



Prior News

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On the Cover.

Spc. Adam Wade, a native of Ridgeway, Va., who is a combat medic, assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment "Golden Dragons," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, watches a child go down a slide in the playground of the newly refurbished Al Gil Al Jadeed Primary School in Mushada, northwest of Baghdad, after a ribbon-cutting ceremony Dec. 29.

(U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti, 2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B)



(left) A newly renovated and rebuild Huda Girls School stands ready for learning. (Above) Approximately 300 girls stand in formation in the courtyard of the Huda Girls School in Tarmiyah, northwest of Baghdad, during the official opening Jan.5. The school was under construction since 2006. A foiled terrorist plan set the back the opening date almost one year.

School opens despite past violence

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti
2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B

Approximately 300 girls in blue jumpers and white head scarves stood in formation on the school's courtyard.

The chill in the morning air rose in puffs as they chatted, happily anticipating the formal opening of their new school.

"Today is a good day," said Sheik Saeed Jassim Hameed al Mashhadani, a tribal sheik in Tarmiyah. "This day marks a beginning of education for these girls."

The Huda Girls' School in Tarmiyah, northwest of Baghdad, officially reopened its doors Jan. 5 in a ceremony, which featured speeches, poems and songs. The school provides education to approximately 950 girls, who attend at various times throughout the day to accommodate the valuable education opportunity.

The school has a long history of learning. Originally built in 1982, the building was used as dormitory but transformed into a school for agriculture in 1995. Since then, it has transformed again into a primary and high schools specializing in the sciences.

"This is really something big for the people. This is a fort of science," said Muhamad Ibrihim Jassim, administrative

supervisor for the Ministry of Education in Tarmiyah about the opening of the school. "This is the largest school in the area."

The school has long been recognized by the Ministry of Education for its excellence in education, but in 2003, that excellence was threatened.

The building was the scene of significant violence, said Dr. Malcom Phelps, a native of Washington, and senior education advisor for the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team attached to the 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

During major combat operations in 2003, the school slowly ceased to function as a fort of science and transitioned into a fort for terror.

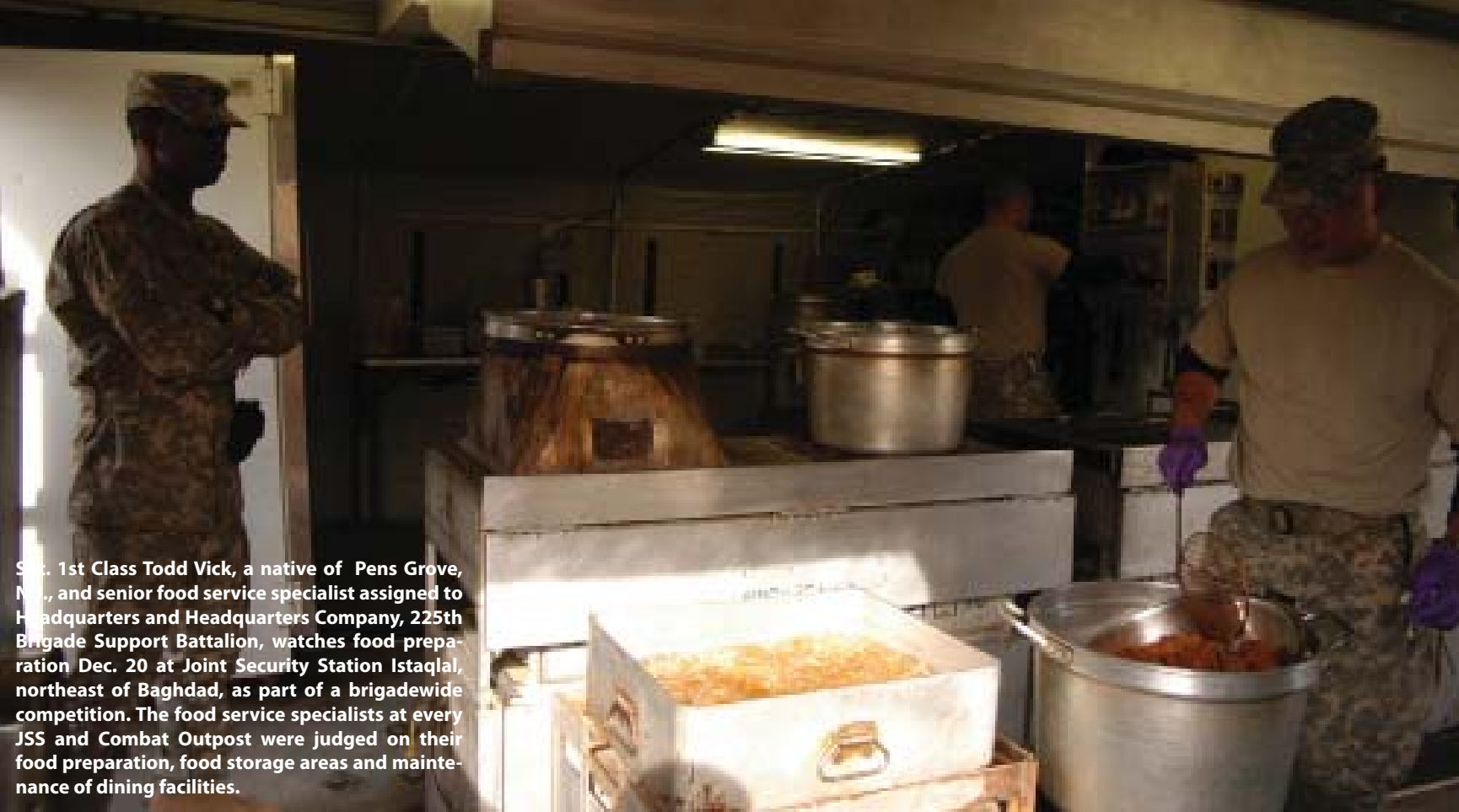
The school, which lies up the road from a Joint Security Station, was the launching point of ambushes, improvised-explosive device attacks and sniper fire against Coalition Forces and the then nascent Iraqi Security Forces.

After a cautious stability was reached in the area in 2006, Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division began projects to rebuild the badly war-damaged school.

During the process, a major terror plan was thwarted. According to a Multi-National Corps – Iraq press release, Soldiers assigned to 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, discovered a command wire leading from the school's outer perimeter to one of the rooms. Inside the room, the cavalry troops discovered five artillery shell explosives. The insurgent's planned attack also included two large explosive-filled propane tanks buried underneath the school's floor and numerous projectiles emplaced underneath electrical conduits in front of each classroom.

"This was a major setback," said 1st Lt. Erik Peterson, a native of Centennial, Colo., who is a civil military officer assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion,

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Sgt. 1st Class Todd Vick, a native of Pens Grove, N.J., and senior food service specialist assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 225th Brigade Support Battalion, watches food preparation Dec. 20 at Joint Security Station Istaqlal, northeast of Baghdad, as part of a brigadewide competition. The food service specialists at every JSS and Combat Outpost were judged on their food preparation, food storage areas and maintenance of dining facilities.



Sgt. James Snow, a food service specialist assigned to HHC, 225th BSB, gives a taste of his special seasoning to Lt. Col. Mark Collins, commander of the 225th BSB, at Joint Security Station Istaqlal, Dec. 20.

Warrior cooks go head to head to prove who's best

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti
2nd SBCT PAO, MND-B

With only what they had stocked in their kitchens, Warrior food service specialists had to prepare a tasty and nutritious meal for a panel of judges.

The judges traveled to every Joint Security Station and Combat Outpost in the 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, area of operations for the two-week competition Dec. 10-23.

“This is a great way to showcase the great work the cooks are doing feeding our Soldiers,” said Lt. Col. Mark Collins, a native of Phoenix, and commander, 225th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd SBCT.

Collins, the head judge, said he got the idea to host the competition from first sergeants within the different Warrior battalions.

“They all tell me the same thing,” he said. “They brag that their cooks are the best, so I suggested this competition to see who really is the best.”

The cooks were not only judged on their skillful food preparation but also the level at which they keep their food preparation, storage areas and dining areas.

“We looked for what they had inside their freezers, cleanliness, how they served food and how they prepare their food for Soldiers,” said Sgt. 1st Class Todd Vick, a native of Pens Grove, N.J., and senior food service specialist assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 225th BSB, 2nd SBCT.

During the two-week competition, Collins said he saw some really great areas and had some really great food – and saw some places that need work.

“The goal in the end is to set up our replacement unit for success by giving them areas that are set up so they can effectively feed their Soldiers,” said Collins.

He commended all of the units for their hard work and said he was pleased to see the cooks take pride in taking care of the Soldier in the brigade.

“It can be a difficult task, cooking out here for all of these Soldiers” said Staff Sgt. Rizalino Corpuz, a native of Wahiawa, Hawaii, a cook assigned to HHC, 225th BSB. Corpuz and his four Soldier prepare daily meals for approximately 400 Soldiers at Joint Security Station Istaqlal, northeast of Baghdad.

“This competition was a way for us to showcase what we can do,” he said.

After two weeks of travel, Corpuz’ team was named the best in the brigade, followed by a team who cooks for Company A, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment “Gimlets,” at JSS Nassir Wa Salam; claiming third place was a team attached to Troop C, 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, at JSS Sheik Amir.

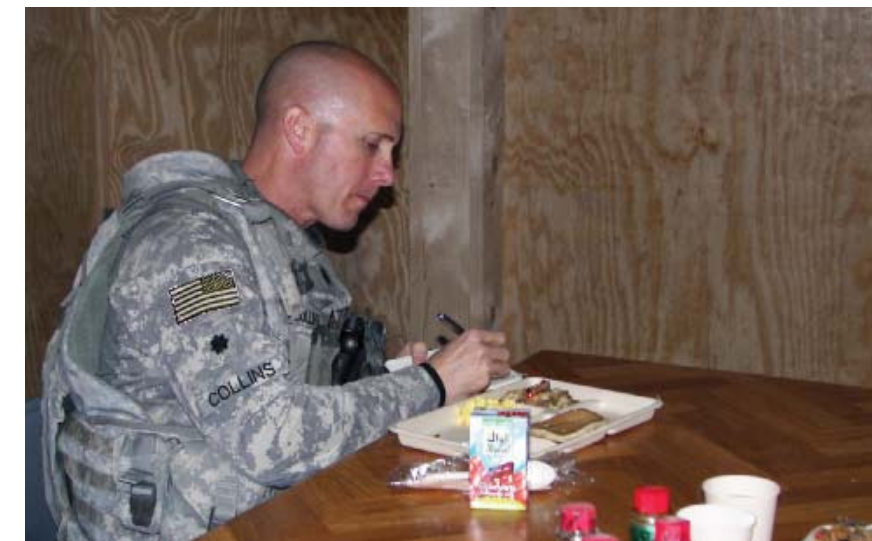
The winners will receive impact awards and a special four-day pass when the brigade redeploys to Hawaii early next year



Staff Sgt. Rizalino Corpuz, a food service specialist assigned to HHC, 225th BSB, drops chicken into a deep fryer Dec. 20 at Joint Security Station Istaqlal.



Collins looks over and talks to two food service specialists at Joint Security Station Istaqlal, Dec. 20 during a brigade-wide food service competition.



Collins takes notes after sampling a meal Dec. 19 at Joint Security Station Sab al Bour, northwest of Baghdad. Collins, accompanied by his fellow judges, traveled to every JSS and Combat Outpost in the Warrior Area of Operations to judge a cooking competition. The food service specialists were judged on their food preparation, food storage areas and maintenance of dining facilities.



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of 2nd Sqdn., 14th Cav. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B)



(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Neil Stanfield, combat camera, attached to 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B)

(Right) A medal is presented by a local leader to a player from the Hammamiat Soccer Club at the Taji Soccer Club Stadium, northwest of Baghdad, after his team won a soccer tournament Dec. 26. Operation Strykehorse Ku’oko’a Peku, a round-robin soccer tournament which pitted four teams from Hammamiat, Al-Rekiya, Taji and Soldiers from 2nd Squadron 14th Cavalry Regiment, “Strykehorse,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, against each other during the tournament, which fostered good will and sportsmanship.

(Above) Sgt. 1st Class James Buchanan, a platoon sergeant assigned to 2nd Sqdn., 14th Cav. Regt., organizes soccer trophies and equipment prior to a soccer tournament at the Taji Soccer Club Stadium, northwest of Baghdad, Dec. 26.

Soccer tournament brings sense of normalcy back to Taji

By Sgt. 1st Class brian Addis

2nd Sqdn. 14th Cav. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B

Soccer players put on a display of footwork and skill during a Taji Qada soccer tournament at the Taji Stadium, northwest of Baghdad, Dec. 26.

The tournament was hosted by local leaders in the area in conjunction with Soldiers from 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment “Strykehorse,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Four teams, consisting of 11 players from Al- Rekiya, Taji, and Hammiat, along with a fourth team from the Strykehorse Squadron, participated in the round-robin tournament.

Staff Sgt. James Pepoon, an avid

soccer player, said he came up with the idea to host a soccer tournament with the residents in the area.

“I asked my platoon leader about the chances of playing with the people here,” said Pepoon, a native of Bristol, R.I., who serves as a cavalry scout with 2nd Sqdn., 14th Cav. Regt. “He first told me that it’d have to be played in body armor, and that didn’t sit too well with me.”

But he went ahead with a plan anyway. Pepoon talked to friends and Family in his hometown and, in the end, more than

1,000 pounds of soccer equipment was donated by local club teams from all over Rhode Island.

The New England Revolution, a Major League Soccer Team, also donated to the cause. Among the items were coach’s clipboards, whistles, soccer balls and jerseys.

The amount of equipment donated through Pepoon’s sheer determination to make an event happen, plus the improved security situation in the Taji Qada, inspired Lt. Col Thomas Mackey, a native of San Bernardino, Calif., Strykehorse’s commander, to support the idea.

“The security conditions in the Taji area are good. The Iraqi Security Forces,

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Soldiers went head-to-head against Iraqi teams

(Continued from page 6)

along with the local government and the people here, are all working together to sustain the good security established in this area,” Mackey said. “The Taji Soccer Club Stadium is a venue that can be well secured, thus mitigating the threats to the event and to our Soldiers playing in the tournament.”

With that, Operation Strykehorse Ku’oko’a Peku, or Strykehorse Free Kick, was set into motion.

On the morning of the event, local leaders and volunteers, with the help of Troop C, 2nd Sqdn. 14th Cav. Regt., prepared the stadium for the game.

Hundreds of spectators filled the seats of the Taji Stadium to witness the historical event.

Among them were several former national players and coaches: most notably was Emmanuel Baba Dano, the “Pele” of Iraq.

Known in Iraq as Amu Baba, he was the Iraqi National Coach during the 1980s and 1990s.

The round-robin format placed each of the four teams against each other in games that consisted of two 25-minute

halves.

The winner from game one faced off against the winner of game two in the championship game, while the defeated teams from each game would face off in the consolation bracket.

Donning the blue uniforms with the New England Revolution logo print across the front, the Strykehorse Squadron met the team from Al-Rekiya.

A hard fought battle between the two teams resulted in a tie forcing a penalty kick shootout in which the Al-Rekiya would claim victory.

Game two also saw Hammamiat win the game with a penalty kick in an overtime shootout against Taji, sending them to the championship against Al-Rekiya.

The championship game, much like the previous games played earlier in the tournament, went to a dramatic double overtime shootout.

With the penalty kicks even at eight going into the tenth and final shot for both teams, Hammamiat scored, sending a shot into the lower right corner of the goal.

With the added pressure of now having to score, a member from the Al-Rekiya



(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Neil Stanfield, combat camera, attached to 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B)

Soldiers assigned to 2nd Sqdn., 14th Cav. Regt., unload donated soccer equipment prior to a soccer tournament at the Taji Soccer Club Stadium, northwest of Baghdad, Dec. 26.

team placed the ball at the eight yard line, measured his steps, and made his approach to the ball.

Needing to make this kick to send it to a third overtime, his shot hit the cross bar, giving the Hammamiat team victory, which sent the crowd into a frenzy.

The victors celebrated near the goal with smiles, handshakes and hugs.

They were then presented their medals by the leaders responsible for assisting in setting up the tournament.

The final award was a team trophy, which the entire team hoisted into the air for all in the stadium to see.

This reconciliation event ended in deeper friendships and a return to normalcy.

“There were teams and fans from both Sunni and Shia areas participating together as Iraqis,” Mackey said. “The benefit of our Soldiers participating in the event was to demonstrate to the population that we are here for them... we are their brothers. Terrorists can never come back and do what they did in Taji last year. Normal life is returning here.”



(U.S. Army photo courtesy of 2nd Sqdn., 14th Cav. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B)

A player from the Taji Soccer Club, scores on a penalty kick during a soccer tournament in Taji, northwest of Baghdad, Dec. 26. Teams from Al-Rekiya, Hammamiat, Taji and Soldiers from 2nd Sqdn., 14th Cav. Regt., participated in a round-robin tournament.

How does the new security agreement affect you?



“Now that the detaining unit’s have to obtain a warrant prior to arresting a detainee, we will now be focusing on gathering specific personnel and not the personnel that are around them. This will cause less detainee apprehension.”

Sgt.Susan E. McGuyer, 225th BSB.

“It’s a big sleep adjustment. The mission will be tougher to do logistical convoys in the dark.”

Pfc. Robert Meadows, 225thBSB.



“With the signing of the Security Agreement, we have begun to develop an effective partnership with our Iraqi counterparts allowing us to effectively target insurgent groups and help the Iraqi’s increase security and stability in the region.”

Capt. Brandon Sargent, 2nd Sqdn. 14th Cav. Regt.

“When we’re out on the roads every day doing route clearance, we will make more of an effort to allow ISF units to work around us and impact local national activity as little as possible”

Spc. Thomas Figger, 66th En. Co.



New Security Agreement takes effect

Story by Master Sgt. Guadalupe Stratman
MND-B PAO

As the Security Agreement takes effect Jan. 1, Multi-National Division – Baghdad’s mission remains the same.

“Our mission continues; we will protect the Iraqi populace,” Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, commanding general, 4th Infantry Division and MND-B. “The significant difference is we will now conduct our missions with our Iraqi Security Force partners in the lead. We’re still here to help them but the weight shifts from our shoulders to the increasingly capable ISF.”

As the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1790 expires, the Security Agreement represents a request by Iraq for U.S forces to remain in Iraq to assist with security and stability only as needed and requested by the Government of Iraq.

“It means we’ll make a few adjustments in how we execute operations but for the most part, it reinforces transitions that are already underway,” said Hammond. “We will conduct all combat operations by, with and through our ISF partners.”

To ease the transition of the Security Agreement, MND-B has worked closely with the Baghdad Operations Center since early November for all combat missions said Brig. Gen. Robin Swan, deputy commanding general, MND-B.

“All of our combat operations are done combined with our Iraqi Security Force partner, which is a flat rule that was initiated in November in advance of the Security Agreement,” said Swan.

Under the provisions of the Security Agreement, all security operations will be 100 percent combined operations between Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces, said Col. Ted Martin, commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Inf. Div.

Additionally, Coalition Forces are only allowed to detain suspects using an investigative warrant, or if they are caught in the act of committing a crime, said Martin, a native of Jacksonville Beach, Fla. The suspect may be detained for no more than 24 hours before being turned over to a competent Iraqi authority, he added. This new requirement has eliminated the need for the facilities.

To mark the event all Joint Security Stations in the Warrior Area of Operations were relinquished to Iraqi Security Forces Control, signifying their new responsibility for securing their country.

Talking Points for Soldiers

This Agreement:

- * Means we will continue to work with the ISF to improve their ability to take the lead
- * Is another step toward ISF taking the major role of defending the nation
- * Means we’ll make a few adjustments in how we execute operations
- * Reinforces transitions that are already underway.

We will

- * Always remain on duty and vigilant. We never relax our posture.
- * Respect Iraqi law and support Iraqi sovereignty.
- * Continue to help our Iraqi partners.
- * Conduct all combat operation utilizing warrants and combined with our ISF partners
- * Operate in accordance with our ROE
- * Coordinate with the ISF
- * Complete our mission with honor and success.



JSS Mushada



JSS Istaqal



JSS Salmiyat



JSS Sab al Bour



(Left) An Iraqi police officer salutes the Iraqi national flag as it is raised on the courtyard of the Huda Girls School in Tarmiyah, northwest of Baghdad, Jan. 5. (Right) Iraqi Army Col. Ala'a, commander of the 36th Brigade, 9th IA Division, hands a backpack to a student at the Huda Girls School in Tarmiyah, northwest of Baghdad, Jan. 5.



Fort of science no longer fort for terror

(Continued on page 3)

14th Infantry Regiment, “Golden Dragons,” 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div. “If they went off, not only would the building have been destroyed, many lives would have been lost.”

More damage was caused to structure by removing the explosives, Peterson said. Engineer crews had to deliberately pull up the floor and take down walls brick by brick to ensure there was no longer a threat built into the structure.

Eventually those individuals involved in the plot were captured or killed by U.S. Forces and ISF.

“Even though this was a setback,” Peterson said, “we had to try again. This is the only secondary school in the city. If it wasn’t rebuilt, there would be no place for these girls to go to school and get a good education.”

Approximately \$300,000 dollars of Iraqi and U.S. funds were spent to rebuild and

refurbish the school, which contains 18 classrooms, science labs, an administration suite and an auditorium.

Now that the school is open, it faces many of the same issues plaguing the entire education system of Iraq.

“We have so many students,” Jassim said, adding that the girls now go to school in shifts to help alleviate the overcrowding. “We need more buildings so we can effectively teach these students.”

Peterson said there are more school projects currently in the works, and he hopes more schools will open soon.

More than just new schools, Jassim said more teachers are also needed, but he is confident in the coming years that will be easily alleviated for the Tarmiyah Qada.

“All of the teachers we

currently have graduated from this school,” he said. “They belong to this area. Some of these girls will do the same thing, and we will continue to prosper like we did before the fighting.”

Jassim said he is sure the area is now safe and the fighting done.

Now that the school is open, it faces **MANY OF THE SAME ISSUES** plaguing the entire education system of Iraq.

“There is nothing more to be scared of,” he said. “These girls can come to school in peace.”

Even though there is peace and stability in the area, a symbol of

violence still looms in the background. Clearly visible from inside the school’s compound is the brightly colored dome of the Ghalani Mosque. This mosque is a known safe haven for terror and frequently broadcasts anti-Coalition Forces and ISF messages.



Two students of the Huda Girls School pose for a picture at the official re opening of the school in Tarmiyah, northwest of Baghdad, Jan. 5.

Jassim said this will not deter his efforts and the efforts of his teachers to ensure the best education possible is available for his students.

“It is our duty to provide the best education possible,” he said. “We have been charged with that duty – and we will prevail.”

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

ePRT leader hopes to make a difference

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti

2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B

Civilians working alongside Soldiers is a relatively new concept for the U.S. Army.

Since the beginning of the War of Terror, civilians work with servicemembers, risk their lives on the battlefield and continue to carve out their niche and prove they are a vital asset to the war effort.

Linda Specht, a native of Carlise, Penn., said she spent much of the last five years bouncing between Afghanistan and Iraq because she said the work is intriguing.

“Conflict really fascinates me,” she said, “and the work that I do has the potential to make a huge difference.”

Specht now works at the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team leader for the 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. She has been in the position for five months and said she is only beginning to appreciate the sacrifice of Soldiers who are deployed for 15 months.

“After five months, I am ready for leave. Going outside the wire daily and working nonstop can really wear on a person. I have such a respect for the Soldiers who do this for 15 months,” she said.

Specht will complete a 12 month stay before going home to Washington D.C.

But while she is here, she hopes to have the greatest impact possible on the area. She also said she realizes that while she cannot win the war, she hopes by influencing small parts of the Iraqi government, her contribution can be long lasting and far reaching.

The ePRT has many different functions. The team is a group of 10 or more individuals who are embedded within a brigade. They specialize in various aspects of governance and essential services. Together with civil affairs, engineers and the other staff sections, they provide a link between the non kinetic goals of the brigades and the kinetic.

“The goal is to work ourselves out of

a job,” Specht said. “Within our areas of expertise, we help the local governments empower themselves and the people.

We want them to begin asking the (Government of Iraq) for help.”

Specht was brought to the Taji area because of her past experience. The Taji Qada, which lies northwest of Baghdad, is mainly a rural farming community which for years didn’t receive much help from the GoI. As years passed

and violence escalated, many of the area’s essential services degraded to a point where thousands of people were left with little to no electricity, no fresh running water and a lack of other basic needs.

Now, with the security situation improved across the Qada, Coalition Forces along with the GoI have rebuilt and improved the quality of life for the people. Essential services, such as water electricity and sewage have aided in the return of many Internally Displaced People to the area.

But this progress would not have happened without the empowerment of the Qada council in the area, said Dr. Tom Simpson, a native of Joplin, Mo, and senior city management advisor, ePRT, 2nd SBCT.

“We are now quiet mentors,” said Simpson. “This transition of us taking a backseat role and allowing the council to make their own decisions is a step in the right direction.”

The ePRT staff no longer sits “shoulder



(U.S. Army photo by Jacob Smith, combat camera)

Linda Specht, a native of Carlise, Penn., and embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team leader with the 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, speaks with Sheik Saed Jassim in Tarmiyah, northwest of Baghdad, Oct. 22.

to shoulder” with the council members, Simpson said. Instead they sit in the back of the room and listen and only give advice when it is asked for. This type of mentorship encourages the council to take a more active role in their futures instead of relying on American intervention.

“People are used to certainty,” he said, “and as we drawn down due to the new Security Agreement, people will have to find that certainty in their own government, and we have to understand that this is their government and we have to let them take charge.”

And this new role of the ePRT allows for that transition to happen.

Simpson accredited this shift in responsibility to Specht and the entire ePRT team. The influence on the Taji Qada council is something Specht hoped to achieve during her time in Iraq.

“We have started a lot of projects, but now it is up to the Qadas to start and finish their own,” Specht said, “and they are more capable than ever to do that.”

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Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, Airmen and civilians from across Multi-National Division – Baghdad take off on the Satellite Honolulu Marathon at Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad Dec. 14.

Runners participate in Honolulu Marathon

Story and photos by Maj. Al Hing
2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B

Approximately 160 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and civilians braved the chilly morning Dec. 14

to run the Satellite Honolulu Marathon in Iraq at Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad. The 26.2-mile course weaved its way through the roads of the camp and at some points proved to challenge the runners’ mental toughness.

Just over three hours, the first finisher crossed the finish line

Maj. Kurt Kinney, a Utica, N.Y., native, and the battalion surgeon for 1st Battalion 21st Infantry Regiment, “Gimlets,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, finished first with a time of 3:04:02. The top female finisher, Spc. Navidad Caldron, a San Jose, Calif. native, who serves with Company A, 404th Aviation Support Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, MND-B crossed the finish line with a time of 3:15:46.

“I’ve run a few other marathons, but this is the first I’ve won and the first here in Iraq,” said Kinney. “I’ve run the Boston Marathon six times, and the Honolulu Marathon twice (in Hawaii), but to be here with our Soldiers and to win is really special.”

Organizer for the Marathon, 1st Lt. Clayton Cole, a native of Gunnison, Colo., and officer assigned to 2nd Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd SBCT is an avid runner, but gave up the opportunity to run to focus on executing the event. “This took a lot of effort with a lot of help, but it’s a great thing for the Soldiers to be able to run and just step away from their normal missions. We wanted to give the Soldiers goals to keep them running.”

Cole said he received support from Hawaii as well.

“With the help of (Hawaii) Governor

(Linda) Lingle and the Honolulu Marathon guys (in Hawaii) we got support that reaches over 8,000 miles,” said Cole.

The help from service members and civilians who volunteered were invaluable, said Cole.

Those individuals set up and manned water and food points to keep runners hydrated and their energy levels high.

One of the runners whose wife is running in Honolulu kept her firmly in his thoughts as he pushed through cramps and the mental challenges.

“Starting around mile 13, I really started to cramp in my legs bad, but I kept going,” said Lt.Col. Mark Collins, a Phoenix, native, and battalion commander for 225th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd SBCT. “At mile 20, the only thing that kept me going was thinking of my wife, and knowing that she would be running today.”



A soldier reaches out for water.



Maj. Kurt Kinney, a Utica, N.Y. native finishes the Satellite Honolulu Marathon in a time of 3:04:02



Volunteers manned the water and food points.

(U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jacob Smith, combat camera)

Hammer Company, Iraqi Police deliver school supplies to al Yasmin School

Story Sgt. Adam Brown

2nd Sqdn. 14th Cav. Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldier partnered with Iraqi Security Forces donate school supplies at al Yasmin School, northwest of Baghdad, Jan. 3.

Hundreds of smiling girls and boys received a special visit when Soldiers of Company B “Hammer,” 52nd Infantry Regiment, attached to 2nd Squadron 14th Cavalry Regiment, “Strykehorse,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, MND-B, and Iraqi Police, showed up at the school bearing gifts.

Hammer Company Soldiers and Policemen from the Hammamiat IP station handed out several hundred boxes of crayons, pens, pencils and reams of paper to anxious children.

At times, the crowd surrounding both the ISF and Hammer Soldiers became a

little overwhelming as they waited to receive the school supplies.

“These drops can get a little hectic,” said Sgt. Jon Martin, a native of Salem, Ore., who is an infantryman assigned to Hammer Co. “But once it is all said and done, it was worth it.”

The school drop met expectations but there was something different about operation; IP officers were in charge. The Security Agreement between Coalition Forces and the Government of Iraq became effective on Jan. 1. Under the provisions of the agreement Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces must work side-by-side.

“The purpose of this



(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles Joseph, 52nd Inf., Regt., 2nd SBCT, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B)

Staff Sgt. Philip Snook, is surrounded by students from al Yasmin School, northwest of Baghdad, Jan. 3.

mission is twofold,” said Staff Sgt. Charles Bentley, a native of Geneva, Ohio, who is a squad leader for Company B. “Delivering the school supplies to students in need while simultaneously giving experience to the ISF as we continue to transition security over to the Government of Iraq.”

For the infantrymen in

Hammer Company, the operation was a welcome relief from their usual days of raids, cache searches and foot patrols.

“Working with the children is always a pleasure, said Staff Sgt. Philip Snook, a native of Eldersburg, Md., who is an infantry team leader for Company B. “These operations are simple but also integral to our goals and to Iraq’s future.”



Wolfhounds provide peace of mind, security

Staff Sgt. Ilalio Saufoi, of Pago Pago, Samoa, maintains security while members of the U.S Department of State’s embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team evaluate the progress being made at a Hussaniyah marketplace Jan. 3. Saufoi is an infantry squad leader with Company A, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment “Wolfhounds,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team “Warrior,” 25th Infantry Division, currently attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.



(U.S. Army Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti, 2nd SBCT PAO, 25th Inf. Div., MND-B)

Bringing in the New Year

(Above) Sgt. Joseph Ray, a native of Rock Hill, S.C., sings with the band Dead Reckoning during their New Year’s performance at the Sgt. John M. Schoolcraft pavilion on Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad Dec.30. Dead Reckoning, along with two other bands provided entertainment before a New York-style ball drop to ring in 2009. Ray is assigned to 556th Signal Company, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, “Warrior,” 25th infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. (Right) Soldiers, Airman, Sailors, Marines and civilians gather around a lighted ball after it dropped to signal the beginning of 2009 at Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad Jan. 1. Before the New York-style ball drop, three bands provided entertainment along with a DJ and a comedian.



Warrior in Focus

Artillery Soldier strives for perfection

Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Serving his second tour of duty in Iraq, Pelon, a native of Monistaique, Mich., was given the distinction of supervising the first air assault mission of an M777A2 howitzer in combat operations in Iraq at Camp Taji, northwest of Baghdad, Dec. 23.

He meticulously checked and rechecked every square inch of his M777A2 howitzer; not a single piece of tape or strand of string escaped his

watchful eyes.

“I’m the first line check on all the rigging for air assault missions,” said Pelon. It is a responsibility he said he doesn’t take lightly.

The Soldiers of Bat. C, stayed laser focused as they executed their elevator training with elements from 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, MND-B.

This training was another first, in the history of the first Army unit to field the M777A2 howitzer.



Sgt. Dustin Pelon. Pelon is the gunner for 2nd Platoon, Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Regiment, “On Time,” 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, “Warrior,” 25th Infantry

FIGHT TO THE FINISH

DISCIPLINE EMPOWERMENT
INITIATIVE HONOR

STRYKER WARRIORS
MAINTAIN
HONOR.

