

A close-up, profile view of a woman wearing a red headscarf with a subtle pattern. She is looking down, her face partially visible, towards a book or document at the bottom of the frame. The background is a blurred, light-colored wall.

COALITION CHRONICLE

Volume 4, Issue 4

April 2009

Multi-National
Corps - Iraq
Changes Hands

President Obama
Visits Victory
Base Complex

ISF Learn the
Art of War

Marine
Saves Lives



A local **Iraqi teacher** at the Khawr Az Zubayar Primary School waits for Iraqi soldiers to hand out school supplies to her students, in the Az Zubayar district, in Basra, Iraq, March 17. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Karah Cohen)



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Soldiers prepare to take off on an administrative flight to a series of bases in Iraq's Al Anbar province.



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British troops discuss their footpatrol area on Leaf Island in northern Basra.



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Marine awarded for his actions during a vehicle roll over in Karmah, Iraq, Aug. 7, 2008 that saved six lives.

COALITION CHRONICLE

*The Official Magazine of
Multi-National Corps – Iraq*

**April 2009
Volume 4, Issue 4**

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Lt. Gen. Charles H. Jacoby Jr., commanding general, I Corps and Multi-National Corps—Iraq, and **Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Grippe**, command sergeant major, I Corps and MNC-I, unfurl the unit colors at the MNC-I transfer of authority ceremony at Al Faw Palace on Camp Victory, April 4. I Corps, of Ft. Lewis, Wash., assumed command from the Fort Bragg, N.C.-based XVIII Airborne Corps. (U.S. Army photo by Lee Cracker)





U.S. Army Sergeant Dylan Taylor, with the 328th Combat Support Hospital, Medical Support Division, Detachment 40, informs Multi-National Forces, Iraq's Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence K. Wilson, on medical procedures for detainees held at Camp Taji, March 19. Taylor works as a medic in the detachment's treatment section. (U.S Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Denise M. Serrano)

Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence K. Wilson, Multi-National Forces-Iraq Command Sergeant Major, paid a visit to Camp Taji, Iraq to tour the newly built Theatre Internment Facility Rehabilitation Center, or TIFRC, March 19.

The TIFRC was completed in November 2007 and began housing detainees in December 2008. The facility was built to alleviate overcrowding at the other detainee facilities located in Iraq. It cost an estimated \$77 million, can house more than 5000 detainees and provides large exercise areas and an entertainment area which can also be used as a place to worship.

"The TIFRC complex, compared to other facilities, has great improvements that will enable us to better house and care for detainees... to treat them with dignity and respect," said Wilson.

The ultimate goal is to hand over the facility to the Iraqi government, and have trained Iraqis working as guards by the end of 2009, he said.

MNF-I CSM Visits Camp Taji

by Sgt. Denise M. Serrano (USMC)
Multi-National Force - Iraq



Currently the TIFRC is managed by the 508th Military Police Battalion from Fort Lewis, Washington, and manned by various U.S. service members deployed to Camp Taji.

While touring the TIFRC grounds,

Wilson made it a point to stop and talk with the service members responsible for keeping the complex running smoothly.

Sgt. Dylan Taylor, a medic with the 328th Combat Support Hospital, was one such person.

"I could tell immediately he (Wilson) was a down-to-earth guy," said Taylor. "He asked me about my job, my family, and my hometown. He shook my hand and even gave me his Command Sergeant Major coin!"

"I realized that despite his position, he was able to put away all the formal bells and whistles and make other Soldiers feel comfortable and proud of what we do. I now view Command Sergeant Major Wilson with the utmost respect and continue to form my leadership style accordingly," said Taylor.

Wilson, who started his 24-month deployment in Iraq in November 2008, continues a fast paced schedule, ensuring that he visits multiple establishments and service members along the way.

U.S. MILITARY MAKES LAST PAYMENT TO SONS OF IRAQ

Story and photo by Pvt. Justin Naylor
Multi-National Division – North PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq – More than a thousand Iraqis stand patiently outside of a gated compound.

Three neatly aligned tables are set up inside the gates. Each table is manned by both Iraqi army and U.S. Soldiers. Large stacks of Iraqi money rest on the tables awaiting placement into the hands of the hard-working members of the Sons of Iraq.

This was the sight in the city of Sudayra in the province of Kirkuk, Iraq, March 2, where the U.S. military made its last payment to the members of the SoI. The Government of Iraq assumed full

responsibility for payments, April 1. U.S. military members played the role of observers as Iraqi soldiers handled making the actual payments to the SoI.

"This is a great step in the right direction," said Sheikh Farhan, a leader of the SoI in the Sudayra region. "Each day the Government of Iraq is growing stronger, and we are becoming more independent."

"By taking over payments, Iraq is showing us that they are truly taking over from Coalition forces," said Sheikh Razzaq, also of the SoI.

"This is one of the many milestones that the GoI is hitting day by day," said Cpt. Justin Michel, commander, Company A, 1st

Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. "This transfer is a necessary step that the government of Iraq is taking to show its citizens that it is taking the lead on more programs."

As security improvements continue in the region, transferring control of the SoI to the GoI is another step in enabling the GoI to control the violence in Iraq.

"The Sons of Iraq and Iraqi army have done a great job so far at improving security," said Michel. "I think that will continue to build upon the foundation they have now and the region will steadily become safer."

"We can reduce violence together," said Razzaq.

Though the U.S. military will no longer be responsible for making SoI payments, they will not be completely removed from the process in the coming months.

"Just because the Iraqi army is going to be in control doesn't mean we are going to be gone altogether," said Lt. Col. David Lesperance, commander, 1st Bn, 8th Cav. Regt., 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. "The Iraqi army, Sons of Iraq and coalition forces are going to be working side-by-side in the coming months to ensure that the transition goes well."



A soldier from the Iraqi army gives a monthly payment to a Son of Iraq payment in the city of Sudayra in the province of Kirkuk, Iraq, March 2. This is the last payment coalition forces will be making to the SoI. The Government of Iraq assumed full responsibility of payments April 1.

Soldiers with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 211th Aviation Regiment, General Support Air Battalion Air Ambulance, prepare to take off on an administrative flight to a series of bases in Iraq's Al Anbar province, Feb. 23.



Air Ambulance on Standby Throughout Al Anbar Province

Story and photos by Cpl. Jo Y. Jones
Multi-National Force - West PAO



AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq – In combat, timeliness is everything, and when it comes to wounded service members, a quick response and delivery to appropriate medical care can mean the difference between life and death. Whether the injured are located in rural areas of Iraq or on forward operating bases, a group of Soldiers aboard Al Asad Air Base are ready to come to the rescue.

Soldiers of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 211th Aviation Regiment, General Support Air Battalion Air Ambulance, work around the clock to provide air medical evacuation services for coalition forces of Multi National Force - West, Iraqi civilians, contractors and occasionally, enemy detainees.

“The primary job of medical support is to get patients off the battlefield as quickly as possible,” said Army 1st Sgt. Andrew Carrillo, first sergeant of 2/211.

In order to ensure timely responses, two crews are on always on duty; 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Each crew consists of a four-man team: a pilot-in-command, a co-pilot, a crew chief, and a medic, who stay within sprinting distance of their mission-ready aircraft during

their assigned shift.

Army Sgt. Thomas McNamara, a crew chief with 2/211, said the crews maintain their fleet of UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters to be ready to fly at a moment's notice, and the crews constantly practice their response routines. By going through the same routine for each and every mission, they can cut down on their response time and get airborne and to the scene of an emergency faster.

“Even the mundane tasks, from putting on your seatbelt to climbing in and out of the aircraft, we do the same way, every time,” advised McNamara. “Doing the same thing, the same way every time will save your life and someone else's.”

Should the crews receive a non-routine medical evacuation call, they have a maximum of fifteen minutes to gather the crew and get off the ground.

Army Staff Sgt. Micah Ann Anderson, a 2/211 flight operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge, said most medical evacuation missions generally take an hour and a half from start to finish. Five to ten minutes are spent on the ground, depending on the location, and the rest of the time is spent

getting to the scene of the emergency and transporting the patient to a designated military hospital or clinic. Aviation detachments similar to the one at Al Asad are scattered throughout the province to ensure the forces operating within the region have medical response coverage.

When the crews are not responding to medical evacuation calls, they plan routine flights to transport supplies and non-emergent patients from one base within Al Anbar province to another. These scheduled runs take place once every three days or so, depending on need and weather, and reach such far-flung outposts as those at Camp Korean Village and Al Taqaddum.

Anderson said the Soldiers have learned a lot during this deployment and responded well to the stress and demands of the missions.

“We have done very well in terms of our flight hours and missions,” said Anderson. “At the end of the day, it's great to be part of saving lives.”



Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Wade J. Olson, an instructor pilot for Company C, 2nd Battalion, 211th Aviation Regiment, General Support Air Battalion Air Ambulance, smiles while flying the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter during an administrative flight over Iraq's Al Anbar province, Feb. 23.

USS Chinook Makes First Overnight U.S. Ship Visit to Iraq

By Lt. Nathan Christensen
U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Public Affairs

The coastal patrol craft USS Chinook (PC 9) makes a port visit to Umm Qasr, Iraq, marking the first overnight port visit to Iraq by a U.S. Navy ship. While in port, Chinook took on fuel and other supplies and crewmembers participated in friendship-building activities with several senior Iraqi officers. (U.S. Navy photo by Lt. Owen Morrissey)



Senior Iraqi officers greet Lt. Allen Maxwell, commanding officer of the coastal patrol craft USS Chinook (PC 9), during a port visit by Chinook to Umm Qasr, Iraq, March 25.

UMM QASR, Iraq (NNS) -- USS Chinook (PC 9) departed Umm Qasr, Iraq, March 25, marking the first overnight port visit to Iraq by a U.S. ship.

"The U.S. Navy has operated in the region for more than 60 years, and Chinook's visit marks the first time a U.S. ship has remained overnight in Iraq; that's extremely significant," said Rear Adm. T.C. Cropper, deputy commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command.

"Chinook's visit exemplifies the great confidence we have in our Iraqi partners and reflects the excellent improvements in security that they have achieved. It also demonstrates our commitment and partnership with the Government of Iraq, its people and the Iraqi Navy."

While in port, the ship's crewmembers were able to participate in friendship-building activities with several senior Iraqi

officers as well as conduct a logistics' replenishment, where the ship took on fuel and other various supplies.

"This is an important day for us and for Iraq," said Lt. Allen Maxwell, Chinook's commanding officer.

"Our visit gave us a chance to interact with senior Iraqi Navy leadership and further enhance cooperation with the Iraqi Navy and Marines. Today was an extraordinary opportunity, and I am proud to have made a positive difference in Iraq's future."

USCGC Aquidneck (WPB 1309)'s daylight-only port visit to Umm Qasr Dec. 15, 2008, marked the last visit by a U.S. ship to the Iraqi port. Cropper was pier-side for Chinook's arrival to Umm Qasr and said he hopes more coalition ships will visit the Iraqi port in the months and years to come.

"Visits like this are important because they help reinforce the

strong ties that already exist between our two navies," said Cmdr. Thomas Cawley, NAVCENT's country engagement officer to Iraq.

Coalition maritime forces in the North Arabian Gulf maintain a naval and air presence to safeguard the region's vital links to the global economy. These key maritime infrastructure nodes are the foundation for the region's economic growth, stability and prosperity as well as significantly impact the global economy.

"Our forces are here to foster security and cooperation in the region and conduct operations that contribute to peace and stability," said Cropper. "U.S. and coalition forces provide the assurance of security and stability that enables the economic development and growing prosperity throughout this region."

British Lance Cpl. Martin John Campbell after clearing a delapidated building on Leaf Island in northern Basra during a footpatrol, Mar. 20. “The Rifles,” of 2nd Platoon, A Company, 5th Battalion, presently at Forward Operating Base Oxford, in the Basra Marshlands, routinely patrol the area reducing the threat of indirect fire.

BRITISH RIFLEMEN AND IRAQI FORCES SECURE SAFETY, ENSURE PROSPERITY

Photos and story by Capt. Jeff Johnson
Multi-National Division South East PAO



BASRA – Coalition troops at a marshland outpost are partnering with the Iraqi Security Forces to defeat indirect fire attacks against the Basra Contingency Operating Base, Mar. 20.

The Basra COB was once a place of almost daily rocket attacks. From last February, the monthly average of 28 has been reduced to a current low of four in the last six months. The security success is due in no small part to the efforts of the British soldiers - some of whom were here at the start, working as stewards of peace throughout southern Iraq.

One of the units, the 5th Battalion – “The Rifles,” an armored infantry battalion within the 20th Armoured Brigade, has had units in Iraq dating back to the beginning with Operation Telic 1 (Operation Iraqi Freedom). They are the only British army battalion to have done four tours here and to have participated in the 2003 invasion. The Rifles are scheduled to stay until the British end-of-mission is reached later this year.

Today, the 5 Rifles battle group accounts for nearly 8

twenty five percent of the remaining United Kingdom forces in Iraq. Their soldiers partner with US and Iraqi forces throughout the Province and share in recent successes in developments at the ports of entry, the January provincial elections and reduction of rocket attacks on the Basra COB.

“We have been operating in the marshes from boats, a new innovation and very much operating with the fisherman and with the local people,” said British Lt. Col. Edward Chamberlain, commanding officer, 5 Rifles. “We have slowly managed to join that up with some of the elements of the Iraqi Army with 52 Brigade, 14 Division.”

“They have started to do some joint activity with us, quite a lot of joint patrolling and I think that is the overall real success; that we have been able to gently take a rearward step as the Iraqis grow in confidence and the other Iraqi security forces are growing in confidence,” said Chamberlain.

Today a foot patrol on Leaf Island in northern Basra

is an opportunity for the British Riflemen to ensure security and observe positive developments in the area like new roads and consistent electrical power to the homes of residents.

“When we were at Leaf Island in December, the electric(ity) went down at night, there were constant power surges that caused black-outs and they would go anywhere from 12-14 hours per day without electric(ity). However, now when we go down at night there are always buildings with lights on,” said British Army Sgt. Nicholas Potter, platoon sergeant, 2 Platoon, A Company, 5 Rifles.

The primary mission for 2 Platoon at FOB Oxford is



British Lt. Col. Edward Chamberlain
Commanding Officer, 5 Rifles

“... we have been able to gently take a rearward step as the Iraqis grow in confidence and the other Iraqi security forces are growing in confidence.”



British soldiers pass an Iraqi man and children on Leaf Island in northern Basra during a routine footpatrol to reduce the threat of indirect fire, Mar. 20.

counter-IDF in the Leaf Island area, which is a few miles outside of COB Basra.

“There has only been one IDF (indirect fire) rocket fired from Leaf Island since we have been here,” said Lance Cpl. Martin John Campbell, on his second tour in Iraq.

Leaf Island today has happy children playing in the streets, and fishermen working their trade for the next trip to the market.

“We have seen a full circle - it has gone from good to bad and back to good,” Potter said.

During an unannounced visit, **President Barack Obama** addressed more than 1,000 U.S. service members, government civilians and contractors assembled in the rotunda of Al Faw Palace in Baghdad, the headquarters of Multi-National Corps – Iraq, April 7. Obama told the crowd that through their service, they have been critical in ensuring that Iraq no longer remains a haven for terrorists. (U.S. Army photos by Lee Craker, Staff Sgt. Joy Pariente, and Spc. Eric Martinez)



*President Barack Obama
Al Faw Palace
Baghdad, Iraq 2009*



Lance Cpl. Robert Thomas, a motor transport operator with Truck Company, II Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group (Forward), takes a moment to wipe down the windows of his Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle prior to a combat logistics convoy from Camp Al Taqaddum to Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, March 12. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Master Sgt. Keith A. Milks)



Iraqi children greet Spc. Jeremy Sparks from Green Platoon, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, during the clearance of Shuzayf, Iraq, on March 26. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Walter J. Pels)



U.S. Soldiers assigned to Delta Company, 1st Combined Armor Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, fire the 120mm mortar system in Mahmadiyah, Iraq, while training Iraqi Army soldiers from 17th IA Division, on its proper usage, March 26. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kani Ronningen)



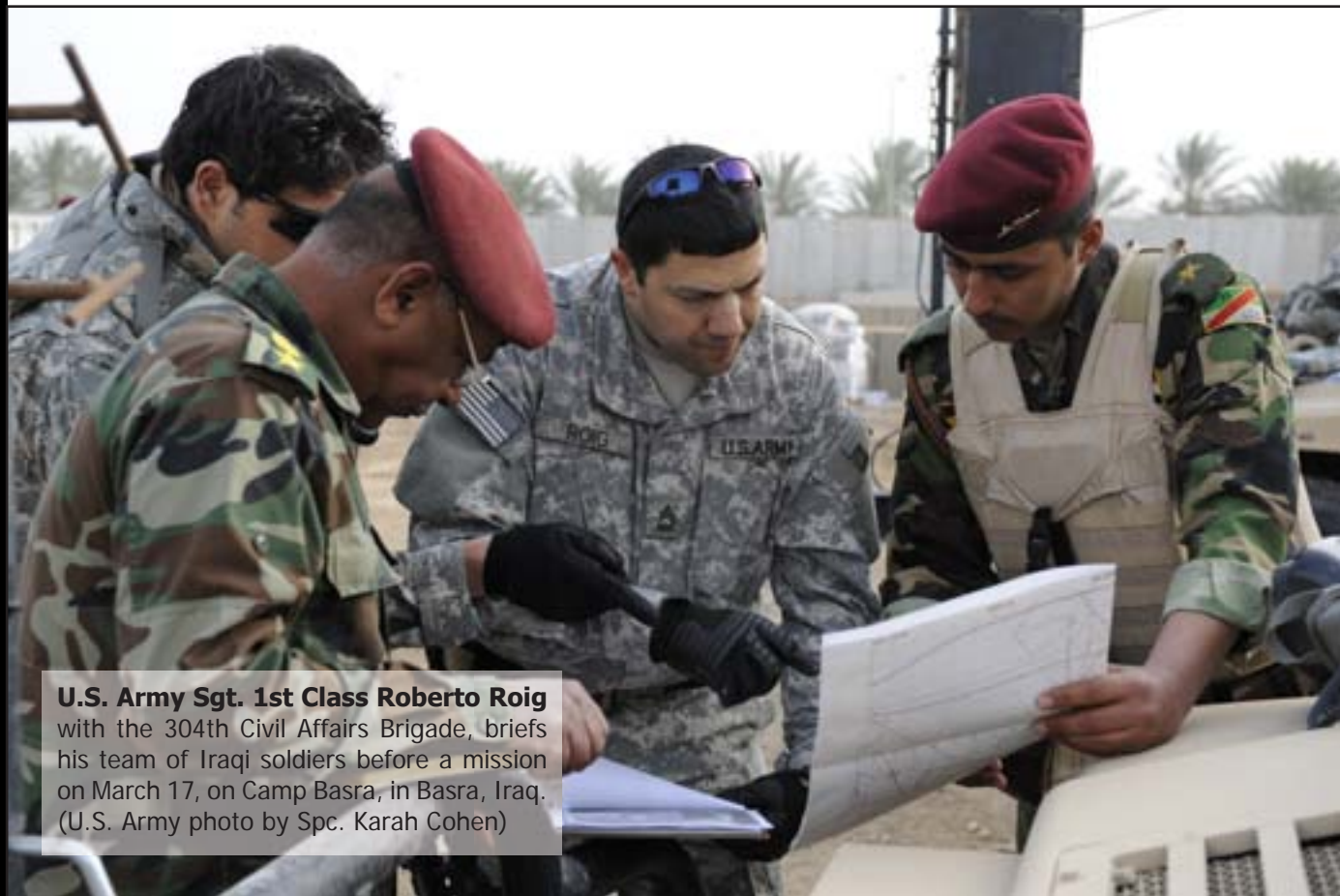
An Iraqi soldier from the 8th Division, Iraqi Army, provides security during a halt in Hamza, Iraq, March 16. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Eric Harris)



Female Iraqi police recruits practice weapons maintenance at the Iraqi police Academy in Karbala, Iraq, on March 26. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kim Smith)



Nurses and doctors gather to show their appreciation for the donations and support given by the 304th Civil Affairs Brigade and the Iraqi soldiers, at the Al Queel Hospital, in the Az Zubayar district, in Basra, Iraq, on March 17. The 304th Civil Affairs Brigade is supporting the Iraqi soldiers in a medical supply handout. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Karah Cohen)



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Roberto Roig with the 304th Civil Affairs Brigade, briefs his team of Iraqi soldiers before a mission on March 17, on Camp Basra, in Basra, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Karah Cohen)



Chaplain [Lt. Col.] Jeffrey Houston, deputy corps chaplain, Multi-National Corps – Iraq, hosts the end-of-tour memorial ceremony at Al Faw Palace, March 20. The ceremony, which paid tribute to the memory of fallen Soldiers during the XVIII Airborne Corps' 15-month deployment, included the firing of volleys by the Task Force Dragon Honor Guard and the playing of Taps by the 10th Mountain Division Band bugler. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Eric J. Glassey)



Iraqi Soldiers show U.S. Army Master Sgt. Robert Eplee, a member of the 6th Iraqi Army Military Training and Transition Team, the hand signal for a closed door entry, on Joint Security Station Kdhimiya Iraq, March 2. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Daniel Owen)

TEACHING IRAQI SECURITY FORCES THE ART OF WAR

by Sgt. Brian Tierce
2nd HBCT PAO, 1st Inf. Div., MND-B

Not long after the announcement that American forces would end their combat mission in Iraq in August of 2010, Multi-National Division-Baghdad Soldiers returned to training the Iraqi troops who will remain on the streets of Baghdad long after the departure of coalition Soldiers.

Soldiers assigned to Military Training and Transition Team 10599 and 47693 conducted military operations in urban terrain, or MOUT, training at Muthana Airfield in the Kadhamiyah district of northwest Baghdad, March 3, with soldiers from the 6th Iraqi Army Division's Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Battalion.

"MOUT training is one part of a comprehensive program we've initiated to train the ISR Battalion's noncommissioned officers on their mission-essential tasks," said Capt. Joseph Valimont, a native of Champion, Ohio. "More importantly, we're training the battalion's NCOs to train their soldiers themselves. We have to ensure that their junior leadership is able to get this training done on their own."

The day started for the ISF soldiers with a classroom session and walk through of the basic skills necessary to conduct operations in urban terrain.

With a population in the range of seven million and sprawling buildings all around, the urban skills the ISF learn in the course and teach to their comrades, could pave the way for greater success in the fight against

criminal organizations.

"They showed a very positive attitude, were very eager to learn, and were motivated," said Sgt. 1st Class Calvin Clark, a native of Columbus, Ga. "We're building a foundation so they can then build on that foundation in the future."

Setting a solid base is not only important to the MND-B trainers, but also to the 6th Iraqi Army Division leadership who attended the training event to see their soldiers in action.

"Most of the training is very good. We've become much more efficient at clearing houses and finding what we're looking for," said Maj. Hussein, executive officer, 6th Iraqi Army Division ISR Battalion. "Before the soldiers weren't as thorough in searching houses after they'd cleared them; now they've found insurgents in areas they'd previously overlooked."



Above: **U.S. Army Master Sgt. Robert Eplee**, a member of the 6th Iraqi Army Military Transition Team, demonstrates how to enter a room under the cover of a smoke grenade, on Joint Security Station Kdhimiya Iraq, March 2. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Daniel Owen)

Now that the training is starting to pay dividends with more successful missions, the MiTT team Soldiers are still pressing forward with even more training events; and the Iraqi soldiers are taking it all in.

"One thing that impressed me about the Iraqis is they seemed eager to learn," said Master Sgt. Robert Eplee, a MOUT Instructor from Brevard, N.C. "They're really hungry for some good training."

After an intense day of training, the Iraqi Soldiers and the MiTT team members had the chance to highlight the improvements made by the ISF.

"Overall, the ISF soldiers' performance was a success; we reached our goal, which was to get them to move from building to building as they cleared them, both as a team and as part of a squad," said Valimont. "When we could move two teams together, I knew we'd taught them something."

Below: **An Iraqi Soldier** clears his sector of fire as he enters the room, on Joint Security Station Kdhimiya Iraq, March 2. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Daniel Owen)





Staff Sgt. Chayla Gooch, 732nd Expeditionary Logistical Readiness Squadron, 586th Task Force, marks the armored security vehicle, ensuring the right vehicles get picked up for transport at Camp Liberty, Iraq. This vehicle is a part of a convoy going to Kuwait with approximately 30 semi-trucks loaded with all types of military vehicles. Gooch, a Joint Expeditionary Tasking airman and native of Marksville, La., is deployed from Langley Air Force Base, Va.

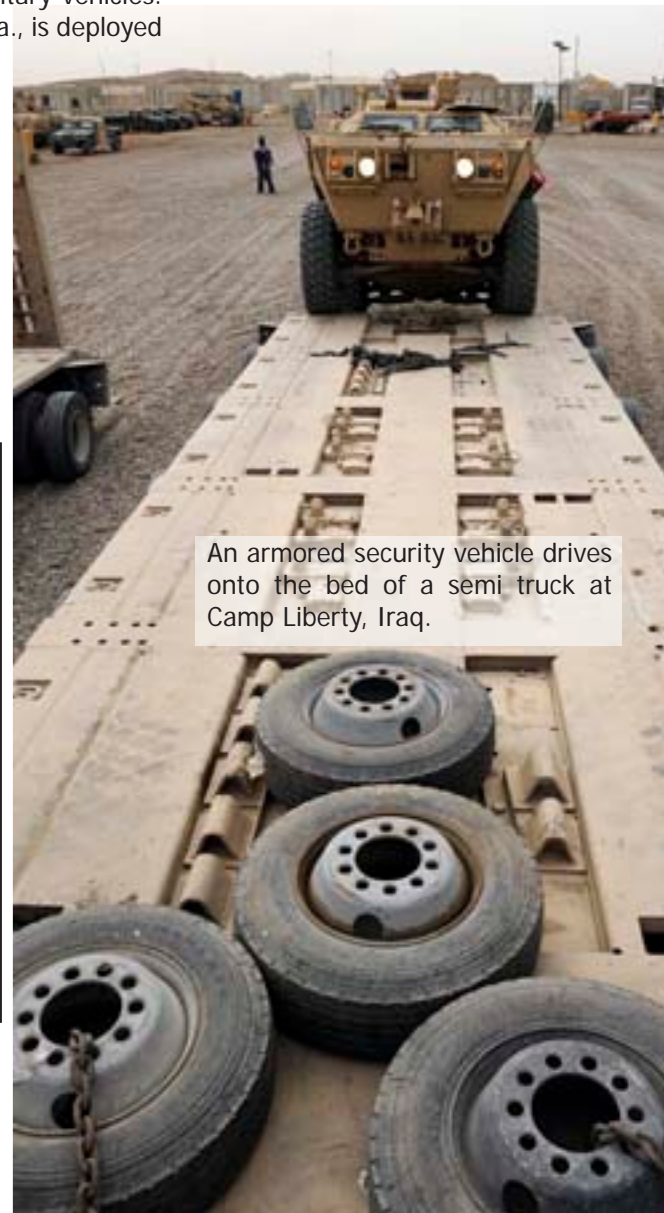
Airmen Process More Than a Billion Dollars in Vehicles, Equipment



An Army Soldier leads the armored security vehicle and drives onto the bed of a semi truck at Camp Liberty, Iraq. One of the redistribution property assistance team's primary duties is to issue military vehicles out to the Army for either combat operations or transport. The personnel at the yard have been able to more than \$1 billion worth of equipment in their six month deployments.



(US Air Force photos by Senior Airman Jacqueline Romero)



An armored security vehicle drives onto the bed of a semi truck at Camp Liberty, Iraq.

Iraqi Security Forces Take Helm at Diwaniya's Joint Security Station 2

Story and photos by Sgt. Rodney Foliente
2nd Brigade Combat Team,
4th Infantry Division Public Affairs



CAMP ECHO, Iraq – Iraqi Security Forces and the local government assumed full responsibility for manning and operating the Joint Security Station 2 in Diwaniya during a ceremony March 14.

The 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, transferred full authority to the ISF, offering the symbolic JSS 2 key to Col. Abed al Jalil Abdul Amir, chief of staff for the Diwaniya Provincial Department of Police.

"The Iraqi Security Forces are willing, ready and capable to conduct operations. This has been evident with the recent holidays, as well as the (provincial) elections," said Maj. William Sachse, executive officer for 2nd Combined Arms Bn., 8th Inf. Regt.

During those events, the ISF provided the majority of the security, keeping the citizens safe and maintaining the peace. The security the people of Diwaniya are experiencing is largely due to the outstanding leadership



Above: **Col. Abed al Jalil Abdul Amir**, chief of staff for the Diwaniya Provincial Department of Police, signs a transfer of authority document during a ceremony turning over the Joint Security Station 2 to Iraqi security forces control in Diwaniya, March 14.

Left: **Maj. William Sachse**, executive officer for 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, offers the symbolic key of Joint Security Station 2 to Col. Abed al Jalil Abdul Amir, chief of staff for the Diwaniya Provincial Department of Police, during a ceremony turning over the JSS 2 to Iraqi security forces control in Diwaniya, March 14.

and efforts of the ISF, said Sachse.

He also applauded the work of the Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Combined Arms Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., who worked and lived with the Iraqi Army Soldiers and Iraqi Police at JSS 2.

"Today marks an important day for the Iraqi people of Diwaniya. The transfer of JSS 2 highlights the irreversible momentum toward a free and prosperous Iraq. Although U.S. forces are leaving JSS 2, our relationship will not change. I look forward to our continued partnership," said Sachse in a speech during the ceremony.

"The Iraqi Security Forces are ready and capable to take over the responsibility and operations of this station," said Amir, through an interpreter. "The training we received from Coalition forces has improved our capabilities and we're now able to defend our country and protect our province."



Marine Saves Lives

Story and photo by
2nd Lt. Michele Perez,
2nd Marine Logistic Group PAO

CAMP RAMADI, Iraq - When driving down a U.S. road and witnessing an accident, most bystanders are likely to stop to make sure all of the occupants of the vehicles are okay. Now add the rollover of a 25-ton Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle into a water-filled canal and the threat of lurking insurgents. How many people would instinctively know what to do then?

Cpl. Dustin L. Griffin knew exactly what to do.

In a small ceremony on March 2, aboard Camp Ramadi, Iraq, Griffin, a security team leader with Security Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 5, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward), was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal for his actions following a vehicle rollover, Aug. 7, 2008, that aided in saving one Marine's life and the recovery of everyone in the vehicle.

The multi-vehicle convoy was traveling through Karmah, Iraq, on a routine mission when the fifth vehicle in the column rolled into a canal. Without hesitation, Griffin dismounted his vehicle and led the efforts of aiding the passengers trapped inside.

The vehicle, which was carrying six passengers, rolled over on its right side into a canal that was 10 to 11 feet deep and the MRAP was fully

submerged, said Griffin.

With complete disregard for his own safety, Griffin removed his personal protective equipment and ran down the steep embankment into the water. Once in the canal, he rescued the interpreter who had escaped the vehicle, but did not know how to swim, according to his award citation.

Three passengers were successfully brought to shore, leaving three still trapped in the vehicle. With the vehicle sitting under two feet of water, the rescue party was in a race against time. Their biggest obstacle was a several hundred pound door.

"It took about six [people] to get the door open," Griffin said. "Once we got the door open, myself and one of the vehicle commanders started looking for the VC and the driver."

Griffin dove in and was able to locate the vehicle commander, who was unresponsive, but still had a pulse.

"I took my Gerber out and started cutting the seat belt off," Griffin said. "We [other Marines in the convoy] worked together and pulled him out."

The two remaining Marines were found and brought up on shore to the casualty collection point. While the corpsman treated the victims, Griffin assisted in setting up the landing zone where the

Cpl. Clinton M. Griffin, security team leader, Security Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 5, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward), is presented the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal by Brig. Gen. Juan G. Ayala, commanding general, 2nd MLG, during a ceremony in Camp Ramadi, Iraq, March 2.

helicopter landed for the casualty evacuation.

Unfortunately, the Corps lost two Marines that day.

However, Griffin's efforts in this critical situation undoubtedly aided in saving at least one Marine's life and he greatly assisted in the overall rescue and

recovery efforts of five Marines and one interpreter, as described in his citation.

Griffin, an activated reservist from Tifton, Ga., was going to college and working with his father at a warehouse distribution center before deploying in Feb. 2008. He volunteered to join CLB-1 on their deployment for Operation Iraqi Freedom, then extend for an extra seven months and joined the battalion's replacing unit, CLB-5.

Griffin's quick and decisive action came down to training.

"For this scenario that happened, we have trained so much that when something did happen, there was no hesitation," Griffin said. "You had a few seconds of shock and then everyone clicked into gear ... no one asked questions; they just started doing it immediately."

At the end of his deployment, Griffin plans to return to school to earn his degree in criminal justice to help him accomplish his dream of becoming an FBI agent. But he has one more thing to do before focusing on this goal.

"I just want to volunteer to [deploy again] as soon as possible, that's my first priority," Griffin said. "I just really enjoy it [deploying], I'm really good at doing it - it's kind of natural to me."

IN MEMORIAM

NAMES OF COALITION SERVICE MEMBERS WHO DIED BETWEEN MARCH 1 AND
MARCH 31, 2009 WHILE SERVING IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

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

JOHN 15:13

March 2

Sgt. Jeffrey A. Reed, 23

March 3

Spc. Jessica Y. Sarandrea, 22

March 7

1st Lt. Daniel B. Hyde, 24

March 10

Lance Cpl. Patrick A. Malone, 21

March 16

Spc. Gary L. Moore, 25

March 19

Sgt. Jose R. Escobedo Jr., 32

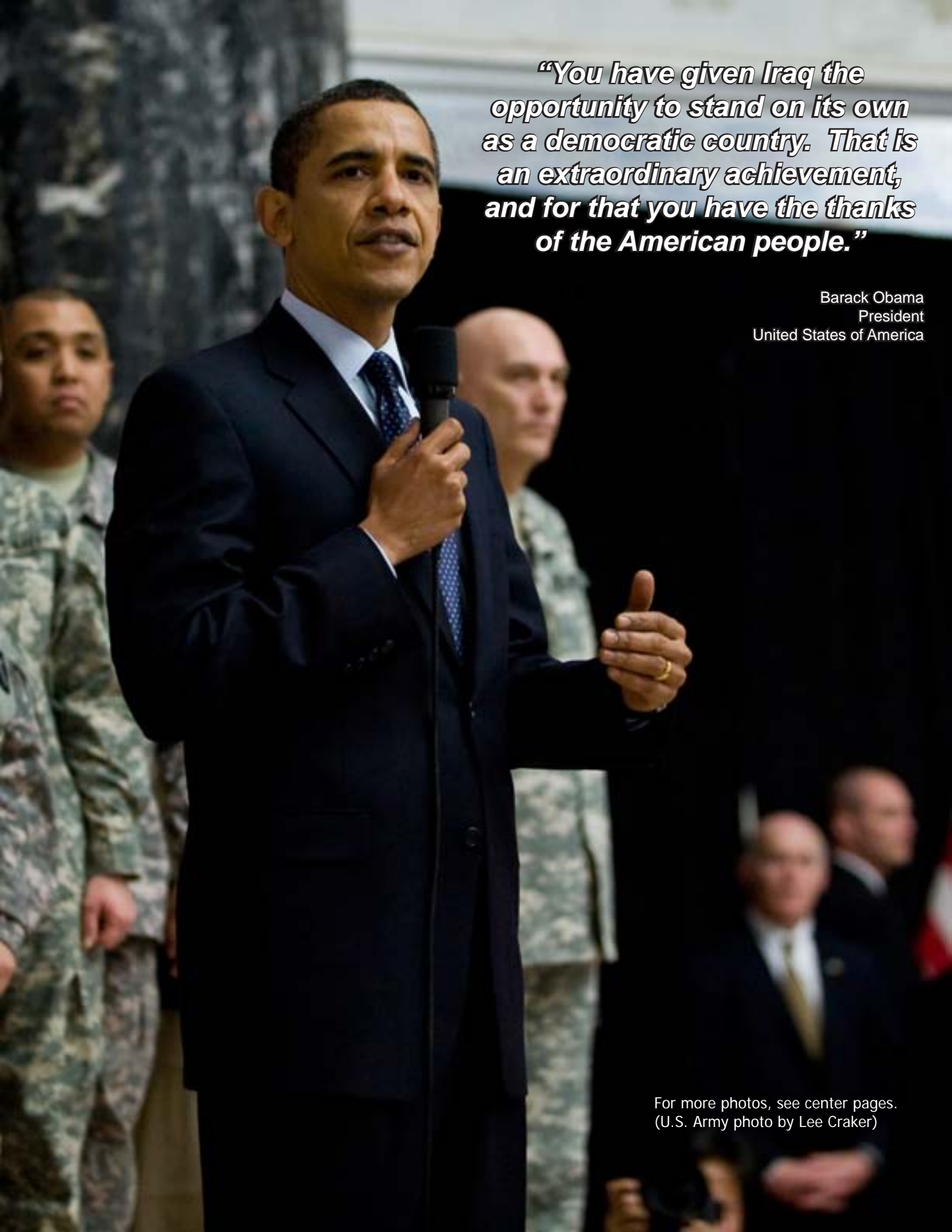
March 25

Staff Sgt. Raphael A. Futrell, 26

March 31

Sgt. Devin C. Poche, 25

Lance Cpl. Nelson M. Lantigua, 20

A photograph of Barack Obama, President of the United States, speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a blue patterned tie. He is holding a microphone in his right hand and gesturing with his left hand. In the background, several military personnel in camouflage uniforms are visible, along with other individuals in suits. The setting appears to be an outdoor event, possibly at the White House.

“You have given Iraq the opportunity to stand on its own as a democratic country. That is an extraordinary achievement, and for that you have the thanks of the American people.”

Barack Obama
President
United States of America

For more photos, see center pages.
(U.S. Army photo by Lee Craker)