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THE RALLY POINT



Serv

: Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division
led in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom

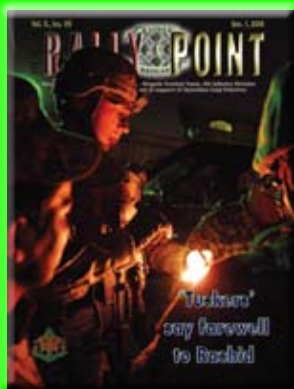
**'Tuskers'
say farewell
to Rashid**



The Rucksack

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Staff Sgt. Herbert Smitley, mechanized infantry platoon sergeant, assigned to Company C, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, checks an identification card of an Iraqi citizen during a late night patrol Oct. 28 in the Risalah community of southern Baghdad. Smitley, a native of Waynesburgh, Pa., deployed to Baghdad three times since the start of the war, and said the conditions on the ground now are the best yet.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

THE RALLY POINT

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Happy Holidays from the
Raider Brigade Combat Team
Operation Iraqi Freedom

07-09



Raider Command Team visits Soldiers throughout
Rashid for Thanksgiving holiday



4 - 64 Armor Soldiers finish 15-month deployment in the lead

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

In October 2007, the Soldiers of Company C, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, a mix of armor and infantry, assumed responsibility for the majority of the Risalah community in southern Baghdad, an area comprised of 12 muhallahs and home to approximately 250,000 Iraqis.

The company's third deployment to Iraq took them to the Rashid district in Baghdad, and introduced the Soldiers to an area recovering from the violence and turmoil of Special Groups and militias trying to impose their will on the Iraqi people.

Currently attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, the Soldiers of "Cyclone" Company recently took a huge step in the right direction, said Capt. Michael Berriman, commander of Co. C, 4th Bn., 64th Armor Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Operations changed significantly since his first deployment in 2003, through his second tour in 2005, and now the conclusion of his third deployment in support of OIF, said Berriman.

The armor officer from Springfield, Mo., explained that he saw the focus of efforts change from major kinetic operations of past deployments to the tasks of increasing the capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces and working to return normalcy to the daily lives of the Iraqi people.

"Our approach has always been that it is going to be a joint effort," said Berriman. "The company has always included the Iraqi Security Forces as my goal was to get the ISF involved, because I knew that they would take ownership."

During the past seven months, the ISF took ownership of their communities and are good at it, he said.

"We got past that part

involving ISF," he said. "The next thing we did is start incorporating the Neighborhood Advisory Councils."

The new NAC Hall, co-located with two Iraqi National Police battalions and Coalition Forces at a joint security station in the Risalah community, opened Oct. 26 to provide local leaders a venue where they can meet with Iraqis in a secure area and maintain direct coordination with their community, said Berriman.

Berriman served more than two years as the "Cyclone" Company commander and his career, like many of the Soldiers in his company, spanned the many phases of Operation Iraqi Freedom, working through major combat operations to providing stability and support for the people of Baghdad.

"It has been a very interesting deployment, very challenging, and I think the Soldiers of this company can walk away with a good feeling

— a better appreciation for what they have done," he said.

The citizens of Risalah started reaping the benefits of the improving security situation through the start of micro-power generation programs, which provide local power to the neighborhoods, and micro-grant funding, one-time grants for local Iraqi entrepreneurs to help stimulate the local businesses and economy, said 2nd Lt. Daniel Gorczynski, fire support officer, Co. C, 4th Bn., 64th Armor Regt.

Community events, such as school supply distributions and community medical engagements, are critical opportunities to get local leadership, ISF and the people involved, he added.

"The NAC has the biggest potential for development, especially with civil operations in Risalah, because they are knowledgeable of the area," Gorczynski said. "The power lines, generators, micro-generators, and (essential services) in the area all belong to the NAC."

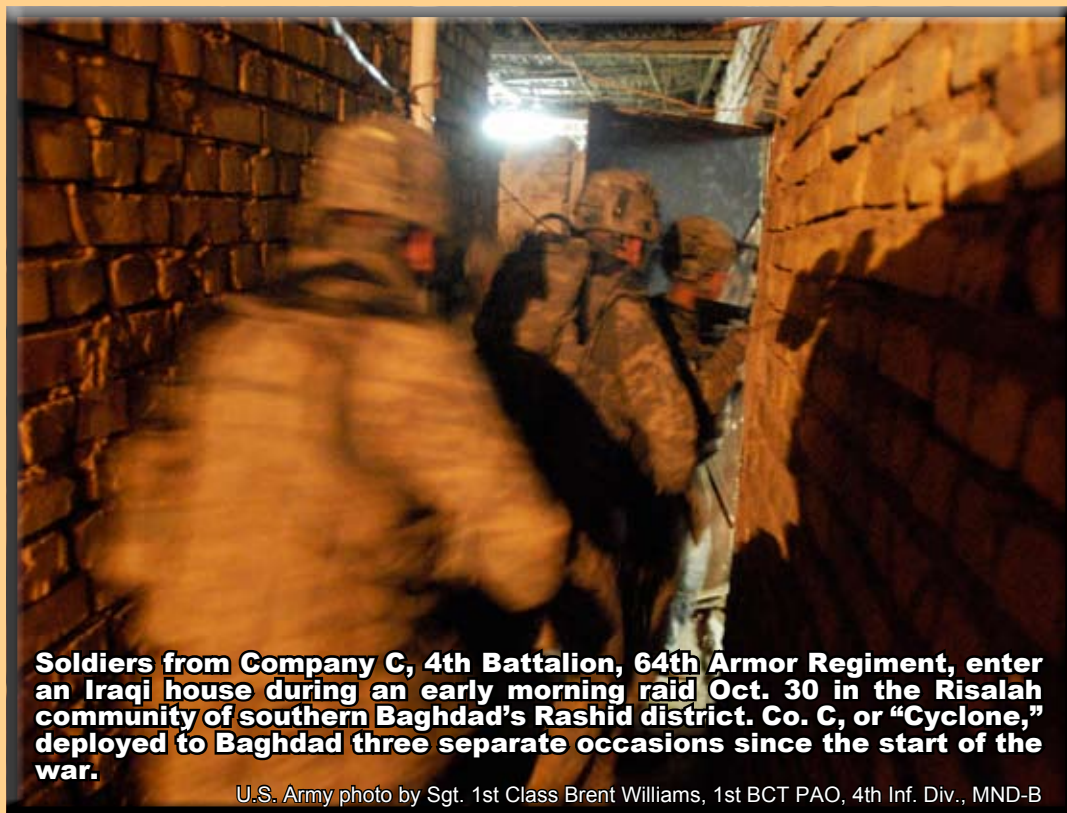
The Soldiers of Cyclone Co. recently started working with the NAC to gain Ministry of Education support to refurbish the schools in the area, said Gorczynski, a native of Basking Ridge, N.J.

The NAC also played an essential role in assisting with resettlement in Risalah, said Gorczynski, adding that the new governance building in the ISF compound provides a haven for Iraqis to bring their problems.

The unit's relationship with the NAC and the Rashid District Council helped to improve the security situation on the ground, said Staff Sgt. Herbert Smitley, mechanized infantry platoon sergeant, Co. C, 4th Bn., 64th Armor Regt.

In fact, said Smitley, a native of Waynesburgh, Pa., it is the best he has seen in his three deployments to Baghdad.

"We have a good relationship with the NACs,



Soldiers from Company C, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, enter an Iraqi house during an early morning raid Oct. 30 in the Risalah community of southern Baghdad's Rashid district. Co. C, or "Cyclone," deployed to Baghdad three separate occasions since the start of the war.

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

and that plays an important part in getting the Iraqi people to work with the U.S. Forces and work with the people to get the (Special Groups) out and build trust," he said.

Conditions in Risalah and Saydiyah changed drastically from the heavy fighting at the beginning of 2008, said Smitley, who re-enlisted during the deployment.

"I think that we're closer than we ever have been in building a functioning government," he said. "This year has been a complete success."

Taking ISF out on every mission, the focus of the company was to push the ISF to do their job and work to their maximum potential, said Smitley, who credited the Iraqi National Police with taking responsibility for their area of operations.

"We are taking a step back with the ISF, letting them work to meet the needs of their people. A lot of our focus is to step out, step back and watch to make sure that they are doing the right thing, he said. "Over watch for us means using their leaders. If they have one good leader per platoon, then we focus that leader, mainly the lieutenants and high ranking noncommissioned officers, forcing them to do more of the job."

Staff Sgt. William Bailey, mechanized infantry squad leader assigned to Co. C, 4th Bn., 64th Armor Regt., said he saw a drastic change in conditions and quality of life for the Iraqi people in Risalah.

"The people have returned to the streets, returned to their daily lives," he explained. "People are out; they are smiling and living their lives."

Missions vary day-to-day for the armor company, said Bailey, which at a minimum, include conducting cordon and knock operations, raids, security over watch, market assessments, atmospherics and checkpoint inspections.

There has not been a drastic change since the company assumed its mission, but the ISF gradually transitioned into a leading role in providing security for their country, said Bailey, a native of Worland, Wyo.

The unit which primarily conducted patrols from their M2 Bradley Fighting



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Lt. Col. Johnnie Johnson and Command Sgt. Maj. Rodney Greene, leaders of the 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, furl the battalion colors during a casing ceremony Nov. 28 at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad's Rashid district. The 4th "Tuskers" Bn., 64th Armor Regt., recently finished a 15-month deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Johnson is a native of Tampa, Fla., and Green hails from Richmond, Va.

Vehicles, now works primarily from humvees and conducts dismounted patrols through the area, which is another indicator of the continuing progress in the area, said Bailey.

During their final days, the Cyclone Soldiers prepared the Soldiers of the "Raider" Brigade to assume the mission in southern Baghdad.

Bailey said he believes it is a daunting task for the Soldiers of the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., to absorb the territory once controlled by the "Surge" forces, units that will not be replaced once they leave Iraq.

Fortunately, the Iraqi National Police of the 1st Bn. and 3rd Bn., 5th Bde., 2nd NP Div., did an excellent job stepping up their operations to take control of their areas of responsibility, he added, which helps the Soldiers as they maintain over watch for the entire Rashid district.

"I think it is important to maintain the relationships we have built with the ISF," he

said. "We have to continue to work and use the ISF to help accomplish the mission."

The Iraqi National Police made great accomplishments since Staff Sgt. Joshua Mager worked on a Military Transition and Training Team for the Rashid district ISF in 2005.

Since the violence in Iraq subsided, the armor section sergeant and tank commander traded his M1 Abrams Tank for a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle and assumed many of the duties and responsibilities normally allocated to an infantryman.

While day-to-day operations remain the same, Mager, a native of Statesboro, Ga., said he takes personal pride in watching the NPs grow into the lead, becoming more competent in the pursuit of the enemy and taking a more active role in their community.

"Now, to see the NP doing the same thing that the Iraqi Army did back (in 2005), I think we have made great

strides and progress in their security forces," Mager said. "The aggression of the NP and the aggression of the American Forces pushing the ISF to accomplish the mission have caused the people in the area to get to a point where they trust us – and where they trust the NP."

"Things are getting better all the time, and looking over time here in the next few years, I think we will see a good turning point," said Mager, adding he wants to maintain what has been accomplished during his three deployments in the last five years.

The "Tuskers" Bn. of the 64th Armor Regt., part of the 4th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., stationed at Fort Stewart, Ga., deployed to the Rashid district of southern Baghdad, finished its 15-month deployment Nov. 28.

CULTURAL BORDERS EXTENDED DURING IRAQI, AMERICAN VTC

Story and photos by Sgt. David Hodge
1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

“All for Iraq” adorns the light blue flags held by Iraqi children Nov. 12 as they recited Iraq’s National Anthem during a live video teleconference at the Forward Operating Base Falcon’s Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Center.

The cultural exchange video teleconference between Iraqi and American children began with the opening remarks from Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, the commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division and Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

“We have a program in Baghdad with 31 Iraqi and American schools partnered with 11

different states in America,” Hammond explained to the teachers, students and leaders on both sides of the world. “The School Partnership Program continues to build and grow in all directions.”

More than 20 Iraqi children from the al Khartoum Primary School in the Shurta community of southern Baghdad gathered at Forward Operating Base Falcon to participate in a question-and-answer VTC with a group of their peers from Nolanville Elementary School in central Texas.

“My experience is that the young school-age children in Iraq are no different than the

children in America,” stated Hammond, who hails from Hattiesburg, Miss, explaining that the program is designed to foster communications between Iraqi and American youths and develop a better understanding of the different cultures.

During the exchange, the two sides asked questions and made remarks on a multitude of subjects, such as school, life and culture.

“I was very pleased to talk to the American students, and I was well educated on how their educational system works,” said Aseel Mazin, a 12-year-old girl, in what is the Iraqi equivalent to 7th Grade in American schools. “I got to learn what their daily schedule is like too.”

The conference offered a chance for Iraqi teachers and students to experience the cultural warmth and good will the Americans exude, said Maj. T.J. Reed, civil affairs officer assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

“We will foster a cultural change to a time of enlightenment – not to change Iraqis to be like Americans but to exercise their freedoms and make their own decisions,” explained Reed, who calls Las Cruces, N.M., his home.

Interactions between the schools will continue to blossom and extend into high school and college for both sets of children, said Reed.

Many of the students’ parents, residents of Nolanville, neighboring Fort Hood, are Soldiers currently deployed with the 4th Inf. Div. in Iraq. In fact, Reed’s 11-year-old daughter, Jordan, participated in the event with the rest of her class.

“Jordan was very excited about finding out what her father experiences on a daily basis, interacting with Iraqis,” Reed said. “She is always interested in the stories I tell her about life at home in America being different than life in Iraq.”

Following a question by an American student about the Arabic language, an Iraqi child asked why Americans do not learn the Arabic



Children from the al Khartoum Primary School in the Douira community display a hand-painted banner for American children from an elementary school in Nolanville, Texas, during a video teleconference Nov. 12 at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad’s Rashid district.



An Iraqi girl from the al Khartoum Primary School, a grade school for children in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad, waves a flag while others recite Iraq’s National Anthem during a cultural exchange with American school children from Nolanville Elementary School in Central Texas, Nov. 12.



A young Iraqi boy enjoys a hearty meal Nov. 12 at the Raider Café Dining Facility at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Iraq.



language in their school.

"It's not really in our curriculum," answered Jordan, whose response brought about laughter.

Hand-painted banners displaying cultural symbolism and national pride filled the television screen after the question-and-answer portion of the VTC.

Hammond said he believes the children are a nation's greatest credentials, and that is a major factor in the Government of Iraq and Coalition Forces' decision to invest in schools across Baghdad.

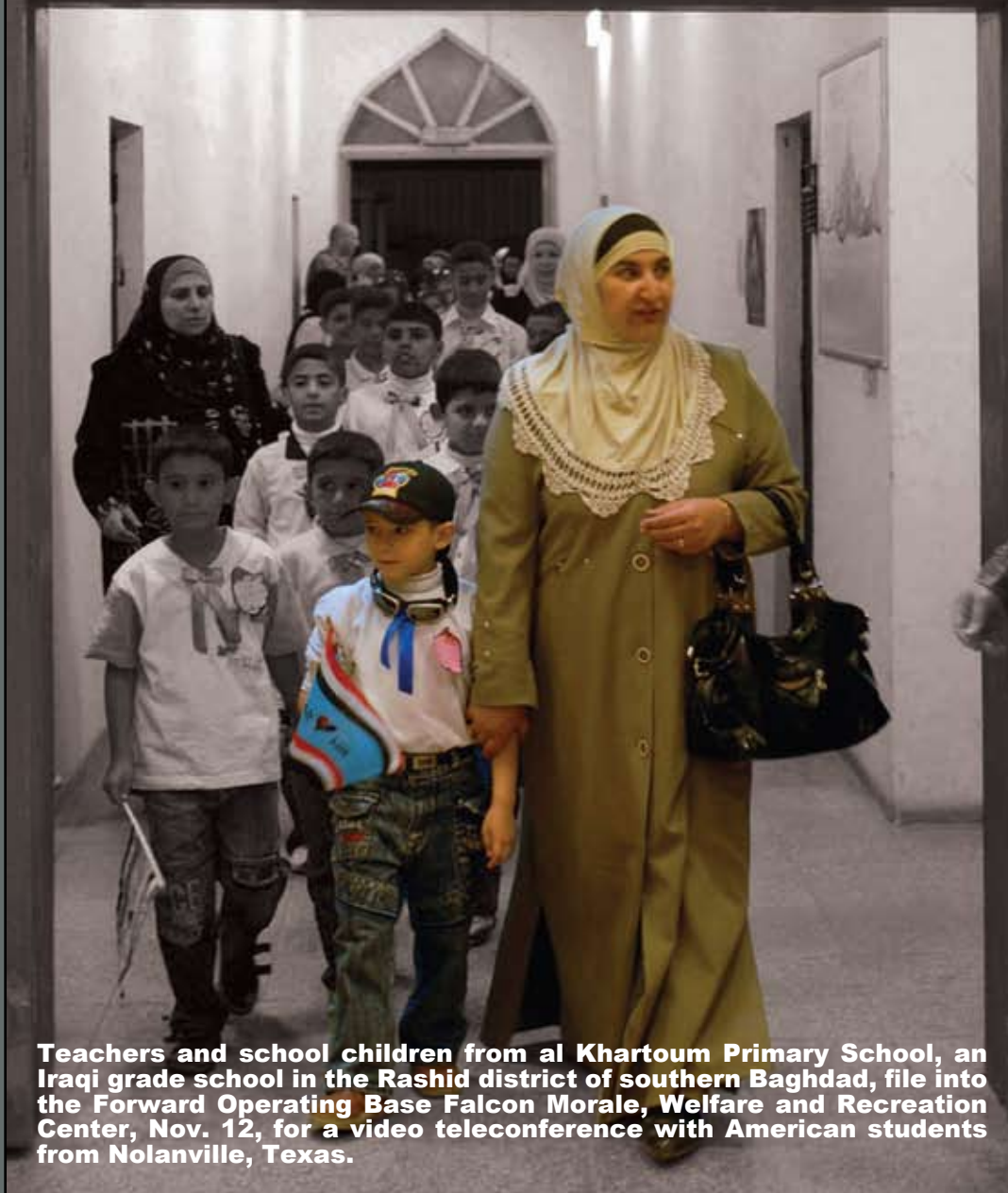
During the previous year, he added, Coalition Forces renovated approximately 267 schools and more than 350 this year.

A GoI official offered his thanks to Coalition Forces for helping with the Iraqi educational system.

"This meeting represents a good will between these children," said Satter Muhammed, deputy general of the Karkh II School District. "Be assured that Iraqis' memory is deep, and we will never forget this. We will pay our friends back."

The Soldiers of the 1st "Raider" Brigade and the 4th Inf. Div. headquarters are currently serving a combat deployment in support of MND-B and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Teachers and school children from al Khartoum Primary School, an Iraqi grade school in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad, file into the Forward Operating Base Falcon Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center, Nov. 12, for a video teleconference with American students from Nolanville, Texas.





Raider EPRT builds upon Rashid district's economic capacity to foster Iraqi business

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams
1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

“True individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence,” said President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the 32nd U.S. President. “People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.”

Job creation is the number-one priority for the senior business development advisor of the 1st Brigade Combat Team's Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, said Edward Walter Koenig III, the economic advisor for the 4th Infantry Division's “Raider” Brigade, deployed in support of Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Creating successful businesses and, ultimately, jobs in southern Baghdad involves opening up institutional lending, repatriating high network Iraqi businessmen and regional investors, and building upon infrastructure to facilitate markets and commercial zones in southern Baghdad,

said Koenig, who hails from Melbourne Beach, Fla.

“I think that really what we're trying to achieve here is a business environment where individuals invest their own money in their own business,” Koenig said.

The Rashid district can be considered a microcosm for Iraq, he added, since there are lots of small businesses, an agricultural business sector and a capacity for light and medium industrial business, as well as the Doura Oil Refinery.

Koenig outlined three basic elements to a strategy to rebuild the Rashid economy and provide an environment where people can establish a successful business, which ultimately translates into jobs for the Iraqi people.

“In this capacity, we have been meeting with commercial banks and are launching programs to facilitate micro-lending and working to transition certain microgrants to small business loans to move the economy toward self

sustainability,” he said.

Koenig said that the Raider Brigade is working to get the highly networked and successful business owners, who fled Iraq during periods of civil unrest and insurgency, to return to Iraq.

“They know the market,” he explained. “They have factories and capital investment currently here, and it is their home.”

“The second wave of offshore investment will come from Arab countries in the region, particularly the Gulf States,” Koenig said. “All have interest in investing money in Iraq. Because these countries share a common language, culture, family relations and a method of doing business, it's easier for these investors to joint venture, and partner with, and invest in Iraqi business.”

Another key component to building the economy lies in infrastructure development, said Koenig, a corporate executive officer of an electronics company, who has spent more than 15 years working in Europe and the Middle East as a regional vice president

for major communications corporations.

“It is a difficult challenge for business to move in and establish themselves, so we have been working on projects and programs to develop infrastructure that will support business investment on the part of business owners,” he added. “A lot of commercial or business zones were destroyed from an essential services standpoint during periods of sectarian violence.”

The business in the Rashid district runs from the corner baker to the large industrial enterprise, which is the greatest opportunity as well as the biggest challenge for the Iraqis, said Koenig.

The team accomplishes this task by working with the banking sector, building upon the small business loans and working to make capital available to medium- and large-sized enterprises, said Thomas Lynch, team leader of the group of specialists hired by the U.S. Department of State to address the needs of the Iraqi people in Rashid.

U.S. Ambassador Marc Wall, Minister for Economic Affairs and Coordinator for Economic Transition, U.S. Embassy – Baghdad, tours Al Dijla Soda Bottling Plant with the local business owner, Khafaji, in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad. The Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team for the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, hosted Wall and John Bass, Baghdad PRT Leader, during a tour of various medium and small business enterprises and projects from the Doura and Saydiah communities in Rashid.

“Economic conditions make jobs, and the effort is to arrange the pieces in such a way that the economic conditions will support employment,” he explained. “We have in the EPRT supported the transformation of this economy with the steps which make investment capital more transparently available and more predictably available.”

The Iraqi banking system needs to be integrated into the world banking system and requires development of accounting reserve requirements and modern services, such as electronic funds transfers, said Lynch, a native of Fairfax, Va., who has more than 25 years experience as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer.

Lynch said he looks forward to redeveloping the local markets to help restart the business in Rashid, putting money in circulation throughout the market streets, and opening the accessibility of the areas by easing security measures.

“So access, plus money, plus redevelopment in this small space should equal by about February or March an explosion of economic activities,” said Lynch, who earned a master’s degrees in European History and Soviet Military Strategy.

Rashid is an area that has been relatively overlooked since the conclusion of “tontense and savage” ethnic conflict 2005 - 2007, stated Lynch.

“The precondition for it all, of course, is security,” said Ambassador Marc Wall, Minister for Economic Affairs and Coordinator for Economic Transition, working out of the U.S. Embassy – Baghdad.

The Raider Brigade has made great progress in establishing security for the Rashid district, and with security established, the focus can change to power generation and raising capital to expand business – “the ingredients for private sector success,” said Wall, who hails from Virginia Beach in Norfolk, Va.

“If security can take root, then the Iraqis have the know-how and the creativity to make it happen, and we can provide just a little bit of the expertise and a little bit of the seed capital to make it happen,” he explained.

Wall also reinforced the point of the partnership between 1st BCT Soldiers and the EPRT, working with the Iraqi business men and local

officials is very encouraging.

“It’s a great example for the rest of the country and an example for our higher effort,” Wall said.

One Rashid business in particular, a soda bottling plant in southeastern Baghdad, is a unique case study in how far the nation’s capital has developed since the widespread violence more than six months ago, said John Bass, the Baghdad Provincial Reconstruction Team Leader.

“(The Dijla Soda Bottling Plant) took a risk, came back after the big wave of violence subsided in April, and restarted operations,” said Bass, a native of Upstate New York. “... they invested their own money in restarting their operations; they weren’t asking for hand-outs.”

The Rashid district is doing better than other areas and has the potential to grow, said Bass, who visits the area, home to approximately 1.6 million Iraqis, monthly.

The 1st BCT EPRT is really creative and innovative at finding new solutions to problems, said Bass.

“The PRTs are unique organizations, and in many respects are an experiment in post-conflict civil-military joint operations,” Bass said. “If they work well – and this one here works very well – it’s a true partnership, where each half of the organization, the brigade and the EPRT, are bringing their expertise and resources to bear, together, collaborating to fix a problem, to tackle a challenge, and to get us down the road.”

There must be a good relationship between the military and the EPRT to be successful, said Lt. Col. Richard Caya, deputy EPRT leader and executive officer for the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

The concept of a provincial reconstruction team dates back to the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support program started in Vietnam and revised in Afghanistan in 2003, said Caya, an infantry officer born and raised in Waterloo, Iowa.

Specializing in local government, energy distribution, agriculture, culture, economics and health services, the 1st BCT EPRT increases the brigade’s ability to build civil capacity in the Rashid district, said Caya.

“They take the services out to the district and provide it to the citizens,” he added. “They can run a literacy campaign; they can stand up a bank or a local business, and then get management for that to make it grow.”

Each member of the team focuses on a specialty, bringing with them years of experience in an area of expertise from the civilian sector, which from a brigade combat team’s perspective, Soldiers don’t have, explained Caya.

“It’s awesome; you can’t bring a price tag on what these guys bring to the brigade and allow us to accomplish,” Caya said. “Us military guys, we train to fight and close with the enemy and hold the ground. The Army’s whole mission is to hold terrain, and while we’re holding terrain and gaining momentum, they help us to increase those gains. It’s invaluable what they bring to us.”

Economics is important but not the only thing that makes the Rashid district work, claimed Caya, who said that the people must have security and essential services.

“It all has to grow comparably,” Caya said. “Each is a piece unto itself and supports the whole brigade effort. Without power or water, jobs or money, then the system fails.”

The 1st BCT EPRT is currently tracking 41 projects, estimated at a total of \$5.1 million, mostly sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development, an independent federal government agency dedicated to providing overseas federal assistance to countries, such as Iraq, said Caya.



Thomas Lynch, Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team leader, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, guides John Bass, Baghdad PRT Leader, through a tour of Al Dijla Soda Bottling Plant Nov. 17 in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

'Copperhead' - Increased AO - Increased responsibility

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams
1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

As "surge" forces begin to redeploy, returning home after a 15-month deployment in support of Multi-National Division – Baghdad and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the units used to help bring security and stability to the Iraqi capital are not being replaced.

Consequently, the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, realigned battle space in early November, moving its companies across the Rashid district in southern Baghdad to assume more of the sector and assist Iraqi Security Forces enforcing the Rule of Law.

Picking up new muhallahs and areas of responsibility to patrol and secure is like starting all over again because every area of operations, every neighborhood is different, said Staff Sgt. Ryan Parker, a squad leader assigned to Company C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

"We are ready for whatever we have to do," Parker assured. "Stay here and maintain this area, keep it peaceful or move to a different area. Whatever the mission needs, we're ready for it."

The Soldiers will use the experience that they have gained during more than seven months of patrolling and operating in western Rashid to control the area and maintain security, he explained.

"In the old muhallahs, we know the people, how they act, what they can expect from us and what we can expect of them," said Parker, who hails from San Antonio. "Now, it's like we just got out here again. We just have to learn the area, learn the people and see what they're up to in those areas."

Parker said that sooner or later, Coalition Forces will leave Iraq, and the Iraqis will take ownership of their country. And while ISF are patrolling the streets and securing the neighborhoods every day, he added, they still need to take additional steps for their forces to become self-sufficient.

The Iraqi Army is better trained and has learned a number of techniques and skills from Coalition Forces through years of training and mentorship on how to soldier, said 1st Sgt. Walter Navarro, Co. C., 1st Bn., 22nd Inf.

Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Looking at the combined effort of the ISF in the Rashid district, Navarro said that the IA and IP moved forward in developing their capabilities where conditions within the communities prevented progress in previous years.

"In order to secure their area, they are still going to need the resources," explained Navarro, who was born in Peru and moved to the United States at the age of 16. "We can't just say that it is just a matter of providing security or fighting an insurgency; the government has to be able to provide for their citizens, and in order to do that, they have to provide resources."

Navarro, who calls Washington home, said that his unit will undertake more combined patrols and operations with the ISF in ongoing efforts to prepare the Iraqi leaders to transition into independent operations and take over more responsibility through out the Rashid district.

Working in concerted efforts in the neighborhoods, businesses and communities, the company established an early rapport with the Iraqi citizens and the ISF in its eight organic muhallahs, said Navarro.

"I am not saying we took a radical approach to how we conduct business ..., but we used all platoons to go out into sector and create a presence — not at the expense of force protection though."

Months prior to the move, Copperhead Co. cross-leveled personnel, attaching a platoon to the outgoing unit to gain knowledge about the area and help prepare the other platoons for the new area of operations, explained Navarro.

"The big challenge right now is getting the platoons familiar with the new battle space and getting the other platoons familiar with the old battle

space," said Capt. Christopher Watkins, commander of Co. C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

The Soldiers will continue to work, mentor and patrol with the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police to increase proficiency and prepare the Iraqi Security Forces to take control of their neighborhoods and communities, said Watkins, an armor officer from New Orleans.

"We won't go into tactical over watch for months to come," he explained.

Leaving its former patrol base in the care and control of the Iraqi Police, the company signed over its combat outpost in West Rashid to the control of the Iraqi Police as Soldiers moved into a nearby joint security station, shared with the Iraqi Army soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 53rd Brigade, 14th IA Division, said Capt. Nathan Wilson, executive officer, Co. C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

The unit left the COP in better condition than it found it, improving the quality of life for the IPs and providing generators, air conditioners and other supplies to the ISF.

"A lot of people did tasks that they wouldn't normally be doing," said Wilson, who was responsible for planning and organizing the move. "They understood that there was a task that needed to be done, and they pulled together to make it happen."

Wilson thanked his Soldiers, as well as members of Headquarters Platoon and Forward Support Company E, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., for their tireless efforts in getting the job done.

The move meant long hours for the Soldiers, who maintained their patrols and operations in face of the move — even after they lost an organic platoon, which was attached to another unit, he explained.

The endeavor resulted in 12-hour patrols for the Soldiers,



Spc. Leonard Waters, a combat medic from Asheville, N.C., assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, searches the skyline from the third-floor balcony of apartments Nov. 10 in the Hayy Jihad community of the Rashid district.

Soldiers of Company C, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, clear abandoned houses during sweeps to search for weapons in the Hayy Jihad community of the Rashid district Nov. 11.

who would return to base to refit and then help pack and prepare the unit for the move, said Wilson.

The Soldiers inspect checkpoints to ensure that the IA, IP and Sons of Iraq forces are conducting proper inspections at traffic control points, properly searching vehicles and operating with the latest military intelligence and tactics, techniques and procedures, said Sgt. 1st Class Pedro Sotomayor, an armor crewmember from Bayamon, Puerto Rico, and platoon sergeant assigned to Co. C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

Sotomayor said Sol and IA soldiers manning checkpoints and conducting patrols and operations together is a good formula for success.

“The two forces working together is a good thing. Every day, we stop at checkpoints and talk with the ISF, and having more people on the checkpoints ensures that everyone is searched,” he explained. “I would rather have more people than less.”

The checkpoint inspections also provide the Iraqis the opportunity to voice concerns and bring valid issues to the attention of the Coalition Forces, said 1st Lt. Jonathan Muir, a platoon leader from Pittsburgh, assigned to Co. C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

“The Iraqi Army soldiers talked about pay issues,” Muir said. “The U.S. commander addresses the issues with their command.”

The armor company, part of a combined arms battalion, deployed to the Rashid district in southern Baghdad, increased its presence in the muhallahs and surrounding areas to disrupt potential enemy activity and plans to duplicate its efforts in the new battle space to ensure that the transition runs smoothly, said Muir.

1st Sgt. Walter Navarro, an armor crewmember from Washington, assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, discusses security with a local Iraqi resident Nov. 11 in the Hayy Jihad community of the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.



Front Sight Post

A cornucopia full of colorful fruit spills onto a table in the Raider Café Dining Facility Nov. 27 to celebrate Thanksgiving Day festivities. Soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, enjoyed a traditional turkey and dressing meal for lunch and dinner. Soldiers from the Raider Brigade celebrated the special day at combat outposts and joint security stations throughout southern Baghdad's Rashid district.

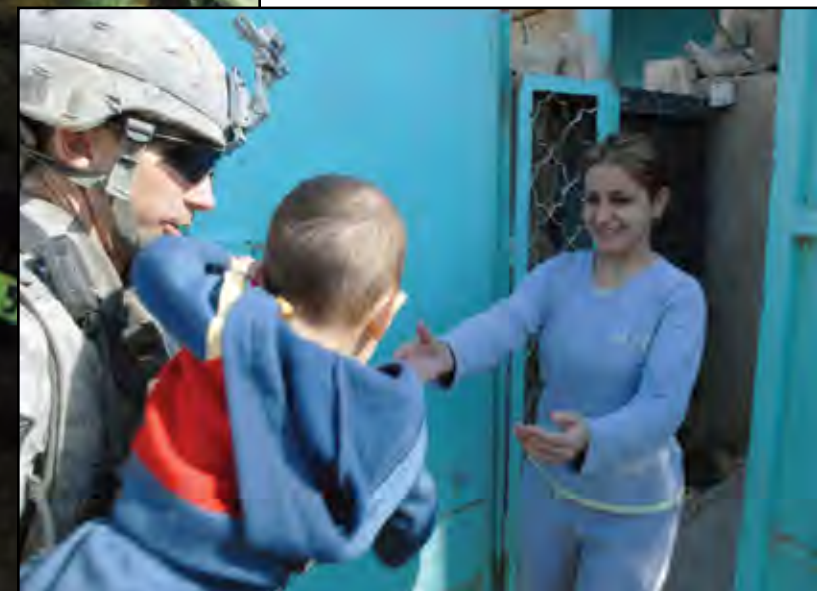


Pvt. Christopher McDonald, an indirect fire infantryman assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, drops a 120mm mortar round down the tube Nov. 9 at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad. McDonald, who hails from Santa Rosa, Calif., is assigned to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Sgt. Kristopher Shiplett, a cavalry scout assigned to Troop B, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, speaks to a local Iraqi boy about soccer while patrolling a market in the Mechanics neighborhood of southern Baghdad. Shiplett, who hails from Zanesville, Ohio, and other Troop B, or "Bulldog," Soldiers patrol the Hadar community in southern Baghdad's Rashid district.



Cpl. Steven Kramer, a mechanized infantry dismount from Antioch, Ill., assigned to Company C, 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, frisks a suspected weapons trafficker Oct. 28 during a target raid in the Risalah community of the Rashid district in southern Baghdad. The Soldiers of "Cyclone" Co. conduct daily security operations to assist Iraqi Security Forces enforcing the National Security Plan, Fardh al Qua Non, Iraq's Rule of Law.



Staff Sgt. Jerod Childs, an infantryman from Texas City, Texas, hand delivers an Iraqi toddler to his mother, Nov. 10, during a security patrol in the Risalah community of the Rashid district in southern Baghdad. Childs, a squad leader responsible for two teams of infantry dismounts in an armor company, took the baby, who had wandered into the streets, back to his mother. The Soldiers of Company C, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, expanded their operations into the Risalah community, Nov. 6, when they assumed responsibility for the battle space as "Surge" forces begin to redeploy.

Raider Soldiers oversee Hayys Jihad and Furat Sons of Iraq's first payday under GoI

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams
1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, joined their Iraqi counterparts at various locations across western Rashid to assist Iraqi Security Forces issuing the first payday to the Sons of Iraq Nov. 10-13.

The long-awaited payday activities are a critical step in uniting the Iraqi people for the future of Iraq, said Staff Col. Ali Abood Thamer, commander of the 1st Battalion, 53rd Brigade, 14th Iraqi Army Division.

“What is happening here, in my opinion, is extremely important because we are training them, putting tools in their hands, and what is the most important thing, taking them away from terrorism,” Ali said. “We are going to give them money; we are going to give them jobs; we are going to give them goals for their future lives.”

Ali said that he took responsibility for supervising and paying the more than 1,000 West Rashid Sol in the Hayy Furat and Hayy Jihad communities after the Government of Iraq assumed control of the citizens-led security program Oct. 1.

“We are bringing all these people into the IA and the National Police,” said Ali. “They are extremely important because we can train them, and they will be our eyes in the muhallahs. They will keep us better informed on the overall situation.”

Initially beginning in early 2007, Coalition Forces sponsored the Sons of Iraq program, an Iraqi initiative employing local citizens as security guards for their neighborhoods and communities.

The program, which grew stronger with the recognition and support of the Iraqi people, multiplied the presence of the ISF and increased security in the area, said Capt. Christopher Watkins, commander, Company C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

“The concern with the Sol program transitioning into the ISF was that the Government of Iraq would not buy into it,” said Watkins, who hails from New Orleans. “The added security measure was virtually on the verge of disappearing.”

In light of the growing concern by the Sol members that the Iraqi government would disband the program, the ISF have, in fact, embraced it, said Watkins.

“They have allowed the supervisors to maintain their roles and will hold the Sons of Iraq accountable in the same way that Coalition Forces have always done,” he explained. “My guess is because it is yet another step in the right direction for Iraq — another step toward the Iraqi people securing their country for

Iraqi Army leaders of the 1st Battalion, 53rd Brigade, 14th IA Division, fingerprint an Abna al Iraq (Sons of Iraq) security guard, Nov. 10, cross-checking ledgers and recording the first payment at a joint security station in the Hayy Jihad located in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad. Soldiers of Company C, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, supervised the event to assist Iraqi Security Forces issuing the first payday since the transition of the Sol to the Government of Iraq's control.





An Abna al-Iraq (Sons of Iraq) security guard counts \$351,900 Iraqi dinar (\$300 USD) after receiving his first payment Nov. 11 from Iraqi Army Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 53rd Brigade, 14th IA Division. Soldiers of Company C, 1st Bn., 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, helped facilitate the event providing over watch for both the Iraqi Security Forces and the Sol.



Command Sergeant Major Muataraf, command sergeant major of the 1st Battalion, 53rd Brigade, 14th Iraqi Army Division, pays a Banaat al-Iraq (Daughter of Iraq) at the Jihad Neighborhood Advisory Council Building Nov. 11 in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

themselves.”

The payday activities are currently one of Multi-National Division – Baghdad’s top priorities as the Sol transition into the control of the GoI, said Watkins.

“This is a critical step that has to be completed,” he said. “We have to work those kinks out before we can move out. We are just making sure that the Iraqis are getting paid.”

Coalition Forces currently are responsible for overseeing the first payday for the Sol, providing advice and ensuring that the interests of both sides are served during this critical transition of the Sol into the GoI control, said Watkins, an armor officer with more than 11 years in the U.S. Army.

“We still need to keep in touch with the Sol as well as the ISF,” Watkins explained. “(Sol) must maintain their relationship with CF.”

The Soldiers of “Copperhead” Company, an armor company in a combined arms battalion deployed to the Rashid district in southern Baghdad, also secured the multiple sights for the Sol payday activities and assisted the IA soldiers in maintaining order during the day-long events, said 1st Lt. Jonathan Muir, an infantry officer from Pittsburgh, assigned to Co. C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

Platoons increased their presence in the muhallahs and surrounding areas to disrupt any potential enemy activity and to ensure that there were no interruptions to the pay-out process, said Muir.

The Sol in the Hayy Jihad and Hayy Furat communities will continue to man checkpoints and provide local security working in support of the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police in the area, said 1st Lt. Nolan Maxwell, fires support officer assigned to Co. C, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt.

Coalition Forces are preparing for the eventual transition of the Sol to the GoI and ISF’s control since early 2008, and the Soldiers of Co. C began facilitating the process, registering members and creating personnel packets in mid-September, said Maxwell, a native of Santa Maria, Calif.

“This is the first payday under ISF control,” Maxwell explained. “We’re watching over, monitoring the payday activities, to make sure all the Iraqis we are tracking are the same guys the ISF are tracking, but it’s not 100 percent accurate yet.”

Working with ISF and local community leaders from the joint security station in Jihad, the Jihad Neighborhood Advisory Council, and the Jihad and Furat Support Council Office, a reconciliation council, Maxwell said that Coalition Forces are comparing their master list to the ISF list of names to ensure that there are no discrepancies, and the Sol are paid their due wages.

“Our ISF counterparts are in direct contact with us, and so far there has been no problem,” he said. “They are doing a great job so far.”

In the past, the Sol have faced difficulties validating their organization to the ISF, but both sides seem to realize that this is the next step in uniting Iraq and are working together toward a solution, said Maxwell.

“I think it is pretty important we are employing a lot of the young adults in our area of operations,” said Maxwell, a 2006 graduate of the Virginia Military Institute. “The more of them who have jobs, the less likely they will fall in with the gangs and begin conducting criminal activity with the special groups and terrorists.”

Coalition Forces will continue to oversee ISF and Sol activities for the foreseeable future to ensure that the transition occurs without any issues as ISF increasingly take the lead in providing security for the citizens of Iraq, he said.



1st Lt. Nolan Maxwell, a fire support officer from Santa Maria, Calif., assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, cross checks names of Sons of Iraq receiving their first payment from the Government of Iraq Nov. 11 at the Hayy Jihad and Hayy Furat Support Council Building in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad. Soldiers of “Copperhead” Company facilitated the payment made by leaders of the 1st Battalion, 53rd Brigade, 14th Iraqi Army Division, after the Sol security program transferred Oct. 1 to the control of the GoI and Iraqi Security Forces.

Art, culture show opens in Doura community

Story by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers joined artists, musicians and Iraqi citizens to celebrate the premier of an art exhibition Nov. 26 in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

The Iraqi artists assembled more than 100 artworks at the Doura Technical College to showcase their ability in the local community, an epicenter of commerce for the eastern Rashid area.

Community leaders and local patrons filled rooms prepared with paintings, sculptures and photographs portraying the exhibition's theme: "New Life, New Culture."

Doura, a neighborhood with a notorious reputation for its intense sectarian violence, saw credible progress since the arrival of the 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, in November 2007, said Lt. Col. Timothy Watson, commander of the "Warrior" Battalion, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

"We think the event shows incredible work by the people of Doura to bring the community back to life," stated Watson, a San Diego-native. "We are hopeful the progress here will continue."

An Iraqi artist displays his painting Nov. 26 at the Doura Art and Culture Show in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.



Photo by Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT PAO

Capt. Brett Walker, information operations officer from Mill Valley, Calif., assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, worked closely with Iraqi artists, community leaders, and members of the Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team to facilitate the Doura Art and Culture Show Nov. 26 in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.



Photo by Maj. Dave Olson

Watson described the art show as the pinnacle of social events in his area of operations.

"Thanks to the hard efforts of Capt. Brett Walker and cooperation with the 1st BCT Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, we've been working towards this in Doura for the last 12 months," said Watson.

The EPRT team played a crucial role in identifying important details of the show, said Walker, an infantry officer assigned to the 2nd Bn., 4th Inf. Regt, who serves as the information operations officer. The Soldiers offered their assistance to facilitate the five-day event; however, it remains an Iraqi-led event.

"The people of Rashid are ready for art; they are ready for a sophisticated reputation," added Walker, who hails from Mill Valley, Calif. "It's a new national identity that will endure for ages."

Faruq Fu'ad Rafiq Hamdani, a featured artist and event organizer, said he believes everybody continually worked hard to set up for the art and culture show.

It took Hamdani 20 days to prepare supplies and artwork for the show. He said he credits the exhibition to the true efforts of both Iraqis and Coalition Forces, adding that the Iraqi people are in need of a place to relieve stress and tiredness.

Zaith al-Tark, an Iraqi sculptor, displays his al-Battaani art piece Nov. 26 at the Doura Art and Culture Show in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad. The statue is dedicated to the 1,000-year memorial of Battaani, who is widely known as an Islamic philosopher.



Photo by Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT PAO

"These places need to be full of color, exhibition, and true happiness," he explained.

Hashem Mahmood, the deputy chairman of the Rashid District Counsel, said the variety of artwork served as a canvas for the Iraqi people's concerns.

"This is what Iraqis are all about," explained Mahmood. "We have security, so we can have the art show."

The Doura Art and Culture Show is scheduled to remain open for five days, and buyers can purchase the artwork on the last day of the event.



Photo by Maj. Dave Olson, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Band members Helall, Hala, and Hazzar Bassam play traditional Iraqi music Nov. 26 at the Doura Art and Culture Show in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad. The family members are musicians and instructors at the Baghdad School of Music and Ballet.

Although capturing terrorists and finding weapon caches in Iraq make the headlines in the news, restoring essential services and key infrastructure elements to the citizens of Baghdad are considered by Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, Infrastructure Coordination Element Team as the real victories in the Global War on Terror.

All coordination issues, from brainstorming for a contract to the final inspections of a multi-million dollar construction project, are handled by the ICE Team, which works coordination issues between Iraqis and Coalition Forces, said Maj. Tom Clark, ICE chief, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Special Troops Battalion.

The restoration begins and ends with coordination from a small team of Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers, contractors and Iraqi civilians.

“We make sure the construction in sector is done to standard,” added Clark, who is part of the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Staged at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Clark and his team of Soldiers and civilians work with members of the

Government of Iraq and the District Council in southern Baghdad’s Rashid district.

Six Iraqi quality assurance and quality control inspectors help the ICE Team ensure contracts are completed to standard by holding local contractors accountable for the work produced.

Working with the ICE Team is a good team environment, said Spc. Gregory Chism, a fueler working as a clerk for the ICE, assigned to HHC, 1st STB, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Everybody is really easy to get along with, he said.

It is a different kind of accomplishment working with the ICE Team, said Chism, who deployed to Iraq as an infantryman with the Army National Guard in 2005.

“Working for the ICE Team feels like I am working for a purpose,” said the native

of Tupelo, Miss. “It feels like I’m making a big difference.”

Bilingual, bicultural advisors also work with the ICE Team and provide technical expertise, stated Clark, who calls Copperas Cove, Texas, his home, but was born and raised in Singapore.

“The BBAs are a natural bridge between us and the Iraqis,” Clark explained. “They understand the Iraqi culture and how to negotiate with the locals.”

The ICE Team is charged with ensuring

Another major breakthrough for the citizens of Rashid is the opening of a regional office for the Ministry of Labor Social Affairs in the Hayy Jihad community.

“There is a great need for providing support for the unemployed, widows, orphans and people who are on the fringes of society,” Clark explained. “The GoI is looking to extend that support through a headquarters in southern Baghdad.”

Last summer in Rashid, the ICE Team worked with numerous schools to get them ready for the start of the school year.

Clark said he believes when Iraqi people see the neighborhood schools in better condition, they understand the genuine concern CF has towards Iraq and its people.

Throughout their time in Iraq, Soldiers from the ICE Team encourage the local leaders to set goals and develop their own systems, said Master Sgt. Jason Staub, ICE noncommissioned officer-in-charge, assigned to HHC, 1st STB, 1st BCT.

“As we work with the Iraqi leadership, we make suggestions to them on how to manage ongoing projects and planning for future projects,” stated Staub, who hails from New Cumberland, Pa.

As the GoI and Iraqi Security Forces continue

to gain more control of Rashid, Clark and his team must prepare to decrease the amount of CF involvement in operations.

“Basically we are working with our counterparts to ensure that when we leave Iraq, they are able to pick up where we leave off,” Clark stated. “There is a lot of work to do. Some departments are not quite manned for the synchronization piece, but they are steadily working on it.”

The Iraqis are breaking through more than 20 years of negligence from the Saddam Hussein regime, and the ICE Team is working with them to overcome Iraq’s out-dated infrastructure system, said Clark.

“It is heartening to see Iraqi patriots out there who put their lives at risk when things are bad in order to serve their own people,” Clark explained.



Maj. James Lantz, Infrastructure Coordination Element Team, assigned to the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion, attached to the 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, speaks to local leaders at the opening of the Doura Refinery Kindergarten School in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

America’s tax dollars are spent wisely, said Clark, who has years of engineering experience in underdeveloped countries throughout the world.

“Our mission is very important because we are asked to be good stewards of the American taxpayer’s dollars as far as construction and initiatives in the operational environment,” explained Clark, a 1994 graduate of West Point. “I’m really proud of my team. They have performed very well.”

One of the major projects coordinated by the ICE Team is the Airport Road Renovation Project, a multi-million dollar highway reconstruction effort paid for by the GoI.

As Iraq starts to open up again, it will open its doors to foreign investors, said Clark.

Infrastructure Coordination Element Team
manages projects to improve Iraqi quality of life

Story and photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Raider BCT Career Counselors retain quality Soldiers

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

The 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, recently paired retention noncommissioned officers and career counselors to retain the Army's most qualified Soldiers and supervise retention activities in garrison while deployed in support of Multi-National Division – Baghdad and Operation Iraqi Freedom 07-09.

With two battalions at more than 100-percent complete and three battalions nearly 70-percent complete in meeting their retention mission, the Raider Brigade's career counselors are making considerable headway in their goals to keep initial, mid-career and career Soldiers in the brigade, the division and the Army, said Sgt. 1st Class Alyce Williams, career counselor for the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

In fact, the "Raider" Brigade, deployed to the Rashid district in southern Baghdad, reenlisted more than 70 percent of its retention mission in the first 60 days of fiscal 2009, said Williams.

The role of the career counselor is to maintain the

Army force and to provide the best counseling and offer the best options for Soldiers whatever their future endeavors may be, said Sgt. 1st Class Paul Thompson, a recruiting NCO, serving as a career counselor for the 4th Support Battalion, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Thompson said he believes job security is key for many of the Soldiers, who have reenlisted during this deployment, but there are many reasons driving today's Soldiers to stay Army.

"I think the majority of the Soldiers have accepted the fact that Iraq or Afghanistan is going to be part of our lives for the next however many years; fact is, I think they do identify and like being in the Army," said Thompson.

The key to the "Packhorse" Battalion meeting its retention goals so early is the result of a good leadership foundation from the battalion commander and command sergeant major to the line unit with the platoon sergeants pushing to make for a successful mission, said Thompson, who calls Miami home.

"The mission is important,

but taking care of the Soldier in conjunction with making the mission, I think the Soldiers recognize that," he said. "Within 38 days, we were already over the 100-percent aggregate piece," Thompson said. "By the 38th day, we accomplished 80 contracts – over 100 percent in each category."

Attached to the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., from the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, Thompson said that he has seen much change in the Army since the inception of the Unit of Action, and the many moving parts continue to grow and change to meet the needs of the mission.

Career counselors have a multi-faceted job, said Staff Sgt. Daniel Andreas, a retention NCO and career counselor for the 1st Bn., 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

In addition to providing retention services for the battalion commander and command sergeant major, Andreas said that his two-man team is responsible for counseling Soldiers on educational opportunities,

miscellaneous benefit programs and promotion potential.

"But of course, at the end of the day, the commander wants to know where we stand, how much in each of these categories that we accomplish toward our goal," said the former aviation operations specialist, who reclassified to recruiter and then career counselor.

The battalion-level career counselor and retention NCO also manage the Army's Bar to Reenlistment Program, the only "down-side" to his job, said Andreas, a native of Albany, N.Y.

Working personnel moves, continuing deployments and accompanying training requirements, and an ever-changing operational environment, such as limiting requirements associated with the Stop/Loss Policy, keep the counselors attuned to their Soldiers' needs, he said.

"We always know of pending deployment in advance and have to be careful not to reenlist Soldiers into back-to-back deployments," Andreas said. "We have to take care of Soldiers."



Staff Sgt. David Ray, a military policeman from Powder Springs, Ga., assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, raises his right hand for his career reenlistment Nov. 7. Maj. Thomas Clark, a native of Copperas Cove, Texas and the Infrastructure Coordination Element Team Chief for the 1st "Phoenix" STB, 1st BCT, served as the presiding officer for the reenlistment at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad.

Photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B



Photo by Sgt. Dennis Winegar, 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., 1st BCT

Even as the 4th Inf. Div. looks to complete its move to Fort Carson during the next fiscal year, the counselor said he will never stop working to retain quality Soldiers and meet the needs of the Army.

The “Regulars” Bn. of the 22nd Inf. Regt. comprises approximately 25 percent of the brigade’s goals, said Andreas, who is well on his way to meeting his battalion’s aggregate retention requirements before next September.

“Of course retention and recruiting work together to keep the Army’s end strength where it needs to be at, so we have the five or six hundred thousand Soldiers we need to make up the U.S. Army,” he added.

Commanders make the Army easy for Soldiers to reenlist, said Staff Sgt. Richard Sayers, an infantryman from Fort Hood, Texas, who has the additional duty of 1st Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt. retention NCO.

Soldiers, who serve in squared-away units where missions are prepped, platoons are informed and discipline is uniform, are more likely to stay in the Army, explained Sayers.

“Command helped by making a good command climate,” said Sayers, who reached his company’s retention goals during 2007 and 2008. “I had no problems getting Soldiers to stay Army.”

Soldiers who invest time in their units have the opportunity to work with their leaders and learn from their chain of command, said Sayers.

“They all seem to be motivated about being over here and come to the realization that this is part of military service,” said Staff Sgt. Redonzo Jackson, an ammunition specialist and retention NCO for the 4th Spt. Bn., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

“Everybody has done their part, and they are continuing to do their part; even though we have made our battalion mission, everybody is still pushing forward to make the Army 100 percent,” he said.

Working for the Soldiers of the 1st BCT’s “Packhorse” Bn., has been a great experience during the current deployment, said Jackson, a native of Columbia, S.C.

“The leadership and the chain of command have been great with assisting us in trying to make sure that the brigade meets its mission requirements that were set for us,” he added.

Career counselors may be the subject-matter-experts; however, retention is – at all levels of command – a commander’s program, said Williams.

There is no one Soldier responsible for the retention mission, but the charge to maintain Soldier levels reaches across the entire Army, said Williams, who hails from Asheville, S.C.

“The Soldiers are already loyal to the Army, to defending their nation, but it seems more so in a combat zone,” she said. “Because in garrison, they’re just doing a job ... but here is where the rubber meets the road, and the Soldiers are just so much more patriotic.”

Spc. Brady Dietrich, a transportation specialist from Reedsville, Wis., Forward Support Company E, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, repeats the Oath of Enlistment as recited by Capt. Brian Kalaher, an infantry officer from Fort Hood, Texas, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st “Regulars” Bn., 22nd Inf. Regt., Oct. 14, on Forward Operating Base Falcon, located in southern Baghdad’s Rashid district.



Photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Col. Ted Martin, commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, reenlists five members of the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment Personnel Security Detachment (left) Spc. Matthew Cole, a cavalry scout from Killeen, Texas; Spc. Jamel Johnson, an armor crewmember from Fayetteville, N.C.; Spc. Clayton Schmid, an infantryman from Alamogordo, N.M.; Spc. Gary Chaffon, an infantryman from Arkansas City, Kan.; and Spc. Anthony Wagner, an infantryman from Akron, Ohio; Nov. 13, at Forward Operating Base Falcon, located in southern Baghdad. The Raider Brigade met more than 70 percent of its retention goals the first 60 days of fiscal 2009.

Soldiers deployed to an actual combat zone have greater awareness of how important their job is to accomplishing their mission, explained Williams.

“The Soldiers are much more dedicated,” she said. “They are just much more loyal to me in a combat zone.”

The U.S. Army Human Resources Command works with the deployed personnel to get the type of assignments a Soldier might not get in garrison, said Williams, who graduated from the University of South Carolina.

While bonuses will decrease a little bit due to the number of Soldiers currently choosing to stay in the Army, a reenlistment bonus often plays an important factor in a Soldier’s decision to re-up in a combat zone, she added.

“Just about everybody gets a bonus here,” Williams said. “Soldiers get a bonus if not for their particular (military occupational skill); they get a bonus for being deployed and not just a bonus but a tax-free incentive.”

Soldiers should talk to their leadership about a possible career in the Army, but they should also make a visit to their career counselors even if they do not plan on re-enlisting, she explained.

“At least know what is available,” Williams said. “At least have all the information needed to make an informed decision, learn what tools are available and talk it out to make the best possible decision.”

Raiders train 9th IA bomb disposal technicians

Story by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div.,

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers conducted explosive ordnance training with Iraqi Security Forces bomb disposal technicians Nov. 16 at Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad.

Soldiers and leaders from the 752nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, attached to the 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B, detonated a van full of munitions to train soldiers from the 9th Iraqi Army Division Bomb Disposal Company on the proper techniques for effective post-blast site exploitation.

"I think this training is important for the Iraqi EOD unit, because it gives them a chance to see how we operate," said Staff Sgt. Stephen Cunningham, a team leader assigned to the 752nd EOD Co.

The Soldiers packed the van with approximately 200 pounds of military-grade munitions to properly depict a real-world scenario.

"As far as their equipment is concerned, they have plenty of robots; their bomb suits and their knowledge is very up to date," explained Cunningham, a Los Angeles native. "They know what they're dealing with, especially when it comes to conventional ordnance."

The training keeps the IA soldiers on their toes and it contributes to the fight in the long run, said Spc. Curtis Garner, an EOD specialist assigned to the 752nd EOD Co.

"They seem really responsive, and they have a good grasp on what they are doing for their country," stated Garner, a native of Portland, Ore. "We just offer them a different avenue, outlook or thought process."

Garner said he believes the IA team leaders are competent and capable enough to introduce new concepts previously not practiced

An Iraqi Army soldier assigned to the 9th IA Division Bomb Disposal Company, transports evidence for further investigation Nov. 16 during an Iraqi Security Forces training exercise near Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad's Rashid district.



Photo by Justin Carmack

1st Lt. Brad Lewis, explosive ordnance technician assigned to the 752nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, attached to the 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, shows fragmentation from a car bomb Nov. 16 during an Iraqi Security Forces training exercise near Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad's Rashid district.



Photo by Justin Carmack, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

by the IA bomb squad.

"In the beginning, we received good training and knowledge from our friends," said Lt. Col. Neverathwan Risa, commander of the 9th IA Div. Bomb Disposal Company. "They have good experience, and hopefully we will develop ourselves to deal with the improvised explosive devices."

Risa, a Baghdad native, stressed the importance of knowledge and training to his soldiers and said he believes the exercise was a good opportunity for Iraqi bomb disposal technicians to train with Coalition Forces.

"It's very important to have this kind of branch in the new IA to deal with all the roadside bombs and to disarm any explosive devices to make the roads safe for the people and the army," Risa explained.

The team is an excellent bomb disposal company, said 1st Lt. Brad Lewis, EOD technician assigned to the 752nd EOD Co. They are one of the leading bomb disposal companies in the Iraqi Army.

"These guys played a big part in the push for Sadr City earlier this year," stated Lewis, who hails from Lubbock, Texas. "Since, we have been trying to work them by establishing training programs, training of the younger soldiers and getting them to the point where they could pass the EOD school in Basra."

This type of training signifies what the ISF need to eventually take control of another operational area, said Maj. Mike Ricciardi, liaison to MND-B EOD operations.

Ricciardi, a native of Orlando, Fla., said Coalition Forces are a better-equipped and trained force over the last five years and he believes improvements for the ISF are on the horizon.

"We are partnered with the ISF; we are mentoring them, and we are assisting on levels that we can," Ricciardi explained. "We're sharing tactics, techniques and procedures that will help them stay alive and continue on with their mission."



Photo by Justin Carmack, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

Senior NCO's career spans Desert Storm to Iraqi Freedom

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Williams, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

The senior noncommissioned officer of the Fire Effects and Coordination Cell for the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, began his mission almost immediately upon arriving at Forward Operating Base Falcon in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad in March.

Currently serving as a special projects manager for the “Raider” Brigade, specializing in force protection, Master Sgt. Craig Wagner, a forward observer assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division – Baghdad, is a veteran of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

When Wagner enlisted as a private and a cannon crewmember for the U.S. Army in 1988, Saddam Hussein had the third largest army in the world.

Stationed with the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Wagner’s duties as a driver and loader of an M109 Howitzer, earned him a deployment to Saudi Arabia for the initial push to liberate Kuwait from the armies of Iraq.

The mission kept the Soldiers in a constant state of combat readiness, explained Wagner, and when alerted, the units reported, loaded its gear and went out the gate to take up defensive positions.

“We were always ready to go to fight the Russians on the East German border, but we never even thought about packing up and going somewhere else,” said Wagner, who calls Santa Rosa, Calif., his home.

Within days, the Soldiers deployed to Saudi Arabia to prepare their equipment and conduct training, awaiting orders in the middle of the desert to drive the Iraqi Army from Kuwait.

“We flew into Saudi Arabia, waited for ships to arrive with gear and vehicles, loaded up and moved out,” Wagner said.

The unit was only in the port for approximately a week when it assumed positions in the desert along the Saudi-Kuwaiti border.

“We were staring across the border at them staring at us,” Wagner said. “All the stuff that they had, we were worried that if we got into a fight, the Soviets would scuff us up really bad. We knew that we were going up against forces a lot bigger than ours. I knew our equipment was good, but I didn’t know that it was going to be that overwhelming of a difference because the Iraqi forces were using all Soviet equipment.”

The size of the regiment, with its attached elements, was roughly the size of a modern brigade combat team, said Wagner.

The unit deployed with three maneuver

squadrons; each squadron comprised of three cavalry troops, consisting of scouts, tankers and mortar platoons. There was also a tank company and an artillery battery in each of the maneuver squadrons and a forward support squadron and air command squadron to complete the regimental force of approximately 5,000 Soldiers.

“Our training was really good; it was top-notch,” he explained. “When we finally got the word to go, the superiority of our weapons systems and training, compared to theirs, they didn’t have a chance.”

Removing the guard towers and breaching the 25-foot berm that lined Iraq’s border, the reconnaissance element assumed a wedge formation and tore north to cut off retreating Iraqi forces before they could return to their bases.

The regiment earned the opportunity to test its mettle in the Battle of the 73rd Easting, the biggest battle of the Gulf War and the biggest tank battle since WWII, said Wagner.

“Our jobs were to ... make contact with the enemy; so we did,” remembered Wagner. “Meanwhile 1st Infantry and 1st Armored Divisions were supposed to come up and relieve us; and 12 hours later they did a relief-in-place with us. They did a forward passage of lines while we were still engaging with the enemy. They did it without any fratricide, and that was impressive.”

By the time reinforcements linked up with the 2nd Armored Cav. Regt., Wagner said that he had shot 100 missions; each mission consisting of loading one to six 155mm artillery rounds onto load trays, sliding the round into the cannon, applying powder and prime and waiting for the section sergeant’s signal to fire.

“So the enemy was retreating, trying to get through us to get back to Iraq,” he recalled. “We were blocking their return route.”

The reconnaissance unit was never supposed to go toe-to-toe with the brigade-sized Iraqi element, but the troops were ready to fight, remembered Wagner.

“We had to disengage after running out of ammunition,” he said.

Operation Desert Storm came to a head for U.S. Forces with four days of fighting after six months of living on tracked vehicles in the middle of the Saudi Desert, he explained.

“The fight will always be with me,” Wagner said. “We were pretty well-prepared and well-trained. We were experts at our weapons systems.”

In the years that followed, Wagner reclassified from a cannon crewmember to a forward observer and eventually reported for duty with the 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, at Fort Carson, Colo.

Master Sgt. Craig Wagner, a forward observer assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, is a veteran of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.



Photo by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO

Throughout his career, he worked in a variety of positions, from leader to trainer, eventually returning to the Raider Brigade, which was part of Task Force XXI, the mission to modernize the Army’s Command and Control systems used on today’s battlefield.

Despite the many changes seen in the U.S. Army during the past two decades, “Soldiering” remains the one consistent force, said Wagner.

“Without getting into the politics of what I think, I knew we would prevail in battle against Saddam’s Army – that wasn’t really much of a worry for me,” Wagner explained. “I knew we had a far superior force and would go in and win; and I also knew the hard part was going to be after.”

Wagner, who will reach his 20-year mark in February 2009 is currently serving his third tour with the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., in support of OIF. He deployed to Tikrit in 2003, Taji in 2006, and currently with the “Raider” Brigade in the Rashid district in southern Baghdad.

For the complete story about Wagner visit www.dvidshub.net.

IVY SOLDIERS DEDICATE LIFE TO COUNTRY

Father and son unite for re-enlistment ceremony at Camp Taji

Story and photos by Sgt. David Hodge
1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B

A Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldier carried the seven Army Values with him everywhere he went, to include his household.

Staff Sgt. Jason Young, a wheeled-vehicle mechanic assigned to Company B, 4th Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B, serves as the moral compass for his Family and role model to two other servicemembers.

A 15-year Army veteran, Young, adopted his wife's three kids after arriving at Fort Hood, Texas, more than nine years ago.

"When I met Susan, I always tried to instill the Army Values in the household," said Young, who hails from Plymouth, Ind.

Balancing the military and his Family was not always easy for the veteran of three deployments and Young confesses that taking care of them was always a joint effort with his wife, Susan.

"It can become stressful trying to balance career and Family," Young explained. "The kids noticed my hard work and dedication, and I always stopped what I was doing for them."

Susan is a school teacher and a member

of the Family Readiness Group program since 2001, said Young.

"Susan is the backbone of the Family," Young admitted. "If there is anything going on while I am away, she handles it."

Young seized an opportunity to fly from his base, Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad, to attend his son's reenlistment ceremony.

Young's son, Cpl. Jason Young, extended his service to his country for another six years during a ceremony Nov. 14 at Camp Taji, north of Baghdad.

"It's really good to have my dad at my reenlistment," said Cpl. Young, a veteran of approximately four-and-a-half years. "It was fun getting to show him where I work."

Cpl. Young, a U.S. Army AH-64 attack helicopter repairer with Co. B, 1st Bn., 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B, said he takes pleasure in the opportunity to continue fixing aircraft.

"I am pretty happy," Cpl. Young stated. "I get to continue with what I want to do – fix Apaches."

Cpl. Young said he enjoys the Army life because it is structured and his camaraderie

between friends is special.

"I've been looking forward to serving in the Army ever since I was a kid, so I hope to make it another 20 years," said Cpl. Young, a native of Temple, Texas.

Cpl. Young appreciates time spent with his dad whether it's at the 4th Inf. Div.'s home in Fort Hood, Texas, or deployed.

"I don't get to hang-out with him very often," the junior Young explained. "Back in the rear, we get weekends off and sometimes I pick up my son and hang out at my parent's house."

Cpl. Young said that he truly believes he is defining a better life for his Family and his son by serving his country.

"My son will be able to take pride and say, 'my dad's a Soldier,'" Cpl. Young said.

Staff Sgt. Young also has a 17-year-old daughter entering the Army as a CH-47 crew member after she graduates high school.

"My girl has always



looked up to me," Staff Sgt. Young explained. "That makes me feel proud."

Young recently signed a waiver form for Jordan to enter before her 18th birthday.

"I think my kids realized everything they needed was provided

to them while they were growing up," Staff Sgt. Young said. "The military is a good living."

The Youngs are currently serving a combat deployment with the 4th Inf. Div., MND-B in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Cpl. Jason Young (right) and his father, Staff Sgt. Jason Young, compete in a friendly video game of football Nov. 15 at Camp Taji north of Baghdad. The Youngs serve with the 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad. The Youngs have approximately 20 years of service between the two of them.



The U.S. Army's highest ranking spiritual leaders visited Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers Nov. 24 at southern Baghdad's Forward Operating Base Falcon to address the needs, concerns and direction the Chaplain Corps faces across the Army.

Maj. Gen. Douglas Carver, U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains, and Sgt. Maj. Tommy Marrero, Chief of Chaplains Regimental Sergeant Major, visited the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division's chaplains and their assistants at the Steel Falcon Memorial Chapel to listen and offer insight concerning the future of the branch.

"It is an honor to visit with deployed Soldiers," explained Carver, a 35-year veteran. "Any chance we get to come to theater to see our chaplains, we take. That's what it is all about."

Carver spoke about counseling techniques for the deployed Soldiers to help cope with the effects of war and encouraged the chaplains and assistants to maintain their spiritual resilience throughout the deployment.

"I'm looking for a chaplain with a pastor's heart," Carver stated. "We appreciate your service, dedication and

sacrifice."

Carver said he considers the service to be one of the most respectable lifestyles and after visiting numerous FOBs around Iraq, assured the Soldiers that the Army's chaplaincy is in good hands.

Marrero also chatted with the Soldiers and stressed the importance of keeping one's faith while deployed.

"If chaplains lose their faith while deployed, the Soldiers are the ones that pay the price," explained Marrero, a former U.S. Army Ranger. "At the same time, Soldiers are helping other Soldiers; they need to take the time and care for themselves in a spiritual and moral way."

Marrero primarily focused his attention on the retention of chaplain's assistants and stated that each Soldier is important to the Army's mission.

"We have maintained the number of chaplain's assistants in the Army without lowering the standard by which we recruit," Marrero stated.

Marrero also explained to the Soldiers that chaplain's assistants have done an outstanding job since the onset of the war, and encouraged the veterans to share their experiences and encounters to as many people as possible.

Spc. Joshua Clare, a chaplain's assistant assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., said he believes Carver's visit was encouraging that he is glad the Chief of Chaplains took the time to visit 1st BCT's spiritual leaders.

Clare, who hails from Saint Maries, Idaho, stated many chaplains and assistants are engrained with the "Soldiers First" ethos.

"We focus on Soldiers first, and it gives us a sense that what we are doing is helping the Soldiers," explained Clare.

Upon completion of the question-and-answer session, Carver urged the chaplains at FOB Falcon to continue to wholeheartedly minister to the Soldiers throughout the remainder of the deployment.

Clare and the Soldiers of the 1st Bn., 66th Armor Regt. "Iron Knights," are currently serving a combat deployment attached to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, in eastern Baghdad in support of MND-B and Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Maj. Gen. Douglas Carver, U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains, fields questions from Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, Nov. 24 at the Steel Falcon Memorial Chapel, Forward Operating Base Falcon in southern Baghdad. Carver, a 35-year Army veteran, discussed the future of the Chaplains Corps with battalion-level chaplains and their assistants. Lt. Col. Jim Carter (right), who hails from Monroeville, Ala., serves as the chaplain for MND-B in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Chief of Chaplains visits Raider Soldiers to discuss future of U.S. Army Chaplain Corps

Story and photos by Sgt. David Hodge, 1st BCT PAO, 4th Inf. Div., MND-B



COMBAT CAMERA: First Sol payday from Iraqi Government



Sons of Iraq members await the opportunity to receive their first paycheck from the Government of Iraq Nov. 10 at the 3rd Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division Headquarters in the Doura community of southern Baghdad. Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad, provided over watch during the pay distribution.

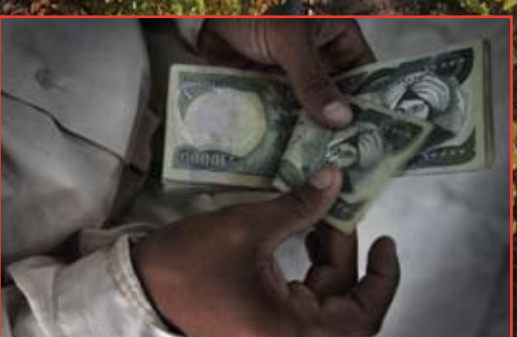


Sons of Iraq members enter the 3rd Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd NP Division headquarters to receive their first paycheck from the Government of Iraq Nov. 10 in the Doura community of southern Baghdad.



Iraqi National Police from the 3rd Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division, distribute money to Sons of Iraq members, which marks the first time, Government of Iraq has assumed responsibility of finances for the Sol program Nov. 10 in the Doura community of southern Baghdad.

U.S. Navy photos by Petty Officer 2nd Class Todd Frantom



A Sons of Iraq member counts money after the first Government of Iraq-sponsored payday, officially marking the transition of responsibility Nov. 10 at the 3rd Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division Headquarters in the Doura community of southern Baghdad.

Sons of Iraq members complete paperwork to receive their first paycheck from the Government of Iraq Nov. 10 at the 3rd Battalion, 7th Brigade, 2nd National Police Division headquarters in the Doura community of southern Baghdad.