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Too Tough Times



Vol. 1 Issue 10

"Telling the story of the 18th Military Police Brigade"

September 2008

IPs preparing to stand on their own...



Two new IP stations validated: page 6

Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and Civilians of Multi-National Force-Iraq:

It has been the greatest of privileges to have been your commander for the past 19 months. During that time, we and our civilian and Iraqi partners have been engaged in an exceedingly complex, difficult, and important task. And in the face of numerous challenges, we and our partners have helped bring new hope to a country that was besieged by extremists and engulfed in sectarian violence.

When I took command of Multi-National Force-Iraq in February 2007, I noted that the situation in Iraq was hard but not hopeless. You have proven that assessment to be correct. Indeed, your great work, sacrifice, courage, and skill have helped to reverse a downward spiral toward civil war and to wrest the initiative from the enemies of the new Iraq.

Together, Iraqi and Coalition Forces have faced determined, adaptable, and barbaric enemies. You and our Iraqi partners have taken the fight to them, and you have taken away their sanctuaries and safe havens. You have helped secure the Iraqi people and have enabled, and capitalized on, their rejection of extremism. You have also supported the Iraqi Security Forces as they have grown in number and capability and as they have increasingly shouldered more of the responsibility for security in their country.

You have not just secured the Iraqi people, you have served them, as well. By helping establish local governance, supporting reconstruction efforts, assisting with revitalization of local businesses, fostering local reconciliation, and conducting a host of other non-kinetic activities, you have contributed significantly to the communities in which you have operated. Indeed, you have been builders and diplomats as well as guardians and warriors.

The progress achieved has been hard-earned. There have been many tough days along the way, and we have suffered tragic losses. Indeed, nothing in Iraq has been anything but hard. But you have been more than equal to every task.

Your accomplishments have, in fact, been the stuff of history. Each of you should be proud of what has been achieved and of the contributions you continue to make. Although our tasks in Iraq are far from complete and hard work and tough fights lie ahead, you have helped bring about remarkable improvements.

Your new commander is precisely the right man for the job. General Ray Odierno played a central role in the progress achieved during the surge. He brings tremendous skill, experience, and understanding as he returns to Iraq for a third tour and takes the helm of MNF-I just seven months after relinquishing command of Multi-National Corps-Iraq. I have total confidence in him, and I will do all that I can as the commander of Central Command to help him, MNF-I, and our Iraqi partners to achieve the important goals that we all share for the new Iraq.

Thank you for your magnificent work here in the "Land of the Two Rivers." And thank you for your sacrifices—and for those of your families—during this crucial phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I am honored to have soldiered with you in this critical endeavor.

With great respect and all best wishes,

Thank you!

David H. Petraeus
David H. Petraeus
General, United States Army
Commanding

Editor's Note:

As the Multi-National Forces' Iraq Commander departs, Army General David H. Petraeus enclosed letter bids farewell and thanks all of you for your selfless service and dedication to the mission. Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno assumed command of Multinational Force Iraq on Sept. 16 here at Camp Victory.



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Too Tough Times welcomes columns, commentaries, articles and letters from our readers. Send submissions and comments to daniel.blottenberger@mnd-b.army.mil. The PAO staff reserves the right to edit for security, accuracy, propriety, policy and clarity and space.

Visit our website at www.18mp.army.mil

'Ever Vigilant'

Continue to remain ever vigilant!



By:
Command Sgt. Maj.
Bernard McPherson,
CSM, 18th MP Brigade

Well teammates, we are closing in on the 90 day mark and Transfer of Authority to the 8th MP Brigade. My thoughts this month are to continue our focus on: Complacency, Tactics, Force Protection, Safety, Maintenance and Quality of Life.

Continued focus in these areas by our small unit

leaders and NCOs guarantees irreversible momentum in the achievements that the brigade has gained thus far in its' Iraqi Police Transition Training mission.

As we discuss and begin redeployment planning and movement; I am holding senior enlisted leaders accountable for identifying our "high risk" Soldiers. You should reduce counseling sessions to discussions with individual Soldiers. This enables us to nail down or indentify issues that have been brought on by a very demanding deployment.

NCOs must establish a system of accountability throughout the 90 day reconstitution phase. There will be a lot of movement occurring during this time; for example, NCOs who must attend leadership schools, Soldiers who qualify, will want to waive their 90 day mandatory stabilization, etc.

Although 90 days are a lot shorter than 120 days, it is still a long time. The enemy does not care about anything I have previously mentioned. He still wants to kill us. We will remain Vigilant until the last second that we are over here.

Speaking of remaining vigilant; A few weeks ago when I visited the 65th MP Co. (Ft. Bragg, NC), CPT Donckers and 1SG Pielt-Edwards, I was frankly amazed at the level of motivation and energy that the unit displayed. They were reenlisting, promoting, and presenting awards to their Soldiers. There were Soldiers moving out on missions as well as returning from

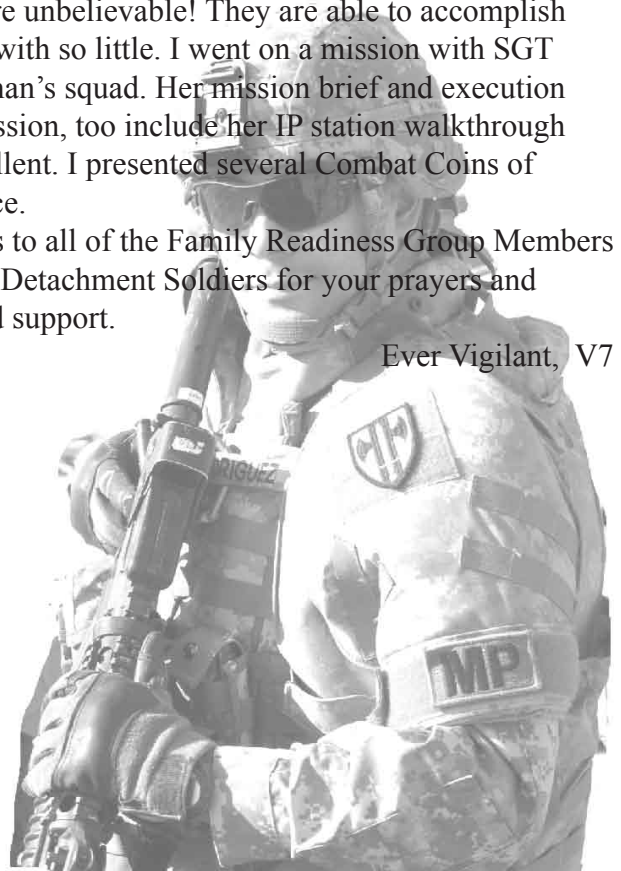
missions. I thanked each of them for everything that they were doing and had done. Needless to say, we presented quite a few Combat Coins of Excellence.

I also visited the Joint Security Station Salmon Pak to see the Soldiers of the 59th MP Co (FT Carson, Co.), CPT Cain and 1SG Nelson. Although the 59th has been in the fight longer than HHC 18th MP Bde, you would not have known it. They were as energetic and mission focused as any unit that I have seen. They were training the Iraqi Police to standard. The trainers were: Iraqi Police, U.S junior and senior enlisted, junior officers conducting hands-on training while skillfully utilizing Iraqi language specialist.

I would be remised if I did not mention my visit to the 230th MP Co; CPT Hall and 1SG Guevara. On that visit I talked to Soldiers, and NCOs. I attended the company's Battle Update Brief and was reminded just how hard commanders, 1SGs, and small unit leaders work. These leaders are unbelievable! They are able to accomplish so much with so little. I went on a mission with SGT Timmerman's squad. Her mission brief and execution of the mission, too include her IP station walkthrough was excellent. I presented several Combat Coins of Excellence.

Thanks to all of the Family Readiness Group Members and Rear Detachment Soldiers for your prayers and continued support.

Ever Vigilant, V7



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Iraqi police cadets listen attentively to an Iraqi Police commander from the Jisr Diyala area here as he instructs the cadets on how to handle a kidnapping situation.



IP cadets receive mission focused training during ERU course

Military Police Soldiers with Multi-National Division – Baghdad's 59th Military Police Company demonstrate how to clear a room.



Spc. Glenn Alexander, a military police Soldier with the 59th Military Police Company, and native of Cleveland, points his hand in the direction he wants the cadets' weapon to scan during room clearing training Aug. 9 at Combat Outpost Cash here. The training was part of a four week Emergency Response Unit training, which trained over 140 Iraqi police cadets to become members of the Jisr Diyala ERU.

By:
Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
18th MP Bde. PAO

Over 140 Iraqi Police cadets gathered August 9 at Combat Outpost Cash here for another day of strenuous training in hopes to become future member of the Jisr Diyala Emergency Response Unit.

On the first day of the second week of training, during the four week ERU training course, began with the cadets forming up into their separate platoons and performing physical fitness training under the already sweltering hot desert sun. By 9 a.m., the heat was already blistering on the cadets.

The physical fitness training the cadets conducted in were: wind sprints, lunges, firemen carries; an exercise where one person places another person over his shoulders and carries the person for a specified distance, and an uphill run, all of which followed various warm up exercises. The PT the cadets' conduct is built to improve their endurance for future operations and to build team work and camaraderie amongst the

group.

To keep the cadets motivated Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers of the 59th Military Police Company's Police Transition Team had the losing squads, of the relays, perform pushups. For the cadets, the extra push up or not doing the extra push up serve as a motivational incentive for the winning squad while they conduct the PT.

"This kind of training never could have happened last deployment," said Spc. Gilbert Ramos, a military police Soldier with the PTT, and native of Tampa Bay, Fla. "We did not conduct physical fitness training with the IP last time we were here."

The Soldiers of 59th MP Co., are not strangers to training IP as they trained the IP forces in Mosul during their last deployment and having already spent over 13 months training IP in Baghdad this deployment.

"There is a definite improvement in the IP," said Ramos. "Now the IP really care about doing their jobs and are willing to learn how to do their jobs better."

After the daily PT session was complete,

which ended with a run up one of COP Cash's massive sand dunes, the cadets sat attentively listening to a Jisr Diyala IP commander give a class on how to conduct yourself if you would be kidnapped by enemy forces.

"We are trying to integrate IP and National Police officers as trainers by having them come and teach select classes on military skills to help build a better working relationship between the different Iraqi Security Forces," said 2nd Lt. Nicole Fogel, platoon leader, 59th MP Co., and native of Brownsburg, Ind.

Apart from military tactics the cadets spent the first week of the training primarily in a class room setting learning basic policing theories such as: police ethics and human rights policies.

Upon completion of police theory, the cadets transitioned into their second week of training where they are taught military training; such as, clearing a building tactics; to include room and personnel searches.

As the curriculum developed into the third

week of training, the cadets are instructed on various policing skills: how to operate an IP station, how to run a detention facility and how to handle civilian grievances.

The fourth and final week of training the cadets go to a weapons range to become more proficient with using their assigned weapons.

The training days are long and fluid and are completed when the training objectives are met for that day of the training.

Though the training was intense the cadets remained motivated and are beginning to develop a team attitude as the training progresses throughout the days of the course.

"The cadets are pretty motivated they have come up with platoon names, and at the end of the day they have physical fitness competitions and the losers clean up the training area," said Fogel. "They have developed a friendly rivalry amongst the platoons. Though the training is intense for them, they are not quitting and they are returning everyday to train."

As a result of the friendly rivalry between

platoons, during the training day the cadets have motivational cheering contests between platoons and physical fitness competitions to keep the units morale levels high. As the cadets' continue through the training, a sense of pride is being developed within the IP and with this pride will be a mission accomplishment attitude they will be able to take back to their stations.

The cadets' motivational level kept the training moving steadily throughout the day, as they moved into the next training phase and began training on room searching and clearing tactics.

During the training, military police instructor, Spc. Glenn Alexander, 59th MP Co., and native of Cleveland, explained the seriousness of the training and how dangerous room clearing can be.

The cadets took the training serious and went through several practical exercises of clearing rooms to make sure they had the technique down properly.

Sgt. Michael Van Houten, who was overseeing the room clearing training, added

to the instruction to the cadets theory of room clearing operations relates to situation they will encounter when they are on the job.

"Everything we do here can be applied to their real world job," said Van Houten, a native of Davenport, N.Y.

Along with the room clearing training the cadets also went through room searching classes where they worked as a team to find hidden explosives, firearms and criminal documents.

"We do a lot of team building exercises during the training," said Fogel. "The cadets are from different areas in Baghdad and don't know each other all that well, so our goal is when they are done training they will be able to go out and be a cohesive unit."

Almost all of the cadets are from the Jisr Diyala and Sadr City areas of Baghdad.

The goal of the new ERU in Jisr Diyala is to act as emergency reaction forces for the area and to eventually transition with the Iraqi National Police, who are filling in, at the checkpoints in Jisr Diyala, said Fogel.

(see ERU pg. 24)



1st Lt. David J. Stanley

Approximately 200 Iraqi Police members and local populace attended the validation ceremony at the Hatamiya Local Police Station where the Iraqi Police are certified to conduct business with little oversight from coalition forces in Al Balad, Iraq, Aug. 25.

164th Military Police validates two Iraqi Police Stations

By:

1st Lt David Stanley

164th Military Police Company UPAR

BALAD - On Aug. 25, two Iraqi Police station validation ceremonies were conducted by the 164th Military Police Company.

This is the first time validations have occurred in the Salah ad Din Province. The 164th has provided a presence in the area of operation surrounding Joint Base Balad since July of 2007.

The validation of the Balad Emergency Response Unit came as no surprise to 1st Lt. Noah Busbey, the district Police Transition Team leader.

"The most difficult task I had to deal with in Balad was reducing the number of personnel assigned to Balad ERU," said Busbey. "No one

wanted to leave because Balad ERU is where the high-speed Iraqi Police are!"

Progress seemed easy because the Military Police and Iraqi Police had a strong working relationship.

The other station validated was Hatamiya Local Police station. Hatamiya has had a Coalition Force presence since 2006.

The most difficult task 1st Lt. Samantha Rossi ran into while trying to get this station validated was convincing the Iraqi Police of the importance of community oriented policing.

"By conducting joint patrols, we were finally able to instill the importance of community policing for the Iraqi Police," said Rossi, 164th MP Co., 728th Military Police

Battalion.

The support of the community, the leadership in the station and their common goal to increase security in Yethrib made getting this station validated an accomplishable task.

Lastly, the validation of these stations is but a mere brick in the road to empowering the Iraqi Police in taking responsibility of the security of Iraq. The Iraqis at these stations have shown that they are prepared to assume responsibility for the security of their surrounding communities. With the assistance of the 164th MP Co., Hatamiya and Balad ERU have undoubtedly set their footprint in the Salah ad Din Province toward making a better Iraq.

MPs, civilian donate wheelchairs to Iraqi children

By:
Pfc. Amanda Tucker
3rd Sustainment Command

BALAD— Military police sponsors, a chaplain and one huge-hearted civilian reached out to help the local community in Balad, Iraq, by giving two handicapped Iraqi children wheelchairs August 9.

Members of the 164th Military Police Company based out of Fort Richardson, Alaska, and currently commanded by 18th Military Police Brigade; go in sector on a daily basis, patrolling surrounding areas and helping to improve the capabilities at Iraqi Police checkpoints. However, the company does much more than that. The MP have become a part of the community and felt the need to help two children who cannot walk.

Capt. Matthew Norris, commander, 164th Military Police Company, 728th MP Battalion, 18th MP Bde. and Phoenix native started looking for a wheelchair after he discovered an Iraqi police chief's son who had a hole in his heart, causing the 2-year-old boy to have muscle weakness.

Once other Soldiers in the unit heard about the commander's idea, they began to inquire about the need for a wheelchair for an 8-year-old Iraqi girl near another checkpoint in Balad.

According to Sgt. Keith Banks, military police team leader, 164th MP Co., his squad would go out to a checkpoint in Balad where the girl was at regularly. The little girl would always peak out of her house from her gate in



Chaplain (Capt.) Jay Clark, 728th Military Police Battalion chaplain, shares a smile with an Iraqi child August 9 at a local Balad community near Joint Base Balad.

Pfc. Amanda Tucker

curiosity at the MP.

"At one point, I got a good look at her and saw that she was walking on her hands; so that brought concern to us," said the Malvern, Ark., native.

Norris went to multiple organizations trying to acquire the wheelchairs. He finally succeeded when he talked to Chaplain (Capt.) Jay Clark, chaplain, 728th MP Bn. Deployed from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii and N.D. native, about his predicament.

Clark was able to provide the wheelchairs with the help of Brad Blauser, a humanitarian volunteer and Dallas native who started the Wheelchairs for Iraqi Children program. Clark and Blauser had initially met on a prior deployment when the two met in a dining facility on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, where Brad told the chaplain about the program 'Wheelchairs for Iraqi Children.'

"We went through... ins and outs of trying to get it all connected but once we did, Brad was excited to take the project on and I was excited to be here for it," said Clark.

Norris, Banks, Clark and Blauser

delivered the wheelchairs in the hot Saturday afternoon. Blauser showed the parents of the children how to properly adjust the wheelchair to accommodate the child as they grew. Sweat dripped off of the civilian's nose as he worked, but it was nothing in comparison to the smile that seemed to never fade as he put forth the effort.

"I was ecstatic. The little girl's father was speechless. Just to be able to see her now be able to maneuver around with her sister out there... it was great," said Norris.

According to Blauser, Iraq has the largest population of handicapped people in the world with 10 percent of Iraq's population is disabled. Iraq has more than 28 million people, with roughly 3 million people disabled, and if just five percent of that 3 million are children, it's 150,000 kids who need a wheelchair. Thanks to combined efforts of the military police, chaplain and a humanitarian volunteer, two children in Balad no longer have to wait for one.



Spc. George Ellis

By:
Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
18th MP Bde. PAO

Working as a plumber in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., just wasn't providing enough money and benefits to provide for five children.

One night in their Florida home, he was asked by his now 18-year-old son if he would be able to support him going to college. It was at that point that he realized with the job he had as a plumber that he would not have the ability to

support his son's college dreams.

George Ellis Jr., a native of Miami, Fla., discussed the situation with his wife of 15 years, Kathleen, about what they should do. While trying to find a new job to better support his Family, he ran into a close friend who told him of the benefits the Army had to offer him and his Family.

"I joined the Army for my – specifically for my oldest boy, so he could go to college," said Spc. George Ellis, a signal support systems specialist with Multi-National Division – Baghdad's 18th Military Police Brigade, which is deployed from Mannheim, Germany.

A father of four boys and one girl, he joined the Army at the age of 37, he said, reflecting on the benefits and opportunities the Army had to offer.

"Just being in the Army, my son now has a better opportunity and more chances to go to college," said Ellis. "I have more chances of getting a loan, and he has more chances to be looked at by other schools."

Ellis said his son has worked hard to get into college ad has excelled in school so he appreciates the opportunities his Army career provides him in helping his son realize his scholastic endeavors.

"My son, Chris, made this happen," said Ellis, of his son, who is now 18. "He gets great grades, and he is the president of several distinguished organizations in his high school, including the National Honor Society. Basically, he has done the leg work and now I'm going to do whatever I can to take care of him."

Ellis, himself, is no stranger to 'leg work,' being a communications specialist for the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 18th MP Bde., which is deployed in the Iraqi capital on a 15-month deployment.

Every morning while deployed, he wakes up at about 5 a.m. and conducts physical training with a battle buddy, who he says is a young total-fitness machine.

"He keeps me in shape," said Ellis of his fellow communications specialist.

Now at 39, Ellis said it wasn't easy getting used to the Army way of life when he joined two years ago.

"After doing physical training in the morning, my body would be all sore," said Ellis. "But once my body got used to it and started to adapt, things got better. It was just like any other job. Once you learn your job, you get used to it."

Ellis went on to say that as he closes in on the age of 40, it becomes a little bit harder and it is something that his body and



Spc. George Ellis, 39, a signal support systems specialist with the 18th Military Police Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, and a native of Miami, Fla., runs cables on a tower that will support operational and tactical communications throughout the brigade's area of responsibility.

mind just have to get motivated for.

Ellis finds that motivation not only within himself but also when he thinks of his Family.

"Sometimes I'm tired and my motivation gets low, but I just do what my son told me to do, and that is drink water and drive on," said Ellis, smiling as he recalled his son's encouragement.

After his morning physical training, he heads to eat and conduct personnel hygiene before heading off to work. The work day starts with the communications team assessing the personal security team's trucks to make sure the communication systems are working properly.

He takes this part of his job extremely seriously because, as he said, reliable communications are important because if the 'comms' go down, lives are now at risk.

"Communication within vehicles is 100 percent important," said Ellis. "Those guys role out every day, and if there communication systems aren't working and something happens, that can be a bad-bad thing. It is really important to me to make sure those guys are good to go."

After the tactical vehicles check out and the security teams are ready to go, the communications team conducts daily computer maintenance.

"We do a lot of computer work," said Ellis. "If someone is having

trouble with their computer, we fix their problems."

The communications section is a huge part in the overall mission success of the brigade.

"Communication is pretty much a big part of how people in the brigade operate," said Ellis. "People get on their computers and check their emails. It is how 90 percent of them do their work. It's how work gets done in my opinion.

"Without communication technicians, we would have to send up smoke signals to communicate."

The work day normally ends at 5 p.m. for the communications team; however, Iraq can be very unpredictable and sometimes mission requirements have them work long into the night.

"If missions are going on or things happen, our work day could be extended. It is really just one of those things that are up in the air," said Ellis. "If there is something that really needs to be done, the team comes together and we do our job."

Ellis said he believes his team's success comes through the cohesion he and his fellow communications Soldiers have together.

"The communications team is a close-knit team," said Ellis. "We work together, side by side, on a daily basis, and we look after each other."

As to whether the job can be stressful at times, he just grinned and said he does not have any stresses.

"I'm here for a reason," said Ellis. "I'm here to do my part for my country, but mostly I'm here for my Family – that is my main goal. I will not let anything deter me, depress me or get in the way of me taking care of my. That's it plain and simple!"

"My Family is the back bone and I am going to do whatever it takes to make them happy, so I can't be stressed because if I'm stressed then my wife is stressed, which makes my kids stressed. So it doesn't happen that way."

After he is released from work for the day, he spends time with his friends, playing a game of Texas Hold'em, working out at the gym or talking to his Family via the internet or phone.

"I talk to my Family pretty much on a daily basis," said Ellis. "Thanks to the internet and phone services, I make it a goal to call them or message them on a daily basis so they know that everything is okay."

Aside from his normal day's work, since deploying last September, Ellis has found himself on several lengthy projects to help with the 18th MP Bde.'s Police Transition Team mission.

He was part of a special project that landed him at the the Furat Iraqi Police Training Facility, which opened Feb. 9 in Baghdad, to help train a goal of more than 12,000 IP to provide rule of law to its Iraqi citizens. His part was to assist in installing electricity and lighting at the facility.

Over and above helping the Police expansion mission of the brigade, he also helped establish automations requirements for the brigade headquarters on Camp Victory upon deploying and then reestablished automations requirements when the brigade moved to Camp Liberty.

His leaders said they believe his hard work and Family ethics, as well as his experience, is what will make him a great leader as he prepares for a future promotion.

"He has a lot of life experience to share with Soldiers," said Sgt. Joshua Klassen, one of the team leaders in the communications section Ellis is part of. "He has worked several civilian jobs where he worked as a crew leader and that definitely shows with his leadership abilities performing his job in the Army."

Despite being a good deal older than most of his peers he works with, Ellis is still full of motivation and is mission-focus driven.

"He is the hardest working 'old man' I've ever met," said Master Sgt. Jimmy Kilgore, the communications section noncommissioned officer in charge, with a smile. "Ellis is full of energy, focused on the mission and is a great man."

He potential leadership abilities were seen just recently as he has became promotable in his field and is now preparing to become a future sergeant.

"I'm trying really hard to get those stripes," said Ellis, referring to the sergeant rank insignia. "Not only would it help my career in being a leader, it will help my Family. The new rank and extra money will help support them and that just means another bill gets paid."

Recently, Ellis returned from relief and recuperation leave, and upon returning, he decided he will reenlist to stay in the Army.

"On R & R, I sat down with my wife, children and parents and we weighed out the goods things and the bad things, and I decided that I'm going to go ahead and stay in the Army," said Ellis. "I'm going to reenlist because my wife and my Family feel safer.

"They feel like they are going to be okay, and I will make

(see Ellis pg. 10)

Cutting them off at the pass: IP checkpoints

By:
Sgt. Daniel West
41st Fires Bde. PAO

FOB DELTA— “A checkpoint is like a narrow pass,” said Lt. Col. Waleed, outgoing commander of Iraqi Police Checkpoint Four, near al-Kut.

“If you close it off, you can halt anything bad trying to pass through.”

Iraqi Police operate six permanent checkpoints around the outskirts of al-Kut designed to halt fighters and the smuggling of weapons into and through the area from Iran, said Staff Sgt. Gabriel Holguin, 511th MP Co.

The unit has responsibility for training Iraqi Police around al-Kut. “The MPs have technology, training and experience,” said Waleed.

“We need more training, though,” he added. “We work shifts; and at least a third of those (who are) off-shift should be training.” Soldiers of the 511th MP Co. train IPs in vehicle and personnel searches, usually at the request of the checkpoint commanders, said Holguin.

“All checkpoints in Iraq are important,” he said. “The checkpoints

in al-Kut are even more so because we are close to the Iranian border, and there seems to be a lot of Iranian influence in this area,” he added.

Specialist Matthew Buraczeski, 511th MP Co., praised the dedication of the IPs at the checkpoints. “Most want to learn the techniques used by Coalition forces to better the checkpoints,” he said.

“That has earned them a lot of respect from Coalition forces and local citizens.” “The checkpoints are very effective,” said Holguin.

“Even though they lack in basic supplies, such as traffic cones, spot lights, signs and speed bumps, the IPs still manage to enforce the standards set by their superiors to the best of their abilities.”



Sgt. Daniel T. West

IP graduate from Furat BRT

Sgt. Joseph Ireland and Staff Sgt. Thomas Heuer, 511th MP Co., Fort Drum, N.Y., settle in to watch a soccer championship between an IP team and a team from the Karamiya district of al Kut, Aug. 28.



Ellis, from PG. 9

whatever sacrifices I need to make to be sure that they feel that way. If my being in the Army is going to make them feel that way, then I'm staying in.”

Ellis said he believes the reason he is getting promoted, and that he has been so successful thus far in his military career, is because of his communications teammates, leaders and his Family back home.

“My signal teammates are why I am so successful, but my success also comes from my Family, whom my motivation relies on them and them alone.”

With his tour in Iraq coming to an end in

the upcoming months, he said he feels the reason he was able to make it through the deployment was because of the people he worked with, his Family and the support of his loved ones back home.

“First of all, I think about my wife, Kathleen, and my kids: Chris, Tobias, Cara, Brandon and Harley. I think about them depending on me and them knowing that I am over here. Secondly, I think about the good people I work with: my roommate, my shop and everyone here helped me, and lastly, I think about all the support I get from my parents back home about me being here. Without them, this tour would have been

much more difficult,” said Ellis.

“I started serving in the Army so my son had a better opportunity to go to college,” said Ellis, “But now, me being in the Army has given me a sense of pride for my country and a sense that I am accomplishing something greater than myself.”

“I just hope I'm doing the best I can for the Army,” said Ellis, “and I hope there are people that realize a lot of us are making whole lot of sacrifices to make sure everything is okay. I hope they appreciate because I know my Family appreciates what I do.”

MPs get first taste of MRAPs

By:
Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
18th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad military police Soldiers with the 95th Military Police Battalion added another vehicle and combat multiplier to their fleet, when they received their first Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Protected vehicles fresh off the assembly line Aug. 22 at the Camp Liberty MRAP fielding site.

The 18th Military Police Brigade, MND-B, started receiving its initial fielding of MRAPs Jun. 30 and now has fielded more than 200 vehicles to its MP Soldiers patrolling the streets of Iraq, said Maj. Kimberly Grahek, 18th MP Bde., logistics officer and native of LaFollette, Tenn.

The Soldiers of the 95th MP Bn. received more than 20 initial issue MRAPs at the Camp Liberty MRAP fielding site Aug. 22. The new MRAPs also are the first to be equipped with Explosively Formed Penetrator enhanced protective armor, a large armored shield that protects the side of the vehicle where EFPs are aimed.

MPs conduct Police Transition Team missions, training the Iraqi police, on a daily basis, on some of the most dangerous streets in Iraq and welcome the new vehicle as a form of further protection against criminal attacks.

“We are working in Sadr City where everyone else is using MRAPs,” said Sgt. Scott Werner, a military police Soldier with the 191st



*Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers with the 191st Military Police Company, North Dakota National Guard, attached to the 95th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade unpack their basic initial issue items to conduct an inventory on the equipment Aug. 22 after receiving their at the Camp Liberty MRAP fielding site.*

Military Police Company, North Dakota National Guard, 95th MP Bn., and native of Bismarck, N.D.

As the vehicles name states, the MRAP, is designed to be far more effective, than the humvee, at deflecting the explosions of certain types of improvised explosive devices, particularly those of the powerful, deeply buried variety.

The MRAP increases the survivability of Soldiers in combat,” said Grahek, referring to the many new safety features that were put into place on the MRAP to protect Soldiers against IEDs.

“We have a better vantage point of the road sitting so much higher up,” said Werner, referring to one of the many advantages of the MRAP for detecting threats while on mission.

The MP Soldiers have been riding in humvees, conducting their daily Police Transition Team operations. Now, they will have to get accustomed to the new features the MRAP brings.

“It is a much different perspective

to get used to,” said Sgt. James Greene, a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 95th MP Bn., and native of Ravenna, Mich., after completing a training course he attended to become certified to operate the vehicle.

The training course consisted of classroom instruction and hands on driving time around the Victory Base Complex while conducting both day and night drivers training.

The MP Soldiers look forward to the new protection the MRAP provides but say they will have to see how it works once they are out there using the vehicle in actual combat operations.

“We will have to see how it goes when we are out there,” said Greene, referring to daily missions in Baghdad. “Hopefully, it offers better protection.”

Married squad leaders work together in MP company

By:
Pfc. Amanda Tucker
3rd Sustainment Command

BALAD — Is there a Soldier in Iraq who wouldn't love to have a loved one here?

In some cases, service members do get to have their loved ones near. Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, and even twins are spread throughout Iraq, fighting the war on terrorism.

For two specific noncommissioned officers, they get to share their experiences together.

Sgt. Cruz Munoz, a Chicago native, and Staff Sgt. Iris Munoz, a Phoenix native, are married patrol leaders for the 164th Military Police Company, based out of Fort Richardson, Alaska.

They met while serving together at Fort Riley, Kan. Cruz had been in the unit ten months when his future wife, Iris, arrived at the unit.

Now, they have two children, a 2-year-old boy and a 5-year-old girl, and just recently celebrated their six-year anniversary in July.

(Cruz) deployed as part of the original company over here, while Iris was in a separate unit, at the same installation, said Capt. Norris,



*Pfc. Amanda Tucker
Sgt. Cruz Munoz, a Chicago native, and Staff Sgt. Iris Munoz, a Phoenix native, are married patrol leaders for the 164th Military Police Company, based out of Fort Richardson, Alaska.*

Company Commander for the 164th MP Company and Phoenix native. “(She) fought tooth and nail to join this company on this deployment.” She came over 90 days after we had already been here.

Even though Iris fought to be in Iraq, being deployed together with her husband isn't always as nice as it seems.

Within her first month as a patrol leader, Iris Munoz went outside the wire on a night mission and her vehicle was hit three times by improvised explosive devices within two hours. Her husband was back at Joint Base Balad waiting for a report.

“He wasn't worried or anything because (he) knew she knew how to do her job. They both know how to be a Soldier real well and a leader.

So he wasn't worried at all,” said Spc. Nicholas Smith, a gunner for the 164th MP Company and a Frederick, Md. native.

“(We've) run, combined between me and my wife, about 600 combat patrols since we've been here in country,” Cruz said.

But being a married MP is not always so stressful. The two are still able to joke around.

“We had a competition one time,” said Cruz, mentioning a game the two play to see whose Soldiers will knock on their door more.

Iris did not know that Cruz had made a rule with his Soldiers not to disturb him after he had gone home to work.

“The first day she was so mad because we started counting, 1..2..3..4..5.. It ended up being like 23 to 1. (Then) she cheated,” said Cruz.

In the morning she went around and told me and the squad to come knock on her door, said Smith. When I asked why, she said, “Just do it.”

While being in a combat environment is difficult, the Cruz family is living proof that somehow a Soldier can make good with the bad.

Iraqi Police Development Summit: ISF look ahead to future

By:
Staff Sgt. Brent Williams
1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

FOB FALCON – As U.S. troop levels decrease, Iraq's Security Forces, in particular, the Iraqi Police will have more responsibility in Baghdad.

The Police Transition and Training Teams of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, met with southern Baghdad's top IP officers at Forward Operating Base Falcon Aug. 10 to hold dialogue on the future of Iraq's law enforcement program in the Rashid district.

Lt. Col. Jeffrey Mullins, operations officer of the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B, hosted an Iraqi Police Development Summit to discuss the unique mission of the Iraqi Police, how to improve IP capability, and the relationship between the patrol and local police in the Rashid District and the Soldiers of the 1st "Raider" BCT.

"We want to create an honest discussion with everyone in the room," Mullins told the IP leaders in attendance. "It is important of both what the Americans and the Iraqis think – understanding exactly what it is that the local IPs and the Patrol IPs say is their mission."

Mullins, an armor officer from Bristol, Va., addressed several subjects of interest to the Iraqi Police working to develop and empower patrol leaders, manage Police Academy enrollment, manage Iraqi Police, and enforce productive shifts at the patrol stations.

Working with Iraqi Police Gen. Samir of the Karkh Directorate, responsible for local police in the Rashid district, and Iraqi Police Col. Moyad, director of the Provincial Patrol Police in southern Baghdad, Mullins also explained the role of Coalition Forces in



Staff Sgt. Brent Williams

Lt. Col. Darryl Johnson, commander of the 716th Military Police Battalion, part of the XVIII Airborne Corps, stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C., discusses a plan to develop junior leaders in the Iraqi Police Force with extensive training, mentorship and an increased potential for promotion based upon performance. Partnered with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Johnson works with IP officers and leaders in southern Baghdad to assist the ISF in their transition to assume responsibility for security in the Rashid district.

training ISF.

"The Iraqi Army will eventually go back to doing Army stuff, and the Iraqi National Police will go back to defending the borders," said Air Force Capt. Cassandra Bates, commander, Flight A, Detachment 3, 732nd Expeditionary Security Forces, attached to the 716th Military Police Battalion, part of the XVIII Airborne Corps out of Fort Bragg, N.C.

"The IPs will be there to defend (Baghdad) and do all the basic police work," said Bates, whose PiTT team was responsible for supervising all the stations in Rashid a little more than nine months ago.

The summit was the Raider Brigade's first opportunity to hold a forum where the IP leaders and station commanders could meet in one room to discuss their problems and look for solutions, such as lack of manning and standardization of patrols and shifts, explained Bates, a graduate of Miami University with a degree in Criminal Justice.

"We want to make sure they're fully equipped and well-manned," said Bates, a native of Spokane, Wash. "We are basically addressing those issues here."

Once responsible for overseeing the IPs, the PiTT's new goal is to "integrate the ISF into the communities and neighborhoods to assist the ISF in securing the muhallahs, the Rashid district and the Iraqi people," said U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Eric Hein, flight sergeant, Flight A, Det. 3, 732nd ESF.

The meeting brought all the commanders together to develop a firm understanding of the way forward in the future of ISF as Coalition Forces begin to draw down, said Hein, a native of Sturgeon's Bay, Wis.

"For the time being, the shurta (police) will remain on checkpoints and will continue to patrol, but what we're hoping to do is improve the investigation capabilities of the shurta," said Lt. Col. Darryl Johnson, commander of the 716th MP Bn., out of Fort Bragg, N.C.; partnered with the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B.

Johnson told the IP commanders at the meeting that the PiTT teams are prepared to help the IPs develop their leadership potential by training future law enforcement leaders capable of maintaining security in Rashid.



Pfc. Miguel Martinez

Iraq Army doctors conduct medical examinations on Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq) during an Iraqi Police recruiting drive in Sab al Bour Aug. 21. The aim for the recruiting drive is to provide local citizens of Iraq with an opportunity to receive a legitimate government paying job. In the past the SoI program was a CF initiative to help the security situation within Iraq while at the same time gain support from the local citizens to help deter the past high crime rate.

Baghdad transitions over a thousand Sons of Iraq into Iraqi Police

By:
Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
18th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – Four Multi-National Division – Baghdad districts began the transition Aug. 21, of transitioning Sons of Iraq (Abna al-Iraq) into Iraqi police by conducting several recruiting drives in the Taji, Tarmiyah, Zahour and Abu Ghraib districts.

Over 1100 So I members in the four districts began the process of becoming IP by attending the separate recruiting drives that started Aug. 21 in Tarmiyah and Taji and are now continuing in Zahour and Abu Ghraib.

The drives were brought together quickly, said 1st Lt. Michael Huber, platoon leader, 411th Military Police Company, and native of Cincinnati, but feels the reason the drives were so successful was because of the local community support while working together.

“The local Sheiks took an active role in getting the So Is ready for the drive,” said Huber, who conducts Police Transition Team operations in the Sab al Bour community of Taji. “The Sheiks had the SoIs show up looking professional like as if it were a job interview. They took a lot of pride in being prepared for the drive.”

The recruiting drive is a great opportunity for the local people in the community to get good jobs to support their families.

“The SoIs really made the most out this opportunity,” said Huber, who reached his district’s goal of over 500 recruits in two days.

Huber added, another reason the drive was so successful, because of the local community backing the current IP force in Sab al Bour.

“The locals were really behind the recruiting drive,” said Huber.

In the past when we (411th MP Co.) arrived it was never like this here; however, when Huber’s PTT arrived in the area the local citizens were hesitant when approaching the IP.

Now the people in Taji come to the stations with intelligence reports to help the IP in their fight against crime.

“We have come a long way in Taji,” said Huber. “Now citizens are reporting criminal intelligence to the IP, telling them where improvised explosive devices are being placed by criminals.”

“The difference now is that the citizens see the IP are truly out there to help them,” said Huber.

In the four districts there were a total of five recruiting drives that took place that supported the transition of 1100 SoIs preparing to become IP.

A platoon from the 411th MP Co., worked in their respective districts with their IP counterparts along with the support from the Soldiers from 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warriors”, 25th Infantry Division, MND-B to make the recruiting drives a success.

During the recruiting drives the recruits needed to demonstrate the ability to complete a literacy test, a physical fitness test, a medical examination and a security background check to ensure they were qualified to join the IP force.

The new recruits can only further help the security level in the districts by providing added security forces.

(see IP pg. 15)

Hometown Hero

Staff Sgt. Jairo Romero is currently deployed in Iraq and sends warm wishes to his friends and family, in his hometown of Davis, Cali. He is an military policeman, whose law enforcement duties require him to work in conjunction with local Iraqi Police, in hopes of promoting peace and civil stability among the Iraqi population.

Romero is originally from Falcon, Venezuela and emigrated to the United States at the age of 17, during the early 1970s. Ever since he was a little boy, Romero had always wanted to be in the military. He enlisted into the United States Army during the early 1980s and is now a staff sergeant with the 40th Military Police Company, an Army National Guard unit based out of Los Alamitos, Cali.

After residing in Canada, Los Angeles, Oakland and Monterey, Romero settled in Davis, California. He earned his Bachelors degree in Political Science, as well as a Masters degree in Community and Human Resources Development, from the University of California in Davis. Romero is currently pursuing his doctorate degree in globalization. He has been married to his lovely wife, Renee, for 32 years and has five children: Alexis, 31, Jairo, 31, Monique, 28, Enrique, 25 and Catia, who is 13 years old.

In his own words, Romero would like to say to the residents of his hometown, Davis:

"We are just trying to help the people of Iraq....Perhaps in the near future, hopefully they have the peace that they deserve..... and the democracy that we have in the United States.....For them to have a place where they can dream, and accomplish those dreams. And for their kids to grow up in a healthy environment, where everyone is free, to say and think whatever they want....If I am contributing just a little bit, in that process, that's good. It feels good. And that's why I am here. That is the commitment, that is the objective and that is what we are doing. And we are doing a good job."

IP, from PG. 14

"Violence in Tarmiyah has increased over the past few months," said Capt. Norma James, commander, 411th MP Co., and native of Lawrenceburg, Ken. "By opening more IP stations in Tarmiyah and increasing the numbers of IP in those stations things can only get better for the citizens."

With the increase of IP forces in the four districts it will enable the Iraqi Army in the area to transition the checkpoints within the city to IP control and have the IA focus their attention on providing security for the country of Iraq as a whole.

"New recruits will increase security in the area," said James, whose company conducts PTT operations in 19 stations across the four districts. "The new potential IP will enable the IA to move into more military based operations along the country's borders to deter criminals coming in from other countries."

An additional aim for the recruiting drive is to provide local citizens of Iraq with an opportunity to receive a legitimate government paying job. In the past the SoI program was a CF initiative to help the security situation within Iraq while at the same time gain support from the local citizens to help deter the past high crime rate.

"We are turning SoI into legitimate Iraqi Security Force members, who can now become proud representatives of the Iraqi government," said James.

Iraqi Police are taking over responsibility to conduct community policing and enforce the rule of law while protecting and serving the citizens of Iraq. The So I that are recruited from these current drives will now be part of that capable and proud security force.

The 411th MP Co., is currently deployed from Fort Hood, Texas, and is currently assigned to the 716th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade, MND-B.



Lt. Col. Michael Indovina

IP graduate from Furat BRT

More than 840 Iraqi Police wave their country's flag while celebrating their graduation Aug. 13 from the Furat Police Training Academy at the academy's training grounds in the West Rashid district of southwest Baghdad. As part of the IP expansion program that called for over 12,000 new hires of IP in Baghdad, the IP graduates completed the four-week certification course. Earlier this year, these graduates trained in a two-week course in order to provide Baghdad an increased police force to improve security in its neighborhoods. The more than 840 IP will return to their stations with additional skills that will allow the IP to better protect and serve the Iraqi people of Baghdad.

Around the 18th Military Police Brigade...



Greetings

Gen. David Petraeus, commander Multi-National Forces – Iraq, is provided an operations and intelligence brief about current military police and Iraqi Police development activities by Col. Mark Spindler, commander 18th Military Police Brigade and native of St. Louis Mo., Aug. 29 at the brigade's headquarters on Camp Liberty. The 18th MP Bde, operational mission in Iraq is to assess, assist and train Iraqi Police in order for the IP to take over primacy of police functions in Iraq.

Staff Sgt. Lori Jewell



Patrol Graduation

Iraqi Patrol Police celebrate following their graduation Aug. 31 from the 4-week training course that certified them as Iraqi Patrol 'Shurtas' Policemen conducted at the Patrol Headquarters. Over 400 Iraqi Police graduated after being trained on Police duties. A number of topics instructed during the certification course-work covered was Human Rights training, police ethics, self defense, checkpoint and personal security duties.

Lt. Col. Michael Indovina



Stitch

Pfc. Jacob Parrish, 320th Military Police Company assists doctors at the Tikrit Hospital. A woman could not get her ring off. The doctors were going to amputate her finger to remove the ring, but Pfc. Parrish stepped in to save her finger. He cut the ring off and stitched up her finger, which they had already started to amputate.

Sgt. Dennis Morida

Operation Iraqi Children delivers in Baghdad

By:
Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
18th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – Anxious but appreciative orphan children in the Salhiya District of Baghdad had something to smile about when Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers arrived Aug. 13 to hand out school supplies as part of an assistance mission named “Operation Iraqi Children.”

During the engagement, military police Soldiers from the 716th MP Battalion, 18th

MP Brigade, lent a hand in the delivering of the school supplies to the local orphanage as Soldiers from Battery A, 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, and policemen from the Salhiya Iraqi Police, teamed up to help the children prepare for school.

Operation Iraqi Children, which began in 2003 and was founded by Laura Hillenbrand and Gary Sinise, is designed to distribute donated school supplies to needy children in Iraq, Afghanistan and Djibouti.

“Operation Iraqi Children is



U.S. Army photo

Sgt. Hanan Khader, a military police Soldier with the 716th Military Police Battalion, 18th MP Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, who is a native of Fresno, Calif., shares a smile with an Iraqi child while handing out school supplies to orphan children in the Salhiya District of Baghdad Aug. 13.



U.S. Army photo

Sgt. Michael Daniels, a military police Soldier with the 716th Military Police Battalion, 18th MP Brigade, who is a native of Aiken, S.C., hands out school supplies Aug. 13 to orphan children in the Salhiya District of Baghdad.

a wonderful way for the people of the U.S. to help the children of Iraq, and by doing so, we are helping our Soldiers, who are working so hard over there,” said Sinise, on the Operation Iraqi Children website.

The IP and MND-B Soldiers will hand out more than 3,000 school supply kits that were donated to the children in Baghdad. The kits contain: a pencil bag, composition books, notebook paper, colored pencils, large eraser, a small pencil sharpener, pencils, ruler and scissors for the eager Iraqi children.

“The kits have been a huge hit with the local children,” said Capt. Nate Brookshire, a native of Richmond, Ken., who is the commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 716th MP Bn. “The kits have also given the maneuver units and Police Transition Team a positive avenue to interact with

local children with our Iraqi counterparts.”

The 716th PTT has handed out more than 400 kits so far, since mid-July, to the children in Salhiya while on community policing patrols with the Salhiya IP.

The PTT assist and train Iraqi Police as they continue to develop into a fully functional police force. The interaction between the IP and the people within their communities continues to build each day, and school supply handouts, such as this is one, help develop a positive relationship with their local citizens.

The 716th MP Bn. is deployed from Fort Campbell, Ken., and is currently assigned to the 18th MP Bde.

Soldier sings way through deployment

By:
Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
18th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – At the age of four, he began his singing career by singing Gospel music at his local church in Indianapolis.

Now at the age of 21 he finds himself on center stage, showing off his vocal abilities on numerous occasions.

“It is just something I love to do,” said Sgt. Victor Cole, who enlisted in the Army as a human resources sergeant in 2005. “Singing and writing music calms me down and is just something I do that gets my mind off of the everyday stresses of being deployed.”

Since arriving in Iraq in December 2007 with Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 716th Military Police Battalion, Cole has been tasked with not only taking care of the Soldiers in his battalion’s human resources needs but also with singing the national anthem at ceremonies his battalion conducts.

His talents became quickly noticed by his brigade command sergeant major recently during a noncommissioned officer induction ceremony.

“When I was told Cole was going to sing the national anthem at the induction ceremony, I was concerned,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Bernard McPherson, command sergeant major 18th Military Police Brigade, and native of Orangeburg, S.C. “I had never heard him sing a note, and the significance of the national anthem sung in a cappella was strategic.”

McPherson, however, was reassured by Cole’s battalion command sergeant major that he had nothing to worry about.

“I was still nervous,” said McPherson, “until I heard him sing a few notes in rehearsal. All it took for me to hear were a few notes. After hearing Cole’s melodic, clear and rich voice, my worries were belayed.”

McPherson said Cole was truly a gifted and talented NCO and that he expected an American Idol tryout sometime in his future.

With Cole’s lifelong goal of being a singer, he said he plans on attending the American Idol competition when he returns from his Iraq deployment.

“My lifelong goal is to become a professional singer,” said Cole. “I plan to attend the 2009 American Idol competition

when I return from my Iraq tour.”

While deployed, Cole said he finds himself singing all day long at work, and when he gets time off, he sings competitively at the Morale Welfare and Recreation Centers on the camp.

Cole has won karaoke competitions at some of the Victory Base Complex MWR sponsored events, but that is very minor compared to some of the events he has performed at in the past.

When Cole was younger, he traveled around to different cities and states performing.

“When I was younger, singing was just something I did because I loved doing it,” said Cole. “Now it is completely different. I want to make a career out of it.”

Cole said he has made a few changes in his military career to help better his chances of becoming a professional singer.

“I love my job in the Army,” said Cole, “but I’ve always wanted to be a singer. I had the chance to go overseas on assignment, but I changed that to stay in the states so I could audition for American Idol.”

Even though Cole loves both singing and being a part of the military, he still feels they are two very separate worlds for him; however, they are both places he has been very successful in.

“My biggest accomplishment in the Army is getting promoted to the rank of sergeant,” said Cole, of his recent promotion.

For his singing career Cole sang at events growing up such as: the Olympic Trials in 2004 in Indianapolis, Indiana Pacer games, Indianapolis Colts games, and he said one of his biggest accomplishments was winning a Show Time singing competition at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, N.Y.

Throughout his music career, Cole has been singing Gospel, Rhythm & Blues, and Blues and has been very successful thus far



Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
Sgt. Victor Cole, a human resources sergeant, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 716th Military Police Battalion, a native of Indianapolis, sings the national anthem during a noncommissioned officer induction ceremony June 21 at Camp Liberty.

at doing so. He said he decided to join the Army because of the stability that comes with being in the Army for military Families

“I joined the Army in my Junior year of high school in order to support my now 3-year-old daughter,” said Cole, who reenlisted recently to continue serving for another six years.

He feels that even though it is music that drives him to get through the long 15-month deployment, his daughter gives him the passion to continue with both careers.

“Music is what drives me to continue, as well as the passion that I have to provide a good life for my daughter,” said Cole, adding that he writes music and sings constantly while he’s in Iraq to set himself up for success. When he returns from Iraq, his goal is to receive his own record deal one day.

ISF, MND-B MPs confiscate multiple passports

By:
Lt. Col. Michael Indovina
18th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces, along with Multi-National Division – Baghdad military police Soldiers from the 191st MP Company, 18th MP Brigade, confiscated more than 20 passports and detained two suspects during checkpoint operations near Thawra Aug. 18.

While assisting ISF and observing checkpoint operations, the combined forces were searching a truck and confiscated the passports, which appeared to be from Iran, Jordan and Syria.

“This is a good find. Taking these documents that allegedly are illegal off the streets prevent future criminals from using the documents to cross borders and possibly bring terrorist and criminal activities into Iraq,” said Maj. Michael Indovina, spokesman for the 18th MP Bde., MND-B. “The ISF continue to build on their capabilities to prevent criminal activities in and around Baghdad.”



Kirkuk Police Academy trains females in northeastern Iraq

By:
Multi-National Division - North PAO
728th Military Police Battalion

Kirkuk – Thirty-seven females attended the first day of a four-week course at the Kirkuk Police Academy outside of Kirkuk city, Iraq, Aug. 16.

It's been a year since the academy has seen any Iraqi females in blue and never a class of this size.

“We need these females badly,” said Lt. Col. Muid, a cadre at the academy. “It is our religious custom not to touch our women, so we cannot search females. Our female Iraqi Police will be extremely important to use at checkpoints and government buildings throughout the province.”

The cadre also pointed out they would bring a different perspective to policing. “Women think differently than men,” Muid said. “They will bring fresh ideas to how we conduct business.”

The 37 females are split into squad-like elements. Each squad will have a 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain female military police Soldier assist them.

“This is going to be a big challenge,” said Spc. Jennifer Swierk, one of the assistants, referring to the cultural differences, “but I’m proud to be a part of this page in Kirkuk’s, if not Iraq’s history.”

For Nowal, 30, the experience so far has her realizing she has a lot of work ahead of her.

“I am very tired,” said Nowal of the first day of training. Nowal’s brother is a member of the Kirkuk police force.

In lieu of the recent increase in female suicide bombers, these women are undaunted by the dangers of the field they have chosen. When asked what they would do if they were to spot one at a checkpoint, as a group they did not hesitate to answer “Man or woman, if you come through our checkpoint, we will stop you.”

“Terrorists are not welcome in the province of Kirkuk,” said Intesar, 29. She elaborated further regarding female suicide bombers. “They are not Iraqis. They are not

Muslim. It is not our way.”

The police force is also providing some women with much needed jobs.

“I have a 5-year-old son I have to feed,” said Jinan, whose husband was killed by criminal elements. “I will be able to take care of my son and also help ensure he has a safe future here.”

An IP recruit earns approximately 185,000 Iraqi-dinar monthly (around \$81 U.S.), with an additional 25,000 dinar per diem (approximately \$20 U.S.). After graduating from the academy, an IP will make 500,000 dinar (around \$360 U.S.), which includes hazardous duty compensation, with the amount varying depending on the area of responsibility, according to academy staff.

The women have to fulfill the same standards as the males to graduate. The Ministry of Interior’s standards is 240 hours of training, to include two hours of calisthenics each morning and various drills geared toward team building. The rest of the day is spent rotating from indoor to outdoor classroom instruction on law enforcement procedures ranging from democratic policing, human rights, hostage survival, basic first aid, to responding to an ambush. The only adjustments the cadres have had to make is utilizing a stick so they don’t physically make contact with their female recruits.

“We are so used to hands-on training when showing our recruits how to do something,” Muid said. “In our custom, we cannot touch our females. That is the only difficult change for me that I see so far. It is good that we have female Coalition Soldiers to help us.”

“This is going to be an amazing experience for all of us,” Bustamante said. “I’m looking forward to helping my fellow female police officers and being a part of the positive historic changes occurring here.”



Seven 18th Military Police Brigade Soldiers stand at parade rest before being awarded Certificates of Achievement Aug. 28 by Col. Ramon Valle, Multi-National Corps – Iraq Command Inspector General, for outstanding performance during a recent IG inspection.

Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger

18th Military Police Brigade Soldiers declared Heroes by Inspector General

By:
Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
18th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – The Multi-National Corps – Iraq Inspector General declared seven 18th Military Police Brigade Soldiers as IG Heroes in a ceremony Aug. 28 held at the 18th MP Bde. headquarters at Camp Liberty.

The Soldiers were recognized by Col. Ramon Valle, MNC-I command inspector general, for outstanding performance during a recent IG inspection of the brigade by the IG team Aug. 26-28.

The team inspected the brigade's administration, motor pool and logistics sections.

"The MNC-I IG's office utilizes what we call Heroes program, which recognizes those individuals that stood out during their scheduled inspection," said Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Vinson,

the noncommissioned officer who conducted the IG inspection for the brigade.

Although there is no written program to determine the qualifications to be awarded an IG Hero, said Vinson, it is up to the inspector to determine who he feels is worthy of the title.

"For example, the two I chose were Pfc. Hollie McDonald, 793rd Military Police Battalion, and Pfc. Jonathan Salinas, 716th Military Police Battalion," said Vinson. "Both are very young junior Soldiers, who displayed great knowledge in their fields of logistics. Their knowledge exceeded those normally in their pay grade and military experience."

The IG Hero award is a way to recognize Soldiers like McDonald and Salinas for their efforts and hard work during their deployments.

The other 18th MP Bde. Soldiers



Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger

Spc. Gina Muncy, 716th Military Police Battalion, is presented a Certificate of Achievement Aug. 28 from Col. Ramon Valle, Multi-National Corps – Iraq Command Inspector General, for outstanding performance during a recent IG inspection of the 18th MP Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, by the IG team Aug. 26-28.

awarded were: Staff Sgt. Sara Lay-Ibejibah, Headquarters and Headquarters Company; Spc. Gina Muncy, 716th MP Bn.; Sgt. Victor Cole, 716th MP Bn.; Sgt. Jose Calderon, 793rd MP Battalion and Spc. Ryan Wheeler, 793rd MP Bn.

"Just as any award recognizes an individual's efforts and hard work, so does the Hero Certificate of Achievement," said Vinson. "The recognition serves as a morale booster for the individuals inspected."

The IG inspection, also known as the Operational Readiness Assessment, works in conjunction with the MNC-I commanding general's Organizational Inspection Program.

There is a requirement in the Army Inspection Program regulation that commanders utilize at the OIP program to ensure their commands are operating within compliance of Army regulatory and policy guidance, said Vinson.

"This is where the IG's office comes in and we inspect to ensure units are operating within compliance," said Vinson.

The 18th MP Bde. received 24 commendable areas out of 28 areas that were inspected, said Maj. Kimberly Grahek, 18th MP Bde. logistics officer and a native of LaFollette, Tenn.

The 18th MP Bde., Multi-National Division – Baghdad, is deployed from Mannheim, Germany, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 07-09.



An Iraqi construction worker continues work on the Amin Local Iraqi Police Station build site August 8.



A humvee belonging to Soldiers of the 340th Military Police Company, New York National Guard provides security at the Amin Local Iraqi Police Station build site.



Sgt. Paul Watkins, military police team leader, 340th Military Police Company, New York National Guard, and native of Providence, R.I., talks with citizens of Amin at the Amin Local Iraqi Police Station build site.

IP station a sign of hope for Amin citizens

By:
Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
18th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – “You shouldn’t build a station here, it will probably get blown up,” said an Amin resident to a U.S. military policeman while conducting Police Transition Team operations at the Amin station build site Aug. 8.

The Amin area is an area with a great deal of special group members in it, that negatively influence the civilian population, that live in the area, said Maj. Lawrence Clossum, commander 340th Military Police Company, New York National Guard, a native of St. Louis, Mo.

In the Rashid district of Baghdad, Clossum’s has one his squads of military police Soldiers conduct daily PTT operations with the Rashid Iraqi Police District Headquarters, which Amin is a part of.

“There are a lot of intelligence reports about criminal activities in the area,” said Sgt. Paul Watkins, a member of the PTT that works in Amin, and native of Providence, R.I. “Citizens are always coming into the station at the Rashid Headquarters talking about special group members and AQI in the Amin area,” said Watkins.

The citizens of Amin were forced to go to the IP District Headquarters for help against criminals. In the upcoming months they will no longer have to do that with the new station being built in Amin.

“There should be three stations in the area we operate in,” said Watkins, referring to the large area of operations his squad is responsible for conducting PTT operations in.

“Right now there is only one.”

The PTT believes the new station will help push out the criminals in the Amin area. Our actions prove this as in others areas of Iraq, when local police stations are added in neighborhoods, the criminal activities have gone down. The stations provide local citizens a legitimate place to communicate with its security element.

“This is a good thing for the neighborhood to help push out criminal influences in the area,” said Watkins, during a walk through the station build site Aug. 8.

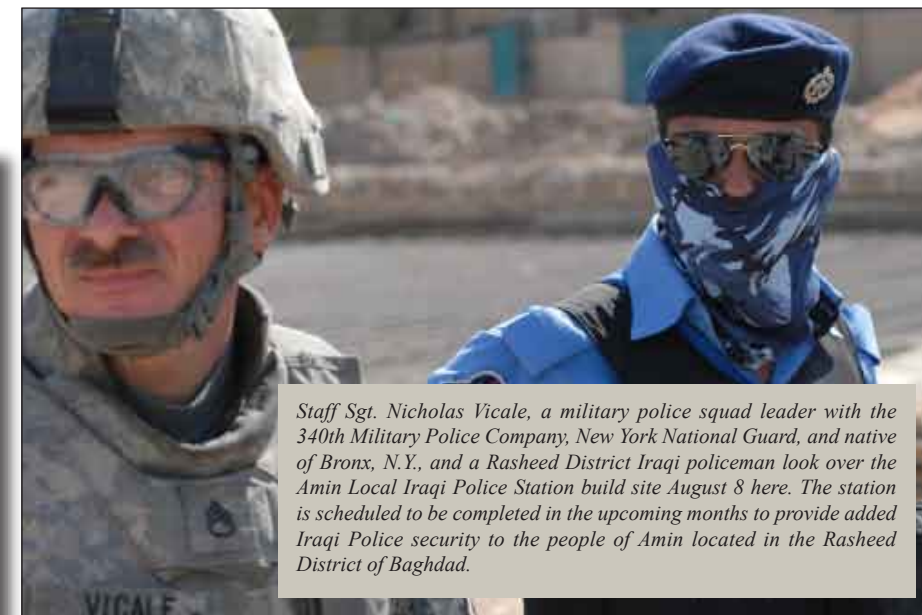
“Stations need to be where the crime is,” said Clossum.

Seeing many people come into the district headquarters to discuss criminals in Amin area it is a good sign of things to come with the new IP station in Amin.

“People are trying to rebuild their lives and cooperate with one another,” said Clossum. “They are tired of hearing explosions and people in their neighborhood getting killed.”

Construction on the Amin IP Station is scheduled to be completed in the upcoming months.

The 340th MP Co., is currently assigned to the 95th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. As part of the PTT, the team is responsible for assessing, assisting and training Iraqi Police capacities. These teams work hand in hand with IP to build relationships with the local citizens while teaching the IP how to conduct community policing.



Staff Sgt. Nicholas Vicale, a military police squad leader with the 340th Military Police Company, New York National Guard, and native of Bronx, N.Y., and a Rasheed District Iraqi policeman look over the Amin Local Iraqi Police Station build site August 8 here. The station is scheduled to be completed in the upcoming months to provide added Iraqi Police security to the people of Amin located in the Rasheed District of Baghdad.



Sgt. Paul Watkins, a military police team leader, with the 340th Military Police Company, New York National Guard, and native of Providence, R.I., looks over the Amin Local Iraqi Police Station build site.

ERU, from PG. 5

"Our PTT goal is to have this elite force of IP be the more professional ISF in the Jisr Diyala area," said Fogel. "We are mentoring the noncommissioned officers to enforce the standard that the ISF officers have set for them."

A part of the training also includes learning what a chain of command structure means in a security force element.

Fogel added, that the cadets are taking what we teach them and really running with it and that they are recognizing their proper chain of command.

"We are enforcing their chain of command to them," said Fogel. "Now they are going to their chain of command when they have problems."

As a group, the PTT in charge of the training said, that the improvements in the cadets between day one and now have been immense.

"I'm definitely impressed with the cadets," said Sgt. Gordon Williams, PTT squad leader, and native of Casper, Wyo. "They know more than we thought they would about being police."

Williams credits the success of the training to the great working relationship the cadets have with the PTT Soldiers. "Once the cadets got more comfortable with us they have shown us what they know a lot more," said Williams.

After the training was complete for the day and the temperature began to cool down the cadets formed up one last time and marched back to COP Cash singing marching cadence louder than they had done all day.

The 59th MP Co., is deployed from Fort Carson, Colo., and is currently assigned to the 95th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



Sgt. 1st Class Patricia Baiocchi

As new trainees' in-process at the Regional Training Center in Diyala, Aug. 17, Iraqi Cadre will search the trainees' equipment bags and personal items for illegal items and ensure they have the proper equipment to train. Part of the course teaches discipline to new IP and selected items are not allowed at the RTC. Here, IP trainees begin their initial training with the goal of becoming an Iraqi Policeman in the Diyala Province. The training is a four week course that trains basic police skills to include basic rifle marksmanship training

RTC: Brings 700 IP recruits

By:
1st Lt. Joseph Faulkner,
728th MP Bn. UPAR

AL UDAIN - The Regional Training Center welcomed approximately 750 new Iraqi Police Aug 17 as trainees begin their initial training with the goal of becoming an Iraqi Policeman in the Diyala Province.

The trainees in attendance typically are male, but this class begins a new epoch where female trainees from surrounding Iraqi Police stations throughout Diyala are now participating in the training at the RTC. As AQI continues to use females to perform terrorist acts, there is now a need for female police in the ranks. In the Arabic culture it is forbidden for a male to search a female; as a result, now more female trainees are stepping up to perform this duty while serving the people of Iraq.

The class of about 750 trainees is the fourth class conducted in Diyala at the Regional Training Center. Upon completion of the 4-week training, the trainees will be certified after graduation by the Ministry of Interior to become Iraqi Police persons.

The Iraqi Course is a four

week course that trains basic police skills to include basic rifle marksmanship training. During this training task all students will be trained on how to shoot a Glock pistol, AK-47 automatic rifle and PKC machine gun on the local weapon ranges.

Iraqi Police trainers or 'cadre' will instruct over 400 hours of instruction on police skills that will provide the trainees the ability and capabilities to work as a certified policeman in their stations and neighborhoods.

Topics the trainees will be certified on are: basic personal defensive tactics, human rights and ethics, democratic policing, Iraqi Rule of Law and basic first aid.

"This Academy is fully led by the Iraqis," said Capt. David Castillo, Regional Training Center officer in charge, 728th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade. "There instructors lead all training and they are doing an excellent job at it."

Castillo added, "They are getting better and better with each BRT rotation."

This class and the training is an important step for the IP as

they prepare to attend the Iraqi Police Academy. The training is very important within the province. There is a need for more and improved security at checkpoints in and around the IP stations.

Security checkpoints have become an important measure in the security of the local villages and in the metropolitan downtown areas in Diyala. The checkpoints are another tool used to prevent the rise of female suicide bombers of getting into the city centers. As the IP perform their duties at these checkpoints, it provides the citizens of Iraq the opportunity to live a normal life as they go about their daily activities.

The training is paying off and to date after three classes, the CF support and assistance at the RTC is well received by the leaders of the Iraqi Police.

"We are being told with coalition forces working with the trainees, this training environment is producing Iraqi Police who are confident and disciplined in their jobs and it is paying dividends in the overall security of Diyala in Iraq," said Castillo.

320th MP company helps Al Alam citizens get clean water

By:
1st Lt Suzanne Russell
320th Military Police Company UPAR

TIKRIT - The 320th Military Police Company Soldiers provide observations while on mission, giving the 101st Airborne Brigade Non-Lethal cell, the first step in a long process to improve the water quality for the citizens of Al Alam.

The company has been working with the Al Alam city council since their arrival in theater. During the bi-monthly city council meetings, the members have the opportunity to inform Coalition Forces of any improvements for their city and request assistance to complete projects.

The projects are associated with water, electricity, medical services, and schools.

1st Lt. Suzanne Russell, Executive Officer of the 320th MP Co. said, "The 320th has focused on the water projects as they are the most important to the health and welfare of the people."

The company began the assessments of the water plants and irrigation systems at the beginning of June. With the assistance of the Civil Affairs, Engineers, and local experts, the assessments were completed



1st Lt. Suzanne Russell
1st Lt. Michael Pangia, 320th Military Police Company, 728th Military Police Battalion, Robert Glick (IPA) and Interpreter "John" speaks with the Al Alam City Council Deputy Chairman.

and the City Council signed a memorandum approving the projects to fix the water issue in their area.

The Director General of Water is the only person authorized to hook up the chlorine to the water tanks in order to provide clean drinking water.

Currently the water is being pulled from the Tigris River and pushed into local homes without filtration or chlorination. Without the chlorine, the people are forced to have dirty water that continuously makes them sick.

"Even though there are new water plants that were built by USACE in the past 3 years, the DG of water will not give his approval," said Russell. He says it is an illegal plant because it does not meet specifications for approval.

The plants have been assessed by U.S. Army Engineers and Iraqi Engineers finding nothing wrong with the plants other than wear and tear maintenance issues. The DG of water claims one of the plants was not built with the proper pipes.

CF has told him they will fix the

pipe issue if he will approve the project and he still refuses. The Company is awaiting the approval of the DGOW before the projects can be started.

The 320th MP Co., 728th MP Bn., is face with five steps on how the Iraq-Commanders Emergency Response Program process works: First the unit identifies the problem.

Second, an assessment is done and sent to the 101st Airborne Brigade Non-Lethal Cell.

Third, the project needs are identified and the city council provides a statement of work. Russell explains, the statement of work is a detailed explanation of the materials, labor, time, and cost to complete the project and translated from Arabic.

Fourth, the city council and the DG of the type of project examples: health, water, irrigation, and education provide CF with an approval memorandum for the project.

Fifth, funding is approved and the money comes from the Iraqi government.



Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
 Capt. Shannon Nowak, (right), a native of Silver Lake, Minn., who serves with the 95th Military Police Battalion's enhanced Police Transition Team, discusses fuel consumption data with the commander of the Rusafa Directorate Maintenance Facility Aug. 7. The maintenance facility supplies fuel to the east Baghdad directorate police for 32 stations. The mission of the battalion's ePTT is to assess the Iraqi Police forces organizational systems. The 95th MP Bn. is deployed from Mannheim, Germany, and is assigned to the 18th Military Police Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Superstars ePTT trains, develops IP to sustain organizational systems

By:
 Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger
 18th MP Bde. PAO

BAGHDAD – In January 2008, Multi-National Division – Baghdad's 18th Military Police Brigade developed a new method to further improve the surging Iraqi Police force by implementing the enhanced Police Transition Teams to concentrate on supporting IP systems in Baghdad.

The ePTT is a group of Soldiers who have subject matter expertise in: personnel, communications and logistic operations and techniques in support of large organizations; their mission is to assess the IP organization and provide assistance to better the organizational management of the IPs in these areas.

Since then, the ePTTs have been embedding with the IP force at the directorate and provincial levels to help improve the IP systems management process.

"The IP leadership is taking advice from the ePTTs and taking responsibility for their stations while feeling more comfortable working with the recommendations made by the ePTT subject

matter experts, who are improving the IP systems in Baghdad," said Lt. Col. Thomas Lombardo, operations officer, 18th MP Bde., a native of Buffalo, N.Y., during a recent assessment visit of the police transition teams in Baghdad.

At the directorate level in Rusafa, a two Soldier team from the 95th Military Police Battalion conducts daily ePTT operations with their IP counterparts to further improve the IP systems in the east Baghdad directorate.

Capt. Shannon Nowak and Master Sgt. Kevin Emory conduct ePTT operations at the Rusafa Directorate Headquarters, which oversees 8,500 IP distributed to 32 stations in five districts on the east side of Baghdad.

"This is the first time, at the directorate level, ever that an ePTT has been more or less embedded with the IP," said Nowak, a native of Silver Lake, Minn.

Prior to January, the Coalition Forces and International Police Advisors, who are civilian law enforcement officers from the United States, hired by DynCorp, were both working on IP systems, but the

(see ePTT pg. 27)

ePTT, from PG. 26

partner trainers were not combining their efforts.

Under the new ePTT, the two organizations are now working together to improve the IP systems.

The ePTT at the Rusafa directorate level consists of Nowak, Emory and with ten IPA and ten interpreters. The team works together to provide the IP commanders with advice on how to make their systems more efficient in order to support the stations within their commands.

“Guidance is given from the officer in charge or the noncommissioned officer in charge and each IPA is the subject-matter expert. They have their specialty area they work and deal with daily issues, concerns and give suggestions to their IP counterparts in order to improve the IP systems,” said Nowak, in explaining the ePTT concept at the directorate level.

Several areas the team was working on during this particular week were fuel consumption, distribution and accountability in several facets.

“We are trying to get a handle on the fuel corruption, issuing out of supplies and equipment, payroll issues, training new and previous IP and investigation techniques,” said Nowak.

Besides these specific areas, the main job of the ePTT is to partner side by side with the IP as they perform their daily jobs and provide assistance to improve the IP systems capabilities.

“The team is at the directorate almost daily, working right alongside the IP to improve their systems,” said Nowak.

In contrast to the standard Police Transition Team, the PTT at the station levels around Baghdad are run by military police Soldiers. Their roles are to train the Iraqi police and teach them how to conduct community policing in the areas they are assigned. Recently however, they have found themselves having to adapt to a new role outside their normal job descriptions to help their IP counterparts with their systems at the station level to help compliment the support structures between the higher and lower echelons of the IP organization.

“I never knew when I joined the Army as an MP I would be doing this,” said Emory, while discussing fuel operations tracking with the

Rusafa Directorate Maintenance Facility commander Aug. 7.

Even though this is outside their primary skill sets, U.S. Soldiers, when conducting their missions and advancing in their career fields, are exposed to a variety of skills sets that they develop an expertise in. Emory and his counterparts have adapted in order to complete their mission of providing guidance to their IP counterparts. And if they are not completely sure on a particular task, they are able to utilize their chain of command to find an expert to pull resources and expertise from.

“Working with the IP has been like working in the operations cell of a new company,” said Emory. “You get to know the mission and the systems used within the organization and then work towards maintaining or improving the systems.”

Also since January, the Directorate ePTT has overseen the

development of an Emergency Response Unit in the Rusafa Directorate, which consists of three battalion-sized elements consisting of approximately 750 IP each in the Zohour, Mada’in and Bab al Shiekh districts in the Rusafa directorate.

The ePTT has seen a lot of challenges in working with the IP, but the IP have overcome all of those challenges.

“There have been a lot of challenges since we started, but

we have worked together with the IP to adapt and overcome these challenges,” said Emory, adding that one of the complications the IP are experiencing is the task of delegating authority to their subordinate leaders while at the same time not negating their chain of command.

“The biggest issue we’re having is for the top leadership in the IP force to give authority to his guys below him to make any decisions or have any authority in the commanders absence,” said Nowak.

Despite the challenges the ePTT face, the Soldiers are out there every day working with the IP at the directorate level to further improve the force in order for the IP to provide rule of law to the Iraqi people in Baghdad.

The ePTT continues to develop a push/pull type of functional system. For example, when subordinates need resources, they can work the system through the chain while at the same time, the higher level assists the lower in getting the resources to do their jobs.

“Improvement in the IP at the directorate level has definitely been transforming over the past eight months,” said Nowak. “It’s a slow-slow process, but we are helping in improving their systems.”



– Master Sgt. Kevin Emory (left), a native of Clinton, S.C., who serves with the 95th Military Police Battalion’s enhanced Police Transition Team, discusses fuel distribution operations with the commander of the Rusafa Directorate Maintenance Facility Aug. 7.

FAREWELL...

American service members reflect honor, dignity for fallen

By:
Master Sgt. Brian Davidson
447th Air Expeditionary Group Public Affairs

On the aircraft parking ramp of the 447th Air Expeditionary Group at Sather Air Base, just west of Baghdad International Airport, Soldiers and Airmen quietly gather in the heat of the mid-day sun, and in a very short time their ranks swell to more than 100.

The call to “fall in” comes from the first sergeant, and the men and women instinctively form six perfect rows.

In front of the formation is a C-130 Hercules transport aircraft with its large loading ramp open.

In the distance, two helicopter crews preparing for a mission notice the activity, and instinctively know what’s happening. They stop their activities and line up in front of the helicopters.

Everyone remains perfectly still under the merciless sun until the command of “forward-march” comes from the first sergeant. The Soldiers and Airmen march towards the waiting C-130 in perfect step, heads up, eyes forward.

The formation divides as it approaches the rear of the aircraft and comes to a halt under its towering tail with three ranks to starboard and three ranks to port. With a softly-spoken command from the first sergeant, the Soldiers and Airmen turn in unison and face inward, leaving a passageway between them leading to the aircraft loading ramp.

They remain at attention as a single Humvee draws near.

A detail of Soldiers forms at the back of the vehicle and carefully removes a silver metal box. It’s draped with an American Flag whose bright colors are a stark contrast to the brown and tan Iraqi environment. The case bears the body of a friend and comrade-in-arms—an

American son who has given his life in the name of freedom.

The scene is most often called a patriot ceremony, patriot detail or ramp ceremony. It’s a very familiar scene for most of today’s service members who have served in a war zone, but it’s rarely seen by anyone who does not wear a military uniform; not the families of the lost, not senior government officials, not even the President.

While the patriot ceremony isn’t a formal part of military customs and courtesies, it is one of the most emotional formations those serving in the profession of arms will ever experience.

The ceremony’s primary purpose is to allow military members to show their respect to their fallen, and because they must remain behind to continue their mission, it also serves as a memorial service for some, allowing them the chance to show their respect.

On this day, the Soldiers were from the 978th Military Police Company, and

the Patriot Ceremony was for Cpl. James Hale, who died Aug. 13 when his vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device during a patrol in Baghdad.

According to Pentagon figures, more than 4,100 American service members have died in the war to bring freedom and independence to Iraq, and more than 3,360 died as a result of hostile action. Of those dead, most were brought to the 447th AEG at Sather Air Base to begin their journey home to grieving families; a process formally known as repatriation.

While the origin of the patriot ceremony is not clear; its purpose is.

When an American military member dies in the war zone, word goes out to let people know when the body will be brought to the airfield for repatriation—and

(see *Fallen* pg. 29)



Fallen, from PG. 28

whether it's in the heat of day or the middle of the night, military members come to pay their respects.

Strict rules prohibit media coverage of, and ceremonies at, interim stops during the journey home for those who have died supporting military operations, but for military members who are deployed forward, the start of that journey is very significant.

"We're family. It's about love, and respect and trying to understand and deal with the loss," said Army Sgt. 1st Class David Davison. "It's not something you can find anywhere in regulations or ceremonial policies—it's something you find in your heart."

For Sergeant Davison, like many others, it's the final chance to say "goodbye."

"It's good for the unit and good for individual Soldiers," he said. "Hopefully, it will help the families at home to know that they are in our thoughts and prayers, and that we share in their grief."

The patriot ceremony also helps the Soldiers turn their focus back to the job at hand. "Soldiers believe in our mission enough to give their lives, and we owe it to them to succeed," he said.

The mission of the 978th MP Company is to assist Iraqi police with maintaining security in Baghdad. Officially called Police Transition Teams, the Soldiers serve in the city every day with the sole purpose of helping their Iraqi counterparts make the streets safer for innocent civilians. It's a job that is both critical to rebuilding Iraq, and dangerous. Sergeant Davison and his fellow Soldiers have learned this lesson all too well. "What we do now will make it possible for Iraqi citizens to leave their homes without fear," he explained. "But there are still people out there with evil intentions."

The Pentagon reports that in July, the death toll of U.S. Soldiers killed in Iraq reached the lowest monthly record of 13 since the war began in 2003.

November of 2004 was the deadliest month for U.S.

troops, with 137 killed in action.

Even with the record monthly low in deaths, every single one is significant. As those who have died are brought to the 447th AEG to begin the journey home, American men and women who wear the nation's military uniform gather for the solemn honor of the patriot ceremony.

"Participating in the ceremony is a way for us to answer the call that comes from within to do something tangible," said Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Mark Campbell, 447th AEG command chaplain. "It's a way to recognize and

honor the fallen, but more importantly, it's a way to honor their life."

The command of "present arms" is given and the Soldiers and Airmen slowly raise their arms in a salute as they stand at attention. In the distance, the helicopter crews also salute as the flag-draped transfer case is brought to the waiting aircraft.

Once the transfer case is loaded, the command for "order arms" is given and the Chaplain offers up a prayer as the faces of many Soldiers from the



978th MP Company stream with tears. Some Soldiers reach out to help others stand as grief makes their knees buckle.

Those who have gathered for the patriot ceremony each walk past the transfer case, some pause to pray, some sob inconsolably and some gently touch the American flag and whisper their "goodbye." As they exit the aircraft, small groups form and friends hold on to each other as more tears fall.

The scene of the patriot ceremony changes very little as it unfolds wherever American service members die in today's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some days come and go without the call for patriot honors, some days the call comes, and some days it comes two, three and more times. When it does, America's best and bravest men and women, serving in harm's way in the name of freedom, will continue to come together to say "goodbye" to their loved and lost.

Absentee voting = Simple, easy process for complex decision

Individual involvement in democratic process matters

By:
Staff Sgt. Brock Jones
MND-B Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY – The fighting men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces are greatly affected when a new president takes office, making this election year an important time not only for America, but also for service members worldwide. A new president means a new commander-in-chief, which can ultimately result in new directions, policies and actions throughout the Armed Services.

As American citizens prepare to flock to voting booths in November to cast their votes for a new president, Soldiers serving overseas do not have to stand by and merely wait for a winner to be declared. Through the absentee balloting system and with the help of local unit voting assistance officers, every U.S. citizen-soldier serving outside the United States can be involved in the election and cast their votes for president.

“Having the opportunity to represent the Multi-National Division – Baghdad command as a voting assistance officer is an awesome opportunity,” said Maj. Gregory Ash, a native of Baltimore, who serves as the officer in charge, deputy G-1 plans and operations, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B, and who is the division’s voting assistance officer. “I try my best to ensure that I give a 100-percent effort to any and everybody who comes in my section to ask about (voting).”

Voting assistance officers are responsible for raising awareness among Soldiers about the absentee voting system, assisting them with the registration process and answering any questions they may have about that process.

“I’ve had junior Soldiers to officers pull me in the hallway or in the dining facility and say, ‘Hey, what do I need to do (to vote)?’” said Ash. “It’s a simple process, but I think one of the biggest challenges that we are going to have here while in theater is just getting the word out.”

“Getting the word out” about voting is what Ash and other VAOs throughout the division have been doing for the past few months. Along with the efforts of other

Soldiers who spread the word because they view voting as an important act, the VAOs hope the information about how to vote while deployed is reaching more and more Soldiers every day.

“I think a lot of times, people think the process is harder than it is, when it really only takes five minutes,” said Staff Sgt. Glenn Butler, a native of Mililani, Hawaii, who serves as a battle noncommissioned officer in the division fires and effects cell, 4th Inf. Div. Butler and others from the FEC voluntarily began a campaign of sorts to raise awareness about the absentee balloting process and help other Soldiers fill out and mail the absentee ballot request application.

“We’re just trying to help out,” Butler said. “We’ve signed up about 180 people in the last five weeks.”

Filling out an absentee ballot request, known as a Federal Post Card Application, is the first step to voting with an absentee ballot, said Ash. The second step is the approval of the request by the Soldier’s state election official, who then returns an official absentee ballot to the Soldier. The final step is for the Soldier to return his or her ballot to the local election official of their state to be counted, he said.

With such a simple process, and with voting assistance officers to help at every level of command, each Soldier has the opportunity to vote for their next commander-in-chief and get involved in one of the most important and perhaps defining processes of democracy.

“(Soldiers) are at the core of an organization that protects democracy, protects the rights that we believe in,” said Sgt. Andrew Pershing, a native of Marion, Iowa, who serves as an open source intelligence analyst with the intelligence section, 4th Inf. Div. and looks forward to being able to cast his absentee ballot. “That’s the reason why you vote.”

The reasons Americans vote are as different as each individual citizen who casts those votes. However, most of those reasons seem to revolve around the desire to stay involved in the processes that have been, and

continue to be, essential to our democratic way of life.

“Every person, every Soldier, from the lower enlisted to the highest ranking, has a part to play in voting because every issue or every policy, every directive that comes down from our higher, our commander-in-chief, affects us all,” said Ash. “Being able to have an opportunity to at least put a word in edgewise ... in the form of a vote I think is key, and at least allows a Soldier ... to say ‘Hey, I made a difference – I at least voted.’”

In November, when the ballots are counted and the new commander-in-chief has been sworn-in, a new era will begin in the management of the affairs of the U.S. military. Every Soldier serving far from home has the opportunity and the responsibility to get involved in the process of choosing their next commander-in-chief through the absentee balloting system.

Absentee voting: Simple 4-step process

1. Fill out a Federal Post Card Application.
2. Send the filled-out FPCA to the Soldier’s state election officials.
3. State officials approve the application and send back an absentee ballot to the Soldier.
4. Soldier votes on the absentee ballot and sends it back to election officials.

