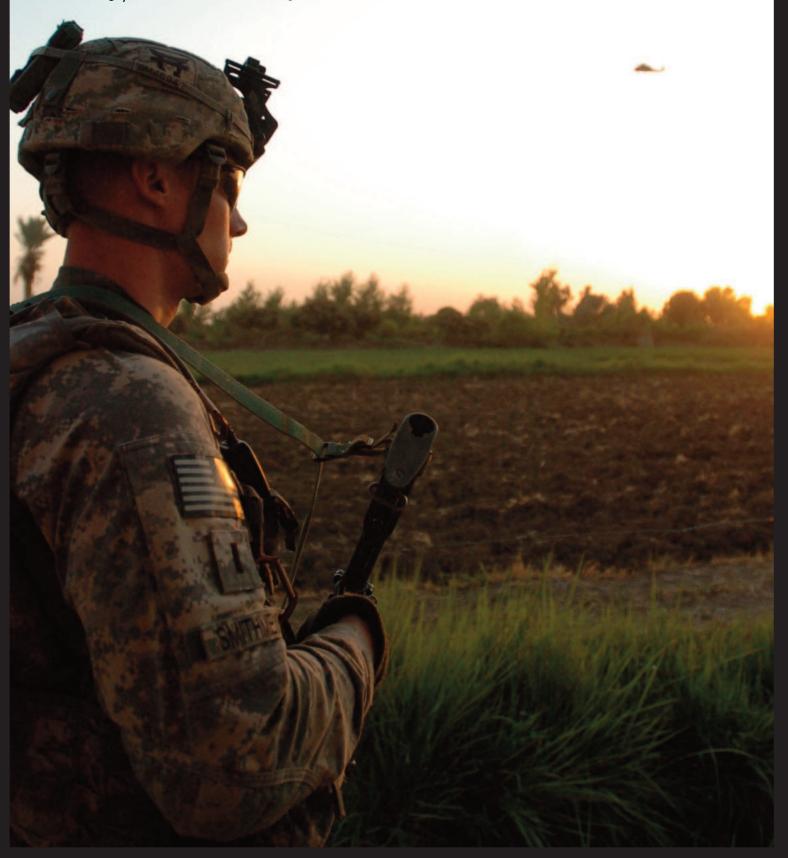
Rakkasan Review Volume 1, Issue 10

A monthly publication of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)





Pfc. Christopher McKenna

A combined color guard of Soldiers from 1/25/17th IA Div. and Btry. B, 3-320th FA, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT) presents the Iraqi and U.S. colors during an IA recognition ceremony at Patrol Base Lutifiyah Aug.12. The ceremony also marked the transition of the patrol base from Coalition forces to the IA. See story on page 5.

On the cover:

First Lieutenant Colby Smithmeyer, from Spokane, Wash., Co. A, 3-187th Inf., 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), overlooks the drop-off point as a UH-60 Black Hawk flies on the horizon during operation Kips Bay, a combined air assault in Al Betra, approximately 30 kilometers southwest of Baghdad, Aug. 8. See story on page 9. (Photo by Pfc. Christopher McKenna)

Rakkasan Review

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We welcome the submission of news items, articles and photographs. Submissions should be made to the 3rd BCT Public Affairs Office via e-mail at: rakkasanspao@yahoo.com.

Rakkasan 6 Notes

As I circulate the battlefield, I am proud of the professionalism, commitment to excellence and mission accomplishment that I see daily. I am proud of the consistent, outstanding results achieved by the men and women of the Rakkasans. These battlefield results are due in no small part to the continued encouragement and support we receive from the Family Readiness Groups, our Golden Rakkasans and numerous other business and community centers from the greater Fort Campbell area.

Remaining connected to our friends and family at home provides us the strength and inspiration to endure the rigors of this deployment and helps keeps us focused on our mission priorities because we are confident in the groups and organizations that assist our loved ones while we can't be there.

Now, more than ever, we must redouble our efforts to keep the right frame of mind that generated our current success and not get lost or irresponsible in the prospects of transition and redeployment. Every time we leave the FOB, COP, or PB, it is a combat operation. That means patrol orders are given, PCCs are conducted, backbriefs and rehearsals are completed.

We don't do convoys, admin runs, or strolls around a town. Although it is all but impossible to prevent someone who is willing to kill themselves to achieve an effect, there are specific measures we take every day that lessen the possibility of an attack. We have also had our share of accidents in this BCT that resulted in the early redeployment of our Soldiers. We simply can not afford any-

more losses to the force.

Safety begins with leader involvement. Team leaders, squad leaders, platoon leaders are the ones who keep Soldiers safe. We will continue to do the right things at all levels (Preventive Medicine inspections, force protection assessments, vehicle services, weapons and equipment calibrations, etc.) to ensure no carelessness or lapse in judgment causes a Soldier to be hurt or our equipment to become combat ineffective.

When we spoke about our mission, right before our departure from Fort Campbell, I mentioned six key points for us to use as a theme and commitment for our mission. These last three months are no different and assisting the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi government, and the people of Mahmudiyah will continue to be our main effort. We are focusing on putting the professional Iraqi Army we partner



Col. Dominic J. Caraccilo

with in full control of the dynamic counterinsurgency operations we conduct throughout the Mahmudiyah Qada.

This major transition requires the dedicated efforts of all of our Soldiers as we assist the people and Government of Iraq in understanding their Army is a professional and trustworthy organization that can be

counted upon to defeat the enemies of peace and freedom.

It is equally important that we prepare the Iraqi Army to meet the very real essential service needs of a community that requires enhanced infrastructure and health care to generate sustainable economic growth. The combination of physical security and economic development will ensure that the break in the cycle of violence we achieved over the past year becomes irreversible in Mahmudiyah.

I am confident the Rakkasan Soldiers, their families and friends alike, will continue their tremendous efforts with the same degree of intensity, focus, character and humility that has brought us this far.

I am proud to serve with each and every one of you.



Do you have photos of you or your unit in action? E-mail us at rakkasanspao@yahoo.com

New police station, new progress in Lutifiyah

By Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy 3rd BCT PAO NCOIC

In yet another sign of progress in Iraq, officials from the Mahmudiyah Qada gathered for a ceremony marking the grand opening of the Lutifiyah Police Station Aug. 2.

"We are celebrating the grand opening of the IP station headquarters in Lutifiyah; (it's important) for the people to open this police station because it connects Baghdad and Babil. We need to have unity in this area," said Maj. Gen. Khadim Hamed Sharhn al-Muhamadani, provincial director of police. "As you know, the local police give a lot of services in this area to support Iraq and the people of Iraq."

The Lutifiyah Iraqi Policemen previously worked out of the Lutifiyah Joint Security Station, along with the Iraqi Army and Soldiers from Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

The new base of operations for approximately 200 Iraqi Policemen, under construction since January, allows for an increased IP presence in the area.

The police chief urged Iraqis to stand strong together against all of those who wish to destroy the country of Iraq.

"This is one of our dreams to open this – that tribal leaders and the 17th Iraqi Army Division came together," said Maj. Gen.



Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy

Maj. Gen. Khadim Hamed Sharhn al-Muhamadani, provincial director of police, speaks at the grand opening of the Lutifiyah Police Station Aug. 2.

Ali Jassim Muhammad Hassen Al Frejee, 17th Iraqi Army Division commander.

He said terrorists and criminals aim to destroy Iraq and its people, but support and courage from the people of the Mahmudiyah Qada helped make the area safe.

"This was the Triangle of Death, now it is safe – you can go anywhere," Al Frejee said. "We are very proud of the IP in Mahmudiyah."

IA officially takes over Patrol Base Corregidor

By Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy 3rd BCT PAO NCOIC

The Rakkasans handed over the first of 18 patrol bases within their battle space in southwest Baghdad to the Iraqi Army during a transfer-of-authority ceremony Aug. 5.

Patrol Base Corregidor, approximately 32 kilometers southwest of Baghdad, is now home to 3rd Battalion, 25th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division.

"The ground we now stand on has an unpleasant history. It has seen the innocent mistreated; it has seen war and devastation; and it has seen its people go hungry," began Capt. Thomas R. Monoghan Jr., commander of Troop B, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), in his remarks during the ceremony.

"Those times are now behind us, thanks to the local sheiks and IA company commanders," Monoghan continued. "The people of this area banned together, standing up to any group that would do their people harm. This area set an example for all of Iraq to follow."

During the brief ceremony, Soldiers of Beast Troop, 1-33rd Cav. Regt. retired the guidon, which has flown since Oct. 24, and a U.S. flag. A lone Iraqi flag now stands in their stead.

"This is the first of many Coalition patrol bases which are being transitioned to the IA in order to maintain security in the Mahmudiyah Qada," said Lt. Col. Daniel Dolwick, deputy commander of 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT).

By the time the Rakkasans reach the end of their 15-month deployment, thry will have turned over 18 patrol bases to IA control.

Ultimately, the 17th IA Div. will take the lead in security for what is now the Rakkasans' battle space in the Mahmudiyah Qada.



Pfc. Christopher McKenna

IA recognized as Patrol Base Lutifiyah changes hands

By Pfc. Christopher McKenna 3rd BCT Public Affairs

A recognition ceremony was held at Patrol Base Lutifiyah to celebrate the 1st Battalion, 25th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division's accomplishments and mark the official transfer of the patrol base from Coalition forces to the IA Aug.12.

"Today is a very special day," said Col. Abid Al Muhsin, 25/17th IA commander. "This taking of responsibility in Lutifiyah shows that the Iraqi Army is ready to protect, that the Iraqi Army is ready to fight, and that the Iraqi Army is ready to take control completely away from the enemy."

The IA and Coalition forces have been working side by side since the Iraqi rebuilding process began in 2005. The IA previously held more of a support role, but they are now easing into the lead security element.

"We celebrate the taking over of security because four years ago, this area suffered from collapse and was called a ghost city," said Staff Maj. Gen. Ali Jassim Muhammad Hassen Al Frejee, 17th IA Div. commander. "Most families here lost family members, but from support of the Coalition, we switched this area to become very secure."

In just under a year, the area has seen a near-90 percent decrease in terrorist activity, ranging from attacks to roadside improvised explosive devices.

"We call this area now an example of peace because the 1st Battalion, 25th Brigade is going to be taking over," Al Frejee said. "They will continue to stay strong and defeat the terrorists and anyone who tries to destroy (Iraq)."

A total of 18 patrol bases within the Rakkasan battle space will transition to the IA by the end of this year. The competence and capability of the 17th IA enables Coalition forces to rely on IA Soldiers to take the lead on security

in this area.

"Friday (Aug.8) was our last day on the patrol base," said Capt. Manuel Gonzalez, from Olympia, Wash., Battery B commander, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). "This is one of the most prepared battalions in the 17th IA Div.; they are ready to take over."

Patrol Base Lutifiyah is the second Rakkasan patrol base to transition from responsibility of Coalition forces to the IA.

"Remember sacrifice today as today is a day of celebration... We celebrate the bravery and hard work of these men," said Lt. Col. William Zemp, commander of 3-320th FA, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT).

"You have fought to free the people of this area from fear and intimidation, now (the IA) stands strong to protect from the corrupt and the criminal."

17th IA MiTT helps Iraqi p

By Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy 3rd BCT PAO NCOIC

Within a month of its inception, the 17th Iraqi Army Division is already independently providing secu-

rity in areas formerly occupied by Coalition forces.

Created from the 25th Iraqi Army Brigade, the 17th IA Div. officially stood up in mid-July when Staff Maj. Gen. Ali Jassim Muhammad Hassen Al Frejee was promoted to his current rank. Al Frejee and his unit will continue to transition into a lead security element in the Southwest Baghdad area now under the authority of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

"This was brought about by a number of factors, but more importantly in this case is the result... a Sunni majority population supporting a profes-

sionalized Iraqi Security Force, and perhaps less profound is their support of the local government in its effort to provide essential services," said Col. Dominic Caraccilo, commander of 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT).

Caraccilo, of Seneca Falls, N.Y., said the 17th IA Div. is less reliant on the Coalition for mentorship, but retains a need for the Coalition-provided effects such as field artillery, aerial platforms and ISR.

"However, (Al Frejee) is working hard to replace some of our special

skills with his own," Caraccilo added, referring to IA route clearance team training currently under way.

The 17th IA Div.'s commander expressed confidence in the partnership of the 17th IA Div. and the 17th

success.

"They are doing very well in providing support; they are a big help to us here in training, supply and fighting insurgency," Al Frejee said. "I believe the work with both sides is



Sgt. 1st

Staff Major General Ali Jassim Muhammad Hassen Al Frejee, 17th IA Div. commander, talks wit Caraccilo, commander of 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), following a ceremony at Patrol Base C

IA Military Transition Team, a team of more than 30 professionals created by the Rakkasans. The MiTT will collectively help the newly formed division achieve established goals. Eighteen Soldiers interact with the IA division staff on a daily basis; the remainder of the team serves in a support role.

MiTT members advise their IA counterparts on day-to-day operations using translators to overcome the language barrier, offer assistance when needed and provide alternative points of view to help them achieve good and is going very well."

Al Frejee said the security gains in the area are the result of the blood and sweat of Iraqi and Coalition Soldiers, as well as the efforts of Sons of Iraq.

"I believe now South Baghdad areas are mostly quiet and safe if you compare things now and how they were a year ago; it is a great thing," Al Frejee said. "We will be an example; we should do it in the right way to ensure success."

The 17th IA MiTT is playing an integral role to help achieve that suc-



artners with transition

cess and is just one of many moving pieces in this transition process.

The 17th IA Div. is undertaking a task that would be difficult for a fully equipped, fully manned division that has been operating for years.

Class Kerensa Hardy h Col. Dominic orregidor Aug.

"We're asking them to do three very distinct missions ... at the same time," said Lt. Col. Joel Grantham, 17th IA MiTT chief.

The 17th IA Div. will assemble, equip, man and train a division element; transition into a leading operational role in southern Baghdad; and continue to conduct daily combat operations.

The 17th IA Div. has "a very strong, dynamic leader," said Grantham, a Vicksburg, Miss., native. "They've got very good brigade and battalion commanders. With the incorporation of a division staff to en-

able operations, they should be fine."

"They're fully capable of doing their job," Grantham said. "This was a brigade with eight battalions; now, it's a division with three brigades and more battalions and essential enablers to go along with the division headquarters. But it was built out of a very solid base."

Rakkasans transitioned Patrol Base Corregidor, the first patrol base in their battle space to undergo this process, to the Iraqi

Army Aug. 5; another is scheduled for the upcoming week.

The transition will continue through November when the 17th IA Div. should have all required personnel and equipment necessary to achieve success.

Captain William Vick, 17th IA MiTT adviser to the 17th IA Div. logistics officer, is assisting the unit in getting the equipment it will need to man the battlefield. The 17th IA logistics staff is taking the lead developing distribution plans for the needed equipment.

Vick, a native of Breckenridge, Texas, is working with his counterparts to find shortages for the infantry brigades, a motorized transportation regiment and engineers in the 17th IA Div. The unit will draw 45 fully equipped humvees from Taji and attend a four-day class which will include an orientation, inventory and a two-day drivers' training class on the vehicles.

"One of the most difficult things for (some people) to understand is we're not going to make them into the U.S. Army, our job – in my opinion – is to get them to the point where they can function as an army, as a staff - on their own," said Master Sgt. Alfred Dalton, 17th IA MiTT noncommissioned officer-in-charge. "And I think they're close. There are a lot of things they do well as a division."

"Sometimes, if you get to the desired end state, it's not important how you get there as long as they know how to get there every time on their own, said Dalton, of Clarksville, Tenn.

Grantham tells his team to look at the end results and ask what the 17th IA Div. needs to accomplish them.

"It may not necessarily be the way we do it, but if they accomplish the mission, and they get the tasks done that need to be done, (then) that's okay."



Staff Major General Ali Jassim Muhammad Hassen Al Frejee, 17th IA Div. commander, talks to Capt. Thomas R. Monoghan Jr., commander of Troop B, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), about the transfer of Patrol Base Corregidor to the IA Aug. 5

Rakkasans train IA on route clearance operations

By Pfc. Christopher McKenna 3rd BCT Public Affairs

As part of what is soon to be an overall transition from Coalition forces to the Iraqi Army, Rakkasan Soldiers have begun training the IA Soldiers in route clearance operations in a course dubbed the Iron Claw Academy.

"The Iron Claw Academy is a four-week course which teaches the IA how to conduct route clearance,"

said 1st Lt. Ryan Thomas, from Long Beach, Calif., 1st Platoon leader, Company A, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). "The Soldiers we are instructing are horizontal construction workers, which is an engineer branch in the IA."

This is the first of several courses teaching the IA about route clearance procedures. The course includes two weeks of classroom applications, one week of

hands-on exercises and a final week of outside partnered clearance operations.

"Up until this point, route clearance was the only thing in which the IA had not been involved with," Thomas said.

The Soldiers learn how to identify different types of improvised explosive devices, basic first aid techniques, how to properly evacuate a casualty and vehicle maintenance.

"All of our Soldiers involved in this are newcomers and are enjoying this new learning experience," said 2nd Lt. Hassan Kadhum, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 17th IA Division.

"As part of a new Iraqi Army engineer group I am looking for experience and am glad to receive these classes on route clearance," he said.

He added the Soldiers have become more attentive day by day and have constantly sought after more information.

"They have taken a lot of tasks that were taught to them in the first couple weeks and executed well during their first actual route clearance mission with us," said Staff Sgt. Shawn Rosensteel, from Cumberland, Ky., 1st Plt., Co A., 3rd STB. "They were eager to get out and from what I saw today, they were attentive and alert during the mission, doing everything that they learned properly."



Pfc. Christopher McKenna

An IA Soldier with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 17th IA Division, prepares to enter one of the IA Badger vehicles prior to execution of a route clearance mission Aug 3.



Pfc. Christopher McKenna

Second Lieutenant Hassan Kadhum, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 17th IA Division, makes sure the IA Soldiers in the Iron Claw Academy, a route clearance course taught by Coalition forces, are prepared for their first mission Aug. 3.

Operation Kips Bay sets IA presence

By Pfc. Christopher McKenna 3rd BCT Public Affairs

Iraqi Army and Rakkasan Soldiers executed Operation Kips Bay, an air assault to establish a solid IA presence in Al Betra in the early morning hours Aug. 8.

The 4th Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division and Company A, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) carried out the combined mission.

Teams of Soldiers searched houses for any evidence of caches and insurgent activity and assessed the area for terrorist threats in the region during the sweep.

Al Betra is approximately 30 kilometers southwest of Baghdad and has had a small presence of both Coalition and IA forces in the area.

"This mission was good for the Iraqi Army; it shows that we are concerned about the area and here for the people," said 2nd Lt. Thaw Al Fkar, 4/1/23/17th IA. "The area we went into has been known for terrorist activity and going in showed that the terrorists cannot have this area."

"Prior to even coming into the area we spent five days (surveying), speaking with the local sheikhs and leaders, gaining information on what to ex-



Pfc. Christopher McKenna

An Iraqi Army Soldier with 4/1/23/17th IA Div. pulls security after dismounting a UH-60 Black Hawk during operation Kips Bay, a combined air assault in Al Betra, approximately 30 kilometers southwest of Baghdad, Aug.8.

pect," said 2nd Lt. Jerry Wolfe, from Honolulu, Headquarters Platoon, Co. A, 3-187th Inf. Regt. "The success of the mission shows that we can come in and do any mission, any time we want to."

With the scheduled transition of Southwest Baghdad to the IA, Coalition forces have been in a support role on missions like Kips Bay.

"We are making sure the IA stays focused in the area. They (play) more of a dominant role in the region and the people see them and interact with them," Wolfe said. "The main thing is to keep the IA in the lead."

The IA's role will continue to increase gradually leading up to November, when the 17th IA will assume control of the area currently under 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT).

"(Kips Bay) helps with transition," Fkar said. "The Soldiers involved were well prepared and there was good work between the Coalition and IA."



Pfc. Christopher McKenna

Soldiers with 4/1/23/17th IA Div. and Co. A, 3-187th Inf., 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT) load onto a UH-60 Black Hawk upon completion of operation Kips Bay, a combined air assault in Al Betra, approximately 30 kilometers southwest of Baghdad, Aug.8.

Uthman school reopens after renovations

By Pfc. Christopher McKenna 3rd BCT Public Affairs

The Uthman School in Mahmudiyah officially reopened Aug. 6 after extensive renovations.

"I have spent 12 years working at this school, and this is by far the best condition it has ever been in," said Wahab Fadel, boys' manager for the Uthman School. "Other school managers are also very impressed, and many are looking to have renovations done to their schools now as well."

Among the renovations were the raising and extension of the exterior perimeter walls, the addition of classrooms and rewiring of the electrical system.

"The classrooms used to be overcrowded, but now there are more; more children are going to be able to gain a proper education thanks to both expansion of classrooms and addition of new ones," Fadel said.

The project was initiated by the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th

Mountain Division (Light Infantry), prior to the unit's departure from country. In April, the 3rd BCT, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) took



Pfc. Christopher McKenna

A student from the Uthman School in Mahmudiyah carries school supplies to be presented at the reopening ceremony of the school Aug. 6. over the renovation project through Commander's Emergency Relief Program funding.

"Work began in April during Operation Marne Piledriver and was officially completed today," said 1st Lt.

Jason Potter, from Springfield, Mo.,
Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field
Artillery Regiment, 3rd BCT, 101st
Abn. Div. (AASLT) civil military operations officer. "The contractor both met and exceeded the scope of work for the project."

Potter said the renovations have made the Uthman School one of the best-looking schools in the Mahmudiyah Qada.

Students will enjoy the newly renovated school Sept. 15, when the school opens for a new year. Many students attended the opening ceremony to receive school supplies.

"Having a better school gives the students a sense of pride in their education," Potter said. "The students see that we are doing something good for them, and they will hopefully embrace positive things."

Joint Chiefs chairman discusses Iraq, Afghanistan, Georgia

By Jim Garamone American Forces Press Service

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff addressed the security situation in Iraq, the need for more U.S. troops in Afghanistan and the Georgia challenge during a Pentagon news conference today.

Navy Adm. Mike Mullen – fresh from a midocean meeting aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln with the Pakistani army's chief of staff and key U.S. military leaders – told reporters he expects to deliver his assessment on the situation in Iraq to Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and President Bush soon.

The situation in Iraq has been complicated by the loss of 2,000 Georgian troops who were called home, and changes in the "Sons of Iraq" citizen security program, the chairman said, adding that he, acting U.S Central Command chief Army Lt. Gen. Martin E. Dempsey and Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, Multinational Force Iraq commander, are continually assessing the situation in

Iraq with an eye to what follows.

The last of the U.S. surge brigades left Iraq in July, and American military leaders are examining the trends in the nation with an eye toward further troop reductions. Mullen said there is no specific date for any announcement.

"The situation does continue to evolve," Mullen said. "Security trends continue to head in the right direction. Violence is down more than it's been at any time in four-plus years. The political process continues." Those factors will figure

into the recommendation that he provides to Gates and the president, the admiral said.

Still, if Iraq continues to make security gains, "I would hope to be able to make recommendations for further troop reductions ... when those conditions are met," he said.

The chairman said there is a "very real, urgent requirement" for more troops in Afghanistan.

The United States has committed to deploying three more brigades to the country when it becomes possible to do so.



Courtesy photo

In the line of duty

Specialist Lawrence Hector, HHC, 3rd STB, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), gives a checkup to a baby during a combined dismounted patrol with Iraqi Police in Sadr Al Yusifiyah July 26.

What does loyalty mean to you?



"...being honest, backing up what is right and what you believe in as well as doing what is right when things are at their worst."

> Spc. Francisco Trinidad Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment

"... being committed to someone or something and having courage to stay committed no matter what the cost."

Staff Sgt. Brian Holley Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment



HOLLEY U.S. ARM)

"... sticking to your word and being faithful to the guy next to you."

Pvt. Jamal Bailey Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade CombatTeam



"... having pride in what you do and meeting the standard to the best of your ability."

Sgt. Benjamin Harding Forward Support Company, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment

