



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Prior, 2-82 Public Affairs)

Being the First to Join the Force

Graduating members of the first group of female Iraqi Security Volunteers in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District swear an oath of loyalty to the government during a graduation ceremony Oct. 12. The women will join hundreds of male residents who are already on duty protecting public places against terrorists.

Commander Notes Progress in Northwestern Baghdad

By Master Sgt. Dave Larsen
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq – A reduction in violence in neighborhoods on Baghdad's northwest side and an improved security situation is allowing reconstruction efforts and economic gains to flourish, the commander of the brigade who have patrolled the area for nearly a year said during a press conference here Oct. 12.

Col. J.B. Burton, commander of the 2nd "Dagger" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, met with members of the Pentagon press corps for a briefing via satellite. He highlighted the progress made in his area of operation, which spans most of northwestern Baghdad.

"In order to stop the cycle of violence

we set about to defeat sectarian expansion by Shia Extremists, while simultaneously defeating Al-Qaeda and denying their access to the population," said Burton, a native of Tullahoma, Tenn. "In short, we had to get out into the city, live among the citizens, fight alongside the ISF, and deny insurgents, criminals and extremists access to the population."

The implementation of the Baghdad Security Plan, Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon allowed the Dagger Brigade to move into neighborhoods with a permanent presence, Burton added, with the end result being an 85 percent reduction in violence in the area since May.

"Of our 95 'Mulhallas,' or neighborhoods—58 of them are now considered under control, 33 remain in a clearing status

with violence continuing to go down, and four remain in a disrupt status," Burton noted. He said murders in the area, which a year ago occurred more than 150 times each week, are down to an average of five a week.

He said a major contributor to the improving security situation in northwestern Baghdad is the commitment of concerned citizens, who have stepped forward to aid Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces provide safe neighborhoods and put a stop to sectarian violence and terrorist acts in their midst.

"These volunteers are actively providing security in partnership with our com-

“Dagger” Commander Tells of Unit Success

Conference From Page 1

bined forces and concurrently increasing the citizen’s confidence in the Iraqi Security Forces as a whole,” Burton said. “To date, we have a total of 1,772 volunteers and recruits who are fully screened and ready to attend academy for integration into the ISF, with 500 scheduled to attend (the police) academy this month.”

With an increased confidence in the security efforts in their neighborhoods, Burton said each of his 14 joint security stations have seen an increase in tips from residents, helping to thwart terrorist activity. Likewise, he said residents are becoming more involved in the local governmental process, addressing community issues together.

Burton’s brigade headquarters is slated to return to its home base in Schweinfurt, Germany beginning next month. The Dagger Brigade commander said he is pleased with the progress he’s seen during his year in the Iraqi capital.

“We leave an area of operations that has shown significant improvement in terms of reduced violence, improved essential services, improvement in the task of daily governing, Iraqi Security Forces that get better each and every day,” he concluded.



(Photo by Capt. David Levasseur, 2-1 Inf. Div. PAO)

Col. J.B. Burton, commander of the 2nd “Dagger” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, conducts a press briefing via satellite with the Pentagon press corps from Camp Victory Oct. 12. Burton’s Germany-based brigade has been responsible for security in 95 western Baghdad neighborhoods for the past year.

“And most importantly we are seeing citizens who are rejecting extremist organizations and standing up and volunteering to

help improve the security and well-being of their families and their neighbor’s families.”

Eid-al-Fitr

Eid-al-fitr is the three-day observance that joyfully celebrates the end of Ramadan. Family parties, forgiveness, moral victory and peace, fellowship, brotherhood and unity are all themes of the observance.

Above all, it is to give thanks to Allah for help and strength during Ramadan.



Arabic Phrase of the Day

aqriibaa'

Defined: family

Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



Today

High: 99
Low: 72



Tomorrow

High: 98
Low: 72



Sunday

High: 98
Low: 71

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Program Releases Detainees for Ramadan

By Spc. Angel D. Martinez
113th MPAD

BAGHDAD – As a gesture of goodwill and reconciliation Multi-National Force - Iraq and the government of Iraq released more than 50 detainees as part of the Pledge and Guarantor Release Program Oct. 10.

The mass release occurred during the month-long Muslim holiday, Ramadan, which started with the new moon Sept. 13.

According to Air Force 1st Lt. Angela Webb, an Ocean Township, N.J., native and the deputy public affairs officer for Task Force 134, the detainees were held because at some point, they were a security risk to Iraqi and Coalition Forces. Once they no longer are a threat, they are released.

In the Pledge and Guarantor Release Program, the detainee promises he will not hurt innocent Iraqis, Iraqi Security Forces or Coalition Forces, Webb said. Then a family member has to ensure that the promise is kept. If the detainee slips up again, not only the detainee but the family member who claimed responsibility for them will be held liable.

“Not all (detainees) have to have a guarantor, but as part of the program we’re trying to find



(Photo by Spc. Angel D. Martinez, 113th MPAD)

Family members showed their support for recently released loved ones during a release ceremony. More than 50 Iraqis were freed by Multi-National Force - Iraq and the government of Iraq Oct. 10.

one for each of them,” said Webb. “We’re not just going to keep them if they don’t have a guarantor. If they’re not a security risk anymore, we’ll let them go.”

For many of the detainees this is not the first visit they have had with their family since being

held. While they are detained, family visitations are allowed.

“We are not trying to keep them away from their families, but they obviously did something bad enough to be considered a security threat,” said Webb.

Since most of the detainees

are their families’ sole providers, there is a material incentive program for detainees and their families, Webb said.

During their captivity the detainees have the opportunity to change their ways by working and pursuing educational opportunities. One of the programs allows them to work voluntarily. With this option, they will be able to send money to their families while they are detained.

There is also anti-extremist re-education program, Webb said, which includes Islamic clerics, psychologists and behavioral scientists working one-on-one with the detainees.

“A lot of (detainees) that come in are illiterate, so we make them go through a basic education class,” said Webb. “This way they can read the Quran for themselves, and they can see that the killing of innocents is not acceptable.”

Overall the program seems to be working, because none of the detainees released under the program have been detained again, she said.

“We are trying to learn about them and figure out how we can help them and their country,” said Webb. “So when they get out here, they pick up a book instead of a gun because they have that knowledge now.”



Trooper Takes Silver Star with Ounce of Humility

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp
1-1 Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Riding in a humvee down a dusty road, Sgt. Ken Thomas, a team leader and cavalry scout for Troop C, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, sits in the right front passenger side of the vehicle, relating that never in a million years did he ever think he would receive a Silver Star Medal while deployed to Iraq.

As the humvee comes to a stop, Thomas who was presented the medal in a ceremony at Camp Liberty, in western Baghdad, Aug. 11, gets out and walks from house to house along a road in a neighborhood in the Baghdad Gardens area near Taji with other members of his platoon as they build relationships with the local people here, gathering census information.

The Utopia, Texas native, who has a wife, Christi, a soon-to-be two-year-old daughter, MacKenzie, spends most of his days here patrolling the streets, takes the fact that he is a Silver Star recipient with a dose of humility.

“I just did my job and there really wasn’t anything extraordinary about it,” said Thomas, relating his experience of a mission in which he and members of his platoon were ambushed as they floated down the Tigris River on patrol boats as part of a joint mission with Iraqi Police near Falahat, Iraq Feb. 16. “It was just another day in the Cav.”

“It wasn’t just me, it was a whole platoon out there doing outstanding things,” added Thomas.

Four Iraqi Police patrol boats, made up of mixed crews with both Troop C Soldiers and Iraqi Police, set out on the mission to keep the river clear of possible insurgents trafficking weapons, said Thomas setting the scene.

Tips received indicated that insurgents were using the river to transport weapons and gain access to areas from which they could launch attacks on civilians, Iraqi security forces and coalition troops.

In the order of march, Thomas was in the second boat and his platoon leader was in the first boat, with the two other boats following.

Within a matter of minutes and not getting too far down the river, the Soldiers and Iraqi Police found themselves sailing through



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1-1 Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Utopia, Texas native Sgt. Ken Thomas (right), a team leader with Troop C, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment talks with local Iraqi residents near Taji, Iraq during an Oct. 6 foot patrol.

a hail of bullets.

Thomas said the enemy, however, was very well positioned, having very carefully planned the attack.

Once the heavy fire began, Thomas’s platoon leader, 1st Lt. John Dolan, a native of Maple Grove, Minn., ordered the boats to turn around—by that time, it was too late.

“After the firing started, we saw the first boat, the lieutenant’s, get hit and saw them crash into an island,” said Thomas. “Then we hit a sand bar and our boat got stuck so we were like sitting ducks.”

After the ammunition for the boat’s main weapon was expended, the decision was made to try to swim to shore as opposed to taking more fire, said Thomas.

As the Soldiers entered the water, weight lifted from the boat and it was freed from the sand bar. The two Iraqi Police decided to take the boat and find another route out.

The Iraqi Police saw no safe way to make it out of the area so they pulled the boat around to the East side of the island. Then, the Soldiers got back on the boat and they were able to take it to a river bank.

“There was a cinderblock wall running to the north and the south and a fence to the east. So, I told him we were going to have to cut through the fence,” said Thomas.

There was just one obstacle, downed power lines running across the fence and sparks were flying from them. Thomas ran

back under fire and cut a hole in the fence using wire cutters all the while receiving small jolts of electricity.

While his fellow scouts made their way through the fence, Thomas pulled security and then crawled through himself.

Once they made it through the fence, they ran to a house where there was better cover and they continued engaging the enemy until helicopters from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade arrived on the scene to evacuate the Soldiers and Iraqi Police.

The crew in the first boat to include Dolan, the platoon leader, had fought their way to a clearing where the wounded Dolan had called in the air assets.

In all, the ambush lasted for a little over two hours, Thomas said. No U.S. Soldiers were killed in the ambush.

Thomas praised the performance of his fellow Soldiers and credits their survival to teamwork.

“They really did an outstanding job considering the impossible task at hand,” said Thomas. “It really was a team effort, everything just fell into place.”

Dolan echoed many of the same sentiments about the efforts of his Soldiers.

“Thomas really did an amazing job and just did what anyone of those guys would have done that day,” said Dolan. “He acted in a manner with no regard for his own safety or life but what he did, he did for his brothers.”