which will help provide jobs.

LaBay says he is inspired by the willingness of the Iraqis to change and improve their systems.

“Every single one of the bankers that I work with today came through some very challenging situations to be here,” he said. “That tells me they’re very interested in growing their banks, which in turn will help the Iraqi economy.

“Regardless of what your idea of banking is, it’s really the lifeblood of an economy,” LaBay said. “And if we help create a strong economy, people will have jobs; People will be in a little bit better place than they are right now.”

“With the enhancements in private and state banking, it’s accelerating,” Qazi said. “It’s not going to happen overnight, but it is happening.”



Managers from eight of Iraq’s leading banks listen to the opening remarks of the “Banking on Iraqi Business” conference hosted by the 15th Financial Management Company at Al Faw Palace June 1. The focus of the meeting was the important role electronic funds transfer and modern core-banking systems play in strengthening Iraq’s economy.

Misuse of lasers can lead to serious injuries

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Dan Yarnall
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

In 2010, there have been several incidents where U.S. service members were injured by the 532 nanometer green beam laser, also known as the “Green Dazzler.”

The “Green Dazzler” is a laser-light device intended for use as part of escalation of force measures, however, most injuries have occurred when Soldiers misuse the light, said Lon Cooper with U.S. Forces-Iraq safety office.

These injuries, some of which have been permanent, take Soldiers away from their missions, said Lt. Col. Thomas White, Theater Consultant for Optometry with Task Force 14th Medical Combat Support Hospital.

Most Green Dazzler injuries to U.S. forces are preventable, and are caused by Soldiers not using the laser is for its intended purpose, Cooper said.

First Sgt. Fredrick Grataski with Company B, 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, ensures his Soldiers know the laser is a necessary tool for them to use in accomplishing the mission.

“We use it only when necessary,” he said, “and in accordance with the escalation of force.”

The laser, when used properly, works well because people’s eyes are naturally drawn to the light. However, it can also cause serious damage when used incorrectly, White said.

“When used at 75 to 200 meters the Green Dazzler will perform its intended effect, it will dazzle the retina,” he said. “It will give a person

an after-image and blurred vision. It causes visual problems, which are all temporary.”

The symptoms, depending on how long the laser was used, disappear in as little as 15 minutes, or the person could take up to two days to recover, White added.

If the laser is pointed at the human eye within 50 meters, it can cause a permanent loss of vision, taking perfect vision down to 20/40 or worse.

“The key thing for Soldiers is not to shine it in people’s eyes unless you have a real reason to,” said White.

Cooper said that leaders need to ensure that before Soldiers go out on a mission, that they understand the purpose of the laser and how to use it responsibly.

“Before any unit goes out on a mission make sure they know the rules of engagement with these lasers,” said White.

Grataski does just that. To keep Soldiers in his unit safe, he ensures they are briefed on the equipment’s proper use.

“My Soldiers know to treat it as a weapon. We don’t play with it like it’s a toy and we don’t shine it in people’s eyes,” he said.

Unit leaders need to drive the safety message home that the “Green Dazzler” is a weapon that can inflict permanent damage to the eyes, White said. Education and proper training can help prevent Soldiers from hurting themselves or their battle buddies.



The use of lasers, in conjunction with other force protection measures, can be a valuable tool. When used improperly they can cause permanent eye damage. (Courtesy Photo)

VBC Facility Operating Hours

Sports Oasis DFAC
Breakfast 5:00 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Dinner 5 - 8:30 p.m.
Midnight chow 11:00 p.m. - 1:00 a.m.
Sandwich Bar open 24 hours

Education Center
8 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Camp Liberty Post Exchange
8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Camp Victory Post Exchange
8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Paul Smith Gym
Open 24 Hours

Victory Main Post Office
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

**USF-I Unit Mail Room
Customer Services/Mail Call:**
Daily 3 - 6 p.m.

Al Faw Palace Post Office
Wednesday and Sunday
12:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Golby TMC Sick Call
Monday - Friday 7:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Saturday & Sunday 9 - 11:30 a.m.

Mental Health Clinic
Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Saturday 9 a.m. - noon

Pharmacy
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - noon;
1 - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday 9 a.m. - noon

Websites

Check it out:

USF-I Web pages
www.usf-iraq.com
www.flickr.com/photos/mnfiraq
www.twitter.com/USF_Iraq

Facebook -
United States Forces-Iraq
U.S. Army III Corps
Phantom Battalion
III Corps Fort Hood



The leadership of the Iraqi Ground Forces Command conduct a “Super Battlefield Update Assessment.” Members of United States Forces-Iraq attend to observe and advise Iraqi Army leadership on the conduct of an effective battlefield update assessments.

BUA, from Page 1

divisions. His American counterpart, Brig. Gen. Joseph DiSalvo, USF-I deputy chief of staff and III Corps chief of staff, watched the proceedings with interest.

“I continue to be impressed with how well the IGFC staff has improved in their ability to communicate the most critical information to their chief of staff. It is vital that our USF-I staff members continue to partner with their Iraqi counterparts to assist them through this process,” said DiSalvo.

For the IGFC, the meeting is their opportunity to share information, work through problems that are impacting the mission, and receive guidance from their leadership.

“The purpose of the Super BUA is to exchange and transfer information and to discuss the events of the last week,” Iraqi Army Maj. Ali Haider, a Public Affairs Officer for the Iraqi Ground Forces Command, said. “It also allows the Iraqi Army divisions to discuss their challenges and any issues they face.”

During the meeting, USF-I staff members sit side by side with their IGFC counterparts so they can hear how they disseminate their information and then discuss with them ways to improve the communication between the IGFC leadership and their staffs, said Maj. Gary Farley, a member of the IGFC Joint Operations Center Advisory Team

“I’ve seen, at least with this corps, that they have the mind set when they’re working with the Iraqis, ‘Let me advise my counterpart,’” Farley said. “What you see happening after the meetings is that a lot of them do their own small huddles with their Iraqi counterparts and talk about how things went.”

It’s a chance to see how effectively their Iraqi counterparts use battle update assessments as they work to take over the security of their country and simultaneously build a fully-operational Army, he said.

“When you hear them work on issues, the Chief of Staff, General DiSalvo, sits right there,” Farley said. “He’s got all his

primaries there and he can say ‘wait a second, I think my guys can help train you on this.’”

When III Corps arrived and became part of the USF-I staff, they wanted to continue the Super BUAs as a means to highlight the ongoing successes and challenges within the Iraqi Army. To that end, the focus by members of the U.S. training teams has intensified in the last couple months, said Lt. Col. Raul Arrocha, the IGFC Joint Operations Center advisor.

“U.S. advisors are now co-located in the Iraqi Army JOC for the first time since the creation of the IGFC,” Arrocha said. “U.S. and Iraqi officers work shoulder-to-shoulder to develop a common operating picture of the Iraq Joint Operations Area. By coordinating with U.S. forces, the Iraqi military has an opportunity to learn different ways to develop, manage, and present information to their leadership.”

The Super BUA also provides USF-I staff members with situational awareness on Iraqi Army operations, Farley said. A clear picture of Iraqi Army priorities and issues gives USF-I staff member’s insight on where to focus their efforts as they work to develop the self-reliance of the Iraqi Army.

“The IGFC continues to make significant strides,” said Col. Mike Matthews, chief of the IGFC Joint Operations Center Advising Team. “For example, they have recently begun to incorporate intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and weather products into their analysis for current and future operations.”

“Having U.S. representatives there helps,” Haider said. “For example, the (USF-I deputy) chief of staff provides suggestions and the Iraqi leaders take them into consideration and use them as guidelines”

Arrocha said that continued coordination with U.S. forces is critical because it will make it easier for the Iraqi military to take over as U.S. forces transition from combat to stability operations.