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Editor's Note

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Cover photo: EOD technician places explosives with water near the IED to put it out of the way and damage the ignition during the Combined CIED (Counter Improvised Explosive Device) exercise between the ANSF and ISAF. Photo by: Ruud Mol

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Removing Saddam and his sons from power, as with removing the Taliban, was over with relative ease. But the blowback since, from global terrorism and those elements that support it, has been fierce, unrelenting and costly. For many, it simply isn't and can't be worth it. For me, I think we must see it through. They, the terrorists, who threaten us here and round the world, will never give up if we give up. It is a test of will and of belief. And we can't fail it.

UK Prime Minister Tony Blair Retirement Speech

Editorial

The cover of this edition of *Coalition Bulletin* captures a soldier neutralizing an IED, a lethal and effective weapon system, being used by insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although the technique is not new but the advancements in technology and modes of application being witnessed



actually provide a useful insight to the nature of fight defense forces are likely to face in future conflicts world over.

Surge in Iraq appears to be creating space (improved situation in Baghdad and Al Anbar being the cases in point) for the political elements to seize the opportunity and deliver. The sought after legislations encompassing amendments in the Iraqi constitution, de-bathification, distribution of hydrocarbon and early elections to empower the actual representatives of the populace, retain the potential to bring a quantum improvement in the security situation. It is therefore time for the Iraqi leadership to take the lead on these issues, as reconciliation and political initiatives retain the potential for long term sustainable peace in Iraq.

Numerous successful operations by ISAF in the strongholds of Taliban in Afghanistan have taken the battle to insurgents and the Coalition forces are visibly on the offensive, having pre-empted the much acclaimed *Spring Offensive*. To build on these gains and make the insurgents ir-relevant, there is a compelling need to ensure ruthless elimination of collateral damage and improve engagement with the locals along with renewed emphasis on the development efforts.

Situation in Somalia remains fragile and the security mechanism worked out through the good offices of African Union remains short of its required level of implementation. The problem merits a more focused approach in terms of effort and resources; else it retains the potential of developing into an ungoverned space harboring destabilizers of global proportions.

Like always, the bulletin reflects the capacity building and development efforts being undertaken in the AOR, with emphasis on non-kinetic means. In the same context, details of a medical symposium held at Tampa and participated by the coalition partners is also a highlight of this issue.

Before I end, I would like to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of LTC Ehtisham Tirmizi, who after having worked for two years as Chief of Coalition Public Affairs Team moves back to Pakistan. We wish him well in his new assignment and thank him for all the good work he did.

Ahsan Mahmood

Brigadier-General, Pakistan

Chairman, Public Awareness Working Group



Iraqi, Coalition Forces Continue Security Efforts



Story by Spc. Scott Kim

Agency Combined Press Information Center

BAGHDAD — A press conference discussing the status of security in Iraq was held at the Combined Press Information Center in the International Zone Wednesday.

Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV, Multi-National Force-Iraq spokesman and Dr. Ali Al-Dabbagh, spokesman for the government of Iraq, talked about the progress that has been made and continuing efforts that will make Iraq a safer country.



Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV, Multi-National Force-Iraq spokesman and Dr. Ali Al-Dabbagh, spokesman for the government of Iraq, discuss the ongoing security efforts during a press conference held at the Combined Press Information Center Wednesday. Photo by by Spc. Emily Greene, Combined Press Information Center.

“Our commitment to help Iraq’s government secure progress and provide hope for its people is strong and clear,” Caldwell said.

Coalition forces have been working hard with Iraqis to prepare them for their responsibility of protecting Iraq.

“We’re working with the MNF-I to supply and train the Iraqi forces so that they can handle the security at the end, because ultimately, they will be responsible about the security situation,” said Al-Dabbagh.

The challenges facing the Iraqi people are many as they are trying to establish a judicial system based upon fair treatment under the law while under assault from terrorists, said Caldwell.

“The Iraqi security force and its Coalition partners are taking on these outlaws,” Caldwell said. “We are helping the Iraqis fight Al-Qaeda, which is trying to plant its poisonous ideology in Iraq through horrific terror tactics and mass murders.”

During the past week, from May 16-22, Coalition forces conducted 45 focused operations against Al-Qaeda.

“These raids resulted in the killing of 19 terrorists and the detention of 88 more,” said Caldwell.

There are also ongoing missions to find the three missing soldiers that were taken on May 12.



Medical Symposium “Knows

Story by Sgt. Shannon Crane
U.S. Central Command Public Affairs

MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – Differences in uniform, language and culture did not inhibit the friendly interaction and flow of ideas at the Central Region Medical Symposium here in Tampa, May 21-24.

The four-day conference, hosted by United States Central Command, was attended by representatives from 12 nations and focused on the critical role of health in sustaining national and regional stability within the USCENTCOM area of responsibility.

It also provided a forum to identify key areas requiring concentration and build consensus for future engagement.

“This kind of cooperation started out a couple years ago as kind of an idea,” said U.S. Air Force Colonel Douglas Robb, command surgeon for USCENTCOM, “and it has grown, I think, into a driving force for change in our region.”

Robb, who is responsible for all joint and coalition health service support activities in the USCENTCOM theater, said it was exciting to have representatives from across the region together in the same place.

“I never would have thought in my lifetime that I would see twelve nations from the Central Asian states, Arabian and Asian Peninsula, and the Horn of Africa,” said Robb, “sitting in a room like this, as friends, as colleagues, as neighbors, to talk about how we can take care of not only the people in our nations, but the people in our region.”



COL Ahmed Al-Qamshoui, a medical officer from Oman, discusses health issues and accomplishments in his country at the Central Region Medical Symposium in Tampa, Fla. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Shannon Crane, U.S. Central Command



Walter Clarke, a representative from the University of Florida, makes a point during a discussion with Brigadier Gen. Christopher Arrum, medical officer from Kenya, at the Central Region Medical Symposium in Tampa, Fla. Photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. Nada Mishrik, U.S. Central Command

Day one of the symposium featured a series of expert presentations from various organizations, to include the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development. Keynote speakers addressed a variety of issues to include health and stability, sustaining civilian health care in a combat zone and rebuilding countries with a focus on health.

“At this symposium, we’re exploring a very important issue: What role does health policy play in national and regional stability?” said Dr. Jeffrey Nader, Deputy Assistant

no Cultural Boundaries”



Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy. “Or in other words, what role does health play in the key international struggle of the next few decades?”

“That is the fight between those who seek to damage developing and fragile states...and those who seek to build up developing and fragile states,” he added.

The presentations were followed by participant breakout groups, organized by region.

The final day of the symposium was spent going over the ideas discussed in the focus groups and figuring out ways each nation could implement these ideas within their home countries and what support the U.S. could provide.



Health professionals from the United States, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan focus on a presentation at the Central Region Medical Symposium in Tampa, Fla. The conference provides an open forum to discuss health in relation to fostering stability, to identify key areas requiring concentration and build consensus for future engagement. Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Shannon Crane, U.S. Central Command

Days Two and Three gave health professionals from around the region the opportunity to give presentations aimed at defining health as a critical stabilizing factor in governance and security.

Representatives discussed specific health-related issues their countries were facing and what steps they were taking to make improvements.

Col. Akzamov Azamat, a health professional officer from the Republic of Uzbekistan, acquainted the group with his country’s actions to ensure it has a healthy military force.

“The Republic of Uzbekistan is trying to maintain a low epidemic risk in the country, and there are a number of research organizations that are assisting us in doing so,” he said.

“Our mission is to improve the medical care for the military of Uzbekistan, as well as the implementation of new methodologies, equipment and treatments for the military,” he added.

Dr. C. Ross Anthony, co-director of Rand Health’s Center for Domestic and International Health Security and director for Global Health, explained his group’s focus on stability through security.

“Stability is not possible without security,” he said. “You must have security in order to get to a stable country, a stable region. Health is a vital component of that stability...and the key for this long-term stability is long-term relationships. We’re talking relationships over decades, not four to six to twelve months.”

At the end of the day, it was not only plans and ideas exchanged at this year’s symposium but there was also an exchange of gifts and of well-wishes between neighboring nations and new-found friends.

“That fact that we can get together and share ideas – get together and share our hopes, our dreams, our vision for our profession in our respective countries and our respective regions – that’s important,” Robb said.



New School Opens in Panjshir Province



*Story and photos by
HQ ISAF Public Information Office*

PANJSHIR PROVINCE, AFGANISTAN — Officials from the International Security Assistance Force Provincial Reconstruction Team Panjshir, along with the provincial governor, parliamentarian representative and an Afghan senator, celebrated the opening of a school here May 2.

The two-story Bazarak Girls School is the first for girls in the province providing education through the high school



U.S. Air Force Col. Jennifer Walter presents a certificate of appreciation to Yakube, the contractor, on a job well done

level. It will host approximately 3,000 students annually in 16 classrooms with desks and blackboards.

“Education is a priority for us,” said Gov. Haji Buhlol Bajig. “The children have been eager to learn, and now they have the proper environment to do so.”

“It’s been a pleasure working with the PRT,” Buhlol said. “I hope the parliament members take this message back to

the capital. We’re working hard here and we want more funding.”

The parliamentarian, senator and other provincial leaders addressed the gathered crowd of more than 200 before cutting the ribbon.



Fletcher Burton, a Department of State representative, and Lt. Col. Chris Luedtke, Panjshir PRT commander, enjoy the classroom inspection

“If the girls are educated, then the mothers will be educated and the future of our children and our country will be different than in years past,” said Parliament member Judge Rahala. “Islam emphasizes education, and we can not ignore half of the population.”

Lt. Col. Chris Luedtke, Panjshir PRT commander, noted Panjshir’s reputation for vigilance.

“Panjshiris fought for Afghanistan, and now Panjshir fights for all children’s education,” Luedtke said. “This was a dream of Panjshiris, built by the hands of Panjshiris, and now it will be filled with Panjshiris.”



An outer view of the first girls’ school in Panjshir



Salvadoran President Visits Troops in Iraq



Story and photos

Courtesy of Salvadoran MoD

The president of El Salvador, Elías Antonio Saca recently visited Iraq and met the troops of his country.

“In an American Air Force airplane Hercules we traveled to Al Kut, Wasit province, where the Salvadoran troops are deployed,” said the chief of state, who received a complete report about the zone and the troops.

After emphasizing the importance that the President and commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces visits his soldiers, Saca said they are “in perfect state, including two soldiers who were injured recently in Iraq” with whom he talked personally.

The Salvadoran soldiers 28-years-old Eduardo de Jesus Romero and 45-years-old Alexander Alberto Mendoza, were wounded April 23 during an ambush near An Numanihay.

“I want to say to the Salvadorans that our troops are in a very high state of moral, they are all good, missing their families, but fulfilling the designated work,” he said after emphasizing the important role of the humanitarian tasks and reconstruction that is realized by the troops.

During his three hours visit to the Arab country, Saca met several Polish and American generals who direct the troops



President Antonio Saca addresses Salvadoran soldiers during his visit to Iraq of Coalition, as well as with the commander of the Eighth Contingent of the Cuscatlán Battalion, Col. Victor Manuel Bolaños.

El Salvador is the only Latin American country that maintains troops in Iraq from August of 2003, when it sent the first contingent of 360 soldiers.

The previous contingent which integrated 380 soldiers

has undergone five fatalities and 20 wounded.

After describing this “historical” visit to Iraq, Saca emphasized the authorities of that country asked for El Salvador that maintains its troops in that nation.

The Iraqi government “asked us to continue our work,” said Saca, and explained that because of security reasons and the unexpected visit he managed to talk with only some of Iraqi employees in the Camp Delta, located in Center South of Iraq.

During his visit to Iraq the president of El Salvador was accompanied by the minister of defense, Gen. Otto Romero, minister of Security and Justice, René Figueroa, as well as deprived secretary of the Presidency, Elmer Charlaix, and of Communications, Julio Rank, among others.



President Antonio Saca poses with soldiers of the seventh contingent of El Salvador in Iraq



Iraqis Taking the Lead in Basrah



*Story and photos
Courtesy of UK MoD*

In an upbeat assessment General Ali Hamadi, Head of the Basrah Emergency Security Committee, has voiced his growing confidence in the Province's security situation and the capability of the Iraqi Security Forces as they assume greater security responsibility and move towards Provincial Iraqi Control.

At a press conference held jointly with Brigadier Tim Evans Light Brigade, at General Hamadi's headquarters, the Provincial Joint Coordination Centre, in the centre of Basra City, General Hamadi praised



General Ali Hamadi, left, and Brigadier Tim Evans speak during the press event at the Provincial Joint Coordination Centre

the significant progress made to date, but admitted more needed to be done. Talking about some of the issues which affect the city, in particular police corruption, he responded:

"I will not say to you there is no corruption in the police. This depends on every individual within the Iraqi Police Service deciding he wants to do good. It is our duty to ensure we fight all the bad elements in society. We will see this matter continue to improve."

The media event, which took place on Monday 14 May 2007, included a Tactical Support Unit capability demonstration and a visit to the centre's Operations Room, where staff from the Iraqi emergency and security agencies coordinate joint responses to incidents.

Brigadier Evans also took the opportunity to answer local journalists' questions, where he underlined the continuing commitment of Multinational Forces in southern Iraq, particularly in supporting security in Basrah Province during its successful transition to Provincial Iraqi Control.

He also appealed to the Basrawi people, saying that the region's future stability and success, now, more than ever, depended upon the Iraqi people choosing to support the lawful transition.

Brigadier Evans said:

"The Multinational Forces have always said that we would reduce our presence once the Iraqi Security Forces began to take back responsibility for security and we are

keeping our promise. The time is right for the people of Basra to determine their future. They must support the Iraqi Security Forces and stop those who want to destabilise Basra."

He also explained the role that the Multinational Forces would provide following Provincial Iraqi Control:

"Reducing the Multinational Forces' presence does not mean abandoning South Eastern Iraq. We want to see Iraq succeed. We will continue to focus on training, mentoring and, if required, provide back-up to the Iraqi Security Forces. They will provide security and we will support them."

The conference was attended by around thirty local journalists. 19 Light Brigade is nearing the end of its tour on Op TELIC 9. In six and a half months it has worked closely with the Iraqi Security Forces and seen security and living conditions improve for the Iraqi people, notably in Basra City.

In addition the Brigade has made a concerted effort in supporting the Iraqi authorities as they confront their own internal corruption; the most well known of these being the closure of the Serious Crimes Unit and the destruction of its building on Christmas Day 2006.

The posture of the Multinational Forces has also changed, with Maysaan Province reaching Provincial Iraqi Control and in Basrah Province, the Old State Building, Shaat al Arab Hotel, Shaibah Logistics Base and Al Faw Security Base being handed over to the Iraqi authorities; these are significant steps towards accomplishing Provincial Iraqi Control.



Georgian Troops in Iraq



**Story by By 1st LT Georgian Army
Mikheil Chkuaseli
Georgian LNO at U.S. CENTCOM**

The Georgian Army's 33rd Light Infantry Battalion, made up of 555 officers and enlisted men, is helping to secure the International Zone, playing a significant role in the mission to provide peace and stability for all Iraqis.

Responsible for force protection and stabilization operations in the IZ, the 33rd Light Infantry Battalion is working directly with the U.S. Army's 1st Cavalry Division to provide security for the Iraqi government and international communities.

Deployed to Iraq since April 2, the battalion has already earned a reputation for being a tough, well-disciplined and well-led outfit. The battalion is led by Major Nikoloz Ikoshvili, recently awarded a medal for service by the Georgian president.

The 33rd Light Infantry Battalion's HQ, TOC and lodging are situated at Forward Operating Base Saqartvelo, which means "Georgia" when translated into English.



26 May, Independence Day of Georgia, celebrating at Fob "SAQARTVELO"

There are four companies in the Battalion. One company is a supply and support unit providing logistics to the other three companies, which conduct security missions. Their UNAMI mission extends six months to perform UN protection duties. Serving among them are a Georgian MP Squad and 13 liaison officers.



Brigade Commander Colonel Bryan Roberts and Battalion Commander Major Nikoloz Ikoshvili during the celebration of the Independence Day of Georgia at Fob "SAQARTVELO"

On May 26, the battalion marked Independence Day of Georgia with a solemn ceremony. The ceremony was attended by distinguished guests from the United Nations, ambassadors from several coalition countries, US 1st Cavalry Division Commander General Joseph Fil and 1st Cavalry Division 2nd Brigade Commander Colonel Bryan Roberts, as well as representatives from other American and coalition units.

Georgia, a partner in the War on Terror since 2003, currently has about 861 soldiers in Iraq and is one of the most significant contributors to coalition forces in terms of per-capita troop deployment.



Romanian Soldiers Bond with

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Gary A. Witte 13th SC(E), LSA ANACONDA PAO

There are differences in uniform, equipment and language, but to members of the 495th Infantry Battalion and their Coalition partners, the similarities are more important.

The Romanian paratrooper unit patrols certain areas in southern Iraq, provides a quick reaction force for British Explosive Ordnance Disposal units and maintains a safe route for convoys 24 hours a day.



Master Sgt. Robert Motoaca with the Romanian Army 495th Infantry Battalion drives an Armored Amphibious Vehicle, also known as a TAB-77

While the soldiers are trained in airborne operations, scuba diving and climbing, they are “just infantry guys” during their missions in Iraq, their commander, Lt. Col. George Constantin said. Their paratrooper status has helped them bond with the 82nd Sustainment Brigade, but overall he sees troops from both armies in the same light. “I don’t see boundaries between Americans and Romanians,” Constantin said.

Their efforts have gained the respect of many U.S. Soldiers, who provide additional equipment and training to the unit stationed at Logistical Support Area Adder.

Sgt. 1st Class Michael E. Proctor of Jacksonville, Fla., a senior maintenance adviser with the 546th Maintenance Company, said he enjoyed working with the Romanians when he recently taught Humvee maintenance to more than 50 of them.

“I’m pretty impressed with them,” Proctor said, noting the Romanians were eager students who constantly asked questions about the unfamiliar vehicle.

The southeastern European country has participated in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom since their beginnings. Currently, there are nearly 600 Romanian soldiers serving throughout Iraq, with a majority of those at the Tallil

base, according to their spokesman, Lt. Dorian Constantin Balan.

The army takes part in numerous training exercises with the American military every year and many of the soldiers know basic or intermediate English, he said. Balan himself learned English through a training program at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. “We have a special partnership with the U.S.,” he said.

Although the Romanian men and women serve under British forces at LSA Adder, many Americans have worked to forge connections with the paratrooper unit.

Maj. Lisa Munday, the plans and effects branch chief for the 365th Corps Support Battalion of Hattiesburg, said she started working with the Romanians to help provide the Humvee training. She was also looking for ways to improve life on the base, so she organized a soccer tournament among various Coalition Forces, including the U.S. Army, the U.S. Air Force, the Romanian Army, the British Army, the Ugandan Security Forces and the Australian Army.



Sgt. Maj. Ionut Grigore with the Romanian Army 495th Infantry Battalion serves as gunner for an Armored Amphibious Vehicle, also known as a TAB-77 while on convoy near Logistical Support Area Adder

“Initially, it was going to be just one tournament,” she said. Instead, the game has become a Sunday ritual at the Romanian camp inside LSA Adder. Variations on physical training uniforms substitute for team colors, with the exception of teams such as the Australians, who brought soccer jerseys with them to Iraq.

Cpl. Mihai Gancea, a Romanian soldier, was preparing for the American-Romanian match, except he was suiting up to play on the United States team. He said he found

Americans, Focus on Missions



Americans to be very friendly and any preconceptions have gone away as he's gotten to know them.

"We are all here for the same thing, so we have to be united," Gancea said. "They are the same as us." This equality doesn't extend to everything. He said while the Americans might be victorious if they were playing their version of football, those skills don't necessarily translate to a mastery of European football. "I don't know if they can beat us at soccer," he said, smiling.

Lt. Delman J. Hafermann of Waverly, Iowa, a liaison officer for 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry Regiment, was one of the Americans competing on the field. He said he enjoys playing against the Romanians and the good-natured competition works both ways. "We tell them Americans can beat Romanians any day," Hafermann said. This time, however, the Romanians earned a 3-1 victory over their American counterparts. Munday, who took part in a volleyball game with the Romanians the same day, said she enjoys seeing the interaction between the different countries.

Munday, who is from Fuquay-Varina, N.C., said her new friends have refused to teach her any Romanian, because they want to practice their English. She also noted their discipline, stating they do physical training five times a week.

"They have such huge hearts. They'll do anything for you," Munday said. "If we stay in our little cliques, we miss a chance to get to know each other."

The Romanians have had several chances to learn from U.S. troops. Many participated in a Combat Lifesaver course taught by the 82nd Sustainment Brigade in February and there are plans to conduct a joint mass casualty exercise in the near future.

"It is very important that we do these exercises together," Lt. Macau Florin, commander of the Romanian medical platoon, said. "We cannot afford mistakes in this."



Sgt. Gabriel Costache makes a move in a game against Staff Sgt. Marian Chiriac while on break from their security duties. Both men are members of the Romanian Army 495th Infantry Battalion



Lt. Sorin Lungu (right) with the Romanian Army 495th Infantry Battalion makes a kick during a soccer game with American Soldiers

There are a few other differences. While the names attached to some military camps can be obscure, it's pretty clear where the namesake of the 495th encampment comes from. The large bat painted on the concrete wall outside the camp is one clue. "They call it Camp Dracula to scare the enemy," Balan, the spokesman, said with a smile.

The Romanians are also involved in their own civil affairs projects, including the planned rebuilding of a nearby Iraqi school, he said. They also face their own dangers. Recently, members of an American convoy helped alert the soldiers stationed at a checkpoint about a suspicious vehicle in the area, Lt. Benone Bodoc, a Romanian platoon commander, said. The vehicle was later prevented from approaching the checkpoint. "They are always willing to help us," Bodoc said of the U.S. convoys. The Romanians constantly scan the area and the traffic for trouble. They also stay alert for dangers, including improvised explosive devices, during their own convoys.

"We have to know it's a war and we have to pay attention to everything; not just one thing," Cpl. Mihai Gancea said while on security duty.

The 495th arrived in February, just a month after their military did away with their draft, Romanian officials said. All the soldiers currently here volunteered to come to Iraq. The Romanian commander said each will do their best to accomplish their mission. "We are honored to be shoulder-to-shoulder with the American Army and we want to be all the time in the same situation," Constantin said. "Our place is here with NATO soldiers."



UK Brigadier Discusses Way ahead with Afghan Tribal Elders



Story and photos courtesy of UK MoD

The commander of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops in Helmand Province has been meeting with tribal elders in Gereshk in an effort to formulate plans for the reconstruction of the area following a recent joint operation by Afghan National Army (ANA) and ISAF troops.



Tribal elders in Gereshk have a vital role to play in the future of the area

The United Kingdom's Brigadier John Lorimer, commander of Task Force Helmand, was invited by Gov. Wafa to address more than 400 of Gereshk's influential tribal elders, called for a jirga, on May 10. It was the first opportunity for the governor and the commander to speak to the community since the start of ISAF's operation to clear the Sangin Valley of senior Taliban members and foreign fighters.

The jirga was also the first time in 28 years that a Helmand Governor has felt able to talk to the people without fear of being attacked by either the Soviets or the Taliban. As well as commenting on the improvements to security, thanks to the combined efforts of the ANA and ISAF troops, the commander was able to outline reconstruction work in the town.

"Development has already started in Sangin and Gereshk," said Lorimer. "We have provided support through a number of projects in Gereshk in recent months, including investment in health, education and municipal services.

"In addition the Kajaki Dam project will bring new roads, better irrigation and employment to the Upper Gereshk

Valley. It is a great opportunity which will brighten your future, but it needs your help and can only work if the Taliban are kept out."

Nearly 2,000 British, Danish and Afghan ground forces drove the Taliban from another area of the Sangin valley toward the town of Gereshk in the east of Helmand Province. It was part of the ongoing Operation Achilles which was



Brigadier John Lorimer, commander of Task Force Helmand, talks to tribal elders in Gereshk

launched by ISAF and Afghan National Security Forces in March aimed at stabilizing northern Helmand Province. The operation was conducted with the support of Karzai and the governor of Helmand.

Once the town was secure, ISAF engineers began constructing three patrol bases for the ANA whose permanent presence will keep the Taliban from returning to the town. A number of reconstruction projects are being planned with money being made available via the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Helmand's Provincial Reconstruction Team from international governments, including the UK.

The focus for the redevelopment of Gereshk centers on the town's hospital and plans also include a major overhaul of its capability and infrastructure. Once the projects are agreed work on identifying local contractors can begin as ordinary Afghans take the lead in reconstructing their country after decades of war.



Kenyan Soldiers Receive Close Look at U.S. Army Specialty Schools



**Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Mark Watson
129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

FORT BENNING, Ga. – Four Kenyan soldiers will be taking back to Kenya lessons learnt at Army Specialty Schools after training in the United States.

The visit was part of the Third Army's Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) program that hosts foreign soldiers and sends U.S. Soldiers to participating countries to interface with their counterparts.

"This builds relationships at all levels from the most junior enlisted to the most senior general," said Navy Lt. Jesse Nice, a Kenyan liaison officer. "It is an information exchange."

He added of the junior soldiers who see the American processes, that when they become senior enlisted or commissioned officers, they will then be in a place to help change things for the better for their country, making their experience with the TSC one that can last for the length of their careers.

The Kenyan soldiers received an up-close look at Airborne, Jumpmaster, Pathfinder and Ranger Schools. While they currently have an Airborne school, they would like to start a Ranger school. The school will be based off the U.S. school and the soldiers will be deployed much as American Rangers are deployed.

"Our Rangers will be a fast strike force," said Maj. Ahmed Saman, the commandant of the Kenyan parachute training school. "They will be trained in counter terrorism and for other high-speed operations."

The visiting soldiers included Saman, Lt. Charles Kirichiu, a platoon commander for their Ranger strike company, Staff Sgt. Hillary Osore, a parachute jumping instructor and Sgt.



Lt. Charles Kirichiu, a platoon commander for a Kenyan Ranger strike company, left, Maj. Ahmed Saman, the commandant of the Kenyan parachute training school. Sgt. Nicholas Ndwinga, platoon sergeant for the Ranger strike company, and Staff Sgt. Hillary Osore, a parachute jumping instructor, visited the Rangers in Action demonstration at Fort Benning. The Four Kenyan soldiers visited several U.S. Army speciality schools to see how the programs are run.

Nicholas Ndwinga, platoon sergeant for the Ranger strike company.

U.S. Army Central Command serves as the liaison for the TSC program. It invites members of militaries throughout the Third Army area of responsibility to travel to the U.S. and be paired with instructors. In return, U.S. instructors travel to various countries within the AOR and help train foreign soldiers.

"In the future, our Ranger instructors may have the opportunity to go to Kenya to advise their Ranger instructors," said Maj. Andrew Harmon, the Ethiopian and Kenyan country desk officer for Third Army.

The TSC program benefits both countries, he said. Not only does it broaden the Army's contacts throughout the area of operations, but the soldiers gain a mutual understanding of each others culture. The program also supports the Global War on Terrorism.

"This is a way to make our allies stronger so they can take care of their problems internally, which in turn helps us," Harmon said. "If we can have allies that are both with us in thought and the fact they are willing to devote troops to fight basically our enemies, we are infact helping the United States as a whole, so that we don't have to send our Soldiers out to fight in other countries."

Third Army makes this mutual benefit possible, he added.

"Third Army is the critical piece that brings everything together," Harmon said. "We have our senior leadership, Lt. Gen. (R. Steven) Whitcomb who meets with leaders in Kenya, and together with Theater Security Cooperation, we work together to address the needs of both countries."



Navy Lt. Jesse Nice, a Kenyan liaison officer, left, Kenyan Sgt. Nicholas Ndwinga, platoon sergeant for the Ranger strike company, Staff Sgt. Hillary Osore, a parachute jumping instructor, Maj. Ahmed Saman, the commandant of the Kenyan parachute training school and Maj. Andrew Harmon, the Ethiopian and Kenyan country desk officer for Third Army watch the Rangers in Action demonstration at Fort Benning.



Japanese Admiral Eiji Yoshikawa Visits Coalition Members



*Story by Sgt. Eric Jensen
U.S. Central Command Public Affairs*



Vice Adm. David Nichols (left) walks on the flight line with Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force Chief of Staff Adm. Eiji Yoshikawa upon the chief's of staff arrival May 17 at MacDill Air Force Base. Photo by: Capt. Manuel Matos (Dominican Republic)

Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force Chief of Staff Adm. Eiji Yoshikawa visited U.S. Central Command senior leadership here at Tampa, on May 17.

"I've arrived to express my gratitude for you giving me this great opportunity," he said. "It's my great pleasure to make a few remarks today."

Yoshikawa addressed the importance of maritime security operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, emphasizing solidarity amongst Coalition Forces by saying that no one country can secure the seas alone. Japan helps guard international waters from the Persian Gulf to Japan. The JMSDF

contributes to OEF by providing fuel and fresh water to Coalition ships. Yoshikawa believes the security on the seas provided by the Coalition is an important mission.

"Although the sacrifices that we have made might not be small, yet I do believe the global war on terrorism must continue so that we can prevent terrorists from operating freely and significantly," he said.

Since December, 2001, the JMSDF has been providing support for Operation Enduring Freedom. In particular, U.S. naval vessels that have been supplied with fuel by Japan in the Indian Ocean have been able to provide effective maritime security in the Persian Gulf. A testament to that is the confiscation of more than nine tons of narcotics and apprehension of small arms and anti-tank rockets by Coalition ships.

"What we have been doing is really historical and epic making activities which have been lasting for six years," Yoshikawa said.

He also pledged Japan's continued commitment to the global war on terror.

"I'm really happy to say, although final discussion is always a political discussion, JMSDF will not give up any effort to continue the contribution to OEF."



Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force Chief of Staff Adm. Eiji Yoshikawa addresses U.S. CENTOM and Coalition officers May 17. Photo by: Capt. Manuel Matos (Dominican Republic)



Kyrgyz Republic supports the War on Terror



Story and photos Courtesy of Kyrgyz MoD

After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the Kyrgyz Republic began actively supporting Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).

The Kyrgyz Republic openly supported the coalition airbase, which opened in December of 2001 at Manas Airport outside of the Kyrgyz Republic's capital city of Bishkek.

Countries such as France, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea have used the airbase as a strategic base of operations for coalition efforts.



Coalition airbase "Manas" near Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyz Republic

The United States, France and Spain currently have troops stationed at the Manas airbase.

The Kyrgyz Republic also provides air-traffic support and logistical support for operations in Afghanistan. Together with the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan,



The Kyrgyz liaison team to US Central Command consists of five officers. In the middle sitting Col. Mustakov Arstanbek (SNR). Standing from left to right: 1st Lt. Zakirov Erkin, 1st Lt. Isakov Ruslan, Capt. Teishov Urmat, 1st Lt. Kochorbaev Almaz the Kyrgyz Republic has provided 16,500 tons of humanitarian aid to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (food, clothes, tents, etc.).

This year, during the Kyrgyz-Afghani negotiations, the Minister of Defense of the Kyrgyz Republic suggested to the Minister of National Defense for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan that young Afghani boys and soldiers be educated in Kyrgyz military schools for free.

The Kyrgyz Republic celebrated the 15th anniversary of its armed forces on May 29 of this year.

During the past 15 years, Kyrgyz armed forces have formed military units and institutions, established multilateral and bilateral military relations with more than 27 countries and continued to support its allies in the War on Terror.



Victory for Afghan farmers



Story by HQ ISAF Public Information Office

SANGIN, Afghanistan – ISAF troops have safeguarded the livelihood of Afghan farmers by doing reconstruction work while in the middle of Operation Lastay Kulang meant to clear Taliban extremists from the Sangin Valley.

ISAF troops from the 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, and the 26th Engineer Regiment dug irrigation ditches to prevent the crops from drying up and decaying in the fields of southern Afghanistan. Using mechanical diggers, ISAF troops completed the work in hours rather than the days hand-digging would take.

"We are entering the main phase of Operation [Lastay] Kulang. What we are here for is to deliver a positive legacy to these people and try to make their lives better," said Maj. Dominic Biddick, patrol commander. "We've

cleared the Taliban throughout the Upper Sangin Valley, between Sangin and Kajaki and now we are delivering some tangible output."

The irrigation ditch feeds about 24 square kilometers south of Sangin. It will supply about 5,000 families with a water supply for their crops. Officials said without the water the crops would have failed within the next 10-14 days.

Lastay Kulang, from the Pashto word for "axe handle," is at the request of the Government of Afghanistan. The operation is building on the achievements of Operation Achilles in the Sangin Valley which supported the Afghan National Security Forces.

Approximately 2,000 ISAF and ANSF troops are taking part in Lastay Kulang, which has British, Danish and Estonian and U.S. troops.



First Women Graduate From Kirkuk Police Academy



**Story and photos by Spc. Amanda Morrissey
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

KIRKUK, Iraq – The first women to train at Kirkuk Police Academy were among the 980 police officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) to graduate from the academy, May 27.

Nisreen Hama Amin and Mirvat Amin, no relation, have joined their male counterparts in donning the blue uniform of the Iraqi police force to answer what they see as the patriotic call to duty.

“I want to help the people and do something good for my country,” Nisreen said. “I saw female police officers in Irbil and other places, and decided that this was the way to do it.”

Nisreen, who graduated from the basic police course, is new to the field of police work while Mirvat, a graduate of the NCO course, has nearly three years of experience working with the Iraqi police.

Although female police officers may still be uncommon in Iraq, they provide a vital function within the police force in their dealings with civilian women.

“The Iraqi police need female officers to be fully effective,” said Staff Sgt. Amaury Garcia, an advisor with the Police Transition Team from Forward Operating Base Warrior.



Nisreen Hama Amin receives instruction on firing a Glock 9mm pistol during weapons training at the Kirkuk Police Academy. Nisreen is one of the first women to graduate from the academy.

“Due to their beliefs, the men are reluctant to fully search women detainees,” explained Garcia, who works closely with the academy’s leadership. “That’s where female police officers step in. After recent bombings by women suicide bombers, the Iraqi police realize the importance of having female officers on the force.”

Nisreen will work in the jails, searching women who come to visit family members and guarding female inmates. Mirvat

also assists her male counterparts in their interactions with women they come into contact with during the line of duty, as well as performing secretarial duties at the police headquarters.



Nisreen Hama Amin accepts a graduation gift from Maj. Gen. Anwar, 2nd Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division commander, during a graduation ceremony at the Kirkuk Police Academy.

Nisreen and Mirvat trained separately from their male counterparts, going to the shooting range and attending classes geared specifically towards them. However, the circumstance of their training has not made them feel isolated from the other officers in their graduating class.

“These are our brothers, all of them,” Mirvat said. “They have been supportive of us and accepted us. We felt like we were a part of a family.”

“Our instructors are capable and qualified, and have my deepest appreciation,” Mirvat added. “They spent so much energy to educate and train us, and we would not have been able to graduate without them.”

Their families have also been important in Mirvat’s and Nisreen’s success. While worried about the dangers the women will face in the line of duty, their families have supported their commitment to become police officers, Mirvat said.

Sunday’s graduation, while a significant success, does not mark the end of their career aspirations. Nisreen would like to attend the NCO course at the academy, while Mirvat would like to work her way through the ranks and someday be a lieutenant.

They are also aware of the example they are setting for other women and girls in their city.

“We would like our country to reach the same level of acceptance that other countries have already achieved,” Mirvat said. “I hope our example will make communities more open and allow women to become more involved in society.”



Surgery Brings Smiles to Iraqi Family



Story and photo by Sgt. Juan Santiago
Multi-National Division – Baghdad Public Affairs

BAGHDAD — Indissar Fadhil gave birth to Hassan about eight months ago. The boy was healthy aside from one major complication: He had a cleft lip and palate. His upper lip had no sides because they were compressed to the center. He had no roof inside his mouth to separate his mouth from his nasal cavity.

“I was astonished and worried for my baby because he wouldn’t stop crying and he was unable to eat,” Fadhil said.

Fadhil said she experienced many struggles and setbacks before receiving positive feedback about getting treatment for her son.

“I initially contacted several doctors in Baghdad.”

They all told her there would be an extensive waiting period and Hassan would require a series of four surgeries, each costing \$1,000.

“I was completely devastated because we have no money and my husband is disabled without work,” Fadhil said.

To her relief, she was referred to the Civil Military Operations Center here. Major Kristian Sorensen, civil affairs officer, and Headquarters Company, 16th Military Police Brigade, found out about Hassan’s condition at the CMOC.

“In this environment, birth defects are not entirely uncommon, though I’ve never seen a cleft lip/palate this severe,” Sorensen said.

“I was automatically drawn to help this family.”

Sorensen took immediate action.

“I made phone calls to (several) groups and organizations and they all led me to Operation Smile,” he said.

Operation Smile, a nonprofit organization in Jordan, specializes in operating on children with cleft lips and palates.

Sorensen said he took photos of Hassan and sent (them) to Operation Smile. One of the doctors told Sorensen that Hassan’s case was one of the most severe he had ever

seen. With the help of professional contacts, Sorensen’s efforts made Hassan eligible for treatment.

Meanwhile, Fadhil has had to glue plastic mouth pieces to Hassan’s mouth in order for him to eat. Sorensen supplied a few mouthpieces and denture adhesive. Fadhil said they have to be replaced every couple months. She eventually ran out of mouthpieces to aid her baby.

Fadhil described a dangerous commute to the doctor in downtown Baghdad to get another mouth piece.

“I had my children with me and we were nearly hit by the impact of a car bomb. Once I reached the hospital, I was informed by the doctor that the mouthpiece would cost about (\$50), which I did not have. I was sent away empty handed.”

Before a date was confirmed for Hassan’s surgery, the young mother’s eyes filled with tears.

“Now I have no choice but to feed him drop-by-drop out of an eye dropper,” she said. “It’s very time consuming and he’s sick. Between tending to him and my other two boys and going back and forth to doctors, I’m just tired.”

Fadhil wiped her tears with a section of her robe and recovered with a smile.

“I am very happy now because the surgery is soon underway.”

Hassan went to Jordan for his first surgery April 20. “Things are good and so much of my thanks are (due to) Major Sorensen’s help.”

Sorensen insisted that everyone from linguists to doctors at the CMOC got involved and nothing would have been possible without them. He also spoke of a bond he established with the Fadhil family.

“As a father myself, I sympathized with the family,” Sorensen said.

Sorensen said it felt good to see the Iraqis recognized him not only as a Soldier, but also as a person.

“A lot of people will walk away from this war with scars,” Sorensen said. “Hassan’s scar will mean people loved him, he will know it represents something special.”



Maj. Kristian Sorensen, civil affairs officer, 16th Military Police Brigade, holds 8-month-old Hassan Fadhil after a talk with Hassan’s mother, Indissar, about the infant’s upcoming surgery.

Pakistani Chairman JCSC Visits CENTCOM



Chairman JCSC with Pakistani liaison group at HQ U.S. CENTCOM. Photo by Capt. Manuel Matos (Dominikan Rep.)

Story by LtC. Ehtisham Tirmizi
Chief CPAT U.S. Central Command

Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee, Pakistan Defense Forces, General Ehsan ul Haq visited HQ US CENTCOM on May 24 2007. It was a short visit aimed at strengthening the ties between US and Pakistan and reiterate the strong commitment on the ongoing war against terror. Chairman was received by Admiral Fallon, Commander CENTCOM at the flight line of Macdill Air Force Base. Besides an office call on Admiral Fallon bilateral issues between the two countries were also discussed.

During his address to the SNRs of 64 Countries of the Coalition, General Ehsan emphasized, “Solution of Afghanistan is very much inbred in the very mold of Afghan

traditions and culture with the immediate neighbours providing that vital mildew for a lasting accord. Other regional countries must not meddle in the affairs, as it would be counter productive”. He also said, “Afghanistan has never enjoyed the privilege of a strong central authority, instead its socio-cultural traditions are more inclined towards the concept of local Afghans identifying with local structures rather than the distant central government. It is in this realm that a bottom up instead of a top down approach will prove more beneficial. He went on to reiterate the three pronged strategy being followed by Pakistan in the tribal areas to achieve long term sustainable improvement of security situation. The talk was followed by an open and candid Q&A session which was much appreciated.

Norwegian National Day Celebration



Italian National Day Celebration



Central Region Medical Symposium



New Zealand National Day Celebration





Captain Robert Wheeler from Canada of the Civil-Military Cooperation team (CIMIC) speaks with a local Afghan during a visit to a few villages in the outskirts of Kandahar City. Photo by: Cpl Dan Pop