



Insurgents out, combat outpost in

With al-Qaeda cleared from Zambraniyah, base construction now underway

SGT. MICHAEL CONNORS
MND-C PAO

CAMP VICTORY — Just days after a major precision air strike in southern Arab Jabour to root out al-Qaeda in Iraq, combat engineers

traversed the battlefield, arriving in the area to construct Multi-National Division – Center’s newest combat outpost.

Soldiers with 535th Equipment Support Company, 479th Engineer Bat-

talion convoyed from Camp Stryker, Baghdad, 15 miles southwest to Zambraniyah in southern Arab Jabour to begin construction on Combat Outpost Meade Jan 15. Coalition Forces hit more than 40 AQI targets in an air

strike Jan. 10 to secure the area in support of Operation Marne Thunderbolt.

Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, commanding general of MND-C, visited the area Jan.

See MEADE, Page 2

Aviation unit preps new Army leaders

PFC. MONICA K. SMITH
3RD CAB, 3RD INF. DIV.

CAMP STRIKER — As Soldiers are promoted in theater, various units are taking steps to ensure their new NCOs have the basic knowledge to perform in their new position of authority.

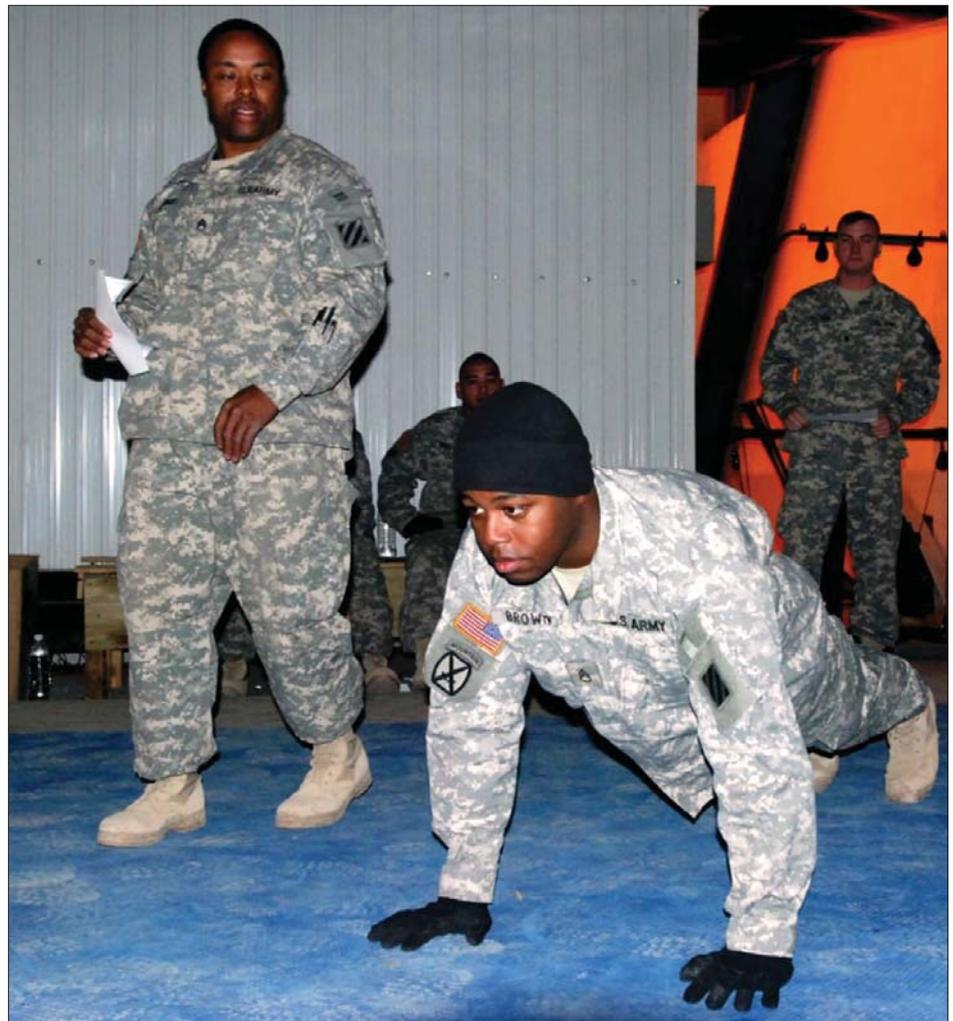
Within 603rd Aviation Support Battalion, a pre-Warrior Leader Course is being offered to Soldiers who hold either the rank of specialist or sergeant.

“The goal behind this class is to prepare them for the WLC when we get back in the rear,” said Staff Sgt. Windy Boles, Headquarters and Support Company, 603rd ASB. “Mostly because we are so mission-focused here, we don’t do specific leadership training, so this class gives them some of the basics.”

During the five-day course, 16 students are instructed in topics ranging from physical training, promotions and reductions, developmental counseling, enforcing EO, Army writing and how to prepare a NCO evaluation report.

“The PT class was good,” said Spc. Thomas Hixson, Company B, 603rd

See PWLC, Page 3



Pfc. Monica K. Smith

Staff Sgt. Everett Goins, (standing) and Staff Sgt. Robrick Brown, both Company A, 603d ASB, demonstrate how to conduct an Army Physical Fitness Test Jan. 18 at the Combat Aviation Brigade flight line.



Sgt. Michael Connors

Sgt. Stuart Arnold, personal security detail, HHC, 2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., pulls security in front of COP Meade with an Abrams tank in the middle ground and a Bradley Fighting Vehicle in the background Jan. 16.

MEADE: *Combat outpost aims to deter attacks*

From Page 1

16, stopping at COP Meade, Patrol Base 2 and a former al-Qaeda safehouse, captured and converted to a Coalition Forces observation point.

"I just want to tell you I'm proud to be here with you," said Lynch to the combat engineers gathered around him at COP Meade. "You all have had more impact than you'll ever know ... The whole world is turning right here right now at Combat Outpost Meade. We'll fight the Global War on Terrorism here so we won't have to fight it back home."

After rallying the troops, Lynch handed out commemorative Task Force Marne pocket knives and his personal coins.

On site for less than two days, the

engineers had already graded the ground and a significant proportion of the outer wall was completed. Soldiers constructed the wall with Hesco barriers - wire-framed, fabric-lined containers filled with dirt.

Pfc. Charles Brosnahan, from Granton, Wis., explained his unit's mission.

"We're just trying to build up a spot so the infantry can come in, clean house and keep their sweep going to push the terrorists further away," he said. "(Soldiers) can't do that without a place to live, so we come out here first and build it up."

COP Meade is being cut out of an empty field in the vast rural community. Surrounding land is relatively flat with a spattering of date palm trees and dry shrubs. Homes are spread out over a checkerboard of colorless, sandy

fields and thriving green farmland.

Abrams tanks from 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, attached to 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment and Bradley vehicles from 6-8 Cav. Regt., attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, stood guard around the perimeter of the new base. In what is known as "terrain denial fire," 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Inf. Div., Kiowa helicopters fired munitions in the distance at passages leading into the area. The overall scene sent a strong message to any lurking AQI elements that coming back was an impossible proposition.

The terrain denial fire blasts occurred several times per hour; though startling at first, the blasts blended into the din of heavy equipment construction as the day wore on. The combat engineers went steadily about their work, unfazed by their job shaping land so close to frontline fighting just days before.

The 535th was joined at COP Meade by Soldiers of Company C, 864th Engineering Battalion. While the 535th got a head start on horizontal engineering — working the land — the 8-64th will be responsible for vertical engineering — building the structures.

The new base is scheduled for completion by mid-February, said Master Sgt. Joe Constante, from Kerrville, Texas, division engineer noncommissioned officer in charge. MND-C has built 16 bases since March 2007.

Spc. Richard Kunard, from El Paso, Texas, a combat engineer with the 535th, echoed Brosnahan's remarks on the purpose of COP Meade.

"Ultimately it will push the insurgents out of this area," he said. "If they have no place to stay, they're always going to be moving, and it will be easier for us to pick them off or locate them and deter any further attacks."

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3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division
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7th Sustainment Brigade
720th Military Police Battalion
302nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



Photos by Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback



Breaking bread

Left: Rakkasan Soldiers from 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), join Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and Qarghuli tribal leaders for lunch at Sheik Mohammed Abdulla Sallah al-Qarghuli's house in Albu Salah Jassim Jan. 22. Breaking bread together is a sign of friendship in Arab culture and shows progress in reconciliation for Coalition Forces and Iraqis. Above, Col. Dominic Caraccilo, commander of 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), alongside Brig. Gen Ali Kassim Al-Freji, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division commander, enjoys the feast.

PWLC: Aviation Bde. leaders' course trains Soldiers to excel as NCOs

From Page 1

ASB. "It helped me be more comfortable in front of formations. It's better to make mistakes here than in front of 20 to 30 people who are waiting to laugh at you. The NCOER class was really needed. I didn't know how to do one before but now I think I'll be ready when I get my first one."

Hixson's class was the second of two trial courses which establish the curriculum and style for the course which

will be taught every other week. Classes begin at 8 a.m. and conclude at 5 p.m. with periodic breaks. Hixson believes the course was beneficial.

"Everybody in here is at least a specialist," Hixson said. "As soon as they get promoted they're at square one. Hopefully they have good NCOs around to help them and if those NCOs aren't around this class gives them something to fall back on rather than standing there going, 'uh ... I don't know'."

At the end of the course Soldiers

were presented a certificate of completion by 603rd ASB Command Sgt. Maj. Keith Dawson.

"This week has not been to test you to see what you know," Dawson said to the assembled students. "This week has been about learning and getting you started down the road to becoming an NCO. Don't walk out of this room the same specialist you were when you walked in. NCOs are responsible for the day-to-day actions of the Army. Go out there and be leaders."

Safety Thought of the Day

Negligent Discharge Prevention

- Weapon status must be understood by all Soldiers.
- NCO supervision concentrating on clearing procedures but also leader involvement in enforcement of current weapon status.
- Units must conduct weapon classes for familiarization and proper clearing procedures.
- Preventive Maintenance Checks must be conducted and periodic inspections of all weapon systems to higher level maintenance.
- Leaders must refrain from trading safety and established standards for speed in execution of the next mission; do not accept shortcuts.
- Thorough risk assessments must be developed for daily operations that have hazards and injury risk associated with them.
- Ensure controls are in place and understood in order to mitigate hazards.

Headline Highlights

Parrot smuggler; lift on opera ban; 'pet' girl

Guards foil parrot smuggler

MINSK (Reuters) — Border guards in Belarus said on Wednesday they had foiled an attempt to smuggle 277 parrots into the ex-Soviet state — aboard a bicycle.

Spokesman Alexander Tishchenko said the smuggler abandoned his bicycle and cargo — contained in six cages — and fled back over the border into Ukraine when confronted late on Tuesday at the crossing point of Dubki.

"The cages were fixed to an ordinary bicycle. The parrots were stuffed inside like sardines, 40 to 50 to a cage," he said.

"You can imagine what it was like. This was sheer barbarism. Those poor birds."

Two birds had died while the others were kept overnight at the border post.

They were then handed over to veterinary inspectors with the eventual aim of offering them to pet shops in the country of 10 million wedged between Russia and three European Union members.

Belarussian border guards last year detained a 19-year-old Russian who was trying to dig his way under the border into Poland using nothing more than a mug.

Turkmenistan ends ban on opera, circus

ASHGABAT (Reuters) — Turkmenistan will end its seven-year ban on opera and the circus introduced by the Caspian nation's former eccentric

leader, state media reported.

Saparmurat Niyazov, who cultivated an elaborate personality cult during his 21-year rule, died in late 2006 of a heart attack. He banned opera, ballet and the circus, saying they are "alien" to Turkmen culture.

The new leader, Kurbanguly Berdimukhamedov, has sought to promote a softer image for the gas-rich nation bordering Iran — and reversed some of Niyazov's most eccentric policies.

Late on Sunday, state television announced his plans to reopen an opera house, resume circus shows and build a cinema in the capital Ashgabat.

"Today a new period is starting in our country which we have called an era of great renaissance," Berdimukhamedov said in televised remarks, his speech interrupted by applause.

During his long rule, Niyazov took the title of Turkmenbashi (Head of the Turkmen) and had thousands of portraits and statues of himself put up throughout the country, including a statue in gold leaf that rotates to face the sun in Ashgabat.

Isolated from the rest of the world and criticised in the West for human rights violations, Turkmenistan has sought to end its isolationist policies under the new president and attract more foreign investment in its vast oil and natural gas sectors.

'Pet' girl kicked off bus

LONDON (Reuters) — A British bus company has apologized to a girl who is led around on a leash by her boyfriend

and describes herself as a human pet after one of its drivers threw her off a bus.

Tasha Maltby, 19, told British newspapers she was the "pet" of her 25-year-old fiance Dani Graves.

Pictures showed her dressed in black Gothic-style clothing with silver buckles on a silver chain — which the driver of a bus from the firm Arriva took exception to.

She told the Daily Mail newspaper Wednesday she was thrown off and told: "We don't let freaks and dogs like you on."

Arriva would not comment on specifics but said it apologized if the couple felt they had been discriminated against. It added, however, that the driver was worried about safety and the company told Maltby to take the leash off in the future.

"We have spoken to the driver who has talked about health and safety," a spokesman said. "Should she be attached to a chain and something happens on the bus, that could be dangerous. All we are saying is that she is very welcome to use the buses but not when she is on her lead."

Maltby — who lives on state benefits and got engaged in November — said her choice of lifestyle might seem unusual but was harmless.

"I am a pet," she told the Daily Mail. "I generally act animal-like and I lead a really easy life. I don't cook or clean and I don't go anywhere without Dani. It might seem strange but it makes us both happy. It's my culture and my choice. It isn't hurting anyone."

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1	9		3	6	8	
2				1	5	
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	8		2			9

from Sudoku: The Original Brain Workout From Japan

Solution to yesterday's puzzle:

4	5	1	6	2	8	7	9	3
9	8	7	5	3	1	2	6	4
2	6	3	7	9	4	1	5	8
6	7	9	3	4	5	8	2	1
1	2	4	9	8	6	3	7	5
8	3	5	1	7	2	9	4	6
3	9	6	4	1	7	5	8	2
5	1	2	8	6	9	4	3	7
7	4	8	2	5	3	6	1	9

ARABIC PHRASE OF THE DAY

Who set the bomb? *mih-noo il-lee neh-sub il-kun-boo-leh?*