



Lightning Weekly

PAGE 1

MAY 11, 2009

JOINT BRIEFING CONDUCTED TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF NINEWA



Gen. Raymond Odierno, commanding general, Multi-National Force-Iraq, talks to Col. Gary Volesky, commander, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division (*far left*); Brig. Gen. Robert Brown, deputy commanding general (Support), Multi-National Division-North (*left*); Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby, commanding general, Multi-National Corps-Iraq (*right*); and Maj. Gen. Robert Caslen Jr., commanding general, Multi-National Division-North (*far right*), following a joint assessment briefing May 2. The briefing was held on Forward Operating Base Diamondback, Iraq, to discuss operations in Ninewa Province.

STORY and PHOTO BY
Spc. Daniel Nelson
145th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE
DIAMONDBACK, MOSUL, Iraq – Maj. Gen. Hassan Karim, commander of the Ninewa Operations Command, hosted a joint assessment briefing May 2, to discuss current operations in Ninewa Province and the June 30 deadline for combat forces to be out of Iraq's cities.

Gen. Raymond Odierno, commanding general, Multi-National Force – Iraq, participated in the briefing at Forward Operating Base Diamondback in Mosul.

Other Iraqi political and military leaders who attended the briefing included Minister of Defense Abd Al-Qadir; Deputy Minister of Interior Maj. Gen. Ayden Kahled Qadir; Ninewa Provincial Governor Atheel al Najafi; Maj. Gen. Abdullah Abdul-Karim, 2nd Iraqi

Army Division commander; Maj. Gen. Hussein Jasim Muhammad Al Awadi, 3rd Iraqi National Police commander; and Maj.

Gen. Khalid Abdul Sattar, Ninewa's provincial director of police.

Also attending were Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby, commanding general, Multi-National Corps – Iraq; Maj. Gen. Robert Caslen Jr., commanding general, Multi-National Division – North; Brig. Gen. Robert Brown, deputy commanding general (Support), Multi-National Division – North; Col. Gary Volesky, commander, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, and Mr. Alex Laskaris, Provincial Reconstruction Team leader for Ninewa Province.

During the meeting, the minister of defense expressed the need to defeat the terrorist networks. He included the importance of having Hassan and the NOC support requests from Najafi.

In addition, he stated he would have an

assessment made by an administrative team from the ministry of defense to determine if additional forces are needed in Mosul.

Najafi commented on how government economic improvement can help provide security.

Reminding everyone of the security agreement, Odierno stated for Coalition forces to remain inside cities beyond June 30, the Iraqi Government would have to make a formal request.

"It's a political decision, not a military one," said Odierno, adding that if ordered to leave the cities, the Coalition forces and Iraqi Security Forces would need to build a closer partnership to continue training and reconstruction projects.

The minister of defense concluded the briefing by making a commitment to emplace a Ministry of Interior cell to focus on extortion and the illegal financing of terrorist cells.

Knowing Is Half the Battle



Iraqi children high five a U.S. Soldier, after a ceremony held Monday, April 27, at their school. The ceremony's purpose was to thank coalition forces for renovating their school.

STORY and PHOTO BY

Pfc. Jared Sollars

145th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE Q-WEST, QAYYARAH, Iraq

– In the small town Isfaya is a school overflowing with young students ready and willing to learn. Just a few weeks ago these students were crammed into classes with as many as 60 in one room. Now with the help of Civil Affairs Team 14 with B Co., 448th Civil Affairs Bn. they have three more newly renovated classrooms.

Team 14 also brought educational supply care packages for each student. Each package had pens, colors, notebooks and various other tools for them to use during their daily educational lives. These packages were brought to help signify the opening of the new areas of the school.

These new classrooms will assist the students and faculty greatly. They will now be able to have fewer students in each classroom, which will in turn allow teachers to get a closer look at each student and find how best to reach them so they will be able

to learn more efficiently.

"This school was targeted because there were too many students and not enough classrooms," said Staff Sgt. Dennis Wiechmann, a member of Team 14, "the school plays the major educational role for children in this very rural area."

The school that has approximately 320 students will be able to divide the students into even smaller groups to aide their learning experience.

The two new restrooms, refrigerated drink station and water storage system that were also installed during the renovation will give the students and faculty a better quality of life and help improve their overall health as well.

This project employed 20 locals and it also included spackling and painting the entire school with the only exception being the headmaster's office at his request.

"I would like to thank the coalition forces for their assistance with our school and valuing the education of our children," said Yihya Mohammad Sultan, the headmaster of the school.

Arafa District Council Hears From Their People

STORY BY

Pfc. Justin Naylor

2nd HBCT, 1st CAV Public Affairs Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq

– Like any place else, residents of Arafa district in Kirkuk city, Iraq, rely on their city council representatives to get projects accomplished in their district.

The chance to speak to district representatives, district police and members from public works sections such as water and electricity came May 7, at the Arafa District Police Station.

"It used to be very infrequent for members of the city council to hear from the people of the city," explained Capt. Stephen Clark, the information operations officer for 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. "We helped come up with an idea to bring the citizens into IP headquarters, invite political leaders, and bring everyone together so that the citizens could talk to the people directly responsible for fixing their issues."

"This is the beginning steps in getting representatives out there helping their city," said Clark.

For 3rd Bn., 82nd FA Regt. and the IP, this is the second round of these meetings in Arafa District.

"We are going to work on getting projects going faster that will improve the city's water and education," said Brig. Gen. Borhan, the Kirkuk inner-city police chief. "We are working very hard to make this city as great as it once was."

Borhan also explained who the residents need to talk to when they need help in the future.

"The district council members are your representatives," he explained. "They are there to address your concerns. Give them a chance, and bring your problems to them."

"The council was built to serve the community of Kirkuk," said Khalel al-Assi, a district council representative. "These kind of meetings are an opportunity for you [the people of Kirkuk city] to bring your issues to our attention. We are here and ready to listen to you."

COMMANDING GENERAL: Maj. Gen. Robert L. Caslen, Jr.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER: Lt. Col. David P. Doherty

PUBLIC AFFAIRS NCOIC: Master Sgt. Michael Wetzel

LAYOUT, DESIGN AND EDITING: Maj. Patrick J. O. Husted

Contact the *Lightning Weekly* at SVOIP: 770-0314 or email at patrick.husted@25id.army.mil.

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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas;

Spc. Daniel Nelson; Pfc. Jared Sollars; Pfc. Justin Naylor



15TH BRIGADE SUPPORT BATTALION SOLDIERS KEEP THE WHEELS ROLLIN'



Spc. Jason Taylor, a San Antonio, Texas, native and a wheeled vehicle mechanic for Company B, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, removes the tire of a trailer at 15th BSB's maintenance bay on Forward Operating Base Warrior, Kirkuk, Iraq, May 1.

STORY and PHOTOS BY
Pfc. Justin Naylor
2nd HBCT, 1st CAV Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq – The day before a platoon of Soldiers are slated to go on a mission into Kirkuk city, they find out the fire suppression system in their mine resistant ambush protected vehicle is not working. Without it, a fire could rage uncontrolled through the entire vehicle. Their leadership is relying on this platoon to go on the mission.

That is where the Soldiers of the maintenance section of Company B, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry, come in.

"We can fix anything with wheels on it," said Spc. Tony Archer, a Porterville, Calif., native and a wheeled vehicle mechanic with Co. B.

The mechanics have to check over all the vehicles before they get dispatched each week, explained Archer.

Considering how many vehicles there are, this is no small task.

"We change out everything from engines to axles," said Archer. "Anything that's

broke, we fix it."

There are a lot of big vehicles and big missions that come into the maintenance bay for these mechanics.

"I participated in changing an engine for a palletized load system," explained Archer referring to 27.5 ton vehicle that is used to carry combat configured loads of ammunition, all classes of supply, shelters and containers. "It only took about a week."

"The majority of our maintenance is on bigger vehicles," said Spc. Jason Taylor, a San Antonio, Texas, native, also a mechanic with Co. B.

15th BSB relies on their big vehicles to be up in running; without them, there are no missions "outside the wire."

"Knowing that our troops - the ones we see and live with - are able to take these vehicles out on missions is a big reward," said Archer. "I am supporting my family and friends. I want to make them as safe as possible."

For Soldiers who routinely venture beyond Forward Operating Base Warrior, knowing they can depend on the mechanics to keep their vehicles in good condition is critical.

"We wouldn't have trucks up and running without them," said Pfc. Steven Violette, a Park Forest, Ill., native and a truck driver for Company B. "They are putting their all in to ensure that we don't get stuck out there."

"It is great knowing that these trucks go out on a mission, and I made them work and made their missions possible," explained Taylor.

Each Soldier has his own reason for choosing this job.

"I've always liked doing mechanical work," explained Archer. "This has helped me work on my own vehicles. It has taught me to troubleshoot and be more clear-minded when I am presented with a problem."

"It's awesome to take things apart and put them back together," said Taylor. "I would recommend this job to anyone interested in vehicles."

With hot weather fast approaching, being under a big metal vehicle is not where most people would want to be, but the mission of the maintenance Soldiers won't stop.

"I wouldn't want to do anything else in the Army," said Taylor.

All in a Day's Work: Soldiers Make the Rounds



Sgt. 1st Class Miguel Casarez [center left], San Antonio, Texas native, and a platoon sergeant in 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, meets with Naji Mohammed Ahmed, the Kurdish mukhtar, or village leader, who invited the men in to his home for tea and discussion.

STORY and PHOTO BY
Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas
2nd HBCT, 1st CAV Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq – Soldiers gather near their mine-resistant armor-protected vehicles in the early morning to receive a pre-mission briefing, which includes threat assessments, rules of engagement, what to do if encountering an improvised explosive device, procedures for medical evacuation and what actions to take during a vehicle rollover.

These briefings are routine to a Soldier serving in Iraq, but they are necessary for every mission and are exactly how Troopers from 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, begin their morning at Forward Operating Base Warrior, Kirkuk, Iraq.

Sgt. 1st Class Miguel Casarez, platoon sergeant for 2nd platoon, C Troop, 4th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt., and his platoon started out with a short drive to Arab Kuy village in Daquq district, Iraq, the purpose of which was to make contact during a key leader engagement with the village mukhtar, or leader.

"The key leader meeting is to access the economic and security situation in the village," Casarez said.

The Soldiers poured out of the MRAPs upon

around the parked vehicles. As they later moved down an unpaved, dusty road, stray dogs and geese lazily and suspiciously regarded the Soldiers. Casarez and his men found, with the assistance of a translator and a group of children playing nearby, the mukhtar's residence on the road near the town's mosque.

Casarez met Naji Mohammed Ahmed, the Kurdish mukhtar, who warmly invited the men into his home.

"I would like a better understanding of the village and how it works and to know how you feel about coalition forces," Casarez said to Ahmed.

"We are grateful. American forces did a great thing in Iraq," Ahmed replied.

The two men discussed issues ranging from ethnic tensions between Arabs and Kurds, essential services like medical care, economic conditions, waste management, and how residents of the village handle security threats.

One topic of lengthy discussion was that of micro grants; up to 2,500 dollars to assist in economic development, in this case focusing on agricultural ventures.

The meeting ended with exchanged pleasantries and Staff Sgt. David Earls, a squad leader in 2nd platoon handed out a pamphlet with a detailed list of emergency contact numbers for the residents of Arab Kuy should they need to call.

arriving and immediately pulled security

"I am glad that you are here, coming far from home to Iraq, leaving your families, to help us," Ahmed said. "Whatever we can do to help, let us know."

Following the meeting the troopers of 2nd platoon crossed the road to the nearby elementary school to meet with school administrators.

"I wanted to see how the school was doing and if they had what they needed to teach the children," Casarez explained.

Casarez was met by several school administrators and was welcomed into the office of Salah Wahiz Hassad, one of the teachers.

Hassad informed Casarez the school needed writing utensils, but that the school was adequately equipped with computers, televisions, and books.

Hassad also stated that the school had been burned down in 2008 and that an administrator had been once threatened by insurgents, but that security at the school had never been better.

Asked by Casarez how the children of different ethnic origins interacted, Hassad replied, "The children get along and have a good relationship."

The only requests the school administrators made was to assist in repairing several classroom doors and – if possible – to help increase the height of the wall surrounding the school.

After a brief tour of the classrooms, each filled with cheerful children diligently working at their studies, the platoon continued on with their agenda.

The final stop was to the Iraqi police station in Daquq to visit with Lt. Abbas, the chief of the police station.

Casarez discussed with Abbas a recent arrest in a nearby village. The two men also discussed, among other things, family and security concerns in the town.

After a hearty lunch of red lentil soup, kebabs, and chai, the customary tea, the platoon returned to their waiting MRAPs to move back to the FOB.

After returning to FOB Warrior, Casarez collected his notes to prepare his end-of-mission report.

"I hope to make recommendations to the command's assessment in regards to what we've heard today," Casarez said.

Assessment visits like this one allow U.S. forces operating in an area to determine resource allocation to improve quality of life and reduce an area's vulnerability to insurgents, according to Casarez. It's all in a day's work.

This Week In TROPIC LIGHTNING History

TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS

MAY 12, 1966 – CHU CHI, VIETNAM – Second Brigade soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Warriors climaxed a week-long series of contacts with the enemy in a fierce two-hour fight.

The infantrymen, supported by gunships, artillery and Air Force Tactical jet fighters killed 49 enemy and took no prisoners.

The Fire Brigade Warriors under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John C. Manh, began a week of on-again, off-again contact with North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong forces on March 28; in joint operations with 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry, and 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry, soldiers.

Delta Company killed six enemy during a sweep through heavy hedgerow complexes, in a pincer-like movement which brought the Fire Brigade's Alpha Company soldiers into close co-ordination with the Delta Devils. As the Alpha Company men moved into the Delta Company location they encountered and killed 16 NVA regulars in scattered actions.

The following day the Warriors killed two enemy soldiers and uncovered 6,000 pounds of polished rice.

The Delta Devils again scored, killing two VC during an enemy probe on their night location. Simultaneously, Alpha Company

soldiers killed another pair of insurgents during an ambush patrol.

On Tuesday, Delta Company, while manning a holding position, spotted an armed enemy soldier running from a treeline waving a Chieu Hoi safe conduct pass. Company Commander Captain Paul F. Allen of Orlando, Fla. advanced to meet the defecting Viet Cong.

As he and his interpreter began to talk to the former enemy, the woodline erupted with small arms fire, killing the communist defector and wounding Allen.

Later the same day the Delta Company soldiers made their way into a night location. Despite being mortared twice, they dug in for the long night of waiting.

As the Tropic Lightning soldiers spent the night in the small perimeter in bunkers dug along the rice paddies' dikes, movement was spotted by a listening post. At first, 60 enemy soldiers were spotted moving toward the company-sized location. As the company executive officer, First Lieutenant Toy M. Smith of String, Tex. acting as company commander, received the reports, he called in support firepower on the advancing enemy.

While artillery rounds exploded in the woodline, more enemy soldiers poured out. Soon the insurgents were trapped between artillery to the rear and heavy Tropic

Lightning firepower to their front.

As the enemy assaulted the perimeter, "They hit us with everything." Said Staff Sergeant Larry Pool of Norwalk, Ohio, acting second platoon leader.



HELMET HANG-UP – The prime responsibility of a combat radio-telephone operator is to constantly keep his headset dry and monitored. Specialist 4 Thomas Roeske of Lansing, Mich., accomplishes this by fastening his headset along with other precious items high and dry with his elastic helmet band.

Tropic Lightning!

TROPIC LIGHTNING NEWS

MAY 11, 1970 – CHU CHI, VIETNAM – For the troops of 3rd Brigade's 2nd Battalion (Mech.), 22nd Infantry, operations often mean the lonely vigil of a night laager and the exhausting effort of fast-moving actions against the enemy.

But the efforts have paid off. With line companies searching and destroying enemy tunnels, bunkers and fighting positions and armored personnel carriers serving as blocking forces, the enemy has been caught in a deadly pincher.

The operations have denied the enemy opportunities to obtain and maintain arms, munitions, food and clothing necessary for successful battle against U.S. forces.



HEADING FOR HOME BASE – Members of 2nd Battalion (Mech.), 22nd Infantry, head back to Cu Chi after search and clear operations near there



BLOCKING FORCE – Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion (Mech.), 22nd Infantry search an area surrounding Phu Hoa Dong village during a recent combined forces operation.

Tropic Lightning!

NEWS FROM THE HOME FRONT

HAWAII

HONOLULU – Internet sex predator Matthew Cargill was sentenced today to a year in jail and five years of probation after pleading guilty to sexually assaulting a 15-year-old girl he met through the victim's MySpace page.

Cargill, 32, was originally charged with two counts of first-degree sex assault, five counts of third-degree sex assault and electronic enticement of a minor.

In a plea agreement, prosecutors reduced the first-degree charges to second-degree offenses and Cargill then pleaded guilty to all the charges.

Last year, the Legislature changed the law on the electronic enticement charge, making it punishable by a mandatory 10-year prison term. But Cargill was sentenced under the old law, allowing him to seek the probation and jail sentence.

Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Thalia Murphy asked Judge Karen Ahn to sentence Cargill to 10 years in prison, calling him a sex predator "who appears to have a preference for teenage girls."

Murphy said Cargill has previously been convicted of open lewdness and stalking charges.

Defense lawyer Myles Breiner said the jail and probation sentence was appropriate under the plea agreement reached with prosecutors and will allow Cargill to seek immediate sex offender treatment.

Cargill posed as a 16-year-old boy when he contacted the victim through the Internet. He arranged to meet her outside her home in March 2006 and sexually assaulted her in his truck, according to court files.

The girl told police she thought Cargill was in his 20s but he was 30 years old at the time of the offenses.

Murphy said Cargill's crimes had "a devastating effect" on the victim and her family.

ALASKA

FAIRBANKS – A Fairbanks man was sentenced to one year in prison Monday for twice stealing snowmachines from a neighborhood near Creamer's Field.

Under an agreement with prosecutors, Ralph Luke-Holmberg, 22, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor count of vehicle theft. He was originally charged with a felony count of vehicle theft.

Fairbanks police arrested Luke-Holmberg in February after finding him with a stolen snowmachine at the intersection of Kathryn Avenue and Bunnell Street.

Three months earlier he was convicted of stealing a snowmachine from the nearby 1000 block of O'Connor Road and going on a joyride through Creamer's Field with another man. The ride damaged a fence and the snowmachine.

In that case, which counts as a felony on his record after his second conviction, he was sentenced to a year of suspended time.

Luke-Holmberg, who will be on probation for 18 months after his release, was ordered to pay restitution for the damage.

He did not speak at Monday's sentencing hearing.

TEXAS

BELTON – Bell County commissioners moved forward with their state-mandated drug court program Monday morning, in order to prevent jeopardizing the county's adult probation funds.

The court approved a resolution establishing the program for fiscal year 2009, and designated County Judge Jon Burrows as the authorized official for grants from the Criminal Justice Division of the governor's office.

A mandate came out of the last legislative session, requiring counties with a population of more than 200,000 to create a drug court.

Bell County received \$100,000 for the program, but Burrows said this will not cover all the expenses incurred, for which they originally requested \$240,000.

The county applied for \$261,000 in state grants for the next fiscal year.

If the county does not implement a drug court, the state would withdraw funding from adult probation programs.

Burrows said the risk of not having state funds for those services is enough incentive to implement the drug court, even though he and other officials said a drug court was not needed in Bell County.

"Our judges were already doing the same thing a drug court would do," Burrows said in an interview last month. "This is another unfunded mandate on us for a program we didn't ask for, and our judges said we don't need."

Burrows said he contacted the governor's office on criminal justice, which told him the funding mechanism in the statute failed to generate enough funds for all Texas counties.

Todd Jermstad, interim director for Bell County's judicial district Community Supervision and Corrections Department, created Bell County's drug court plan with Judge Rick Morris of the 169th District Court.

"There are still grants that can be disbursed, that free up funding for this year through August," Jermstad said. "The biggest need is for outpatient treatment, but the state did not provide enough money for that."

Drug court will begin as soon as the county receives grants for it.

Nonviolent drug offenders, or those who committed crimes under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances, will be screened initially, then evaluated to

determine the severity of their condition.

Those with severe addictions will be admitted to treatment facilities. Less severe cases will be geared toward drug education.

The program's goal is to keep drug offenders out of the criminal justice system, and administer adequate treatment for addictions, Jermstad said. It is geared toward people who have failed other substance abuse programs.

"The commissioner's court is trying to hang tough on this," Jermstad said. "Hopefully we get the grant next year or we're in trouble."

NEW YORK

WATERTOWN – The largest employer in Jefferson County is teaming with the city of Watertown to host what could possibly be one of the largest parties held in the past 25 years.

More than 70 fire departments, school bands, businesses, community organizations and Fort-Drum-related agencies are participating in the May 16 Armed Forces Day Parade.

"Floats, there are going to be a lot of floats this year," said Kathleen B. Mastellon, a member of the parade's organizing committee.

Officials from Fort Drum and the city are utilizing the parade as a venue to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the 10th Mountain Division being housed at Fort Drum along with the recent revitalization of downtown Watertown.

"This is probably the largest number of participants the parade has had in the last three years," City Planner Christine E. Hoffman said.

Dr. Robert J. Kasulke, a prominent Watertown vascular surgeon, has been named the parade's grand marshal.

The city has extended the parade route this year. Participants still will start at the high school and march north on Washington Street, but they will continue through Public Square and disband in a parking lot on Court Street.

The judges' stand still will be set up at the Dulles State Office Building.

That morning, the city will close Public Square to traffic. Vendors, artists and classic cars will line downtown from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"It's going to be a big block party in the square," Mrs. Hoffman said.

Following the parade, the city will hold a dedication ceremony for the recently erected fountain.

***Tropic
Lightning!***

LIGHTNING HERO OF THE WEEK

PV2 Kirk P. Rosenbalm
HHB, "Steel Dragons", 2-82 FA,
3 HBCT, 1st Cavalry Division
Tyler, Texas

On 21 April, while conducting a dismounted patrol in the Al Shorta neighborhood the "Steel Dragons" were attacked by an RKG-3 grenade. The grenade detonated against an MRAP causing damage to the vehicle and severely wounding the gunner, who sustained a gaping wound to his pelvic area and had extreme uncontrolled bleeding. PV2 Rosenbalm immediately rushed to the aid of the wounded Soldier and began lifesaving care, packing the wound with multiple combat gauzes in order to stop the bleeding. During the ground evacuation to the FOB Diamondback Combat Surgical Hospital PV2 Rosenbalm continued to treat the injured Soldier and prevented more loss of blood. The Soldier was stabilized at the CS and surgeons there credit PV2 Rosenbalm's actions with saving his life.



IRAQI FACTS

Under the reign of Saddam Hussein, women were afforded many rights and freedoms that many other countries in the region did not offer because of their adherence to Islamic law. Under Saddam's secular Ba'ath regime, women could vote, serve in the police, and serve in the People's Assembly.

Although women with medical degrees were allowed to serve in Iraq's armed forces, they were kept out of most military roles until the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War. After the eight year war was initiated, women were allowed to enter into other military positions normally held only by males. Women's education was also a high priority in Iraq. From 1970 to 1980, female attendance in primary schools rose from 34 percent to 95 percent. However, despite these rights, women were often treated poorly by Saddam's regime.

According to some reports, Iraqi police often raped female detainees. In the later days of Saddam's reign, security agencies became more lax and rarely went after people accused of "honor killings."

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CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



Of all the attitudes we can acquire, surely the attitude of gratitude is the most important and by far the most life-changing.

- Zig Ziglar



Zimbabwe Police Arrest Two Editors

HARARE, Zimbabwe – Police in Zimbabwe on Monday arrested two editors of an independent weekly newspaper and charged them with publishing articles that could hurt the credibility of law-enforcement agencies.

Vincent Kahiya, editor of the Zimbabwe Independent newspaper, and Constantine Chimakure, its news editor, were arrested over an article that named police and security agents allegedly involved in the abduction of rights activists from Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change party last year, according to the paper's lawyer, Innocent Chagonda.

"They have been detained and are most likely to appear in court on Tuesday," said Wayne Bvudzijena, Zimbabwe's police spokesman.

The arrests come as Western governments and donors say they will not pour in money to breathe life into Zimbabwe's battered economy recover unless political reforms, such as a free press, are implemented.

President Robert Mugabe's government has arrested a number of foreign and local journalists and closed many privately owned newspapers and radio stations.

The group Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights issued a statement Monday, saying it was outraged by the arrests.

"The arrest and detention of the journalists is, in the considered view of ZLHR, unjustifiable and unsustainable. The article on which the charges appear to be based merely reported on information contained in indictment papers, which had been placed before the court by the office of the attorney general and which are now a matter of public record. It beggars belief that they are now being prosecuted for allegedly publishing falsehoods," the lawyers group said.

The arrests come on the heels of the All-Stakeholders' Media Summit organized by the government -- and boycotted by journalists protesting the re-jailing of a freelance journalist, Andriison Manyere, who faces charges of toppling Mugabe. Participants at the summit agreed that repressive laws in Zimbabwe should be repealed.

SPORTING NEWS

Vikings Still Assessing Favre Situation

MARSHALL, Minn. - The Minnesota Vikings have spoken: Yes, they're interested in Brett Favre.

The Vikings broke their silence Monday, with president Mark Wilf saying the team is considering the supposedly retired star.

"He's a Hall of Fame quarterback. He's a great competitor," Wilf said. "Ultimately, you'll have to ask Brett what his plans are, but sure there's interest in Brett Favre. But again, it's part of a process we have in general with any of our players. We're always looking to make our team better."

Several conflicting and contradictory media reports swirled last week around the possibility of Favre, who retired for the second time at the end of last season, returning to play for the Vikings.

Neither Favre nor the Vikings commented last week, which only added more confusion to the situation.

Favre was released by the New York Jets on April 28 and issued a statement that said, "At this time, I am retired and have no intention of returning to football."

He hasn't been heard from since.

"That type of decision is up to Brett Favre, and I'll leave it to Brett Favre to give you that answer," Wilf said.

His agent, Bus Cook, has said that Favre remains retired to his knowledge. Cook did not immediately return a phone message from The Associated Press on Monday.

Wilf, who along with brother Zygi purchased the team in 2005, spoke about Favre during a previously scheduled community visit. It was the first question asked by a fan during a panel discussion between Wilf and linebackers Chad Greenway and Ben Leber as part of a "You Made the Team" luncheon with the Marshall Chamber of Commerce.

After Greenway gave a politically correct answer, Wilf jumped in to defend the current stable of quarterbacks – incumbent Tarvaris Jackson, newcomer Sage Rosenfels and third-stringer John David Booty.

"With Sage and Tarvaris and John David, we're pleased with the quarterbacks we have," Wilf said. "Let's not let that get forgotten here. And we just feel as a whole as a roster, we're trying to improve every day. We feel we've made a lot of steps to improve off an NFC North division win and we're ready to take the next step and to go all the way."

It's a little bit of deja vu for the Vikings.

Last year, Favre renounced his retirement from the Packers and, after being told Green Bay was going with Aaron Rodgers at quarterback, it was believed that Favre wanted to play for the NFC North rival Vikings.

After a messy divorce with Green Bay, Favre was shipped to the Jets, where he threw 22 touchdown passes and 22 interceptions for a team that finished 1-4 to miss the playoffs.

The Vikings won the division without him, but have been unsettled at the sport's most important position for the past three-plus years. Quarterback continues to be viewed as one of the team's few weak spots on an otherwise talent-laden roster.

"Last year it didn't become a distraction and we kind of went through the same thing during training camp, which is right at the peak time," Greenway said. "For us, it's like we battled through that, were NFC North champs from last year and it obviously didn't affect us. We got off to a relatively good start so I don't think that had any type of effect."

But with Favre, retirement has become an annual ordeal. He was released by the Jets on April 28 and now is free to sign with the Vikings if he is healthy enough and still has the desire to play.

"He's retired a couple of times so you wonder where his loyalties lie," Greenway said. "For us, we're moving forward with what we've got here. We have a team that can obviously win at a high level and we have a team that, moving forward, we think can really compete for an NFC North title again and get to the championship game and hopefully further."

"As good as something may sound, we have a great team to play with right now and there is no sense in looking outside of what we have within our 53 man roster."



TASK FORCE LIGHTNING – THROUGH THE LENS



Sgt. Jerry Agony of Co. A, Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, explains the fundamentals of basic rifle marksmanship to a Sons of Iraq member, April 19. Soldiers from Co. A coached and competed in a shooting tournament with Sol and members of the Iraqi army and Iraqi police to help strengthen relationships which will last long after coalition forces leave the country in 2011.



Mr. Alex Laskaris of the Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team and Maj. Gen. Robert Caslen, Jr., commanding general, 25th Infantry Division, unveil a stone marker during a dedication ceremony on a hilltop overlooking the site of the Battle of Gaugumela, during a joint staff ride, 10 May.



Newly promoted SGT Stephano Porter, 84th Engineers, takes a minute to say a few words immediately following his promotion at CP-North HQ on FOB Marez, Mosul, Iraq, 8 May. SGT Porter is a member of the CP-North mounted PSD.



A Soldier from the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division pulls security outside of the Christian monastery in Al Kosh, Iraq, 8 May.

HEROES OF THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION



- Sgt. Charles C. Fleek
- Co. C, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division
- Born: 28 August 1947, Petersburg, KY
- Died: 27 May 1969, Binh Duong Province, Vietnam
- Entered Service: Cincinnati, OH, 1968
- Place of Action: Binh Duong Province, Vietnam
- Date of Action: 27 May 1969



Charles C. Fleek

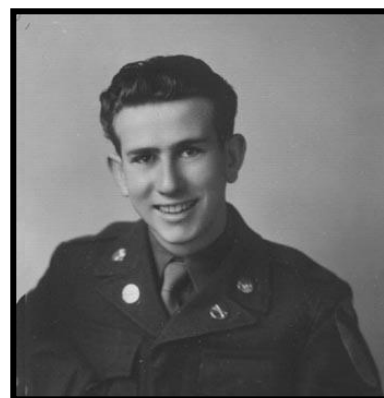
Medal of Honor Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Sgt. Fleek distinguished himself while serving as a squad leader in Company C, during an ambush operation. Sgt. Fleek's unit was deployed in ambush locations when a large enemy force approached the position. Suddenly, the leading enemy element, sensing the ambush, halted and started to withdraw. Reacting instantly, Sgt. Fleek opened fire and directed the effective fire of his men upon the numerically superior enemy force. During the fierce battle that followed, an enemy soldier threw a grenade into the squad position. Realizing that his men had not seen the grenade, Sgt. Fleek, although in a position to seek cover, shouted a warning to his comrades and threw himself onto the grenade, absorbing its blast. His gallant action undoubtedly saved the lives or prevented the injury of at least 8 of his fellow soldiers. Sgt. Fleek's gallantry and willing self-sacrifice were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit on himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.

HEROES OF THE 1ST CAVALRY DIVISION



- Cpl. Gordon M. Craig
- 16th Reconnaissance Company, 1st Cavalry Division
- Born: 1 August 1929, Brockton, MA
- Died: 10 September 1950, Kasan, Korea
- Entered Service: Brockton, MA, 1950
- Place of Action: Kasan, Korea
- Date of Action: 10 September 1950



Gordon M. Craig

Medal of Honor Citation:

Cpl. Craig, 16th Reconnaissance Company, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy. During the attack on a strategic enemy-held hill his company's advance was subjected to intense hostile grenade mortar, and small-arms fire. Cpl. Craig and 4 comrades moved forward to eliminate an enemy machine gun nest that was hampering the company's advance. At that instance an enemy machine gunner hurled a hand grenade at the advancing men. Without hesitating or attempting to seek cover for himself, Cpl. Craig threw himself on the grenade and smothered its burst with his body. His intrepid and selfless act, in which he unhesitatingly gave his life for his comrades, inspired them to attack with such ferocity that they annihilated the enemy machine gun crew, enabling the company to continue its attack. Cpl. Craig's noble self-sacrifice reflects the highest credit upon himself and upholds the esteemed traditions of the military service.