

# COALITION CHRONICLE

Volume 3, Issue 13 January 2009

*Air Force  
Firefighters  
Move, Expand  
Iraqi Training*

MARINE  
COMMANDANT  
VISITS  
TASK FORCE  
NINEWA

*Forces Command Top  
NCO Gets Firsthand Look  
at Iraqi Enlisted Training  
Improvements*

Soccer Tournament  
in Taji Helps Create  
Bond With Community





U.S. Marine Gunnery Sgt. Ralston Clarke, Personal Security Officer, I Marine Expeditionary Force, and native of Bronx, N.Y., stays warm as the sun sets behind the sandy horizon at a small U.S. Marine camp near the Saudi Arabian border and Sahl Sinjar, Iraq, Dec. 5.

Photo by Lance Cpl. Lindsay Sayres

# COALITION CHRONICLE

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Air Force firefighters make improvements to Iraqi training program



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Forces Command's top NCO visits Iraqi enlisted training academy



page 16

Taji soccer tournament helps create lasting relationships

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# Air Force firefighters expand, relocate...

A man wearing a shiny, silver, fire-resistant protective suit is pointing his right hand towards the camera. He has a serious expression. The background is dark and indistinct.

**Tech. Sgt. Brian Partido** explains the different features of the mobile live fire training unit in Baghdad, Iraq, Dec. 24. Partido is a fire and rescue advisor, and is deployed from the 19th Civil Engineer Squadron, Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark.

Story by Senior Master Sgt. Trish Freeland  
Photos by Staff Sgt. Paul Villanueva II  
AFCENT, Baghdad Media Outreach Team



**Master Sgt. James Brody** creates a simulated car fire for a live burn exercise in Baghdad, Iraq, Dec. 24. Brody is an assistant firefighter instructor, and is deployed from the 174th Fighter Wing, Syracuse Air National Guard, N.Y.

## ....Iraqi fire training course

Iraqi firefighters were more than half-way through the firefighter apprentice course being trained in Baghdad's International Zone before being moved. The class was originally taught at Taji Military Base just north of Baghdad, but the location lacked advanced live-fire trainers and had limited capacity for students.

"The maximum class size at Taji was 10. In the IZ, we have five extra instructors from civil defense who enable us to teach an additional 24 students for just one class," said Tech. Sgt. Brian Partido, a fire rescue advisor deployed from Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark.

The new location allows firefighters from the Iraqi Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense, which includes the Iraqi air force and army, to come together

at one location for training. This particular training session marked the first time the two ministries worked together at this level.

"It was easy to show how beneficial the training would be. The Iraqi air force firefighters weren't getting the training they needed at Taji," said Maj. Trenton Roney, a training advisor deployed from Langley Air Force Base, Va.

"Combining the course not only helped the MoD, but also the MoI. They were granted access to the Iraqi air force fire truck and firefighter suits that are being used for the training," said Roney.

The 60-day course was designed and conducted by the Coalition Air Force Training Team, a division of Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq and augmented by U.S. Air Force firefighters from the





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***“The maximum class size at Taji was 10. In the IZ, we have five extra instructors from civil defense who enable us to teach an additional 24 students for just one class.”***

**Tech. Sgt. Brian Partido**  
Fire Rescue Advisor

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Department of Public Works and nearby Sather air base.

“We took the fire apprentice course from the U.S. Air Force and adapted it to the way Iraqi firefighters operate here and then had it translated into Arabic,” said



**Iraqi firefighters** don their personal protective equipment before participating in a live fire exercise in Baghdad, Iraq, Dec. 24. The firefighters are part of a 60-day firefighter apprentice course.



**An Iraqi firefighter** double checks his partner’s personal protective equipment before participating in a live fire training scenario in Baghdad, Iraq, Dec. 24. The firefighters are taking the firefighter apprentice course being taught by members of the U.S. Air Force.

Partido, an El Paso, Texas native.

The course consists of six training blocks that cover various areas including medical issues, basic fire principles, fire control, hazardous materials, structural training and aircraft firefighting.

“We took them through a structural trainer that is a brand new state of the art propane driven trainer,” Partido said. “We gave them the baseline knowledge of being able to enter a facility safely, extinguish a fire and operate on a fire and emergency scene.”

“Since the MoI and MoD will often have to work together to fight fires, it’s best for them to receive the same level of training so they’ll be able to accomplish this more easily,” Roney said.

The class brought together firefighters with different levels of firefighting experience. The experience levels ranged from those with none at all to veterans with 20 years experience.

Col. Juher Jumhor Al Azawi, director general of the training academy, has been a firefighter for

the last four years. He said the class was a good refresher.

“I’ve had rescue and firefighting training before, but this class offered a lot of new information,” he said. “I never worked with airbags before this.”

1st. Lt. Ra’ed Hussein Alwan is a 16-year Iraqi air force veteran. He previously served as a mechanic but transferred to firefighting after the war started in 2003.

“I chose to be a firefighter because it’s a humanitarian thing, just like doctors helping sick kids,” he said. “Even if I’m on vacation, I can use my skills to help with car accidents, volunteer at hospitals or put out neighbor’s fires.”

Upon graduating in early this month, the firefighters will return to stations throughout Iraq to put their newly sharpened skills to use.

“We started with the basics and worked our way to the more advanced techniques,” said Partido. “It’s amazing to see how far they’ve come in such a short amount of time. I think they’re going to do excellent.”



# Soldier stands out among fellow Infantrymen

Story and photo  
by Sgt. Grant Okubo  
10th Mountain Division



**Spc. Christopher Halski** stands tall as his battalion commander Lt. Col. Gregory Baine presents him with an Army Commendation Medal during an award ceremony, Dec. 10. While deployed, the Omaha, Neb. native earned two Purple Heart Medals, two ARCOMs, an Iraqi Campaign Medal, and a Combat Infantryman Badge. Halski serves as an infantryman with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. Baine is a native of Beaumont, Texas.

One standout infantryman earned six individual recognitions as 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad, infantry leaders honored Soldiers for their heroism and bravery, recently.

Spc. Christopher Halski, an Omaha, Neb., native, assigned to Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, stood out among his peers as his company awarded him, and the comrades with whom he shed blood and sweat the past year, multiple commendations. Halski earned two Purple Heart Medals, two Army Commendation Medals, a Combat Infantryman Badge and an Iraqi Campaign Medal.

Halski remained quite humble after the ceremony, stating he only did what leaders asked of him - simply performed his duty as an infantryman.

"It's a point of pride," said Halski, after being presented the awards, who said he was honored about being recognized and felt his comrades were remarkable for their contributions and sacrifices.

"He's an outstanding Soldier and just an outstanding human being in general," declared Sgt. Lucas Jordan, a Thifton, Ga., native and close friend and battle buddy of

Halski. "He's really a credit to the Army and our unit as a whole." Jordan said if anyone deserves the awards, it is Halski.

"One thing about Specialist Halski is that even though he was wounded on two separate occasions, with his wounds, he was still able to fight the fight," said Sgt. 1st Class Gordon Smith, Halski's platoon sergeant and a Plano, Texas, native.

He said that although injured, Halski continued to fight until his comrades had to pull him out of "the fight" so a medic could administer medical treatment to him.

During his tour of duty, Halski earned two Purple Heart Medals for wounds he suffered in combat.

Halski earned his first Army Commendation Medal when he came to the aid of his fellow Soldiers, who found themselves immobilized because of enemy gunfire.

"Through his [Halski's] leadership and his courage, he was able to pin the enemy down with the .50-cal [caliber machine gun]," explained Smith. Halski earned his second Army Commendation Medal for his general performance throughout his

deployment, said Smith. He earned the Combat Infantryman's Badge for his actions in active ground combat while assigned to an infantry unit, and the Iraqi Campaign Medal for his service in the country of Iraq.

"Whenever anyone needed help with anything, Halski was the catch phrase 'go to guy,'" said Smith. "I think it's an honor for us to be able to honor a Soldier of his caliber."

Although being presented the awards may be one of the high points of Halski's deployment, he said the occasion marked a good time for reflection about everything the Co. C infantry Soldiers have accomplished during this deployment, which is his second in the past five years. His first deployment with Co. C, 2nd Bn., 30th Inf., took him to Afghanistan.

One of the keys for getting through the deployment, he said, is the bond he developed with battle buddies.

"Now we can look back and say, 'Wow, we did all that,'" he said, as he and his team prepare for returning homes after the deployment. "In the 13 months deployed, we have made a world of difference in the Beladiyat area."



# *Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team One...*

**Airman 1st Class Derrick Torba**, Staff Sgt. Michael Breive and Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey Wasik, take a moment out of their busy schedule to pose in front of a Joint explosive ordnance disposal rapid response vehicle or JERRV Dec. 17 at Sather Air Base, Iraq. All three are EOD technicians assigned to the 447th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron Explosive Ordnance Disposal Flight, Alpha.

Photo by Air Force  
Master Sgt. Brian Davidson  
375th Airlift Wing





**Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis M. Carey**, command sergeant major, U.S. Army Forces Command, talks to an Iraqi instructor from the Camp Taji Iraqi Noncommissioned Officer Academy Dec. 16 during his two-day visit to Iraq. Carey spent the morning visiting training ranges at the academy as well as meeting with Iraqi and American instructors at the Camp.



# *Forces Command top NCO gets firsthand look at Iraqi enlisted training improvements*

Story and photos by  
Staff Sgt. Jeremy D. Crisp  
**MNC-I PAO**

**T**here has been a 180-degree turnaround in the Iraqi noncommissioned officer corps since 2005, according to the top enlisted Soldier at U.S. Army Forces Command in Atlanta.

Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis M. Carey, FORSCOM command sergeant major, spent two days touring Iraq, and on a trip to Camp Taji's Iraqi NCO academy recently, he said he has seen vast improvement in just three years.

"The Iraqi army has made great strides in empowering the Iraqi NCO," Carey said.

Carey, a Phoenixville, Penn. native, was the command sergeant major for the XVIII Airborne Corps during its tour as Multi-National Corps - Iraq in 2005.

He, and the current command sergeant major of MNC-I and XVIII Airborne Corps, Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Allen, spent the better part of the day visiting with Iraqi instructors at the NCO Academy -

getting a feel for how the academy works and what lies on the horizon for the NCOs.

The duo visited firing ranges and urban terrain training sites before linking up with a handful of Iraqi instructors at the academy.

"Do you find your soldiers learn better in the classroom, or outside

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***"The Iraqi army has made great strides in empowering the Iraqi NCO."***

**Command Sgt. Maj.  
Dennis M. Carey  
Forces Command**

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hands on?" Carey asked the group.

The reply from one NCO was that "some learn better and faster than others. We prefer to do both. We train them in the classroom before going out into the field."

Carey asked a variety of other questions of the NCOs before ending with: "What can we as Americans do to help you do this better?" He garnered rounds of laughter from the instructors when he responded to his own question by asking "get out of your way and let you work?"

The reply was "La, la, la" meaning 'no, no, no.'

"The Americans have been a great help to us," said Iraqi Warrant Officer Adel, the commandant of the academy. "If we need help, they help us. When we don't, they let us do the things we are here to do."

An Iraqi warrant officer is the equivalent of a U.S. Army sergeant major.

"Our Soldiers here in Iraq who are teaching the Iraqi army are doing





**Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis M. Carey**, command sergeant major, U.S. Army Forces Command, shakes the hand of Iraqi Warrant Officer Adel, commandant, Iraqi Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Camp Taji, during the last day of a two-day visit to Iraq Dec. 16. Carey spoke with several of the Iraqi instructors at the camp, and said that he has seen a 180-degree turnaround for the better in the Iraqi NCO since his deployment to Iraq in 2005.

a fabulous job,” Carey said. “It’s great to come out here and see this firsthand. I’d do it once a month if I could.”

The visit brought a smile to all the Iraqi instructors, and they thanked Carey for taking his time to see them.

“We are very proud of what we do in the army, and we know we are getting better,” Adel said. “Trips like these, when a command sergeant major like Command Sergeant Major Carey comes to visit, it lets us know that what we are doing is important. It shows that he cares about our training.”

Carey and Allen finished their trip to Camp Taji with a briefing from U.S. Army military transition team troops before having lunch with both Iraqi and U.S. instructors from the academy.



**Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Allen**, command sergeant major, XVIII Airborne Corps and Multi-National Corps – Iraq, pounds the chest of 1st Sgt. Frederick Harvey from the Camp Taji Iraqi Noncommissioned Officer Academy during a recent visit to Camp Taji. Allen and Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis M. Carey, command sergeant major, U.S. Army Forces Command, spent the morning visiting Iraqi and U.S. troops at the academy.




# Checkmates Make Return Trip Home from Iraq

by Clark Pierce  
Naval Air Station Jacksonville Public Affairs  
Photo by Photographer's Mate Third Class  
Christopher Stephens

*“Our VS-22 maintenance personnel displayed tireless dedication to keep these soon-to-be-retired birds mission ready. As far as I know, we sustained a 100 percent sortie completion record.”*

Lt. Jason Tarrant  
U. S. Navy





**Two S-3 Vikings** assigned to the “Checkmates” of Sea Control Squadron Twenty Two (VS-22) conduct an airborne refueling during routine flight operations aboard Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73). George Washington Carrier Strike Group is currently participating in Partnership of the Americas, a maritime training and readiness deployment of the U.S. Naval Forces with Caribbean and Latin American countries in support of the U.S. Southern Command objectives for enhanced maritime security.

**T**he sailors of Sea Control Squadron (VS) 22 recently returned to Naval Air Station Jacksonville after completing a five-month deployment to Al-Asad Air Base, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Their boots-on-the-ground and eyes-in-the-sky deployment in Iraq required that VS-22 pilots, aircrew and maintainers operate in a very dangerous environment, substantially different to the conditions they normally encounter as a carrier-based platform.

To meet the demands of this mission, each of the 205 “Checkmates” completed anti-terrorism and desert survival training, in addition to qualifying with the M-16 rifle and M-9 pistol, prior to their deployment.

The large Al Asad Air Base (formerly Saddam Hussein’s premier MiG-25 Foxbat air base) is located south of the Euphrates River in the volatile, largely Sunni, Al Anbar Province in western Iraq.

The squadron brought four S-3B Vikings to Al Asad, each equipped with the latest Low Altitude Navigation Targeting Infrared for Night navigation

pod. LANTIRN is a terrain-following radar that enables pilots to maneuver and surveil at low altitudes during daylight or at night. According to Lt. Jason Tarrant, the squadron flew about 80 percent of its non-traditional intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance combat missions at night.

“The Viking’s LANTIRN infrared capability was invaluable for taking away the cover of darkness from enemy combatants,” said Tarrant. “The Checkmates routinely detected heat signatures of vehicles, shelters, people and improvised explosive devices –and relayed that information to convoys and combat teams in the affected area.”

The Checkmates flew an average of three sorties a day.

“Our VS-22 maintenance personnel displayed tireless dedication to keep these soon-to-be-retired birds mission ready. As far as I know, we sustained a 100 percent sortie completion record,” said Tarrant.

VS-22 is the Navy’s last S-3B Viking squadron. Disestablishment activities are scheduled for Jan. 28-30, 2009.





**Staff Sgt Joseph Branch**, aa Atlanta Ga. native, with 18th Security Forces Squadron, Kadena, Japan, inspects traffic with his partner Nemo, a U.S. Air Force military working dog, in Ghazaliya, Iraq, on Dec. 9. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Daniel Owen)



**Soldiers with the 1st Azerbaijani (AZ) Peacekeeping Company** stand in formation as AZ Army Capt. Elzamin Tahmazov, 1st AZ Peacekeeping Company, marches by at an appreciation ceremony at Camp Ripper located on Al Asad Airbase, Iraq on Dec 3. Azerbaijani soldiers are in the process of leaving Iraq after a tour of duty guarding the Haditha Dam. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Seth Maggard)

**A young Iraqi elementary student** raises his hand to answer a question his teacher asked to the class, in Al Hayyaniyah district, Basra, Iraq Dec 2. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Gustavo Olgiati)



**United Kingdom, Major General Andy Salmon**, Order of the British Empire, General Officer in Charge, Multi-National Division (South East), walks the Al Hayyaniyah district streets, Dec. 2, during his recent visit to the district in Basra, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Gustavo Olgiati)





**A U.S. Airman** comforts an Iraqi civilian during a joint walking patrol with Iraqi policemen Dec. 20, in the Rashid district of southern Baghdad. The airman is assigned to 732 Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. (U.S. Navy Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Todd Frantom)



**Pfc. Joshua Huddleston**, a native of Viola, Arkansas, of Headquarters Platoon, 21st Military Police Company (Airborne), Fort Bragg, N.C., gears up for a mission, in the early hours of Dec. 23, in the Contingency Operating Base Basra, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Gustavo Olgiati)



**A U.S. Navy Sailor with Company B, 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment (1/4), Regimental Combat Team 1** hands out candy to Iraqi children in the Andaloos Precinct of Al Fallujah, Iraq on Dec 5. U.S. Marines with 1/4 were escorting Iraqi police as they can distributed food bags to Iraqi citizens. (U.S. Marine Corps Photo by Lance Cpl. Grant T. Walker)



**A Romanian soldier** of 341 Romanian Battalion salutes the formation as he marches by at Romania's Independence Day ceremony at Camp Dracula, Dhi Qar, Iraq.



# Romanian Independence Day

Dec. 1, 2008

Photos by Spc. Donte Baltimore  
982nd Combat Camera (Airborne)







**Romanian soldiers** from the 341 Romanian Battalion perform first aid on a mock casualty as part of a demonstration during the Romania's Independence Day ceremony at Camp Dracula, Dhi Qar, Iraq.



**Romanian soldiers** from the 341 Romanian Battalion perform combatives as part of a demonstration at Camp Dracula, Dhi Qar, Iraq.

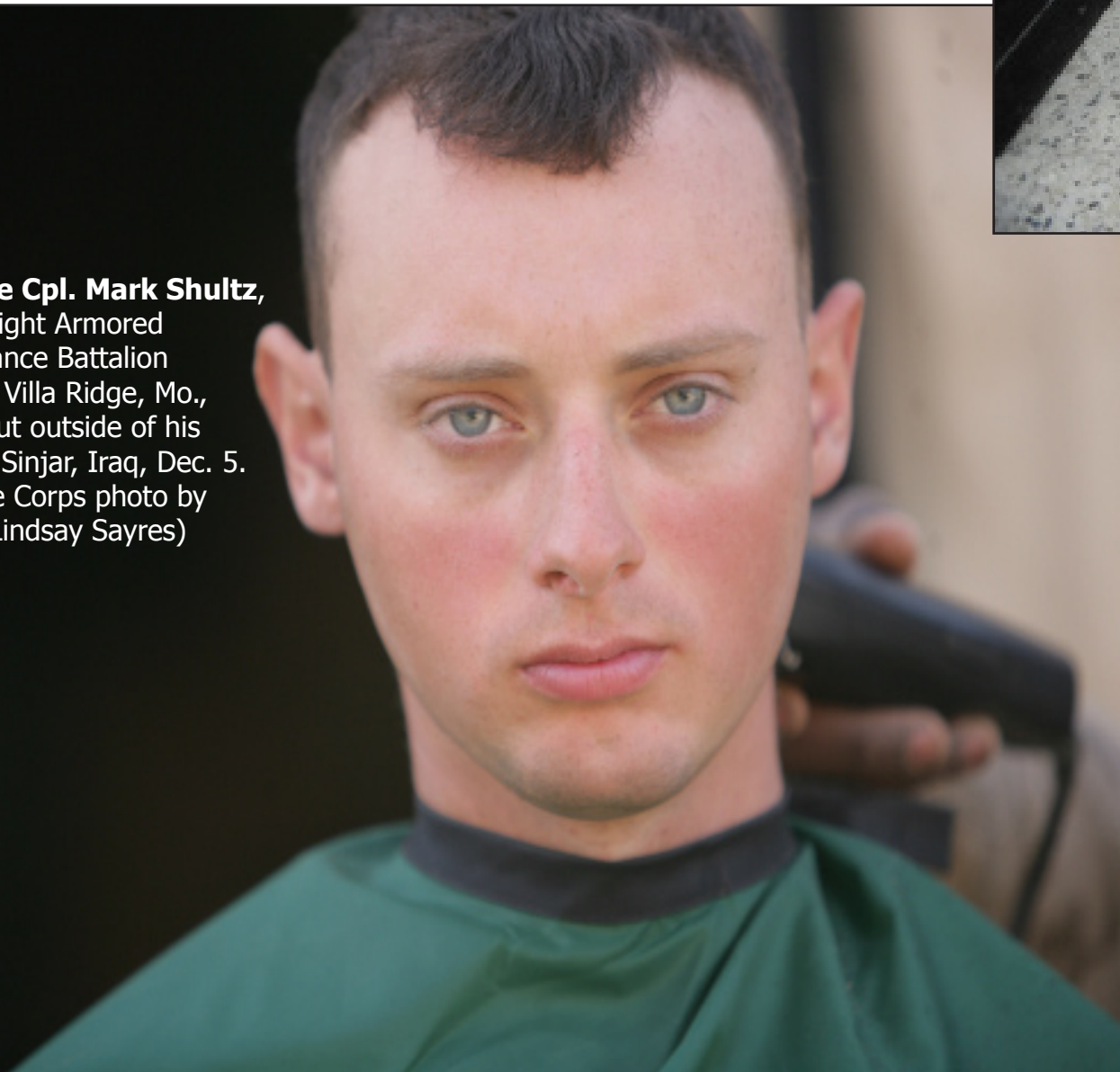




**An Iraqi police officer** provides security while his fellow officers search the house of a suspected criminal during cordon and search operations in Diwaniyah, Iraq, Dec. 10. The Iraqi Army and Iraqi police worked together to complete the operation. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Eric Harris)



**U.S. Marine Cpl. Mark Shultz,** Scout, 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (LAR), from Villa Ridge, Mo., gets a haircut outside of his tent in Sahl Sinjar, Iraq, Dec. 5. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Lindsay Sayres)







**Capt. Lori August** and Capt. Ramona Toussant both of Co. C, 27th Brigade Support Battalion, show a hearing impaired girl from the school for special needs children in Rumaythuh, Iraq how they administer a hearing examination, Dec. 11. The Iraqi girl is at Combat Operations Base Adder to be tested for a hearing aid. (U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Brendan Stephens)



**An El Salvadoran soldier** stands at attention while El Salvadoran Maj. Gen. Jorge Alberto Molina, division general and minister of national defense of El Salvador, speaks at Forward Operating Base Delta, Iraq on Dec. 5. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Rasheen A. Douglas)



# Soccer tournament brings sense of normalcy back to Taji

by Sgt. 1st Class Brian Addis  
with Courtesy Photos

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

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 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, along with the local government and the people here, are all working together to sustain the good security established in this area," Mackey said. 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 Hammamiat Soccer Club** hoists the championship trophy at Taji Soccer Club Stadium, northwest of Baghdad, Dec. 26. A round-robin tournament saw four teams from Hammamiat, Taji, Al-Rekiya and Soldiers from 2nd Squadron 14th Cavalry Regiment, "Strykehorse," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad, battle on the soccer field during Operation Strykehorse Ku'oko'a Peku, or Strykehorse Free Kick.







**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 Squadron 14th Cavalry Regiment, "Strykehorse," 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team "Warrior," 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad, participated in a round-robin tournament.

the 1980s and 1990s.

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

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."



**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.





**Lights of moving cars blur** in a busy intersection of Al Hayyanayah district, in early December in Basra, Iraq. Photo by Army Sgt. Gustavo Olgiati



**Airman 1st Class Adam Harry** (right), 887th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, of Jacksonville, Fla., and U.S. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Dishaun Jones, Navy Provisional Detainee Battalion-5, a San Jose, Calif. native, compete for the 2008 Bucca Boxing title in fight night held on Camp Bucca in Basra, Iraq on Dec. 4. Photo by Spc. Karah Cohen

# Nights in Iraq



**Pvt. Drew Wheeler** from Richmond, Va., scans his perimeter on Dec. 17 during a joint walking patrol with Iraqi National Policemen and Iraqi Policemen in the Sadiyah district of southern Baghdad. Wheeler is an Army medic attached to 520th Area Support Medical Company, 62nd Medical Brigade assigned to 732 Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Todd Frantom



# Commandant of Marine Corps discusses deployment with Marines at Task Force Ninewa

Story and photos by Cpl. Dean Davis

**G**en. James T. Conway and Sgt. Maj. Carlton W. Kent, commandant and sergeant major of the Marine Corps, visited with Marine and sailors of Company A, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, Task Force Ninewa in an area west of Mosul on Dec. 30.

After landing in the Marines' remote position, Conway and Kent thanked the task force for their success in operation Defeat Al Qaeda North II, discussed the Corps' up-coming changes and fielded questions.

The Marines of Task Force Ninewa, which comprises 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, Company A of 1/2, and other attachments, have been patrolling and occupying a remote area in the northern tip of Iraq for two months, interdicting smuggling from Syria.

"The Marines' efforts have been extremely effective up here, showing the ability to move fast in a short period of time," Conway said. "Because of them, there is now almost no enemy movement into Mosul and Tal Afar."

The visit was part of a ten-day tour covering Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, which gave Conway and Kent an opportunity to address many Marines' questions concerning the future, including Afghanistan.

"When the Marines make their way to Afghanistan, it's going to look a lot like it does here, with internal support, harsh weather and harsh terrain," said Conway. "This gives me confidence that Marines can perform in a very austere environment and do it very well."

Conway ended by discussing his plans for Marines to enjoy more dwell time between deployments, the growing strength of the Marine force and new technology in weapons and ballistics.



**Gen. James Conway** (above), commandant of the Marine Corps and **Sgt. Maj. Carlton W. Kent** (below), sergeant major of the Marine Corps speak with Marines and sailors of Company A, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, Task Force Ninewa in an area west of Mosul Dec. 30.



**Capt. Jamie P. Murphy**, commanding officer of Company A, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, Task Force Ninewa shows Gen. James T. Conway, commandant of the Marine Corps around his company's area west of Mosul Dec. 30.



# IN MEMORIAM

NAMES OF COALITION SERVICE MEMBERS WHO DIED BETWEEN NOVEMBER 19 AND DECEMBER 31, 2008 WHILE SERVING IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

**GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS: THAT A MAN LAY  
DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.**

*JOHN 15:13*

## **November 19**

Gunnery Sgt. Marcelo R. Velasco, 40

## **November 20**

Pvt. Charles Yi Barnett, 19

## **November 21**

Sgt. 1st Class Miguel A. Wilson, 36

## **November 24**

1st Lt. William K. Jernigan, 35  
Master Sgt. Anthony Davis, 43

## **November 25**

Capt. Warren A. Frank, 26

## **December 4**

British Lance Cpl. David Kenneth Wilson  
Staff Sgt. Solomon T. Sam, 36  
Sgt. John J. Savage, 26

## **December 11**

British Cpl. Lee Churcher

## **December 20**

Staff Sgt. Jonathan W. Dean, 25  
Pfc. Coleman W. Hinkefent, 19

## **December 21**

Lance Cpl. Thomas Reilly Jr., 19

## **December 24**

Staff Sgt. Christopher G. Smith, 28  
Spc. Stephen M. Okray, 21  
Spc. Stephen G. Zapasnik, 19

## **December 25**

Maj. John P. Pryor, 42  
Master-at-Arms Seaman Apprentice  
Joshua D. Seitz, 19

## **December 28**

Spc. Tony J. Gonzales, 20

## **December 31**

Pfc. Christopher W. Lotter, 20  
Pvt. Benjamin B. Tollefson, 22



U.S. Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr., Army Chief of Staff, walks alongside U.K. Maj. Gen. Andy Salmon, general officer in command, Multi-National Division - South East, on Dec. 21, at the Basra International Airport, Basra, Iraq.

photo by Sgt. Gustavo Olgiati  
982nd Combat Camera (ABN)

