

THE COALITION CHRONICLE

Volume 3, Issue 2

February 2008



On the Run

Task Force Marne Soldiers flush out AQI suspects south of Baghdad

What's Inside

On the Run

Task Force Marne Soldiers flush out AQI suspects south of Baghdad

Page 2

XVIII Airborne Takes Over

Austin replaces Odierno as MNC-I commanding general

Page 4

Moving Produce

Point of entry reopening brings trade, prosperity to western Iraq

Page 14

Putting Forward in Support

Paratroopers secure COP, continue logistics mission

Page 16

Pilgrims' Progress

ISF put an Iraqi face on Ashura security

Page 19

Departments

Coalition News Briefs
Page 1

Freedom's Focal Point
Page 6

In Memoriam
Page 21

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THE COALITION CHRONICLE

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February 2008
Volume 3, Issue 2

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This Month's Covers

Up front: Sgt. Dan Hansen, a team leader with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, tests a detainee's hands for explosives residue during Operation Patriot Strike Dec. 29, 2007 in Ubaydi. Photo by Army Sgt. Ben Brody.

On the back: Iraqis carry their flag in a parade celebrating the Iraqi police's birthday Jan. 9 in Ad Diwaniyah. Photo by Army Spc. Alan Moos.

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.

N COALITION NEWS BRIEFS S



AQI havens destroyed in massive airstrike

ARAB JABOUR — Two weeks into Operation Marne Thunderbolt, al-Qaida in Iraq extremists were on the run. The operation targeted AQI sanctuaries and weapons stockpiles in southern Arab Jabour.

More than 40 enemy targets were hit Jan. 10 during one of the largest U.S. air strikes since the war began. Targets included known weapons caches and IED locations, hit by a bomb blitz in which more than 40,000 pounds of bombs were dropped.

The targets resulted from months of intelligence gathering.

Much of the intelligence came from Sons of Iraq in the area, “protecting their own, protecting their towns,” said Col. Terry Ferrell, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division commander.

Ferrell said the purpose of the strikes was to eliminate the enemy’s “defensive belt” of buried IEDs and caches designed to deny coalition and Iraqi security forces movement in the area. ☞



IPs graduate from Ramadi academy

RAMADI — More than 100 new Iraqi police officers graduated Feb. 2 in a small ceremony at the Thayala Iraqi police station here.

“This is a great day for the men,” said Lt. Col. Adnan Dayeh Darb, police chief. “They worked hard for this day and it makes me happy to see their hard work and dedication paid off in the end.”

The Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery instructed the policemen at their station instead of at the Ramadi training center.

“We started sending a mobile training team to the stations during the fall of last year,” said Maj. Stephen Thrasher, 1/41 FA executive officer. “By us sending a team out, more policemen are able to be trained.” ☞



ISF members awarded for finding IED

JSS ISTAQLAL — Iraqi security forces are taking steps toward providing security in this region north of Baghdad.

Lt. Col. Michael Pappal, commander of 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, awarded members of the Iraqi police and Iraqi army with certificates at Joint Security Station Istaqlal Jan. 14.

He said the recognition was a direct result of “outstanding support to the citizens of Iraq by locating an improvised explosive device and eliminating a potential loss of life in Istaqlal.”

Their “selfless service and sacrifice will contribute immensely to the success of Iraq,” he said.

This is just an example of the good work the Iraqi security forces are doing in the area. Everybody should continue to focus on keeping the district safe, he added.

Col. John H. Hort, commander of 3rd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., approved the awards for the Iraqis.

“If you know where (the IEDs) are being hidden at or stored, please let us know, and we will come and investigate,” Hort said. ☞



AQI interrogator, 12 others detained

TIKRIT — During an operation east of Tikrit near the Hamrin Mountains Jan. 27, coalition forces captured an alleged al-Qaida in Iraq associate who serves as an interrogator at a terrorist prison and training camp in the region. The suspected terrorist also reportedly facilitates the purchase of weapons and the movement of fighters in the area.

During the operation, the wanted individual identified himself to the ground force and was subsequently detained, along with 12 suspected terrorists. ☞

On the Run



Capt. George Morris, commander of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), and his Soldiers hit the ground running in the opening salvo of Operation Patriot Strike Dec. 29 in Ubaydi. The operation netted 10 suspected al-Qaeda conspirators, who were detained.

Task Force Marne Soldiers flush out al-Qaida in Iraq suspects south of Baghdad

Story, photos by
Army Sgt. Ben Brody
MND-C PAO

Going after al-Qaida in Iraq cell leaders in the Ubaydi farmland 20 miles south of Baghdad, U.S. and Iraqi troops launched a three-pronged assault on the area which netted dozens of detainees, Dec. 29.

Soldiers from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, and Soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, along with about 200 Iraqi troops, raided houses and searched fields near the Tigris River.

The operation was planned by Task Force 1-76 Field Artillery, part of 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

As the sun rose through Ubaydi's date palm groves, four Blackhawks landed in a fury of dust and whipping wind. Soldiers from Co. B poured

out, their breath steaming in the cold air as they charged straight for a small compound purported to be an al-Qaida safehouse.

"This is an area where our sources say people are either aligned with al-Qaida in Iraq or they've been killed or chased away," said Sgt. 1st Class Lyle Whitted, a platoon sergeant with Co. B. "This is the definition of an AQI-controlled area."

The four helicopters soon returned to deliver more troops to the objective.

After determining that 10 men were either associates or close relatives of known AQI leaders, the Soldiers flew back to drop the detainees off at a holding facility before resuming their mission.

Three of the men detained were found in a spider hole by Iraqi troops.

About half of the force on the ground was Iraqi, showing the local populace that Iraqi troops are a legitimate and viable force, committed to reigning in terrorists. The operation on the southernmost



An OH-58D Kiowa helicopter from 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, fires a rocket at a weapons cache during Operation Patriot Strike.



Staff Sgt. Joe Hammond (front), of Co. B, 2-502 Infantry, leads his squad through a gully during Operation Patriot Strike.

of the three main objectives was planned, led, and executed entirely by Iraqi soldiers.

The Iraqi troops took 32 detainees that were on their blacklist.

Iraqi police supported the operation by reinforcing the western cordon, preventing AQI fighters from escaping the targeted area.

Throughout the operation, OH-58D Kiowa helicopters fired rockets at suspected weapons caches. Iraqi soldiers also discovered four 120mm mortar rounds and 80 rounds of 20mm anti-aircraft ammunition.

"This was a combined operation including coalition forces, Iraqi army and Iraqi police units," said Lt. Col. Dane Barksdale, commander of Task Force 1-76.

"The purpose was to clear all reported or suspected enemy safehouses, meeting locations, and

cache sites in the northern portion of [Area of Operations] Anzio. We detained more than 40 enemy and confiscated or destroyed enemy mortar and anti-aircraft ammunition."

"There is no place to hide because of the partnership that exists between the security forces and the people."

***Army Lt. Col. Dane Barksdale
Task Force 1-76 commander***

Barksdale added that the initial response of the people in the area has been positive and that they appreciated the operation which helped to secure the people in the area.

"The longer term effect is that the majority of the people in the area are against these enemies of Iraq and there is no place for them to hide because of the partnership that exists between the security forces and the people," he said.

The 2/502 Inf. Regt. is assigned to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), and the 2/69 AR is assigned to the 3rd Heavy BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. Both units are operationally attached to 4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div. ☞

*‘Together we
can achieve
lasting security’*

Austin, XVIII Airborne Corps take MNC-I’s reins

Story, photos by
Army Sgt. Laura M. Bigenho
MNC-I PAO

Army Lt. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III assumed command of Multi-National Corps-Iraq during a transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Victory’s Al Faw Palace Feb. 14.

His predecessor, Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, is slated to take over as the Army’s next vice chief of staff.

Army Gen. David Petraeus, Multi-National Force Iraq commanding general, spoke highly of Odierno’s accomplishments and leadership as commander of III Corps and MNC-I. Petraeus said Iraq was a much different place when Odierno first took command 14 months ago.

“The situation was very difficult,” Petraeus said. “The bloodshed had reached horrific levels. The very fabric of Iraqi society had been torn.”

Petraeus said Odierno and his team had a lot of planning and



Army Gen. David Petraeus, Multi-National Force-Iraq commanding general, hands the Multi-National Corps-Iraq colors to Army Lt. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III during a transfer of authority ceremony at Al Faw Palace Feb. 14.

hard work on their hands, but they stepped up and made the tough decisions the country needed.

“He forthrightly requested additional forces and he and his staff began developing an operational concept for their employment,” Petraeus said. “His recommendations for what came to be known as the surge forces have since been

proven correct. They reflected a mastery of the operational level of war and they explicitly laid out the concepts that have guided our forces over the past year.”

Odierno said he was humbled by Petraeus’ remarks and for having served among the ranks of others.

“You restored optimism to a

country once enslaved by the influence of terrorists and allowed a nation to take control of its own destiny," Odierno said. "I am humbled to serve in your ranks, and I salute each and every one of you. Thank you for being at my side and for being the Soldiers that you are."

"You restored optimism to a country once enslaved by terrorists and allowed a nation to take control of its destiny."

***Army Gen. David Petraeus
MNF-I commanding general***

Austin said he looks forward to working alongside the Iraqi security forces, who share ideals similar to those of coalition forces.

"Iraqis, like the coalition sol-

diers by their sides, believe that there are ideals and responsibilities that transcend the individual, and they are denying the terrorists the freedom to launch their attacks from their neighborhoods," Austin said. "Every day, Iraqis are getting involved with the government."

Austin previously served in Iraq in 2003 as assistant division commander (maneuver) of 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized). Other assignments include commander of Combined Joint Task

Force 180 during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and, most recently, chief of staff for U.S. Central Command. He took command of XVIII Airborne Corps in December 2006.

Austin said he plans to help Iraqis promote progress.

"We will help the Iraqi government integrate local volunteers into the Iraqi security force and other employment opportunities that will promote progress for this great country," he said.

The Iraqis' evident choice of peace over sectarian violence will be key in continuing to make progress, Austin said.

"It is clear that the Iraqi people have a new confidence in tomorrow and in their future," he said. "With will, determination and focus, together we can achieve lasting security and give all Iraqis a future of hope." ©



Petraeus, Army Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, III Corps commander and Austin salute the colors during a playing of the national anthem. Austin assumed control of MNC-I during a transfer of authority ceremony at Al Faw Palace on Feb. 14

Freedom's Focal Point



Soldiers celebrate New Year's Eve at Camp Taji. Photo by Army Spc. Jeffery Sandstrum.

Freedom's Focal Point





Above: Soldiers from 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment patrol and clear houses in Sheik Sa'id in Diyala Province Jan. 2. Photo by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Sean Mulligan.

Far right: Soldiers of the 56th Military Police Company, 101st Airborne Division, working with contracted civilians conduct close-quarters battle drills with Iraqi police trainees at Forward Operating Base Danger Jan. 8. Photo by Army Spc. Jordan Huettl.

Right: Army Sgt. Brian Terry, 626th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, welds a piece of metal as he fabricates a humvee vehicle modification part Jan. 9 at Camp Striker. Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. Adrian Cadiz.



Freedom's Focal Point



Freedom's Focal Point



As the sun begins to rise over Patrol Base Assassin, a Bradley armored fighting vehicle operated by Soldiers from Troop A, 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, waits to roll out to conduct a joint clearing operation with Sons of Iraq and Iraqi national police Jan. 6. Photo by Army Sgt. Timothy Kingston.





Top left: Two Iraqi men get retinal scans to be processed into the Army's system before taking a physical fitness test for Iraqi army qualification at Forward Operating Base Iskan Jan. 2. Photo By Army Spc. Adam Sanders.

Far right: Air Force Senior Airman Jessica Lafo, Staff Sgt. Nick Last and Airman 1st Class Tyler Jones, 506th Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron, lower a robot into a well to look for weapons caches in Uch Tapa Village, Kirkuk Province Dec. 30. Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Samuel Bendet.

Right: Army Sgt. Eric Whitlock, 318th Tactical Psychological Company, 10th Battalion, 9th Psychological Operations Group, scans from the gunner's hatch of his humvee in Sab al Bor Jan. 4. Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. William Greer.

Above: Army Sgt. Christopher Craft, Troop G, 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, searches for weapon caches during Operation Iron Harvest Jan. 8 near Mansuriyat al Jabal. Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Jason Robertson.





Freedom's Focal Point



A van loaded with tangerines from Syria awaits inspection at the Husaybah port-of-entry facility. It has been two months since the reopening of the renovated port-of-entry facility at the Iraqi-Syrian border, and the region is beginning to prosper from the increased trade.

Moving Produce

Reopening of Syrian port-of-entry brings trade, prosperity to region, free trade zone to follow

Story, photos by
Marine Cpl. Billy Hall
MNF-W PAO

Loads of fresh goods appear to overwhelm the aged vehicles that carry them and can be seen more and more along the Iraqi-Syrian border. Fruits, vegetables, eggs, milk and endless other goods seem ready to outwardly burst from inside over-packed vans that seemingly could keel over from the highly-stacked roofs.

It has been two months since

the reopening of the renovated port-of-entry facility at the Iraqi-Syrian border in Husaybah, Iraq, and the region is beginning to prosper from the increased trade.

Recently, Mayor Farhan Tekan Farchan, the regional mayor of Al Qa'im, met with city councilmen and coalition forces to discuss the next step.

With the committed backing of the government of Iraq, the development of a free-trade zone with neighboring Syria seems the next stride to ensure thriving commerce for the region, as well

as the rest of Iraq.

"The idea is to provide a place where goods could be imported and sold tax and tariff free," said 1st Lt. Colin Ricks, a team leader with the Civil Affairs Team from 5th Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, of Task Force 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 5. "It will hopefully bring lower-priced goods that would otherwise not be available to the people."

Syrian officials say they recently completed a 2.5 million square meter free-trade zone facility on

“It will hopefully bring lower-priced goods that would not otherwise be available to the people.”

**Marine 1st Lt. Colin Rickes
Civil Affairs Team leader**

their side of the border.

In order to handle trade increases, Iraqi officials are deliberating on a location to build their own extensive free-trade zone facility.


“The location is still up in the air,” Ricks said. “Originally the mayor wanted to put it right next to the port-of-entry. The governor wanted to move it east, just south of Sadah. The area they want to put it in is an empty field. All of the infrastructure still needs to be built.”

Iraq is currently planning to bolster trade with Egypt and Iran through new facilities and trade agreements.

Several customs barriers have been burdening Iraq’s economy since several U.N. sanctions were imposed after the invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

According to World Trade Magazine, Egypt is Iraq’s current leading supplier following the U.N.’s decision in 1996 to allow Iraq to sell oil for humanitarian goods.

Increased stability and progress within the government is permitting Iraq to again mend bonds with the Arab world.

An Iraqi-Syrian free trade zone will be another piece in the puzzle toward over-all economic stability and a return to normalcy for Iraq. 



Marines tour the Iraqi-Syrian port-of-entry facility in Husaybah, Iraq, before meeting with Iraqi officials to discuss the planning for a free-trade zone.



A vehicle loaded with produce pulls into the Husaybah port-of-entry facility for inspection.



An Iraqi police vehicle is parked in front of incoming vehicles loaded with goods from Syria at the port-of-entry facility in Husaybah.

Putting the 'Forward' in Forward Support

Airborne sustainers ensure security, continue logistics mission in one of Baghdad's toughest neighborhoods

Story, photos by
Army Staff Sgt. Mike Pryor
MND-B PAO

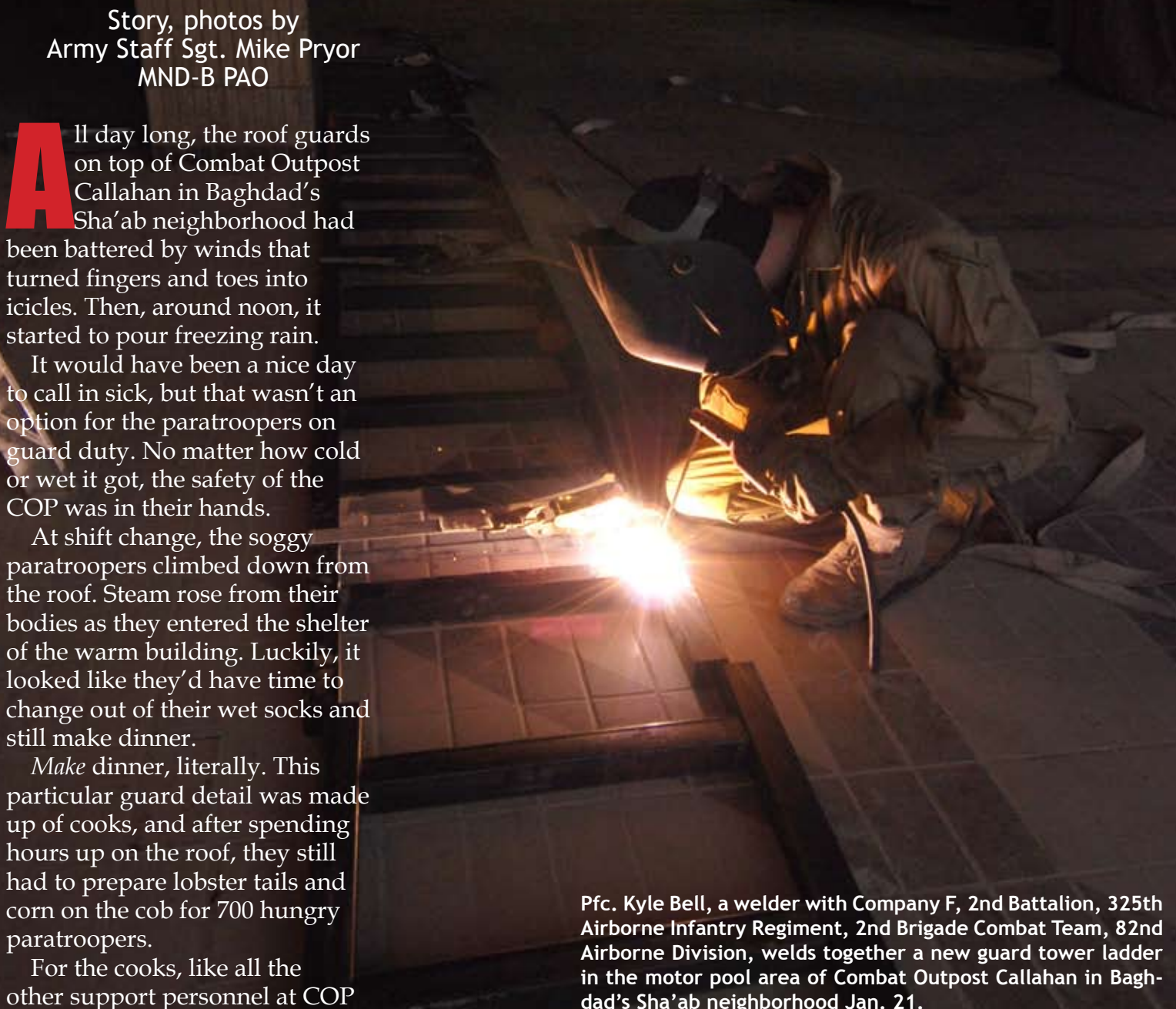
All day long, the roof guards on top of Combat Outpost Callahan in Baghdad's Sha'ab neighborhood had been battered by winds that turned fingers and toes into icicles. Then, around noon, it started to pour freezing rain.

It would have been a nice day to call in sick, but that wasn't an option for the paratroopers on guard duty. No matter how cold or wet it got, the safety of the COP was in their hands.

At shift change, the soggy paratroopers climbed down from the roof. Steam rose from their bodies as they entered the shelter of the warm building. Luckily, it looked like they'd have time to change out of their wet socks and still make dinner.

Make dinner, literally. This particular guard detail was made up of cooks, and after spending hours up on the roof, they still had to prepare lobster tails and corn on the cob for 700 hungry paratroopers.

For the cooks, like all the other support personnel at COP



Pfc. Kyle Bell, a welder with Company F, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, welds together a new guard tower ladder in the motor pool area of Combat Outpost Callahan in Baghdad's Sha'ab neighborhood Jan. 21.



Sgt. Gavin McBean (right), Co. F, issues instructions as commander of the guard detail on the roof of Combat Outpost Callahan in Baghdad's Sha'ab neighborhood early last year.

Callahan, the end of a shift on guard duty usually means their real work is just beginning.

For more than a year, the cooks, along with the mechanics, drivers and other personnel who make up Company F, the forward support company for 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, have juggled two jobs: protecting the force and providing combat logistics support to hundreds of paratroopers based at an expeditionary outpost in one of Baghdad's toughest neighborhoods.

"The company doesn't sleep. It's amazing," said Capt. Brian Shoemaker, Co. F's commander, who hails from Destrehan, La. "They've really done an excellent job.

"They've got a tough life out here, but they make the most out of it. They drive on."

When the 325th AIR moved into Sha'ab in February 2007, there was no COP Callahan – there was only an abandoned 5-story shopping center crawl-

ing with rats. For Co. F, the first days were the busiest as the paratroopers worked constantly to fortify the building and make it livable.

"It was pretty hectic when we first got out here," said Spc. William Moore, a mechanic from Austin, Texas.

Moore recalled having to work on damaged vehicles while wearing his helmet and full body armor because the COP was not secure enough to remove them.

"We couldn't even fit underneath the vehicles," he said, shaking his head at the memory.

From day one, the company assumed the key mission of protecting the COP while the line units conducted op-

erations out in sector.

Guard duty at Callahan has never been easy. In the first months, the COP was attacked on a near-daily basis, and the paratroopers on guard duty had to make life or death decisions about who posed a threat and who did not.

"We put a lot on their shoulders to be able to go up there and make those decisions," Shoemaker

"No matter how often we break it, they're always there to fix it for us. Without these guys, we really couldn't operate."

***Army Sgt. Ken Spalding
Company C infantryman***



Pfc. Robert Couch, a forklift operator with Co. F, mans a guard position in front of COP Callahan.



Spc. Gilbert May, a mechanic with Co. F, repairs a damaged humvee in the motor pool of COP Callahan in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District.

said.

Yet at the same time as they were protecting the COP, the paratroopers had to support the basic needs of more than 700 Soldiers on any given day. At times, the number of personnel being supported by Co. F rose to almost 1,500, Shoemaker said.

Units based at COP Callahan depend almost entirely on resources provided by Company F to conduct their day-to-day missions, Shoemaker said.

"The fuel that they use to drive, the food that they eat, the ammo they shoot, they get all that from us," Shoemaker said. "It's a pretty daunting responsibility."

For some of the paratroopers, it sometimes seemed as if there weren't enough hours in the day to complete all the work that had to get done.

Pfc. Robert Couch, a driver and forklift operator from Sweet Home, Ore., recalled a period where he went 51 hours without sleep.

"I got no problem working long hours if there's stuff that needs to get done. All I need is coffee and (energy drinks)," he said.

In order to get the job done, paratroopers from Co. F have had to learn to adapt over the past year, Couch said.

He himself was faced with a number of situations where he had to learn new skills on the fly in order to complete a mission.

"I ended up doing it just because it needed to get done," Couch said. "That's what I'm most proud of."

Whenver the company has faced trying circumstances during the deployment, the paratroopers have responded by knuckling down and working harder.

That gritty attitude reminded Spc. Robert Crull, a member of the headquarters platoon, of the line-men on a football team, who don't get the glory that quarterbacks or wide receivers do, but who make every big play possible.

"These guys are busting their butts, day in and day out, and a lot of the work they do goes unnoticed," said Crull, a native of Atlanta.

One person who did notice it was Sgt. Ken Spalding, an infantryman with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 325th AIR.

Spalding said all the paratroopers at the COP appreciate Company F's hard work — even if they don't express it every day.

He made his gratitude clear after bringing his damaged humvee into the motor pool one day to be repaired. In minutes, the mechanics had the tire off and were fixing the problem. Spalding said he looked on in amazement.

"No matter how often we break it, they're always there to fix it for us," Spalding said. "Without these guys, we really couldn't operate. ☺"



An Iraqi army soldier with Company B, 5th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division pulls security Jan. 18 in Kadamiyah during the Ashura movement.

Iraqi forces put local face on Ashura security

Pilgrims' Progress

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

Millions of Shia Muslim's moved through the streets of Kadhimiyah in January to observe Ashura.

Ensuring these men, women and children were safe, Iraqi security forces came together in planning and executing the security in and around Kadhimiyah. It was a joint effort among the ISF and took weeks of planning to ensure the festivities went off without a hitch.

In control of security and planning in Kadhimiyah is the 2nd Division of the Iraqi National Police.

Iraqi army soldiers from the

5th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, set up the outer cordon of Kadhimiyah, and manned tactical checkpoints to search each Iraqi citizen and vehicle entering the area for explosives and weapons.

The 5th Battalion also has 40 female troops within the battalion, and used them — to include 12 other females augmented to the battalion — to search female Iraqi citizens at each checkpoint.

National policemen from the Justice Battalion maintained the inner security of Kadhimiyah, as forces from the 6th Ministry of Interior manned shrine security.

"They went through numerous synchronization meetings at all levels of command for this operation," said Clarksville, Tenn. native, Capt. Dan Koban, opera-

tions advisor, Military Transition Team, 5th Bn., 1st Bde., 6th Iraqi Army. "They joined together to publish a plan, went through weeks of preparation and it has all come together."

The security plan was a joint and combined effort using different ISF elements, Koban stated. The plan incorporated coalition air and aviation and possessed three levels of security, with each level of security getting tighter as it got closer to the Shrine.

The Iraqis also worked with local neighborhood and district council members, local councils and governments, and local clinics to ensure they hit every angle needed to ensure overall safety and fidelity.

As coalition forces look to move toward tactical overwatch, they wanted little involvement in the operation to secure Kadhimiyah. They wanted to step back, and watch the ISF take control of their homeland. All the ISF asked from coalition forces was for air assets to patrol the skies above.

Soldiers from Company D, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, traveled between TCPs, giving the ISF added troop strength on the ground.

"We provided just an American presence there to respond to any situation that would develop," said Andover Township, N.J. native, Capt. Brad Henry, commander, Co. D, 1st Bn., 502nd Inf. Reg. "The real reason we (were) there is really to be a liaison between the air assets that are allocated to the battalion for Ashura. We are the link if something were to happen to the ISF units on the ground."

Coalition troops acted as a back stop to the ISF, who were responsible for the overall security in



An Iraqi army soldier directs traffic at a checkpoint in Kadamiyah.



Iraqi policemen check the registration of a vehicle at a tactical checkpoint in Kadamiyah.

Kadhimiyah, he said.

Since 2004, Iraqis have been afforded the opportunity to observe Ashura, something Saddam would not allow the Shia's to do. The last few years there were no serious incidents besides small arms fire from terrorist and/or extremists. This year was no different, except there were no negative incidents reported. No small arms fire; no mortars.

However, the threat was there. The Kadhimiyah Shrine is one of the few Shia monuments unharmed by insurgent activity, said Henry.

"The threat is there but there's been no attacks, and a lot of that credit goes to ISF forces in Kadhimiyah," he further explained. "They do a pretty good job of keeping Kadamiyah locked down from outside extremist organizations."

Kadhimiyah is predominately Shia, explained Henry, and most of the security forces operating in the area are Shia themselves, so

they take a lot pride in protecting the Kadhimiyah Shrine.

Kadhimiyah is the central hub of the Shia religion and they have put the right amount of resources and focus there, and according to Koban, "they've got their A-game in Kadhimiyah."

"They do a pretty job keeping Kadamiyah locked down from outside extremist organizations."

***Army Capt. Brad Henry
Co. D commander***

Iraqi security forces have had the lead on the security for the processions since day one, Henry said.

"It bodes very well for the future. They still require support and attention from coalition forces to get them where they

need to go, but where they are now, the ISF, compared to where they were two years ago is light years ahead," Henry said. "The fact that they can secure Kadhimiyah with very, very little coalition support is very promising. The amount of coalition force input into the planning process was very low."


Henry believes coalition forces are well on their way of handing

Kadhimiyah to the Iraqi security forces with minimal coalition input and presence, allowing them to move into more of an over watch role.

"I think the success they've had during Ashura says we can get to that point in the future," he continued.

Now with Ashura over, and the success fresh in their minds, it's time to look toward the future. Their focus now, especially with the continued peace throughout northwest Baghdad, is on soldierly training — especially among the noncommissioned officers and junior troops, or jundi, said Woodbridge, Va. native, Capt. Jeffrey Mackinnon, team chief, MiTT, 5th Bn. 1st Bde., 6th Iraqi Army.

"We want to develop their NCO corps so they are capable of executing things without a US force," he said. "That's our goal in the end, so we're pushing them to take charge in their operations. We're pushing them to take more charge with their personnel and logistics mission."

"These guys are willing, able and confident and want to move forward... once the higher level Iraqi army comes on line then these guys will take the next step forward," Koban said. 

IN MEMORIAM

NAMES OF COALITION SERVICEMEMBERS WHO DIED WHILE SERVING IN
OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM BETWEEN DECEMBER 16 AND JANUARY 15, 2007

December 17, 2007

Pfc. Juctin R.P. McDaniel, 19
*524th CSSB, 45th Sust. Bde.,
8th TSC*

December 20, 2007

1st Lt. Jeremy E. Ray, 26
1/3 ACR

December 21, 2007

Pfc. George J. Howell, 24
*1/87 Inf., 1st Bde.,
10th Mountain Div.*

December 25, 2007

Sgt. Peter C. Neesley, 28
3/7 Cav., 2nd Bde., 3rd Inf. Div.
Sgt. Bryan J. Tutton, 33
*1/73 Cav., 2nd Bde.,
82nd Airborne Div.*

December 26, 2007

Sgt. Benjamin P. Portell, 27
3/3 ACR
Capt. Rowdy J. Inman, 38
3/3 ACR

December 30, 2007

Pfc. Joseph R. Berlin Jr., 21
STB, 4th Inf. Div.

December 31, 2007

Petty Officer 1st Class
Victor W. Jeffries, 52
Navy Exp. Log. Spt. Grp.
Sgt. Reno S. Lacerna, 44
*87th CSB, 3rd Sust. Bde.,
3rd Inf. Div.*

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

January 2, 2008

Pfc. Joshua R. Anderson, 24
6/8 Cav., 4th Bde., 3rd Inf. Div.
Staff Sgt. Ryan D. Maseth, 24
1st Bn., 5th SF Group

January 3, 2008

Capt. Thomas J. Casey, 32
1st Bde., 1st Inf. Div.
Maj. Andrew J. Olmstead, 37
1st Bde., 1st Inf. Div.

January 4, 2008

Petty Officer 2nd Class
Menelek M. Brown, 24
USS Hopper

January 5, 2008

Pfc. Jason F. Lemke, 30
2/23 Inf., 4th Bde., 2nd Inf. Div.

January 6, 2008

Spc. James D. Gudridge, 20
4/64 AR, 4th Bde., 3rd Inf. Div.

January 7, 2008

Pfc. Timothy R. Hanson, 23
1/15 Inf., 3rd Bde., 3rd Inf. Div.

January 8, 2008

Sgt. David J. Hart, 22
*2/327 Inf., 1st Bde.,
101st Airborne Div.*
Pfc. Ivan E. Merlo, 19
*2/327 Inf., 1st Bde.,
101st Airborne Div.*
Pfc. Phillip J. Pannier, 20
*2/327 Inf., 1st Bde.,
101st Airborne Div.*

January 9, 2008

Spc. Todd E. Davis, 22
3/2 SCR
Staff Sgt. Jonathan K. Dozier, 30
3/2 SCR
Staff Sgt. Sean M. Gaul, 29
3/2 SCR
Sgt. Zachary W. McBride, 20
3/2 SCR
Sgt. 1st Class Matthew I. Pionk, 30
3/2 SCR
Sgt. Christopher J. Sanders, 22
3/2 SCR

January 11, 2008

Lance Cpl.
Curtis A. Christensen Jr., 29
*2/8 Mar. Regt., 2nd Mar. Div.,
2nd MEF*

January 12, 2008

Pfc. Keith E. Lloyd, 26
1/3 ACR

