

Iraqis take control in Basra • UAVs give eyes in the sky

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THE COALITION CHRONICLE

Volume 3, Issue 1

January 2008

Road to Bridge 18

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span*



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THE COALITION CHRONICLE

The Official Magazine of
Multi-National Corps-Iraq

January 2008
Volume 3, Issue 1

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This month's covers

Up front: 1st Lt. Todd Peterson, Company C, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 2, slides boosters inside a charge Dec. 1. Photo by Marine Sgt. Zachary Dyer.

On the back: Marines with 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment stand on a humvee as it is lifted by a CH-53E Super Stallion at Forward Operating Base Da Nang Dec. 5. Photo by Marine Cpl. James F. Cline III.

Questions, comments and concerns about The Coalition Chronicle can be addressed via email at jacob.boyer@iraq.centcom.mil. The Chronicle accepts articles, photos and letters for submission. Send submissions to terrence.hayes@iraq.centcom.mil. The Chronicle reserves the right to edit for security, accuracy, propriety, clarity and space.

COMMANDER'S VOICE

For the superb Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines of Multi-National Corps-Iraq, 2007 was a year of hard work, sacrifice and progress.

While the first six months of 2007 were characterized by some of the worst violence since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the last have seen attacks drop to levels unseen since 2004. The changes that have taken place in the last 12 months are remarkable. They will be felt long into 2008 and have implications on nearly all future operations.

When we started 2007, Iraq was caught in a cycle of bloodshed that had been steadily increasing since May 2005. Sectarian violence was widespread, al-Qaida in Iraq had several safe havens around the country from which it was planning and executing attacks, and Baghdad was a ghost town. To put an end to this terrible trend, we surged in forces and operations. Centered on an influx of nearly 30,000 additional troops into theater, the surge gave us the combat power necessary to push into Iraq's toughest cities and villages, securing Iraq's people where they slept.

The main thing the surge allowed us to do is protect Iraq's population by eliminating the safe havens of al-Qaida and other extremist groups. The influence these organizations once had were a major source of sectarian violence, instability and the overall climate of fear that was holding Iraq's people hostage. With al-Qaida routed from its former strongholds in Anbar province and the Baghdad belts, and Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army holding to a self-imposed ceasefire, nearly every indicator we use to track progress is heading in the right direction. Attacks in Anbar are down 75 percent since the start of the surge. In Baqubah, violence has decreased by nearly 70 percent over the same period. Attacks in Baghdad have decreased by 80 percent since mid-June.

Though the surge cemented our reputation as one of the finest counterinsurgency forces in history, it wasn't simply a Coalition effort. Iraqi Security Forces partnered with us every step of the way. The courageous members of the Iraqi Army, National Police, and Iraqi Police, have been developing steadily ever since they were stood up a few years



Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno
MNC-I Commander

ago. Their performance during the past year is testament to how far they've come during their short history. In December alone, the Iraqi Army completed more than 1,000 independent combat operations. In addition, they conducted nearly 15,000 independent patrols and almost 19,000 checkpoint operations. This increase in the army's capacity, combined with the overall improved security situation, has given the country's various police organizations the chance to do real work — something that wasn't possible before. While there are many challenges ahead for them, their contributions to the current security situation prove that with our help they are well on the way to self sufficiency.


The growth in the competence and capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces was mirrored by developments in governance at the local level. Across Iraq, local and tribal leaders have reached out to us in an effort to improve security and stability in their neighborhoods. They are not only concerned with security, but also with improved governance, essential services and economic progress. In close partnership with our Coalition, they've established numerous concerned citizens programs. These neighborhood watch-style groups help protect areas where sufficient numbers of other security forces are lacking. Numbering some 60,000 people, concerned citizens are contributing significantly to the security of their neighborhoods, though they are only temporary

and must eventually be absorbed into Iraqi Security Forces or transitioned into other forms of employment.

The active role concerned citizens groups are taking in Iraq's security is representative of Iraq's citizens, who are rejecting extremism of all types. In neighborhood after neighborhood, Iraqis — confident that we will act on their intelligence tips and protect them from reprisals — are providing us information that enables us to put a stop to violence before it starts. Iraq's people have seen the barbaric tactics of al-Qaida and other sectarian death squads, and they have seen the honorable and heroic conduct of Coalition and Iraqi security forces. Treated with justice and honor, they are starting to side with us in support of the new Iraq.

As we look forward to the year ahead, we do so aware of the fact that our surge in forces has served a noble purpose. The security progress we achieved provided the Iraqi government the time and space it needs to move forward on political, economic and diplomatic fronts. The work that brought us to this point was tough. What we've achieved required enormous sacrifice and dedication from the men and women of our corps. You performed magnificently, and I sincerely appreciate all of your efforts. When historians write the book on Operation Iraqi Freedom, our surge in forces and operations will be its own inspiring chapter. Do not forget the role you played in making history.

Our work, however, is far from complete. Over the next six months we will continue to reduce forces to pre-surge levels. We will do this in such a way so as not to lose the gains you have fought so hard to attain. As we slowly drop back to a presence of 15 brigade combat teams, our main challenges will be to continually improve the security situation while supporting the development of governance capacity, essential services, jobs creation and all those important things the Iraqi people justly deserve.

In 2007, we helped give the Iraqi people hope for a better future. In 2008, it is our job to help them turn this hope into reality. 

CSM's CORNER

In retrospect, the last 13 months have gone far quicker than I ever imagined. Then again, everything looks far less daunting in the rearview mirror.

I've been thinking about three things that would form the basis of my last message to the corps. The first is the substance of a book I read a few years ago. The second is the comment made by a young captain a few weeks back. The final one is the challenges our young NCOs will face in the years to come.

I am remiss; I can't remember the name of a book I read sometime ago. In it, the author makes the argument that the three most powerful armies in the history of humanity were the armies of a democracy. He goes on to explain that these armies were manned, trained, equipped, deployed, fought and were subsequently deactivated or disbanded after they had achieved their stated objective. For those interested, one of the armies concerned was Greek and the other two were American.

During a recent trip to a unit outside of Baghdad, I had a long mentoring session — at the request of the battalion commander — with a young company commander. During the course of our conversation, I asked the captain what he thought his principle responsibilities were. Unhesitatingly, he responded "to get his Soldiers home alive." When prompted further, he was at a loss for words.

I've spent countless miles and hours on the roads of Iraq visiting nearly every command in the corps. Seldom do I visit a unit in which the senior NCO or officer leadership does not express some degree of concern with the accelerated manner in which we have promoted our young NCOs. All, myself included, revel in the tenacity and courage exhibited by our troopers while at the same time taking pause at the lack of institutional knowledge our youngest enlisted leaders display or possess.

Yes, I'm bouncing around here, so please bear with me. While math is not my strong suit, I've done an as-



**Command Sgt. Maj.
Neil Ciotola
MNC-I Command
Sergeant Major**

***It would take almost
three years in
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Does the potential
exist to make a better
Soldier in that time?***

essment of sorts and determined that the typical platoon sergeant or first sergeant will see his or her troopers every day for the better part of nine months if you're a reservist, seven months if you're a Marine, and 12 1/2 months if you're an active duty Soldier.

For the sake of argument, I'll focus specifically on the active duty Soldier. Think about it; 12 1/2 months of constant contact with your Soldier. It would take almost three years in garrison to accrue one year of constant daily contact. That's three years rolled into one. Does the potential exist to make a better Soldier in that time? Does the potential exist to make a better member of American society?

In the book I referenced, the armies discussed were disbanded and ceased to exist after they completed their stated objective. In the words of the company commander, his job was to get his Soldiers home alive. Most of us acknowledge the lack of institutional knowledge our young sergeants possess. I did not say they're not great Soldiers, but they do not know what they don't know.

Our duty here in Iraq is to preserve and build upon the gains we have fought so long and hard to secure. Our duty here in Iraq is to protect and lift up the good people of this country. Our duty here is to take home better men, women and Soldiers than we brought. The potential is there. All that is lacking is our commitment to the task. Our duty here is to recognize that the deployment may end in seven, nine or 15 months, but not our obligation to our troops or our respective service. We must always move forward;

in doing so we must acknowledge, embrace and invest in our future leaders.

Of two things I am certain: This war on terror will one day come to an end and this American Army will, and must, live to fight another day.

We're not here to merely one day go home. There is too much at stake, too much to be gained, far too much opportunity at hand. Take our doctrine to the next level: Let us train while we fight. Arm them now for the journey they will take into the future.

I have met so many great Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines. I leave this command far more capable and far richer than when I arrived. I shall miss you all.

Godspeed. ☺

N COALITION NEWS BRIEFS S



PRT improving roads south of Baghdad

FOB KALSU — The 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division's embedded provincial reconstruction team, with assistance from local government councils and Iraqi contractors, the task of restoring roads and improving roads damaged by war is in full swing south of Baghdad.

"It's all about helping the agricultural market in our area," said Capt. Brian Love, ePRT military liaison.

The area, comprised of Arab Jabour, Hawr Rajab, Al Buaytha and Adwaniyah, is mainly agriculturally-based. The improvements, which began in October, will help farmers move their goods quickly to more markets.

The brigade is focusing on routes between the communities, including those that link Al Buaytha to Arab Jabour and routes from Hawr Rajab to Baghdad. ☞



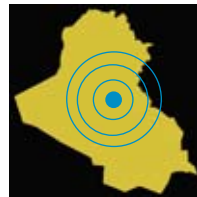
IA, U.S. troops deliver backpacks to children

ADIL — Iraqi Army soldiers and troops attached to 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, delivered backpacks to school children at the Kawaryzmi Primary School Dec. 13.

The headmasters at the school complained they did not receive enough school supplies for their students for the entirety of the school year. This was the second school they delivered supplies to, with the first being Al Khullud Secondary School for Girls.

Working with the Iraqi Army, the Soldiers gathered the supplies and delivered them to very enthusiastic, but well-mannered students.

In charge of delivering these supplies were soldiers of 3rd Company of the 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division. ☞



4th Infantry Division takes control of MND-B

BAGHDAD — Under the clear morning skies, the 4th Infantry Division took the reins of Multi-National Division-Baghdad from the 1st Cavalry Division during a transfer of authority ceremony Dec. 19.

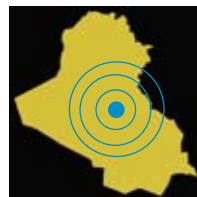
Presiding over the ceremony was Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, commanding general, Multi-National Corps-Iraq.

Odierno said that the battle in Iraq changed significantly during the last year and the success could be linked to the 1st Cav. Div.'s efforts in Baghdad.

"Significant events are often a result of the right people being in the right place at the right time," said Odierno. "In the case of Baghdad in 2006 and 2007, the right people were the magnificent men and women of Multi-National Division-Baghdad and their dedicated Iraqi Security Force partners."

Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, commanding general, 4th Inf. Div., uncased his division's colors and assumed command of the MND-B mission.

"As we, the 4th Inf. Div., return to Baghdad for our third deployment, we truly feel we have two homes. One in Fort Hood, Texas, and our other is clearly here in Baghdad. We look forward to once again serving with our Iraqi brothers. ☞



Coalition captures two special groups leaders


BAGHDAD — Coalition Forces captured two suspected special groups leaders and detained three other suspects during operations to disrupt criminal element networks outside the capital Dec. 21.

The targeted individual reportedly trained criminal splinter group elements to perform attacks on Coalition and Iraqi Forces. He allegedly facilitated the training of numerous criminals in the use of EFPs and IEDs. ☞

Road to Bridge 18

*Marine engineers
demolish
unfixable span*

Story, photos by
Marine Sgt. Zachary Dyer
MNF-W PAO

A low-angle, high-contrast photograph showing two Marine engineers in desert combat uniforms and helmets working on a wooden bridge structure. One Marine in the foreground is reaching up, holding a black detonation cord. Another Marine is visible above him, also working on the bridge. The bridge is made of light-colored plywood and dark wooden beams. The background is a bright, hazy sky.

Cpl. Allen Macleod lowers detonation cord to Lance Cpl. Andrew Wilson as they work to wire explosive charges underneath Bridge 18 near Ar Rutbah Dec. 2. Both Marines are combat engineers with Company C, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 2,



Debris is sent flying into the air as Bridge 18 is demolished by the Marines of Company C, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 2, Dec. 3. The Marines used 2,080 sticks of C-4 explosive to destroy the bridge.

The roads crisscrossing the deserts of Iraq serve as major arteries, allowing local and military traffic to get from one place to another relatively quickly. The cargo carried by much of this traffic is the lifeblood of not just the military mission, but the civilian economy in Iraq. A clot in one of these arteries has the potential to hamper both the military and the local populace.

With that in mind, the Marines of Company C, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 2, set out Nov. 30, on a four-day mission to destroy Bridge 18 near Ar Rutbah.

"This bridge was a target by (al-Qaida in Iraq), about four or five months ago," said 1st Lt. Todd Peterson, the executive officer for Co. C. "The insurgents were trying to do some sort of countermobility op, trying to channelize (Coalition Forces). This was one of the bridges that was hit. They set an IED on it, and it damaged it to the point where the bridge started dropping."

"Because this is the (main supply route) from Syria over to Baghdad, all the (third country na-

tional) trucks, like 200 every few days, have to run underneath this bridge," added Peterson, highlighting the bridge's importance to the area. "This is also the main route to get Coalition Forces to Rutbah. And all those trucks were coming dangerously close to hitting it, and two or three of them actually did hit it."

"All of those trucks were coming dangerously close to hitting it, and two or three of them actually did."

***Marine 1st Lt. Todd Peterson
executive officer, Co. C***

One caveat to the mission was that the road still be useable after the destruction of the bridge. The demolition of the bridge had to be controlled in a way that minimized the damage to the road that went under it. The Marines also wanted to save the abutments of the bridge if at all possible. This would make it easier for Iraqis to come back and rebuild the bridge, according to Peterson.

When the Marines arrived at the bridge late in the night, a local trucker had just lost part of his shipment of potato chips to the bridge and was in the process of trying to salvage what he could. They set up a makeshift forward operating base and then got as much sleep as they could before starting early the next morning.



A Co. C heavy equipment operator kicks up dust as he uses an excavator to tear at pieces of the demolished Bridge 18 Dec. 3. The bridge was destroyed to make it safe for large vehicles to pass underneath.

Over the next three days, the Marines rigged the bridge with explosives. First, they bolted wooden frames to the underside of the bridge so they could secure the charges to the bridge. Before the charges were placed in the frames, boosters were inserted into the C-4. Once the charges were strapped to the bridge, detonation cord was attached to each charge. Each length of cord had to be the same length to ensure that all the charges went off at the same time. In the end, the bridge was wired with 2,080 sticks of C-4.

"Because we wanted to do this in a controlled manner, and not just shoot a bunch of (joint direct attack munitions) at it or something like that, we decided to use controlled charges called counter-force charges," explained Peterson. "Basically they work in a scissor-type action. One charge on one side, one charge on the other and offset a little bit; and then they push against each other and chop it like a scissor. So, we set a bunch of those charges all along the girders as well as the support columns, and basically just cut the bridge in specific areas to allow the heavy equipment to push it around and get it off the road."

The Marines set the explosives off early Dec. 3. Then the company's heavy equipment operators stepped in. Using two D-9 bulldozers and an excavator, the Marines pushed the pieces of bridge off the side of the road making sure the debris was far enough away that it couldn't be used to hide an IED.

After the Marines had cleared the road and packed for the trip back to Al Asad, there was little noticeable damage to the road.

"Everything went smoothly," said Gunnery Sgt. Johnny Mendez, the company gunnery sergeant. "The demo went off and the bridge came down just as we planned."

This is not the normal mission for combat engineers in Iraq. When the war started they were kicking in doors and blowing up buildings, but now that the military is focused on rebuilding Iraq, the engineers are used for tactical construction to increase force protection measures and destroy weapons caches, according to Mendez, a Las Cruces, N.M., native.

The controlled demolition of a bridge is something that has not been done in Iraq before. Because of this, the engineers documented every step they took in the hopes that Marines in the future will be able to use what the leathernecks of Co. C learned, according to Peterson.

While both Peterson and Mendez are combat engineers, the weight of the mission fell on the shoulders of the junior Marines – the combat engineers and the technical engineering specialist.

"They're outstanding, I couldn't ask for better," said Mendez. "The heroes are the ones below me, they're the ones that kicked butt."

The mission gave the younger engineers a chance to shine. For most of them, this was the first time they had seen an explosion that big or used that much explosives, said Lance Cpl. Andrew Wilson, a combat engineer with Charlie Co.

"I enjoyed putting the demo together, putting the boosters in, and watching all that explode," said Wilson, a New Castle, Va., native. "It was a learning experience. That's the first time I've ever used boosters, and the first time I've ever really made a bunker buster."

At the end of the day, the Marines were just happy they got the chance to do what they have trained to do and support the mission at the same time.

"I wish we did more of that," said Wilson. "I love being an engineer. We build, we blow up – that's a pretty good life." ©

Keep it Fresh

Iraqi farmers' union helps increase crops' lifespan

Story, photos by
Army Sgt. Kevin Stabinsky
MND-C PAO

The fruits of the past month's labor were reaped when the Al Rasheed Land Owners Association took a major step in becoming a self-sufficient entity Dec. 17 at Forward Operating Base Kalsu, providing for the welfare of the farmers.

The organization was originally formed a few months ago, to help unionize local farmers and allow them to increase their harvests. About 250 rolls of plastic were distributed.

"They are totally in charge. We are just here to observe," said Capt. Ken Guglielmina, Civil Affairs Team 11, currently attached to 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division.

The plastic, which will be used to create greenhouses for plants, will help the crops survive the winter cold, Guglielmina said. This will help the farmers increase their income for the year.

Due to the structure of the association, some of that income will help the organization grow, allowing it to aid more farmers.

The association provides the farmers goods such as seeds, plastic and fertilizer at reduced cost to union members, Guglielmina said. The money raised by the union goes into a large communal pot used to purchase more equipment for area farmers available to them from the union at roughly a quarter of the normal market price, he added.

To become a member of the farmers association, local residents must provide proof of land ownership. The leadership is comprised of 16 local sheikhs sent by their villages to represent them.

One of the land owners at the day's event, who had nothing but praise for the association, was Mithaq Abed, a local farmer with about 21 acres.



An Al Rasheed Land Owners Association leader (left) checks the IDs of local farmers Dec. 17 outside the association's headquarters in Al Rasheed. The association was giving plastic out to farmers for roughly a quarter of the market price.

Abed, whose two brothers are also farmer union members, said the three rolls of plastic the family received at the distribution will allow more of his tomato and eggplant harvest to survive the winter chill.

"I support the union 100 percent," he said, adding that before the inception of the union, he had to go through the black market to obtain supplies to allow his farm to grow.


Now he said the union provides him those goods much cheaper, often times almost free. Such reduction in price only encourages farmers to get involved in the union, Guglielmina said, which now has approximately 1,500 farmers.

The number of farmers has helped the association raise several tens of thousands of dollars, said Sheikh Mohameed Kashkol, Al Rasheed Land Owners Association leader. He said these proceeds are going to be used to buy more products.

One of the products, set for distribution next month, is one Abed said he and other farmers desperately need – water pumps.

In addition to the water pumps, the union is also planning a seed distribution next week.

"I'm glad to see the farmer's union continue to help us and the Iraqi people," Abed said, adding that in time he would like to see the union grow large enough to provide tractors for farmers.

It may be a while until the union grows to that size, but the steady pace has surpassed expectations. To help further encourage and sustain that growth, Coalition Soldiers provided Kashkol a computer and printer to help monitor and track purchases as well as keep steady accounting records. 



Top left: Soldiers from Company A, 1st Brigade, 87th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, train Iraqi soldiers in basic marksmanship with the M-4 assault rifle at Forward Operating Base McHenry Dec. 4. Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Samuel Bendet.

Top Right: A Marine from Company C, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, uses a blow torch to cut through pieces of rebar remaining from Bridge 18 near Ar Rutbah Dec. 3. Photo by Marine Cpl. Shane S. Keller.

Bottom Right: Soldiers and leaders from 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division gather for Christmas dinner in Muqdadiyah. Photo by Army Spc. Shawn M. Cassatt.

Bottom left: A Soldier from Company B, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, maintains security while a Bradley fighting vehicle prepares to cross a bridge in Arab Jabour Dec. 11. Photo by Army Spc. Angelica Golindano.



Freedom's Focal Point



January 2008

Soldiers from Company A, 1st Brigade, 87th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, look for weapon caches and mortar training sites in Agula Dec. 3. Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Samuel Bendet.



Freedom's Focal Point



Freedom's Focal Point





Far left: Kid Rock performs for Marines with 2nd Marine Logistics Group, at Camp Al Taqaddum Dec. 18. Photo by Marine Sgt. Bobby J. Segovia.

Top: Bosnian EOD personnel arrange shells and attach plastic explosive to prepare for the controlled detonation of unexploded ordnance near Diwaniyah Dec. 8. Photo by Army Spc. Gabriel Reza.

Bottom right: Army Sgt. Joseph Box, A Company A, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, scans the retina of new Critical Infrastructure Security personnel into Biometric Automated Tool kit systems near Hor Al Bosh Dec. 5. Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. William Greer.

Bottom left: Soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, prepare to fire a 120mm mortar to zero a mortar tube Dec. 5 at Forward Operating Base Doria. Photo by Army Spc. Laura M. Buchta.



Basra Provincial Governor Muhammad Al-Wa'ili shakes hands with Basra Operations Center commander Gen. Mohan al-Furaiji in front of Iraqi National Security Advisor Muwafaq al-Rubaie at the formal ceremony to hand over security responsibility from British to Iraqi control Dec. 16 at Basra International Airport.

Iraqi Control *Provincial authorities take over in Basra*

Story, photos by
Army Sgt. Nicole Dykstra
MNF-I PAO

Coalition Forces transferred security responsibility of Basra to the provincial Iraqi government in a ceremony at the Basra International Airport Dec. 16 marking a kind of anniversary for the British commanding general.

"I commanded the coalition troops which entered Basra in April 2003, four-and-a-half years later I have the privilege of handing this city back," said Maj. Gen. Graham Binns, commander of Multi-National Division-Southeast. "I came to rid Basra of its enemies and I now formally hand Basra back to its friends. This is a city forever close to my heart."

General Binns' comments are particularly im-

portant because the ceremony benchmarks the last province under British purview to be handed back to the responsibility of the provincial government and security forces.

Basra Palace was handed over to Iraqi troops in September. Since then, British forces have been mainly concentrated at the airport, allowing the Iraqi security forces to conduct business on their own with little interference from British troops.

Also of particular note, Basra is the ninth of Iraq's 18 provinces to be handed back to control by local provincial governments. This half-way marker is a significant testament to the dedication and maturity of the Government of Iraq as they take responsibility for provinces one by one.

"This event ensures the progress of the Iraqi armed forces abilities in training, efficiency and personal integrity," said Dr. Muwafaq al-Rubaie,



Maj. Gen. Graham Binns, Multi-National Division-Southeast commander, speaks to the press following the handover of Basra to Iraqi control.



Taking Over

Security responsibility for nine of 18 provinces has been handed back to Iraqi authorities.

In Iraqi control

Al Muthanna
An Najaf
Basra
Dahuk
Dhi Qar
Erbil
Karbala
Maysan
Sulamaniyah

In CF control

Al Anbar
Al Qadisiyyah
At Ta'mim
Babil
Baghdad
Diyala
Ninawa
Salah ad Din
Wasit

Iraqi national security advisor. "Basra province is the ninth province to fall under provincial Iraqi control. This is a big step towards taking over the responsibility of all provinces, which may happen by the middle of next year."

To this end, the Government of Iraq and Multi-National Forces-Iraq finalized a plan in June 2005 to hand over security responsibility one province at a time to provincial civil authorities.

To assess the readiness of the provinces for hand over, the Joint Committee to Transfer Security Responsibility was created. The JCTSR is comprised of representatives from the Government of Iraq, MNF-I and the embassy.

Four conditions are assessed to determine a province's eligibility for transfer: the capability of the Iraqi security forces, threat levels in the province, local government capacity, and the provincial government's relationship with Coalition Forces.

"This is a big step towards taking over the responsibility of all provinces."


Dr. Muwafaq al-Rubaie
Iraqi national security advisor

"The first and last word is for the Basrawis. Without your sacrifice, without your blood, without the treasure and sweat and tears you have invested in liberating this city and this province, and in building the Iraqi security forces; without this sacrifice we would not be here now," al-Rubaie said.

With the handover of Basra, one half of Iraq's provinces have been transferred to the control of Iraqi Security Forces. While British forces will still maintain a presence for the time being, this paves the way for future British troop reductions in Iraq.

"Our help will continue to be one of assistance, not interference, to

support not to direct, to listen not to ignore, to understand not to fear," said Binns.

British forces will maintain a presence in southern Iraq while decreasing their military footprint to 2,500 troops by Spring 2008. 

Eyes in the Sky



A Company G, Task Force XII unmanned aerial vehicle lifts off as controllers Spc. Eric Hansen and Staff Sgt. Yancy Shattuck from 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, control it Dec. 14. The aircraft will fly surveillance and reconnaissance missions for troops on the ground in MND-B and is one of about 20 missions to launch from Taji each day.

UAV operators keep watch for troops on the ground

Story, photos by
Army Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton
MND-B PAO

Planting improvised explosives devices is a dangerous business in central Iraq. Even the most experienced insurgent, with a meticulous plan and a foolproof hiding spot, can quickly find himself facing with the business end of a Hellfire missile.

It's not that they do not try to hide. Most insurgents planning to attack a convoy or lob a mortar at a Coalition base take great care in covering their intentions, but it is hard to fight a guy sitting in front of a monitor miles away flying an eight-foot unmanned aerial vehicle.

"You can tell we do a lot of good here," said North Ridgeville, Ohio, native Spc. Eric Hansen,

a UAV maintainer for 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division. "When we got here, we were getting mortared a lot. That's really slowed down since we've been here."

In Multi-National Division-Baghdad's area of operations, the small unmanned aircraft are launched and recovered by Company G, Task Force XII's Guardian Angels.

"The UAV is a huge combat multiplier that provides a real-time picture of the battlefield," said Capt. Shirwen Separa, Co. G commander and native of Brockledge, Fla. "It provides surveillance and reconnaissance for the maneuver units to identify terrorists in the act of terrorism."

Made up of Soldiers from seven brigades in the MND-B area of operations, Co. G is the embodiment of cooperation between the local commands in Iraq.

While its headquarters is composed of Soldiers from the division's aviation brigade, Task Force XII, the six assigned platoons each hail from one of the maneuver brigades.

The Soldiers assigned to the Guardian Angels are responsible for maintaining, launching and recovering the aircraft, said 1st Sgt. Todd Venema, who hails from Grand Rapids, Minn. Once the planes are in the air, they fly to a specified handoff sight, where forward operators in the brigades take the helm of the aircraft in mid-flight.

"The platoons mostly work with their own brigades and their own aircraft" he said. "The relationships are good, and the handoffs are seamless."

The pilots are also unique. While most Army pilots are commissioned or warrant officers, the Soldiers who patrol Iraqi airspace from the ground are enlisted.

Sgt. 1st Class David Norsworthy, a UAV operator from Clarksville, Tenn., said he has a special perspective for just how valuable the eyes in the sky really are. He is an 11-year infantry veteran who says he can appreciate his new job for several reasons.

"It's a whole new world," Norsworthy said. "The way I used to deal with infantry Soldiers doesn't

work here. But after 11 years of beating back brush and sleeping in the rain, this is the life.

"This job is kind of a novelty too," he added. "About once a week, we've got (Soldiers from other units) coming around to ask about what we do. At

times, we've got VIPs walking through here."

"When I went to (a Soldier professional development school) pretty much everybody in the class wanted to do what I do by the end," Hansen said.


Company G launches about 20 aircraft per day to patrol the skies over the Baghdad area.

Once in the air, Soldiers at Taji and in the maneuver brigades monitor feeds sent back by the planes.

"If an operator sees a threat they let the ground guys or aviation close air support know," Separa said. "With the UAV, we can react to a threat almost instantly."

"I think they're a great asset to the Army," Hansen said. "You can fly them cheaply and get surveillance 24 hours a day and in inclement weather."

"Most importantly, it minimizes lives at risk because they're unmanned," Separa said.

Even those who miss the quiet whirring sound of the tiny plane flying hundreds of feet above them, are sure to notice its effect — no matter how hard they try to hide. 

It is hard to fight a guy sitting in front of a monitor miles away flying an eight-foot unmanned aerial vehicle.



Sgt. Jeremiah Bull, a UAV operator from 4th Battalion, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, assigned to Task Force XII's Company G, 'Guardian Angels,' pushes a UAV toward its launcher Dec. 14.

Training to Protect and Serve

Artillerists prep volunteers for Baghdad's streets

Story, photos by
Army Sgt. James P. Hunter
MND-B PAO

When one thinks of a police force, he may think of a two-man team, patrolling through a neighborhood in their white-Chevy Monte Carlo, with blue and red lights, and the word "Police" written on the side.

They move throughout talking with local citizens at the diner, coffee shop, or on the streets corners. No matter what community, country or religious sect, policemen are there to "protect and serve."

Take away the type of vehicle, re-write it in Arabic, from right to left, and an average policemen in Iraq is no different.

One of the biggest areas of focus in northwest Baghdad is the volunteers stepping up throughout the various muhallahs, giving way to freedom and democracy.

In Ameriyah, Kahdra, Jamia,



Sgt. Anthony Williams and Sgt. Danil Ramirez, both with Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, teach Iraqi Police Auxiliary students patrolling techniques in Hateen Dec. 17, on their first day of training as the volunteers who will provide overwatch and security in Hateen, a muhallah in the Mansour District of Baghdad.

and Adil, men are volunteering their efforts. Now, in Hgateen, there are Iraqi Police Auxiliary forces, focused on maintaining a stable, secure neighborhood.

In the Strike area of operations alone, units have been very successful with establishing volunteer forces, said Capt. Brian

McCall, commander and native of Junction, City, Kan., with Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regt. If they apply and adapt too what they have learned from other units in dealing with volunteers, they too will be successful.

Just two weeks ago, U.S. troops



Iraqi Police Auxiliary students train on patrolling in Hateen, Dec. 17. IPA forces will provide over watch and security in Hatgeen.

with both Battery A and B of the 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, began volunteer recruitment drives in the Hateen and Yarmouk muhallahs, the Mansour District of Baghdad.

From 300 men, they were able to, through background checks and investigations, narrow the

field to 150 volunteers.

At the Operation Ace Academy in Hateen, the Iraqi Police Auxiliary began their training, Dec. 17. Twenty-five volunteers will train over a four-day period for the next four weeks, until all volunteers are trained. Also, in Yarmouk, Bat-

tery B troops are training auxiliary forces.

These men will patrol their homelands, almost acting as a neighborhood watch, until called up to begin training at the Baghdad Police Academy where they will officially become Iraqi policemen.



Sgt. Anthony Williams, Co. A, shows an Iraqi Police Auxiliary student ready-up drills in Hateen Dec. 17



Sgt. Danil Ramirez, Battery A, demonstrates a drill for Iraqi Police Auxiliary students in Hateen Dec. 17.

In the meantime, troops with Battery A, 2nd Bn., 32nd FA, are training these men on basic military and policing skills, said Sgt. Anthony Williams, instructor and native of Fresno, Calif., with 2nd Platoon, Battery A, 2nd Bn., 32nd FA. They are training on everything from weapons and countering-improvised explosive devices, to proper police ethics and values training.

For every two Soldiers there were seven Iraqis at the training grounds in Hateen.

Through interpreters they were able to convey their message of training and the importance of their role.

Their goal during the course is to ensure these men are fully capable of patrolling and maintaining ethics policemen live by, said Williams.

"We are trying to instill certain core value" said 1st Lt. Douglas McDonough, platoon leader and native of Bonham, Texas, with 2nd Platoon, Battery A. They are tailoring their training to the Iraqi society, but ensuring they instill the basic skills and situational awareness each policeman must be keen on.

Even Iraqi army command-

ers in the area came to talk with these men on their importance; for their job is important to the future of Hateen and the future of Iraq.

Everyone knows military forces are used for aggressive actions against a known enemy force. Pushing police forces out into the muhallahs allows Iraqi military troops the opportunity to focus on training and military operations.

It also gives the Hateen IPA a sense of ownership for their homeland, said McCall.

These men want to help their neighborhood, and in doing so, it puts more jobs into the community and gives them a sense of pride for security in their neighborhood.

"(Being a volunteer) is very

important to these people," said Williams. "These guys want to save their neighborhoods."

With their will to save their neighborhoods, they should have an immediate impact in the area.

"I think initially the people will see friendly faces in their neighborhood; guys they have known all their lives there working to protect them," McCall said. "If a


guy they know and trust is patrolling the streets in front of their house, (it should) make them feel a lot better."

In the area, with a population of 30,000 Iraqis, McCall is

"If a guy they know and trust is patrolling the streets in front of their house, it should make them feel a lot better."

***Capt. Brian McCall
Battery A commander***

eager to see how the good initiative of the Iraqi volunteers will play out.

"I think it can be a turning point for this community," he said. 

IN MEMORIAM

NAMES OF COALITION SERVICE MEMBERS WHO DIED WHILE SERVING IN
OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM BETWEEN NOVEMBER 16 AND DECEMBER 15, 2007

November 16, 2007

Sgt. Steven C. Ganczewski, 22

3/75 Ranger Bn.

Sgt. Mason L. Lewis, 26

26th BSB, 2nd Bde., 3rd Inf. Div.

November 18, 2007

Pfc. Marius L. Ferrero, 23

1/38 Inf., 4th Bde., 2nd Inf. Div.

Cpl. Jason T. Lee, 26

1/38 Inf., 4th Bde., 2nd Inf. Div.

Cpl. Christopher J. Nelson, 22

1/38 Inf., 4th Bde., 2nd Inf. Div.

Staff Sgt. Alejandro Ayala, 26

90th LRS, 90th MSG

November 20, 2007

Sgt. Alfred G. Paradez Jr., 32

1/8 Cav., 2nd Bde., 1st Cav. Div.

November 21, 2007

Spc. Melvin L. Henley Jr., 26

603rd ASB, 3rd CAB, 3rd Inf. Div.

November 22, 2007

Staff Sgt. Jonathon L. Martin, 33

1/32 Cav., 1st Bde.,

101st Airborne Div.

November 27, 2007

Pvt. Isaac T. Cortes, 26

1/71 Cav., 1st Bde.,

10th Mountain Div.

Spc. Benjamin J. Garrison, 25

1/71 Cav., 1st Bde.,

10th Mountain Div.

November 28, 2007

Cpl. Allen C. Roberts, 21

MAS 214, MAG 13,

3rd MAW, 1st MEF

Sgt. 1st Class John J. Tobiason, 42

847th AG Bn., 89th RRC

**GREATER
LOVE HATH
NO MAN THAN
THIS: THAT
A MAN LAY
DOWN HIS
LIFE FOR HIS
FRIENDS.
*JOHN 15:13***

November 30, 2007

Cpl. Blair W. Emery, 24

504th MP Bn., 42nd MP Bde.

December 1, 2007

Spc. Matthew K. Reece, 24

1/504 PIR, 1st Bde.,

82nd Airborne Div.

December 3, 2007

Sgt. Kyle Dayton, 22

2/504 PIR, 1st Bde.,

82nd Airborne Div.

December 4, 2007

Sgt. Eric J. Hernandez, 26

1/327 Inf., 1st Bde.,

101st Airborne Div.

Pvt. Dewayne L. White, 27

1/327 Inf., 1st Bde.,

101st Airborne Div.

December 5, 2007

Capt. Adam P. Snyder, 26

1/327 Inf., 1st Bde.,

101st Airborne Div.

December 9, 2007

Spc. Randy W. Pickering, 31

RSS, 2nd Stryker Cav. Regt.

December 10, 2007

Spc. Johnathan A. Lahmann, 21

20th Eng. Bn., 36th Eng. Bde.

December 11, 2007

Chief Petty Officer Mark T. Carter, 27

Navy SEAL

December 13, 2007

Guardsman Stephen Ferguson, 31

1st Bn., Scots Guards

Sgt. Samuel E. Kelsey, 24

3/7 Inf., 4th Bde., 3rd Inf. Div.

Spc. Brynn J. Naylor, 21

2/12 Inf., 2nd Bde., 2nd Inf. Div.

Pvt. Daren A. Smith, 19

3/89 Cav., 4th Bde.,

10th Mountain Div.

December 14, 2007

Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan A. Lowery, 38

3/3 Armored Cav. Regt.

December 15, 2007

Sgt. Austin D. Pratt, 22

2/30 Inf., 4th Bde.,

10th Mountain Div.

