

# COALITION CHRONICLE

Volume 4, Issue 3

March 2009

British, Iraqi Army  
Join to Train  
Iraqi NCO Corps

Mississippi  
Engineers  
Clean Up  
Baghdad's  
Streets

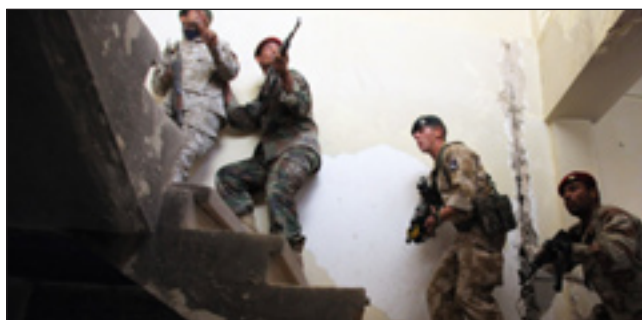
Iraqi Security  
Forces at Trebil  
Show Independence





U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Michael Berg, a native of Ocean Springs, Mississippi, and a member of the 732nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, Detachment 3, Charley Flight, Squad 2, patrols the streets of Rashid, Iraq, on Feb. 13. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Daniel Owen)

page 10



page 1

British and Iraqi soldiers partner to teach Noncommissioned Officer training course.



page 8

Soldiers organize various school materials during a school supply distribution event.



page 20

Brig. Gen. John E. Wissler (left) presents a token of appreciation to Iraqi Army Brig. Gen. Fahdel during a visit to Port of Entry Trebil.

# COALITION CHRONICLE

The Official Magazine of  
Multi-National Corps – Iraq

March 2009  
Volume 4, Issue 3

MNC-I Commander  
Lt. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III

MNC-I Public Affairs Officer  
Col. Billy J. Buckner

MNC-I Public Affairs Sergeant Major  
Sgt. Maj. Sharon Opeka

Layout and Design  
Ms. Renea L. Everage

Questions, comments and concerns about The Coalition Chronicle can be addressed via email at **mncicoalitionchroniclegroupmailbox@iraq.centcom.mil**. The Chronicle accepts articles, photos and letters for submission. Send submissions to **mncicoalitionchroniclegroupmailbox@iraq.centcom.mil**. The Chronicle reserves the right to edit for security, accuracy, propriety, clarity and space.

The Coalition Chronicle is an authorized monthly publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of this monthly publication are not necessarily the official views of or endorsed by the U.S. Government or the Department of Defense. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Public Affairs Office of the Multi-National Corps-Iraq.

## Departments

Feature up Front

page 1

Freedom's Focal Point

page 10

Photo Feature

page 18

In Memoriam

page 21



# British, Iraqi Army Partner to Build Iraqi NonCommissioned Officer Corps

by UK Capt. Laurence Roche  
20th Armour Brigade  
and Capt. Jeff Johnson  
MND-SE PAO

Photos courtesy of Matt Cardy  
Getty Images

Iraqi army and British Queens Royal Hussars participate in squad drills during the IA 51st Brigade "Scorpion" course in Basra, Iraq on Feb. 12. The Scorpion course is a junior noncommissioned officer development course for IA that is held at the former Iraqi Naval Academy in Basra.



**BASRA, Iraq** - Twenty Iraqi soldiers completed a junior noncommissioned officers leadership course developed the Iraqi army and the Queen's Royal Hussars of Britain at the former Basra Iraqi Naval Academy Feb.14.

The al Aqrab, or 'Scorpion' course, is a 10-day train-the-trainer commanders and tactics course designed to develop Iraqi NCOs through lessons in basic infantry skills.

"All of the training the British forces give us is very, very useful, and has a big effect," said Staff Brig. Gen. Bilal Saleh Shkur, commander of 51st Brigade, 14th Division. "The

Iraqi army needs more training and it is always good to get the experience of the British army."

The course was created when a need for junior leaders was identified by British military leaders who worked with the IA.

"The Iraqi army commands itself very well, but we felt that there was a little bit missing in the middle," said Lt. Col. Christopher Coles, commanding officer of the QRH, a light cavalry regiment that serves in Iraq as part of the UK 20th Armoured Brigade, "The Iron Fist."

The Scorpion course, which generally has 20 NCOs ranked from corporal to staff sergeant, is

organized into a two-section, squad-sized competition and includes first aid and patrolling skills, and interspersed with room inspections and physical training.

The final two days of the course include a building-clearance exercise and skill competitions between the class sections.

The building-clearance task puts the junior NCOs to the test by clearing opposing forces from bombed out buildings on the former Basra Naval Academy.

Course instructors pose as opposition forces during the final events to add realism to the challenge and an opportunity for

first-hand assessment of their students' capabilities.

This is the 10th installment of the Scorpion course for 51st Brigade and the fifth to be held at the former Naval Academy.

"We're not trying to change the world overnight; we're just trying to introduce the concept of junior leadership," said British Warrant Officer 2 Darrell Jones,

Scorpion course chief instructor. "It goes down well and I think that individuals really benefit."

This summer, when the British reach end their mission in Iraq, the Iraqis running the course will continue to operate it independently.

"It's their course and what we're trying to do is bring their junior NCOs to a level where they can go

back to their units and get involved with their own troops," Jones said.

This is the second Scorpion course completed by the QRH who plan to host more courses in the coming months.

"There's always more that can be done and we've still got a part to play. But we're not trying to put the icing on the cake ourselves, that's for the Iraqis to do," Coles said.



An Iraqi army soldier gets a "thumbs up" from one of the British Queens Royal Hussars participating in squad drills during the "Scorpion" junior noncommissioned office development course at the former Iraqi Naval Academy in Basra, Iraq Feb. 12.



***"We're not trying to change the world overnight; we're just trying to introduce the concept of junior leadership."***

British Warrant Officer 2 Darrell Jones  
Scorpion course Chief Instructor



# IRAQI RAILROAD ROLLS BACK INTO TAJI

3rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) PAO



A container is loaded onto an Iraqi railroad car prior to departure from Camp Taji, Iraq on Feb. 10. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Ray K. Ragan)

An Iraqi railroad locomotive arrives at Camp Taji on Feb. 10, to begin a rail operation moving 40 containers from Camp Taji to the port city of Umm Qasr. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt 1st Class Mike Brantley)

**CAMP TAJI, Iraq** - Iraq's national distribution capability took a big step forward recently as the Iraqi railroad successfully picked up cargo from Iraqi Transportation Network trucks at Camp Taji and moved it to the Port of Umm Qasr.

The rail spur at Taji opened for cargo movement for the first time since 2004. A 20-car IRR train owned and operated by the Government of Iraq picked up 40 empty containers for movement to the port of Umm Qasr. The operation was an important step in an effort to link Iraqi trucking, rail, and port operations together.

One Iraqi with a critical role in the day's event stated the operation was a sign of Iraq's rebuilding effort. "It's our country and we want to serve our country," said Mohammed, the train's conductor, through an interpreter.

"Whatever it takes to do, we'll do it. So we came here to serve our country; rebuild it."

The IRR is a key piece of transportation infrastructure for

Iraq according to Maj. Scott D. Meyer, Strategic Mobility - IRR program officer, Multi-National Force-Iraq.

Iraq has a geographic advantage to turn it into a hub for moving cargo from the port at Umm Qasr to Turkey, Syria and Jordan. The rail lines themselves are in good repair and Iraq has experienced operators for running the trains, Meyer added.

Meyer said that the IRR and Iraqi Transportation Network, a consortium of all Iraqi-owned trucking companies, are working together to move cargo efficiently. Where the ITN is responsible for short-haul of cargo, the IRR is responsible for the long-hauls.

"Trucks are more efficient with short-haul and trains are more efficient with the long haul," Meyer said. As part of the recent rail operation, ITN trucks delivered the 40 containers eventually uploaded onto IRR rail cars.

In addition to demonstrating transportation infrastructure progress, these initial small rail

movements will eventually prove the IRR ready for regular transportation of cargo said Meyer. Adding that as the IRR moves more and more cargo for both the Iraqis and coalition forces, it offers the added benefit of moving Iraqi transporters and coalition forces off Iraq's roads.

Upon arrival in Umm Qasr, the IRR will load cargo and make its back through Iraq.

Sustainers and transportation experts from the 10th Sustainment Brigade provided partnership and planning for the railway operation. Maj. Peter P. Vien, brigade engineer, 10th Sustainment Brigade, said that coordination involved all echelons of command starting at Multi-National Force - Iraq, through the 3rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), the brigade's higher command.

"I think it [the proof of principle] was very successful, because this will be the first time we had the Iraqis come into Taji and pick-up stuff and move it out, Vien said.

Maj. Scott Meyer, Strategic Mobility - Iraqi Railroad Program Manager with the Multi-National Force - Iraq, and a native of Naugatuck, Conn., summons the first locomotive to enter Camp Taji since 2004 across Main Supply Route Tampa, Feb. 10. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Mike Brantley)





# IRAQI ARMY DISPLAYS LIVE FIRE IN AMARAH

Story and photos by Capt. Kevin Wolf  
4th Brigade Combat Team  
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE GARRY OWEN, Iraq** – After nearly two months of intense training, 48 Soldiers from the 38th Iraqi Army Brigade accurately called in a target and fired a 120mm-mortar system on Forward Operating Base Garry Owen, Feb 16.

“The instruction that we received gives us a specialty, something that (most other Iraqi) Soldiers don’t have training on.” said Sgt. Mishal Ghanim, of the 38th IA’s mortar battery.

The 38th IA Bde. became one of the first units in southern Iraq to conduct a live fire exercise with IA mortar crews and forward observers executing indirect fire missions. The Iraqis received assistance from the 2nd Battalion, 7th Calvary Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

A Soldier, assigned to the 38th Iraqi Army Brigade, loads a 120-mm mortar round during a live-fire exercise in Amarah, Iraq Feb. 16. Amarah is located near Forward Operating Base Garry Owen in southern Iraq.



“Things such as map reading and observing indirect fire doubles our combat effectiveness; we are now Forward Observers and are of much greater use to our unit,” said Pvt. Ali Shani, assigned to the 38th IA Bde.

His unit’s training with the 4th BCT Soldiers consisted of instruction on map reading, observing and adjusting mortar fire and firing the 120mm mortar system.

The partnership between the 38th Bde. and 4th BCT has continuously strengthened since the American Soldiers first arrived last summer. The Maysan Province is becoming more stable every day, thanks in large part to the increasing capabilities of the IA.

After the live-fire exercise, the Multi-National Division Center Commander, Maj. Gen. Michael Oates, congratulated the Iraqi Soldiers and handed out coins.



The Multi-National Division Center Commander, Maj. Gen. Michael Oates, hands out commemorative coins to Iraqi Soldiers, assigned to the 38th Iraqi Army Brigade after completing a life-fire exercise in Amarah, Iraq Feb. 16. Amarah is located near Forward Operating Base Garry Owen in southern Iraq.



Sgt. Mishal Ghanim, from Co. Commando of the 38th Iraqi Army Brigade calls in a coordinate during a live-fire exercise while Ali Shani, also assigned to the 38th IA observes for accuracy in Amarah, Iraq Feb 16. Amarah is located near Forward Operating Base Garry Owen in southern Iraq.





Iraqi school girls sing a song in Arabic to thank the Iraqi and American forces for their generosity during a distribution drive at the Al Kays & Al Yasameen Elementary School, one of two schools to receive goods, Feb. 19 in the New Baghdad district of eastern Baghdad.

# Paratroopers and Iraqi Security Forces Distribute Supplies to Oubaidy Schools

*Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Alex Licea  
3rd BCT, 82nd Airborne Div PAO*



Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Sorton (left), a native of Pittsburg, Pa., and Command Sgt. Maj. Herbert Kirkover, a native of Dahlonaga, Ga., assigned to 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division Baghdad, organize various school materials during a school supply distribution event at the Al Kays & Al Yasameen Elementary School, one of two schools to receive donated goods, Feb. 19 in the 9 Nissan city of Oubaidy. The supplies will enhance the children's ability to participate in school.

Paratroopers and their Iraqi security force partners distributed a variety of new school supplies to students in two Oubaidy schools, Feb. 19, in the 9 Nissan district of eastern Baghdad.

Children formed a cheerful scene as they welcomed Multi-National Division - Baghdad paratroopers from the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, and their Iraqi partners from the 8th National Police Brigade, 2nd NP Div., to receive the much-needed supplies.

Children at the Al Assal kindergarten greeted the combined forces and eagerly watched as NP officers and paratroopers opened up the cardboard boxes and organized the school materials on a nearby table.

Lt. Col. Louis Zeisman, the commander of the 2nd Bn., 505th Parachute Inf. Regt., along with Command Sgt. Maj. Herbert Kirkover, the battalion's senior enlisted leader, told the school's headmaster that the crayons, notebooks, markers, pencils, coloring books, finger paint and toys were donated to the school from the paratroopers' family members back at Fort Bragg, N.C., the unit's home station.

"I appreciate these items for the children," said the school's headmaster. "We are very thankful."

Paratroopers have team up the ISF in several humanitarian events across the district over the past several weeks to improve the lives of the area's



Lt. Col. Louis Zeisman, a native of Fayetteville, N.C., commander of the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division Baghdad, and an Iraqi National Police Officer give an Iraqi boy some candy during a school supply distribution event Feb. 19 at the Al Assal Kindergarten in the city of Oubaidy.

residents. NP officials have focused attention in 9 Nissan due to the poverty in the region.

Capt. Agustin Dominguez, the battalion's fire support officer, said these events enhance the children's ability to participate in school. Outreach programs like this can result in a change of attitude toward the ISF and their coalition partners.

"Events like this will allow the local residents' mood to change because they are seeing that we are here to provide security for them, and we are here to help their children get a better education," said the native of Miami.

Capt. Adisa King, commander of Company A, 2nd Bn., 505th Parachute Inf. Regt., and his men delivered several more boxes of donated school items to the nearby Al Kays & Al Yasameen elementary school.

The students sang a song in Arabic as a gesture of appreciation as the combined forces were leaving the school's courtyard.

Dominguez and his Iraqi partners plan to visit several more schools across the city in the weeks to come; providing schools with practical items such as fans and chalkboards, as well as restock the school with supplies in the near future.

"They are looking for our help to improve the overall quality of the area schools, and we are going to do what we can to see that their wishes are met."



Lt. Col. Louis Zeisman, a native of Fayetteville, N.C., commander of the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division Baghdad, gives a Iraqi boy a toy during a school supply distribution event Feb. 19 at the Al Assal Kindergarten in the city of Oubaidy. Family members of deployed Paratroopers from Fort Bragg, N.C. collected the items to be donated to the Iraqi schools.



From left, U.S. Marines Staff Sgt. Shane Perry, Staff Sgt. Michael Rivera, and Cpl. Daniel Farmer with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 266 (VMM-266) perform maintenance on a MV-22B Osprey propeller cell aboard Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, Feb. 17. The Marines are all Flightline Mechanics with VMM-266. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Michael L. Haas)



U.S. Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 11th Field Artillery, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, use biometric scanners to input newly graduated electrical engineers into the pay system prior to receiving their paycheck at the ministry of electricity in the city of Taji, Iraq, Feb. 12. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jacob H. Smith)

Maj. Gen. Michael Ferriter, deputy commanding general, operations, Multi-National Corps - Iraq, listens to a local Sons of Iraq leader ask questions about the future of the SoI program at Forward Operating Base Montini in Balad Feb. 23. The SoI program is transferring from Coalition force control to the Government of Iraq on a province by province basis. Local leaders are encouraged to be part of the process. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joy Pariente)



U.K. army 2nd Lt. Matt Maguire and U.S. Army Sgt. Adam Kirschner with the 42nd Military Police Brigade, Task Force Bucca, Civil Affairs and U.K. army 2nd Lt. Matt Maguire with the Queens Royal Hussars, hang an influence poster on the wall outside of the Al Nashaa school in Umm Qasr, Iraq, on Feb. 19. The U.S. Air Force 887th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, U.K. Army Queens Royal Hussars, 2nd Platoon Iraqi Marines, and Iraqi police of the Umm Qasr District are participating in a ribbon cutting ceremony in celebration of the restoration of the Al Nashaa school. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Karah Cohen)



**U.S. Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, and 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, are watching U.S. Air Force F-16 fighter jets destroy a heavily booby trapped building with a series of 500-pound bombs outside the Diyala Media Center, Diyala, Iraq on Feb. 6. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Walter J. Pels)**



**An Iraqi sailor** inspects a sample of fuel for water and particles during pre-launch inspections of a new boat at the Port of Umm Qasr Feb. 11. The Iraqi Navy is responsible for securing the waterways around the Shatt al Arab River, the port area and waterways near their oil platforms in the Persian Gulf. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Aaron Thacker)



**Navy Lt. Jonathan Kehoe**, commander, Platoon 602, 63rd Battalion, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobilization Unit 6, based out of Little Creek, Va., and attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, crosses the finish line in 10 minutes and 13 seconds for the Guinness World Record for the fastest mile in a bomb suit at Camp Echo Feb. 2. Kehoe comes from Leadville, Colo. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente)



**Marine Maj. Gen. Paul Lefebvre** (center), deputy commanding general, Multi-National Corps - Iraq, does his traditional 'group huddle' photo pose with distinguished guests and members of the Estonian contingent after the Estonian end-of-mission ceremony at the Joint Visitor Bureau on Camp Victory, Feb. 7.



**Brig. Gen. Robert Kane** (left), Coalition Air Force Transition Team commanding general, congratulates Capt. Yaarub Abdul Wahed Rasheed, Iraqi air force instructor pilot, during the Iraqi air force pilot graduation ceremony here Feb. 19. There were fourteen pilots and instructor pilots honored during the ceremony. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Eunique Stevens)



**Spc. Abdurahim Sharif**, a mechanic with the Forward Support Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division attached to 25th Infantry Division, Multi National Division - North, talks with Pvt. Omar Ahmab Ibrahim, a mechanic with 2nd Battalion, 6th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division to discern why the vehicle they are working on hasn't been starting in the mornings. They agreed that the glow plug control box was ready to retire. The coalition force mechanics visited their Iraqi army counterparts Feb. 14 to help them repair some of their humvees. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Sharla Perrin)



**An Iraqi soldier serving with the 1st Battalion, 22nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, takes up his position as Soldiers of 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, march off after the turnover ceremony of joint security station Sheikh Marouf in the Karkh District of northwest Baghdad Feb. 23. The coalition and Iraqi soldiers worked and trained together at the JSS to help secure the neighborhood from violence (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Dustin Roberts)**



# Iraqi Security Forces at Trebil Show Their Independence

Story and photos by Cpl. Triah Pendracki  
II Marine Expeditionary Force (Fwd)

A Marine with Multi National Force-West gazes at the arches marking the border between Iraq and Jordan while visiting the Port of Entry Trebil in Iraq's western Al Anbar province, Feb. 12. A group of MNF-W Marines, including the deputy commanding general of MNF-W, Brig. Gen. John E. Wissler, visited the port of entry to monitor the progress of local Iraqi security forces charged with guarding the border between Iraq and Jordan.

Brig. Gen. John E. Wissler, Multi National Force-West deputy commanding general, walks through the Port of Entry Trebil in Iraq's western Al Anbar province with Iraqi Army Brig. Gen. Fahdel, Feb. 12. A group of Marines from Multi-National Force - West visited the port of entry to monitor the progress of local Iraqi security forces charged with guarding the border between Iraq and Jordan.



## PORT OF ENTRY TREBIL,

**Iraq** - In the furtherance of Iraqi sovereignty and the security agreement, Iraqi officials are proving to U.S. and coalition forces that they are not only ready, but capable of defending themselves and their country.

Brig. Gen. John E. Wissler, the deputy commanding general of Multi National Force-West, paid a visit to Port of Entry Trebil in Iraq's western Al Anbar province, Feb. 12 to view a validation exercise demonstrating the progress of local Iraqi security forces charged with guarding the border between Iraq and Jordan.

POE Trebil had long been a gateway for illegal trafficking from Jordan into Iraq until a small detachment of Marines formed the Port of Entry Transition Team, and trained local Iraqi government forces to defend their port of entry from

smuggling and terrorism.

While at POE Trebil, Wissler watched a reaction drill during which ISF responded to a simulated vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. With minimal help from the POETT, Iraqi forces quickly threw up a security perimeter as a team of firemen put out the blaze and paramedics rushed in to pull a simulated casualty to safety.

Wissler said he was impressed by the ISF's skilled performance during the demonstration.

"This was a tremendous opportunity for me to see in action the operations and the ability for this port of entry team at Trebil," he said. "It's a joint operation across all elements of the Iraqi security forces to join together to respond to a vehicle-borne IED, and their performance was magnificent."

After the demonstration was

complete, Trebil's port authority, Iraqi Army Brig. Gen. Fahdel, led Wissler through the port to see other security measures that allow for safe transit through the POE.

The POETT Marines are using fewer hands-on training techniques with the ISF as they are becoming more independent. The aid of U.S. and coalition forces is still an important, but ever diminishing, factor in the Iraqis' success.

"We will continue to execute our humanitarian actions and our civil military operations," Wissler said. "What we're trying to do is remove ourselves as much from our physical presence in Iraqi lives, but at the same time we are going to continue to have our hand outstretched."

"In partnership with the Provincial Reconstruction Team, we will continue to help to bring a better life to all the Iraqis."



# Mississippi Engineers Clean Up Baghdad's Streets

Story and photos by Sgt. Catherine Graham  
890th Eng. Bn., 225th Eng. Bde.

For the 890th Engineer Battalion, 225th Eng. Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division-Baghdad, supporting the counterinsurgency efforts with route clearance is not the only skill that they brought with them to Iraq.

The National Guard unit from Gulfport, Miss., has supported the lower Mississippi Delta with hurricane relief since its inception in 1953. Hurricane Katrina, one of the most devastating hurricanes in history, gave the organization extensive experience of restoring the environment after a disaster.

So, this deployment, when the battalion was tasked to perform route clearance, not restoration - it collaborated with the 46th Engineer Battalion, a sister battalion tasked with construction, to create joint-route sanitation missions.

"Route sanitation is integral to our mission as a whole. It is the primary objective of the 890th to remove opportunities for enemy exploitation," said Maj. Rick Weaver, operations officer for the 890th Eng. Bn. "We have been successful in the area by removing threats and the conditions that favor IED emplacement."

The vision was that route clearance and route sanitation should go hand-in-hand to support

the same outcome. While route clearance removes the improvised explosive device threat for coalition forces and the community, route sanitation or cleaning the rubbish from the streets and medians, helps to remove waste material that can be used as concealment for roadside bombs. Both activities lessen the effectiveness of terrorists in Baghdad and improve the conditions of Iraqi communities.

On average, the 890th Eng. Bn. conducts four cooperative sanitation missions a week with construction assets from the 46th Eng. Bn. To date, the 890th Eng. Bn. has directed and overseen 72 successful route sanitation missions that help clean up the streets of Baghdad, said Weaver.

"Our efforts can be seen all over the Baghdad area, everyone benefits from the combined missions that our battalion directs. Our Soldiers are proud to be able to support the local government in making the surroundings normal again as we did the Mississippi Gulf Coast after Katrina."



Soldiers from 2nd Platoon, 688th Mobility Augmentation Company, 890th Engineer Battalion, 926th Engineer Brigade, Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 46th Engineer Battalion search the busy streets of Baghdad for rubbish and explosive devices during a routine route sanitation mission, Feb. 7.

An Iraqi man makes room for more debris by burning the garbage to compact one of the local landfills in Baghdad, Feb. 7. The 890th Engineer Battalion, 926th Engineer Brigade, conducts route clearance and sanitation patrols to clear Iraqi communities of debris and deny terrorists the ability to hid improvised explosive devices.



# Purple Heart Medals Awarded to Kirkuk Airmen

by Senior Airman Jessica Lockoski  
506th Air Expeditionary Group PAO

**KIRKUK REGIONAL AIR BASE, Iraq** - Turning one's back on a problem is usually an avoidance technique. But for two explosive ordnance disposal technicians whose backs were to a recovered rocket as they were temporarily stepping away, the act likely saved their lives, preventing posthumous awards of Purple Heart medals.

Standing in their own EOD compound, near the blast site where a more-than one-foot deep crater and blast-splattered walls testify to the incident, Staff Sgt. Brandon Pfannenstiel and Senior Airman Robert Wester received their medals from Brig. Gen. Brian Bishop, 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing commander, during a ceremony here Feb. 4.

The airmen suffered injuries while in the process of analyzing a recovered explosive Jan. 3.

Pfannenstiel, deployed from Whiteman AFB, Mo., recalled the "miracle" that would have put them inches away from the detonation.

"It was white and loud, my ears were ringing, and all I kept thinking was my fellow airman, Wester, was behind me," said the Midland, Texas, native. "I turned around to make sure he was ok."

"We're very fortunate," said a Wester, a Knoxville, Tenn., native, deployed from Hickam AFB, Hawaii.

Wester was partially shielded from the blast by a pressure washer and grill in area. He said when it exploded, he felt pressure in his back. That "pressure" ended up being metal fragments hitting his leg and back, two inches from his spine.

"I was dazed and wasn't expecting it," Wester said. "The blast ... clouded my judgment, so I didn't know if it was indirect fire or an IED. I ran 10 feet before I fell to the ground."

20 Coalition Chronicle



Staff Sgt. Brandon Pfannenstiel (right) and Senior Airman Robert Wester, explosive ordnance disposal technicians with the 506th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, receive Purple Heart medals from Brig. Gen. Brian Bishop, 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing commander, Feb. 4. Pfannenstiel and Wester were wounded Jan. 3. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Eunique Stevens)

The IED that the team encountered wasn't one that could be referenced by textbook, according to Capt. Shane Frith, flight commander of 506th Explosive Ordnance Disposal. "It was the first one of its kind that we've seen," he said.

The morning of the accident, the team responded to an improvised explosive device in downtown Kirkuk, Firth explained. "They recovered an explosive rocket that was pointed to launch toward the base.

"We have changed certain things, said Pfannenstiel. "You can't always just look back and question what you do. You do everything the safest way you can, which we did, but we learned a new tactic."

The two airmen now have their own lessons learned from real and dangerous enemies.

"I walk past it many times, Wester said of the blast site."Every time ... I am thankful more than anything, I am more vigilant."

"I'm dumbfounded that both of our lives could have been taken, Pfannenstiel said. "Some people don't understand the dangers of our job. We operate the safest way possible, but possibility is always out there."

"Through this event, we have learned more about the enemy tactics and we have adjusted our procedures accordingly to prevent further injuries or death to our EOD techs and our Iraqi partners," Firth said. "It was a very close call for both of my troops and had they been delayed even five seconds in their procedures, we would be writing a different story about their lives.

"While it is extremely unfortunate that they were injured, the positive side is that we now know more about the way to counter the insurgents' methods of targeting and killing U.S. and coalition forces," he said.



# IN MEMORIAM

NAMES OF COALITION SERVICE MEMBERS WHO DIED BETWEEN JANUARY 1 AND JANUARY 31, 2009 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*

**February 6**

***Spc. Christopher P. Sweet, 28***

**February 8**

***Sgt. James M. Dorsey, 23***

**February 9**

***Lt. Col. Garnet R. Derby, 44***

***Sgt. Joshua A. Ward, 30***

***Pfc. Albert R. Jex, 23***

***Pfc. Jonathan R. Roberge, 22***

**February 12**

***British Pvt. Ryan Wathall***

**February 14**

***Cpl. Stephen S. Thompson, 23***

**February 15**

***Staff Sgt. Sean D. Diamond, 41***

**February 19**

***Pfc. Cwislyn K. Walter, 19***

**February 21**

***Staff Sgt. Mark C. Baum, 32***

**February 23**

***Cpl. Michael L. Mayne, 21***

***Spc. Micheal B. Alleman, 31***

***Pfc. Zachary R. Nordmeyer, 21***

**February 24**

***1st Lt. William E. Emmert, 36***

**February 26**

***Spc. Brian M. Connelly, 26***



**U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Robert Caslen** (center) from Berlington, Vt., and commanding general of Multi-National Division-North, leads the traditional Great Aloha Run at Contingency Operating Base Speicher Feb. 8. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kani Ronningen)

