



Security paved way to successful Iraqi elections

BAGHDAD – As Iraqi forces celebrate what their leaders are calling a resounding victory for a safe and free Iraq, U.S. Division – Center leaders are praising Soldiers for their strategic role in assisting them.

Despite an early morning attempt by terrorists to disrupt the elections, the Iraqi people resolved themselves to get out and vote at the March 7 general elections.

American leaders watched as trained and determined Iraqi Security Forces stopped terrorists at every turn from scaring voters away from polling sites – a force that they had been involved in training and assisting; a force they were still involved with assisting.

Though most Soldiers from 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Div., in western Baghdad,

remained inside the wire, a small few stepped outside the wire to escort United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq personnel and western media to polling sites.

“The security was tight,” said Guy DiDomenico, a U.N. field security specialist, touring a polling site in Mansour. He explained that around 8:30 a.m., polling was slow. However, many more voters arrived between 10 a.m. and noon.

Compared to the 2009 elections, at which he was also present, DiDomenico said security improved greatly this year and that the polling locations appeared much more organized, with more people working at them.

Watching from more than 300 meters away as their ISF counterparts handled the security at the polling sites,

U.S. Soldiers said they were impressed by the process.

“The ISF did a good job,” said Cpl. Andrew Canvasser, a military policeman with MP Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.

“The ISF used a show of force to keep order,” he said, explaining that both Iraqi Army and Police were present at the polling sites. “[They] did a good job minimizing [the] threat as much as they could.”

Meanwhile, back on Contingency Operating Location Constitution, the location of the 6th IA Div. Joint Operations Center, 4th Bde. Soldiers and leaders carefully monitored the security situation alongside their Iraqi partners.

Together, the two military forces shared intelligence about the situation

on the ground, coordinated the use of U.S. intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance equipment, and received updates from the field.

“The JOC was instrumental in ensuring that Iraqi and U.S. forces were synchronized, updated on each others’ activities, and allowed us to quickly and effectively maneuver ISR assets at the request of our partners,” said Col. John Norris, the brigade commander. “The JOC has proven to be a valuable tool and an asset that will continue to be used by our ISF partners long after we have gone.”

Even though the threat of violence against voters by insurgents was high and the sound of explosions could be heard in the distance throughout the morning, the ISF remained committed to providing a safe and secure environment for voters.

“As anticipated, [al Qaeda in Iraq] attempted to disrupt the elections, but the determination of the Iraqi people and the ISF has prevailed, and Iraq is moving forward,” said Norris.

DiDomenico agreed.

“I give a lot of credit to the Iraqi people for going out and voting even though there’s real danger out there,” he said. “It’s a sight to see people voting.”

As they watched the ISF operate at ground level, Capt. Justin Kennedy, from Belton, Texas, battle captain and an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter pilot with 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Bde., 1st Cav. Div., watched from the air.

“When we were out there, there wasn’t a single time today, when we looked at an Iraqi check point, that the Iraqi Security Forces weren’t doing their job,” Kennedy said. “It was an ultimate full-circle experience. Getting



Photo by Spc. Daniel Schneider, 366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – Pfc. Shane Packard, an infantryman assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, watches the horizon for possible insurgent attacks March 7 while the Abu Ghraib populace votes. The Iraqi Security Forces requested the presence of 1-38th in case they might have needed assistance.

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American customs versus Iraqi culture



In Iraqi culture the okay sign is an obscene gesture equal to giving someone the middle finger.



The bottom of the feet or shoes is considered unclean in Iraqi culture and should be kept on the ground out of sight.



In Iraqi culture the thumbs-up is also an obscene gesture equal to giving someone the middle finger.

Story by Sgt. Teri Hansen
Photos by Pfc. Debrah Sanders
366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD—Iraqi culture can vary greatly from American culture. Without even realizing the blunder a person can offend an Iraqi. An example would be making the thumbs-up sign. In American culture this is a positive sign, but to an Iraqi this is an obscene gesture equal to giving someone the middle finger. The okay sign is offensive in the same way. There are many mistakes one can make when interacting with persons of another culture. Knowing the customs and courtesies of that particular group of people can go a long way toward building a good rapport, according to the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity Quality and Dissemination Branch.

Family is the foundation of an Iraqi man's life. It is the center of honor, loyalty and reputation. When speaking to the head of the household, it is polite to inquire about his whole family, but it is not seemly to inquire about any one female of the family or show them direct attention. It is disrespectful to stand too close, stare at or touch a female.

When socializing, especially for business purposes, it is important to allot time for refreshments and light conversation. This establishes trust. Refusing food or drink that is offered can be very offensive. Be gracious in accept-

ing all refreshments. It is also important to refrain from eating, touching or gesturing with the left hand. This appendage is considered unclean. In addition, be aware of sitting posture. The bottom of the feet or shoes is considered unclean as well and should be kept on the ground out of sight.

One must be careful when praising an Iraqi's possessions. If too much praise is given to a single item, the Iraqi may be inclined to make that item a gift. They will also expect a gift of equal value in return.

As opposed to America's concept of personal space, Iraqis view close personal interaction as customary. Backing away is considered rude. Slouching or leaning are seen as signs of disinterest and are impolite. Other gestures commonly used by Americans can be very offensive to an Iraqi. Pointing at something with one finger is considered a sign of contempt; use the entire hand instead.

Hand gestures common to Iraqis include the right hand over the heart, which means thanks or can be a sign of respect. The right hand, palm up with fingers touching can mean slow down or be patient. A quick snap of the head upward combined with a clicking of the tongue can mean no.

Misunderstandings can happen in any situation. Observing people's customs can lessen the likelihood of something being misinterpreted. 🌈



Holding the right hand palm up with fingers touching is a gesture for an Iraqi that can mean slow down or be patient.



The placing of the right hand over the heart means thank you or can be a sign of great respect to an Iraqi.



Pointing at something with one finger is considered a sign of contempt to an Iraqi; use the entire hand instead.

www

Where did the numbers we use today come from

The numbers we use today (1, 2, 3, etc.) are all made up of algorithms, a process or set of rules to be followed in calculations. These are known as Arabic algorithms. The numerals (I, II, III, etc.) are known as Roman numerals because they're based on the Roman algorithm.

The Arabic algorithm is based on the number of angles in the numbers themselves. These are the numbers 0 through 9 in their original form and the angles used to determine them.

○
No angles

One angle ---> 1

--->Z<---Two angles

Three angles ---Z<---

--->A<---Four angles

--->E<---Five angles

Six angles --->F<---

1--->Z<---2 Seven angles

Eight angles 1--->X<---1

1--->9<---1 Nine angles

Information found at www.scribd.com



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Key U.S. leaders building rapport

Baghdad Belt Council opens communication



Photo by Sgt. Phillip Valentine, 366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – 1st Armored Division Commander Maj. Gen. Terry Wolff and the 1st Armd. Div., U.S. Division – Center, deputy commanding general – east, Brig. Gen. Ralph Baker, join Shaykh Ayadd al-Juburi and Shaykh Turki al-Ghartani during a meeting held Feb. 18 at Contingency Operating Location Prosperity. The intent of the meeting was to conduct a senior leader event with shaykhs and Iraqi Security Forces to strengthen ties with U.S. forces while building lines of communication between Sons of Iraq leadership and Government of Iraq officials.

Iron Castle Soldiers guide reconstruction efforts

Story by Spc. Brian Johnson
1434th Eng. Co., 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

BAGHDAD – Support from local Iraqi government agencies is key to U.S. military success with reconstruction efforts in Iraq, say Army officials.

The Joint Reconstruction Operations Center is helping to ensure that support continues and reconstruction expectations are met.

Established in 2006 by U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey, then the Multi-National Forces – Iraq commander, the original mission of the center was to coordinate and synchronize reconstruction efforts throughout Baghdad.

“The JROC’s current mission is to help people in the U.S. State Department and U.S. military units get essential service infrastructure projects done in and around the province of Baghdad,” said Col. Jeffrey Liethen, from Madison, Wis., JROC director. “We help with projects to fix the major electrical grid, the water purification systems, the sanitary sewer

and waste treatment systems, and solid waste landfills in Baghdad.”

The center is often a direct connection to many Iraqi government offices, to include the Ministries of Health, Defense, Electricity and Environment, as well as local amanats, the Baghdad Sewer and Water Authority, and other government offices located throughout the city.

Two Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 16th Engineer Brigade, are part of the reconstruction team: Maj. Donald Westfall, from Chardon, Ohio, and Sgt. Andy Carson, from Ashland, Ohio.

“The JROC works with a myriad of groups on reconstruction projects,” said Westfall. “We have worked with [U.S. Division-Center] brigades and division staff, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Task Force 134 and the provincial reconstruction teams.”

The JROC is currently working with officials at different levels, both civilian and military, on a myriad of projects. These projects include establishing constant power for the Boob Al Sham Industrial Zone, which will be

able to supply power to 600 factories once the project is complete.

One of the more important projects they are working on is the Karkh Waste Water Treatment Plant, attempting to get it back on-line. Once online, it will prevent more than 600,000 cubic meters of untreated sewage from flowing into the Tigris River each day.

Operations center employees help to ensure all of the stakeholders in reconstruction projects are aware of the progress and issues associated with those and many other projects, said Liethen.

“The projects that we do are important because they help many Iraqi people get the basic services that you and I take for granted in the U.S., like water for drinking, cooking, washing; toilets that flush; electricity for homes and businesses,” Liethen said.

According to him, as essential services improve, violence will hopefully decrease as U.S. forces continue their drawdown in Iraq. Though the JROC mission is expected to end soon, he said the impact they leave behind could last for generations to come. 🌈



Paratroopers assigned to 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, partner with Iraqi Army troops Feb. 3 to search for smugglers and caches in western Anbar province.

Paratroopers aid Iraqis in search for weapons

Story and photo by Kayleigh Sjoström
1st AAB, 82nd Abn. Div., USD-C

AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq – Advise and assist paratroopers partnered with Iraqi Army troops Feb. 3 to search for smugglers and caches in western Anbar province.

Infantrymen assigned to 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, worked side by side with 2nd Bn., 28th Bde., 7th Iraqi Army Div., based out of Camp Khalid, to conduct security reconnaissance near Watah.

The paratroopers have been working with the IA since November 2009, training them in proper reconnaissance techniques and maneuvers.

“The IA soldiers are eager to learn,” said 1st Sgt. Scott Thomas, the highest ranking noncommissioned officer in Co. C. “They have shown that the hours of instruction and joint training was not in vain but very valuable to the Iraqi Soldiers and to the defense of the Iraqi nation.”

The paratroopers have assisted the IA by teaching them how to properly conduct dismounted patrols as well as room and building clearing techniques and searching for hidden weapons, ammunition and explosives.

As the elections near, reconnaissance missions have increased in western Anbar to provide the province with more security.

“Our Iraqi Army partners are demonstrating the willingness and tactical acumen necessary to secure themselves and the local populace,” said Capt. Matthew Arabian, Co. C commander.

According to Thomas, the paratroopers plan to continue their partnered reconnaissance missions with the IA for the duration of the deployment. ▲

U.S., Iraqi Soldiers graduate software training together

Story & photo by Spc. Michael MacLeod
1st AAB, 82nd Abn. Div., USD-C

AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq – Iraqi instructors graduated 10 Iraqi and 10 U.S. Soldiers Feb. 18 from a three-day integrated logistics software training program.

The combined training will allow the Americans, part of the 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, to aid Iraqi logistics specialists from 7th Iraqi Army Div. in adapting the Iraqi maintenance and parts ordering process to a new software system.

“I am very proud of these graduates and what we are doing here to assist the Iraqi Army in achieving their goals,” said Lt. Col. Andrew Danwin, commander of the 307th Brigade Support Battalion, 1 AAB, 82nd Abn. Div.

“We are learning in this process also and taking time to learn their system and better it,” he said.

The Internet-based Iraq Army Asset Management Program is similar enough to the U.S. Army’s Standard Army Information Management System and Standard Army Retail Supply System programs, so that, now trained on the IAAMP program, advise and assist troops may suggest how their Iraqi counterparts can adapt the program to real-world parts ordering, according to Staff Sgt. Jennifer Williams, an automated logistics specialist with 307th BSB and one of the recent training graduates.

“I already have a list of suggestions for the Iraqis,” said Williams, citing a process the Iraqis will

need to follow to build “replenish points” into their system so that parts will be ordered automatically when inventory drops to a certain level.

Ammar Jawad, a software instructor with the contracted training company Anham, said IAAMP is not difficult to learn, though language difficulties and a lack of basic computer knowledge for Iraqi Soldiers initially present challenges.

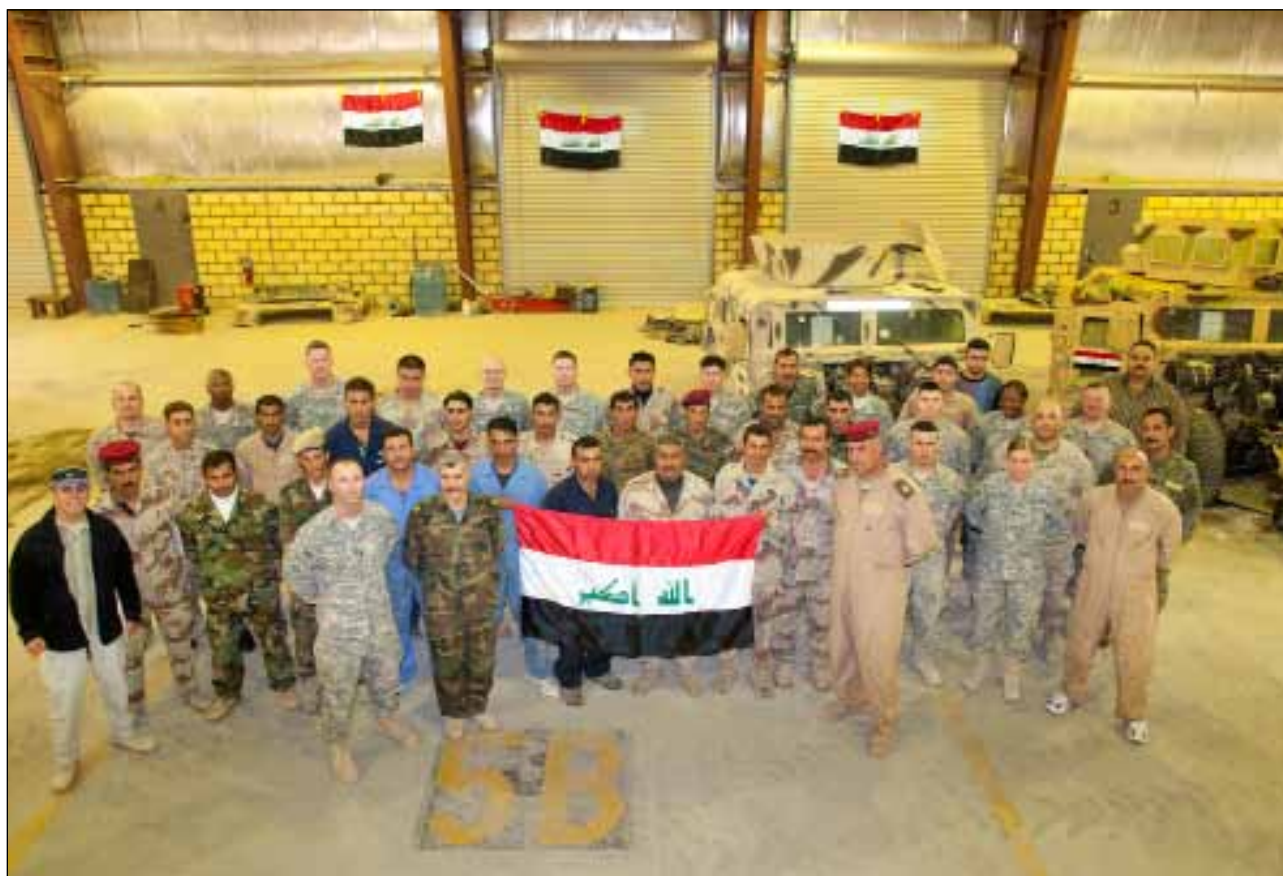
“To get around the language and technology issues, we go to each field location three times,” said the Taji-based instructor, originally from Baghdad. “This is our first visit to the 7th IA’s Al Asad Medium Workshop.”

The medium workshop is the most capable maintenance support within the 7th IA Div. region, and the only place that parts can be ordered using the real-time database, explained Capt. Kyle Brown, commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 307th BSB.

“We are the furthest ones away from Baghdad, from Camp Taji and the Taji National Depot. The depot supports all fourth-line maintenance, wheeled and tracked, as well as fourth-line supply, with the Joint Repair Parts Command.”

Williams is on her second deployment to Al Asad and third to Iraq. One of Brown’s Soldiers, whose job includes the maintenance of five separate parts-ordering computer networks for her brigade, Williams said she enjoyed learning alongside the Iraqi logistics specialists.

“They are very professional and organized,” she said. “They ask a lot of questions. I like that because I learned so much from their questions.” ▲



Graduates from a parts-ordering software training course stand proudly displaying the Iraqi Flag with the rest of the 7th Iraqi Army Division Al Asad Medium Workshop staff following the presentation of graduation certificates at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, Feb. 18. U.S. logistics paratroopers with 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division underwent the training with their IA counterparts to help them adapt the software to real-world situations.

ISF trains for elections

*Photos by Spc. Jared Eastman,
1st BCT-A, 3rd Inf. Div., USD-C*



BAGHDAD – An Iraqi Security Forces Soldier talks to group about the training they will receive during a pre-election training event Feb. 19 at Joint Security Station Meade.



An Iraqi Security Forces Soldier conducts first aid training with a group of ISF.



An Iraqi Security Forces Soldier bandages up his training partner's mock wound.



An Iraqi Security Forces Soldier tackles a mock insurgent during a pre-election training event Feb. 19 at Joint Security Station Meade.

U.S., Iraqi security officials visit Iraq polling sites

Story & photos Spc. Michael MacLeod
1st AAB, 82nd Abn. Div., PAO, USD-C

RAWAH, Iraq – U.S. and Iraqi security officials visited polling sites in a small town along the Euphrates River in western Iraq Feb. 25 to take a local pulse on the national elections just a week away.

Col. Mark R. Stammer, commander of 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, toured three voting centers – all schools – with Lt. Col. Ali Muhammad Kadhun Al Saadi, commander of 2nd Battalion, 28th Bde., 7th Iraqi Army Div., representatives of the U.S. State Department and local Iraqi Police.

School principals and polling-site security officials acknowledged preparations have been substantial, but that many details of the security plan will not be released until the last minute to keep opposing forces in the dark.

The greatest worry for security officials is suicide bombers, while for voters it is fraud, according to Al Saadi.

“We are all worried about suicide bombers and [vehicle-born improvised explosive devices],” said Al Saadi. “Our biggest worries are of human infiltration by

suicide bombers. We have visited the houses around the election centers and gotten sworn statements from owners promising not to allow their houses to be used to target the election centers.”

Iraqi Security Forces have also increased their intelligence efforts, expanding the number of sources, he said. Badges have been issued to all locals, and strangers have been asked to leave the town during the election.

Lt. Col. Mohamad Abdolwahab Moslih, a police officer in charge of checkpoint affairs, said that anything U.S. forces or Iraqi Soldiers need, the IP were ready to do.

“The IP, IA and [U.S. forces] are working so closely together that even the enemy cannot distinguish one from the other,” said a major who works with Moslih.

Moslih said that as long as the IA and IP work together, Rawah will be 100 percent secure. That morning, a parliament member in the neighboring town of Anah was injured by a sticky bomb placed on his vehicle, though Moslih said the incident was the first of its kind in that area in two years.

Stammer told the principal of a secondary school for boys that



Col. Mark R. Stammer (kneeling far right), commander of 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, poses with Iraqi security officials and other government employees with the students of a girls school in Rawah that will be used as a polling site for the Iraqi national elections taking place March 7.

while he wasn't in Iraq seven years ago, he didn't think “men such as these” were serving in security roles at the capacity they're serving now.

“But they're here now, and they're doing fantastic work for the people in Rawah, Anah, Anbar and the people of Iraq,” said Stammer.

“It's that synergy of strengths – the IA, IP, [provincial security forces], the people – that's going to make this election a success,” he said.

Muthana Ismael, an official in charge of security for polling sites in Rawah, estimated a voter turnout rate of 60 percent based on past elections. Along with the other officials at the visited polling sites, he did not think people were afraid to vote.

“Voting is very dear to us,” agreed Abdullah Najim Abdullah, director of a primary school for boys. “It's the process that we all have to go through, and elect our representative to the government. Voters have to elect the people who have their heart and mind for the country. We all want the unity of Iraq.”

Abdullah said that for the past seven years, there have been few basic services provided by the government and few jobs, so people are ready for the change they hope they can achieve by voting in a new government.

“When I talk with people, everyone says they are looking forward to change,” agreed Al Saadi. “Their biggest concern is fraud and tampering with the ballot boxes. I tell them we will have international and [United Nations] monitors and asked them to come out and cast their votes.”

Abdullah said people know about the monitors and are placing their faith in them.

“We have seen the results from the last provincial elections when the monitors were here,” he said. “It all went very, very well.”



Muthana Ismael, an official in charge of security for polling sites in Rawah describes security measures for the upcoming Iraqi national elections Feb. 25 to Col. Mark Stammer at a primary school in Rawah.

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to be here during the surge – during the most violent period in Iraq – and then to fly out here today and look down from my aircraft and see everybody voting with no violence going on ... it was like a 180-degree [turn-around].”

As he continued to observe the situation, voting continued in central Baghdad as Soldiers with 2nd BCT, 10th Mountain Div., provided support to the ISF in eastern Baghdad.

The U.S. support included ISR assets, early warning capabilities, combined command and control nodes, and quick reaction forces that remained positioned to respond if requested by the ISF.

“The purpose of our security operations was to ensure that the voters have freedom of maneuver to go to the polls,” said Maj. Dennis Ifurung, executive officer with 1st Bn., 89th Cav. Regt. “We ensured that there were no illegal checkpoints, no possible [car bombs] or gatherings that would hinder voter turnout or enable intimidation and persuasion.”

To the west of their position, Soldiers from 3rd Bde. Support Bn. waited for a call from the ISF, prepared to deliver consequence management packages and assist the ISF with palletized barriers.

Their leaders said the fact that they were not called was a testament to how successful the ISF was in securing the city.

“Today, we’ve been prepared in case we need to

respond to any assistance the Iraqi Army needs us to provide; whether it be security or consequence management packages to help secure an election site,” said 1st Lt. Michael McCrory, Co. A, and a native of Cumming, Ga. “If the Iraqi Army needs us, we’re going to be there but if we don’t get called up, it means that we’ve done our job training the Iraqi army these last few years to be ready.”

Other Soldiers on standby said they were eager to assist the Iraqis in more over watch missions in the future but said they were glad to remain in the wings today if they were not needed.

“I think it’s excellent that we are not in the front, and that we are assisting, because it shows that we have done our job in training the ISF,” said Spc. Brandon Cleary, Co. A, BSB, and a native of Tuscaloosa, Al. “We’ve been over here for a decent amount of time and I think it’s finally showing. A mission like this is historical. For the first time, the Iraqi people are able to vote on their own free will.”

As they waited to be called in for support, Soldiers from 4th Bn., 31st Inf. Regt., provided 45th Bde., 11th IA, multiple ISR video feeds for the election at a joint command and control center. The unit also provided six quick reaction teams strategically placed throughout the area by the IA.

As the polls closed in the northern area of Baghdad, officials attributed the ISF for higher than anticipated voter turnout as the local population continued to fill polling stations.

“Overall, supporting the national elections has solidified for us the IA’s ability to conduct security operations and track units on the ground,” said 1st Lt. Drew Kitchen, an IA operations coordinator.

If Iraqis filled the polling stations in northern Baghdad, they swelled them in Iraq’s Anbar province, where advise and assist paratroopers with 1st Bde., 82nd Airborne Div., escorted three election-site monitoring teams with United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq to polling sites in Ramadi, the Ramadi-Fallujah corridor and the Hit/Haditha area.

According to the Anbar Operations Command, the ISF had discovered 20 improvised explosive devices and removed them in a 30-hour span prior to Election Day. Eight more detonated on Election Day with only one minor injury.

U.S. forces standing by for assistance were never called upon by ISF. However, Capt. Richard Jones, commander of Co. B, 2nd Bn., 504th Parachute Inf. Regt., said his company provided security and transportation for the Ramadi and Fallujah area UNAMI teams.

His men did exactly what was needed. “They deserve praise,” he said. “They worked hard today. They have been working hard this whole deployment, and we’re proud of them.”

This story was a USD-C compilation with contributions by Staff Sgt. Ryan Sabin, Staff Sgt. Nathan Hoskins, Sgt. Michael MacLeod, Sgt. Bryce Dube, Spc. Jared Eastman and Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth. 🇺🇸

Iraqi Security Forces ready: 4-9 ‘Manchus’ check polling sites in election preparation

Story & photo by Spc. Daniel Schneider
366th MPAD, USD-C

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION NASIR WA SALAM, Iraq – A week before Iraqi elections March 7, Soldiers from 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, conducted a presence patrol along the Kandahri marketplace near Abu Ghraib.

At the request of Iraqi security forces, the Soldiers of 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, joined them March 1 to patrol along polling sites that will be used in the coming election to ensure the Iraqis were prepared to protect voters.

“We’re here working together with the Iraqis for a common goal,” said Spc. Yahir Macias, assigned to Co. B. “If the Iraqis succeed, then U.S. forces succeed.”

The patrol demonstrated U.S. willingness to support the Iraqi people when requested, said 1st Sgt. Mark Ohme, first sergeant of Co. B.

“The ISF have a pretty good handle on security of the area,” said Ohme, a native of Bermebaton, Wash. “They have a better understanding of security within their area than we do. We’re here to support them when they need us.”



Pfc. Anselm Chang, a Los Angeles native and infantryman assigned to Company B, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, pulls guard while his first sergeant checks on the security of a polling site near the Kandahri market March 1 prior to elections.

As the patrol walked down the streets and alleys surrounding the Kandahri marketplace, children came out from alcoves to wave to the U.S. Soldiers as they passed. Macias waved back to a young boy standing in an archway.

“We’re letting these people know we’re still here for them,” said Macias.

At the second polling site, they discovered Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police already providing security.

“Iraq has become a proficient security force,” said Capt. Derek Noel, commander of Co. B. “This is a sign of the success over the last seven years that the ISF are at the point they are at now.”

Noel explained how the performance of the ISF has improved substantially from his last deployment to this one.

“There was a time where American forces were in the spotlight,” said Noel, a Gettysburg, Pa., native, “but now we can place the Iraqis on their own pedestal and take on a different role as advisors and a supplemental combat force.”

Macias said it has been good to see how far the Iraqis have come in standing on their own.

“It always makes someone feel good when helping someone else out,” said Macias. “We’re helping an entire nation, so the good feeling is even better.” 🇺🇸

Discussing future of water in Baghdad

Story & photo by Spc. Brian Johnson
1434th Eng. Co., 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

BAGHDAD – In a desert environment, water can sometimes be more valuable than any other commodity.

In Baghdad, which has a population of more than eight million people, 10-15 percent of the population does not have access to potable water. Having that access, especially during the scorching heat of summer, is vital.

To increase awareness of the water situation in Baghdad, reconstruction teams from the U.S. military and the Baghdad Water Authority gathered at Contingency Operating Location Prosperity Feb. 18 to discuss Baghdad water services.

The event, hosted by the Joint Reconstruction Operations Center, brought together teams from U.S. Division – Center and U.S. Forces – Iraq, as well as Baghdad's chief water engineer, Haider Mohammed, and members of the BWA to discuss the issue.

The water authority also supports several areas outside of Baghdad, to include Abu Ghraib, Taji and Tarmiyah. Since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the water authority has attempted to gain control of all water assets, operations and activities in Baghdad but has been unsuccessful.

According to water authority officials, to be a successful provider of potable water, they "must have control over all water operations, maintenance, repairs, planning and bill collection."

According to Haider, many problems plague the Baghdad water distribution network.

"There is no management of water distribution and many of the distribution networks were constructed without planning," Haider said. "The city of Baghdad also lacks adequate reservoirs, which results in the pumping of water from the production plant directly into the distribution system."

Haider explained some of the additional problems the Baghdad water network faces. These include a lack of modeling and records and inadequately trained, skilled and competent workers. Also the BWA has no real long-term strategic plan.

BWA officials said nearly 50 percent of potable water is lost due to leaks, illegal tapping and waste. There are currently no laws that prevent anyone from tapping into a water line or a water main.

As the conference continued, the military teams presented another problem that Baghdad is facing: sewage.

"If many improvements are made to the water system in Baghdad but there are no sewer improvements made, the result will be sewage in the streets," Haider said.



Air Force Col. Lowell Nelson, U.S. Forces – Iraq, asks a question to City of Baghdad Senior Water Engineer Haider Muhammad Feb. 18 at Contingency Operating Location Prosperity. Teams from the Baghdad Water Authority, the U.S. Division – Center and USF-I gathered together to discuss water issues in Baghdad.

According to water authority officials, there are no sewer systems in any newly developed areas of Baghdad. Instead, storm drains and irrigation canals are used to push sewage away from the public.

The Army Canal, in the Sadr district, has become one of the main sewage drains for the city. Built in 1959 by then president Abd al-Kassem Qassim, the canal was designed to bring fresh water to the people living in northeastern Baghdad.

Unsanitary water now feeds through the canal into the Army Canal Pump Station, but the pump station no longer operates effectively, causing filthy water to flow directly into the Tigris River. Making the

canal operational would require cleaning, unexploded ordnance removal and other minor rehabilitation efforts.

BWA officials said they find themselves constantly responding to current crises instead of managing production and operations.

Despite this, Haider assured military leaders that the authority's operations are improving and they are making headway on numerous projects, but he offered a much broader solution.

"A complete overhaul of the City of Baghdad Water Authority is required," said Haider. "Development, then execution, of a comprehensive long-term strategic plan is required immediately." ▲

U.S., Iraqi engineers build new road together

Story by Sgt. Brian Moore
1434th Eng. Co., 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

BAGHDAD – American and Iraqi engineers from 317th Engineer Company, 101st Engineer Battalion, 16th Engineer Brigade and 17th Iraqi Army Division worked together to finish construction of a road leading into Contingency Operating Location Deason in February, and took advantage of some training in the process.

Upon arrival to COL Deason early in the month, the Soldiers met their partners from 17th IA, soldiers they would be working

with throughout the duration of the project.

"Some of our Soldiers had never met Iraqi Soldiers," said Sgt. Steve Balamut, 317th Eng. Co. and assistant project manager for this mission. "The Iraqis were eager to learn what we had to say and teach. And we were eager to learn from them." Some of the equipment, such as the rollers and graders, had to be inspected by the maintenance section of 317th before being allowed to leave Victo-

"The Iraqis were eager to learn what we had to say and teach."

– Sgt. Steve Balamut

ry Base Complex to ensure it was in good working order. Once it was inspected, the engineers loaded the heavy construction equipment onto flatbed trucks and chained it all down. The equipment can't move at highway speeds, which

poses a potential hazard to Iraqi motorists. So it is transported via truck.

On the first day, while waiting for gravel, the engineers taught a preventive maintenance class with Iraqi engineers on the roller, grader and bucket loader.

By the second day, 36 dump trucks escorted by the Iraqi Army arrived full of gravel; the same for the next day. Seven loads were dumped onto the first lane while the rest was dumped onto a stock pile.

Iraqi and U.S. engineers worked together to grade gravel while others watered it down for compaction. Others operated dump trucks and bucket loaders to move gravel from the stock pile to the road.

Leaders from both camps praised the U.S. and Iraqi engineers for working together to build a critical road and building camaraderie in the process. ▲

Air Cav train with Iraqi strike team for air assault

*Photos by Sgt. Travis Zielinski,
1st ACB PAO, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C*



TAJI, Iraq — The Iraqi Army Karkh Area Command Strike Team teamed up Feb. 15 with Soldiers from Company F, 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – Center, to train on procedures for loading and unloading aircraft for air assault operations.



A Strike Team soldier pulls security after exiting a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter operated by 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – Center, during an air assault training exercise.



A Strike Team soldier pulls security after exiting a CH-47F Chinook helicopter, during air assault training. The helicopter cold load training is the first part in a series of air assault exercises being conducted.



A Strike Team soldier rushes out of a UH-60 Black Hawk during air assault training.



Sgt. Donn Pattermann, a helicopter crew chief observes Soldiers exiting a Chinook.

What's happening around Camp Liberty



Photo by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbaugh, 366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – The Danny Morris Band performed an energetic show Feb. 23 at the Tigerland Morale Welfare and Recreation center at Camp Liberty. In an intimate casual setting, many audience members smiled and tapped their toes to the “surf-rockin’, rock-a-billy blues” tunes.



Photo by Spc. Daniel Schneider, 366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – Chief Warrant Officer 2 Louis Plaza assigned to Company A, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Armored Division receives the sign of the cross made by ash from Capt. Anselmo Hernandez, a Catholic chaplain, at the Division Chapel Feb. 17 during Catholic Mass on Ash Wednesday.



Photo by Sgt. Phillip Valentine, 366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – First-time humvee driver, Pfc. William Langbehn, 146th Signal Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Armored Division, U.S. Division-Center, gears up for a road test Feb. 24 at Camp Liberty.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kristina Scott, 366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – Spc. Dwayne Bhola, in Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 392nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion watches his ball during the American Red Cross’s “Baghdaddy Mini-golf Tournament” Feb. 13.



Photo by Spc. Daniel Schneider, 366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – Arthur Sinclair, lead singer of the Kyng Arthur reggae band, performs the first song, kicking off a Feb. 21 show at Camp Liberty main stage. This was the band’s second trip to Iraq but the first to Baghdad.



Photo by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbaugh, 366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – Charlie Wilson, a former member of “The Gap Band,” and members of his band met with members of 1st Armored Division Band Feb. 20 at the band hall on Camp Liberty. After a jam session, Soldiers were given an opportunity to chat with Wilson and his crew.



Photo by Spc. Daniel Schneider, 366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – More than 500 service members and civilians from all over Victory Base Complex participated in the African-American/Black History Month 10-kilometer run Feb. 20 at Camp Liberty. The first four finishers received a prize, and the first 400 participants to finish received a commemorative T-shirt.

Soldier obtains U.S. citizenship

Story by Spc. Daniel Schneider
366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – Some quick work by unit leaders helped an Egyptian in the U.S. Army become an American citizen during a naturalization ceremony Feb. 15 at Al Faw Palace.

Spc. Peter Beskales, a linguist assigned to Company A, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Armored Division, gained his citizenship as a result of his unit's efforts in the week prior to the ceremony.

The speed of the process surprised not only Beskales but members of his unit as well.

Staff Sgt. Larry Carson, a psychological operations noncommissioned officer assigned to Co. A, DSTB, 1st Armored Division, was one of the personnel working on Beskales' packet.

"We were told his packet would take three months to get from the U.S. to Rome for processing," said Carson.

Despite a frenzied last week for Carson, he said it was still worth it to help Beskales obtain his citizenship. Carson said he recommends anyone who can help Soldiers obtain their citizenship to do so.

"This ceremony was for him and I was grateful to be able to share it with him," said Carson. "It was a very rewarding experience."

The tradition of non-citizens dedicating themselves to faithfully serve in the U.S. military is as old as U.S. history itself.

"Over 400,000 immigrants served in the Union Army during the Civil War," said Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby, deputy commanding general for operations, U.S. Forces – Iraq, during the ceremony. "Foreign-born Soldiers have served honorably throughout our history. You Soldiers have demonstrated the same dedication and allegiance to our great nation."

Beskales' journey began when he won a lottery allowing people from other countries the opportunity to immigrate to the U.S. It was his dream to become an American citizen since he was very young, he said.

Beskales joined the U.S. Army in June and began serving his new country even before he was granted citizenship. He deployed in January to serve in Iraq, still not counted among official U.S. citizens, but still serving.

Eight months later, Beskales fulfilled his dream as he raised his right hand to swear allegiance to the U.S.

"Becoming a citizen is one of the two biggest moments in my life," he said; the first being when he raised his right hand to swear allegiance to the U.S. Army. ▲

'Not your daddy's pickup'

1AD Soldiers receive driver training on the MRAP

Story & photo by Sgt. Phillip Valentine
366th MPAD, USD-C

BAGHDAD – It is one mean machine: four-wheel drive, 375 horsepower, turbo inter-cooled, direct electronic injection, full airbrakes with traction control and, best of all, it weighs more than 53,000 pounds.

Sound like a commercial for the latest sport utility vehicle?

Well, maybe not. It's the MaxxPro, one of many Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles fielded by the U.S. military, and one of the vehicles Soldiers assigned to Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Armored Division, U.S. Division – Center, were trained on at Camp Liberty Feb. 27.

The MRAP driver's course, conducted at the MRAP fielding and sustainment yard, included instruction on MRAP familiarization, safety procedures, preventative maintenance checks and the real deal: the chance to drive two variants, the RG-33 and the MaxxPro plus.

Instructor Christopher Lynch, lead operations for MRAP instruction with DynCorp, and a Sulphur Springs, Texas, native, said the purpose of the training was to familiarize Soldiers with the vehicles and teach them the positive and negative aspects of each.

"Training is important; I am a big believer in it," said Lynch. "Proper planning and training lessens the chances for accidents and leads to mission accomplishment."

It is important to know all the aspects of a vehicle, said Lynch, even the shortcomings, so

operators can be prepared for most mishaps.

While the instructors emphasized the importance of the training, they kept it light and reassuring.

"It made learning a lot easier with low stress," said Pfc. John Dothage, Co. B, DSTB, 1st Armored Division, U.S.D-C. "These guys have been great; this has been the best training I've had here."

Dothage, a Springfield, Mo., native, said he now feels comfortable driving an MRAP if the need arose.

Private 1st Class Christina Brandt, assigned to 501st Military Police Co., DSTB, 1st Armored Division, also enjoyed the training. She has received instruction and driven MRAPs in the past but admitted this class has been beneficial for future missions with MRAPs.

"This training is a lot more in-depth compared to the last time," said Brandt.

After talking to others in her unit who had deployed in the past without MRAPs, Brandt expressed how grateful she is to have these vehicles in theater. She said she couldn't imagine what it was like before the MRAP.

Even though a feeling of ease surrounded the class, the size and power of the vehicle stayed on the students' minds. The amount of armor on the outside and the personnel safety equipment inside reinforced that, whether conducting missions outside the wire or just driving out of the motor pool, the vehicle requires that drivers give it the utmost respect.

Lynch said that was the intent of the training; to ensure Soldiers go back home safely and without injury. ▲



Pfc. Christina Brandt, assigned to 501st Military Police Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 1st Armored Division, takes a turn at experiencing the heft of a roof hatch on a MaxxPro Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle at Camp Liberty Feb. 27. The DSTB Soldiers underwent a driver's course that focused on safe driving of the MRAPs.

Iron Castle Soldiers keeping up good work



Photo by Sgt. Brian Moore, 317th Eng. Co., 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

BAGHDAD – Spc. Chris Forrest, a Downs, Ill., native, backs up a bobcat Feb. 16 on the Joint Visitors Bureau Hotel parking lot at Victory Base Complex. Members of the 317th Engineer Company spread and compacted gravel on the site to prevent vehicles from getting stuck in mud that builds up during the rainy season.



Photo by Spc. Hugh Lawson, 317th Eng. Co., 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

BAGHDAD – Spc. Bret Harmon (left) and Sgt. Lester Flaherty, 317th Engineer Company, prepare to unload a Bobcat Feb. 11 to spread gravel at the K-9 training facility at Camp Slayer. Some of the ground at the training facility was in poor condition, so adding pea gravel is expected to dramatically improve the condition of the kennel.



Photo by Staff Sgt. April Mota, 101st Eng. Bn., 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

BAGHDAD – While meeting at Contingency Operating Location Deason Feb. 16, Brig. Gen. Glenn Hammond III, of Williamsburg, Ky., and 16th Engineer Brigade commander, and Brig. Gen. Ali Jasim Mohammed, 17th Iraqi Army Field Engineer Regiment, discuss blueprints for a possible joint operations center to be built there.



Photo by Spc. Brian Johnson, 1434th Eng. Co., 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Brig. Gen. Ahmed Hamza Raheem, director, Federal Police Engineer Directorate, looks on while Sgt. Joseph Smith, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 16th Engineer Brigade, demonstrates the Trimble Total Station at Camp Liberty Feb. 23.

Engineers help their Iraqi brethren

Story & photo by Spc. Brian Johnson
1434th Eng. Co., 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

BAGHDAD – There remain many challenges Iraqi Forces must face while rebuilding Iraq and assuming complete responsibility for the security of their nation.

Iraqi Federal Police engineers, who are helping keep many of Iraq's roads safe, have been undergoing such a challenge: forming new partnerships to meet the needs of the police.

The 16th Engineer Brigade command team, led by Brig. Gen. Glenn Hammond, recently visited the IFP Engineer Directorate, headed by Iraqi Brig. Gen. Ahmed Hamza Raheem, to discuss the capabilities of the IFP engineers and potential partnership opportunities between his organization and 16th Eng. Bde. This was the first meeting between the two groups.

The IFPED is responsible for



Brig. Gen. Ahmed Hamza Raheem, director, Federal Police Engineer Directorate, exchanges a handshake with Brig. Gen. Glenn Hammond, 16th Engineer Brigade commander, Feb. 15 at Contingency Operating Location Prosperity. Raheem met with Hammond and members of his command team to discuss potential partnership opportunities between his organization and 16th Eng. Bde.

conducting infrastructure and design management of all IFP facilities across Iraq.

When Ahmed took over in May 2008, he started from scratch, reorganizing the directorate and restructuring the leadership. Since

then, many budget shortfalls have affected Ahmed's organization as well as the entire IFP organization.

The IFP are authorized almost 90,000 members; its organization currently has less than half.

These shortfalls have caused a lack of needed equipment, much of which is not expected to arrive for more than a year from now. Ahmed said that is why the new partnership he and Hammond are forging is so critical.

"I wish that I could have met you two years ago," said Ahmed. "The efforts of the U.S. team to help supply the basic needs are the first step of helping to rebuild. We need equipment and well trained people to use it."

Over the course of the next hour, Hammond and Ahmed exchanged ideas on how their organizations can benefit each other through training and partnership.

"If we can't provide assistance to your organization, we might as well go home now," said Hammond.

"I look forward to acquiring as much engineer expertise as I can from our U.S. friends," said Ahmed. "I will be ready for you anytime that you are willing to offer assistance." ▲

Engineers set barriers at International Zone

Story by Spc. Heather Todd
1192nd Eng. Co., 16th Eng. Bde., USD-C

BAGHDAD – Soldiers from 1192nd Engineer Company, 101st Engineer Battalion, set multiple barriers at the International Zone in three different sections. The barriers will protect the civilians who are there from improvised explosive devices.

The 104th Infantry Bn. supported the project by securing the site. The IZ is the location of the Central Court of Iraq and the Ministry of Justice. The engineers set barriers at the main entrance of the compound, the sidewalk entrance where judges and lawyers enter the building and in the parking lot.

"The barriers were placed to help defend against any IEDs or [vehicle borne improvised explosive devices] that could be placed there," said Sgt. Nicholas Adam-

son from Struthers, Ohio, and assigned to the 1192nd Eng. Co.

Kellogg, Brown and Root supplied the barriers. The engineers operated the crane, with a team of six Soldiers working to place the barriers. The Soldiers worked four, 15-hour days to get the job done ahead of schedule.

"The team was very motivated," said Staff Sgt. Isaac Johnson, the project noncommissioned officer in charge, from Elyria, Ohio. "We worked long hours every day but they never complained and they were always on time – and we didn't stop till the job was done."

The terrain made the project more difficult. Trees and brush kept hampering the job.

"We had to be very flexible; the terrain was horrible with all of the trees," Johnson said. "So we had to make a lot of adjustments to get the barriers in place, but we accomplished the mission and that's all that matters." ▲



Photo by 1st Lt. Tanner Dunlap, 1192nd Eng. Co., USD-C

Staff Sgt. Bradley Wilson, with 1192nd Engineer Company, guides a barrier at the IZ.



An Iraqi waves a flag after the culmination of a fire-fighting demonstration.



Iraqi firefighters fight a fire, intentionally set, to demonstrate their firefighting skills.

Fighting fires

New Iraqi firefighters display

Story & photos by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbuagh
366th MPAD, USD-C

Sirens blared in a small parking lot as bystanders watched the newest graduates of the Iraqi Civil Defense Directorate Academy race to perform life-saving techniques.

Guests observed 25 graduates demonstrating their new firefighting skills at the conclusion of a graduation ceremony Feb. 17 at the International Zone. The demonstration was designed to showcase the many aspects of the firefighter training.

As the demonstration began, fire engines stormed past the audience and whipped U-turns in the tiny parking lot. A vehicle, intentionally set on fire, burned directly in front of the crowd as firefighters raced from their trucks.

Training grenades exploded nearby, startling the firefighters as they unfurled the hoses and hooked them into spigots in the ground.

Army Spc. Michael Burris and Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Raul Rodriguez, both assigned to 414th Civil Affairs Battalion, 1st Armored Division, helped train the Iraqi firefighters.

"We're mainly here as advisors, teaching [the Iraqi firefighters] better firefighting tactics," said Rodriguez.

Soldiers of 414th focused on providing the Iraqis with help in the maintenance and upkeep of their equipment, insight on prior experiences, and different ways to maneuver around obstacles. They also built a curriculum for the different courses, assisted with the organization and record-keeping of training, and most importantly, said Rodriguez, taught them proper wear of personal protective equipment and safety methods.

"Yes, they have a job to save lives," Rodriguez added, "but they first need to ensure they're taken care of and protected prior to entering a fire-



Iraqi firefighters put out a fire intentionally set in a vehicle as part of a training demonstration from a simulated explosive. The demonstration finalized the graduation ceremony of the

s, saving lives

skills in graduation exercise

fighting environment.”

Each student underwent the basic firefighting course, but several other students also attended training in different courses, such as emergency rescue, hazardous material and explosive ordnance disposal.

The firefighters overcame many obstacles in the demonstration after weeks of training and guidance from U.S. forces.

During the demonstration, they sprayed water onto raging fires while EOD cordoned off an area and carefully handled a potential bomb threat. Medics assessed and evacuated the wounded and unconscious.

One of the participants in the ceremony, Iraqi Lt. Col. Lu'ai Mun'im Hamoodi, the fire chief for Adhamiya Fire Department in northern Baghdad and an instructor for the Iraqi rescue teams.

In one scenario, fire crept up to the third floor, stranding victims on the roof. Lu'ai was able to rappel with one victim clamped to his harness off the side of the three-story building, saving the victim's life. Along with the rope rescue operation, other members of the rescue team set up a giant air cushion for the civilians still trapped on the rooftop.

Iraqi Col. Ali al-Ani, director of training for officers of civil defense at the academy, said the demonstration went well and that everything ran smoothly.

“Raul and Burris helped us to do this scenario, and they support our people in training,” said Ali. “They give [the firefighters] a lot of their experiences.”

“The Americans [provided] continuous support to both Iraqi Civil Defense and the Iraqi Air Force,” said Lu'ai.

Ali said the graduation demonstration reflected more than just a culmination of training; “The training the firefighters [received] in our academy is reflected in our real lives on the streets.”

As the demonstration concluded, an Iraqi firefighter proudly marched in front of the crowd waving the Iraqi flag. ▲



Graduation Feb. 17 in the International Zone. Two firefighters lay on the ground with injuries during a demonstration by the Iraqi Civil Defense Directorate Academy's newest class.



Lt. Col. Lu'ai Mun'im Hamoodi rappels from a building with a stranded victim.



A man leaps from a building onto an air cushion run by an emergency rescue team.

U.S., Iraq leaders join together to provide fresh water to Aqur Quf

Story & photos by Spc. Daniel Schneider
366th MPAD, USD-C

CONTINGENCY OPERATING LOCATION NASIR WA SALAM, Iraq – Civil affairs Soldiers and leaders from 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, joined with the Iraqi Ministry of Water Feb. 28 to celebrate the opening of a refurbished water filtration plant near the village of Aqur Quf.

The Soldiers, from Company B, 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, and 4th Bn., 9th Infantry Regiment, assisted the Iraqi officials in the project at their request in order to provide clean drinking water to the Iraqis in the area.

The plant is one of three such plants expected to open in different regions in the coming months, said 1st Lt. James Hester, a civil affairs team leader and project manager assigned to Co. B, 422nd CA Bn.

“This is the main water treatment plant of the area, and [it] now can connect more areas through water piping from this facility,” said Hester. “The Iraqis did a tremendous amount of work on this project. We’ve had weekly meetings with the Ministry of Water, the plant manager and contractors to make sure things progressed properly.”

The new plant will deliver fresh water to

the people living in the Jeb Dafar and Zydon regions as well as an additional 4,000 to 5,000 people in the surrounding area. The plant can be renovated further to serve even more people as the need arises, said Hester.

Begun in the summer of 2009, the project has taken a long time to reach fruition, said Hester, requiring the efforts of all of them working side-by-side to complete.

The civil affairs team received some help along the way from 4-9, known as the “Manchu” battalion.

“The Manchus provided us with a platoon dedicated solely to helping us whenever we needed it,” said Hester, “which provided us the opportunity to operate independently and check on progress frequently to keep things

“I’m very proud of what we’re doing out here; we’re participating in a piece of history.”

– Spc. Jared Bower

moving smoothly.”

Iraqi Security Forces have hailed the project as one of many opportunities to prove their dedication to the local people, said Lt. Col. Mark Bieger, battalion commander for 4th Bn., 9th Inf. Regt.

“We’ve been making an effort to step back and let the Iraqi leadership present humanitarian aid and projects like this one to the people of Iraq,” Bieger said. “We want to generate a positive perception among the local populations that the ISF are here to support and protect them.”

The water plant will be paramount in pro-



Staff Maj. Gen. Akmed speaks to local leaders during the ribbon-cutting ceremony of a water filtration plant Feb. 28 in the Zydon area of Iraq. Akmed recently took over command of 6th Iraqi Army Division, which helped provide security during the refurbishing of the plant.

viding the areas around Aqur Quf, which are predominately made up of farming communities, with reliable water to support their crops, said Bieger. Water and electricity are the two main concerns among the residents.

Despite the project taking 18 months to complete, ISF and U.S. forces have managed to keep the area secure the entire time. According to Bieger, the ISF has stepped up its role in supporting security for projects such as this one to encourage future projects that provide basic necessities.

“This ribbon-cutting ceremony was clearly an Iraqi celebration of Iraq’s dedication and ability to support themselves,” said Bieger. “The ISF already had the area secure before we even arrived. So, even if the U.S. wasn’t at the event, security would have been sufficient regardless.”

As U.S. military leaders begin the responsible drawdown of the U.S. presence in Iraq and Iraqi leaders prepare for their first independent national elections since Americans set foot on Iraqi soil in 2003, Soldiers in attendance at the ceremony understood the significance of their efforts.

“We’re trying to help the Iraqi people so that when we leave, they’ll have clean drinking water,” said Spc. Jared Bower, assigned to Co. B, 4th Bn., 9th Inf. Regt. “I’m very proud of what we’re doing out here; we’re participating in a piece of history.”



Prominent shaykhs, Iraqi Security Forces and U.S. Soldiers gather at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

2-12 FA 'Vikings' change command



Command Sgt. Maj. William Zito passes the 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment, colors to Lt. Col. Kevin Murphy, outgoing commander.



Col. John Norris pins a Bronze Star medal on the collar of the outgoing commander of 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment, Lt. Col. Kevin Murphy.



Lt. Col. Kevin Murphy, outgoing commander, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment, passes the battalion colors to Col. John Norris, commander, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division March 2 during a change of command ceremony.



Lt. Col. Terrence Braley and other 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Soldiers salute the American flag during a change of command ceremony.

Air Cav crew chiefs given chance to fly in Apache

Story & photos by Sgt. Alun Thomas
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

Unlike crew chiefs for the CH-47F Chinook and UH-60 Black Hawk, AH-64D Apache crew chiefs don't get to fly in the aircraft they maintain, despite their many hours of work.

This changed for 23 Apache crew chiefs in 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – Center Jan. 25 and Feb. 11 when they were given the opportunity to fly in the front seat of an Apache.

"We got approval to allow crew chiefs and some aviation specialists who usually don't get the opportunity, to fly in an Apache," said Capt. Robert Holcroft, from Emmet, Idaho, S-3 assistant officer in charge, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB. "The reason we chose to do this is because other airframes (Chinooks and Black Hawks), their crew chiefs get to fly in those aircrafts ... these guys don't get that opportunity."

Major Gen. Daniel Bolger, commander, 1st. Cav. Div., established the incentive program as a way to give something back to the Apache crew chiefs who have consistently performed above average, said Holcroft.

"It's an amazing idea ... there's nothing better for these crew chiefs to build their morale," Holcroft said. "To actually have [Bolger]



Spc. Zachary Andrade, from Coleman, Texas, an Apache crew chief in Company A, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – Center, climbs in the front seat of an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter Feb. 11 and prepares to fly in the aircraft for the first time in his career. Andrade was rewarded with the flight for his above average performance as a crew chief.

er] put that level of thought into it is amazing, and I'm sure these guys would really appreciate him coming up with the idea."

While some chiefs selected for the program are still relatively new to the Army, others have been in up to 15 years without ever having the chance to fly in an Apache, Holcroft explained.

"Some of them climbing in the front seat for the first time are [senior noncommissioned officers] who've been working on this aircraft their entire career," Holcroft said. "It's an amazing opportunity and morale booster for them."

Each participant was flown by a senior Apache pilot around Camp Taji for 15 minutes, with all precautions taken prior to flying, he said.

"It's a two-pilot aircraft and we've mitigated the risk by having our most senior aviator, [Chief Warrant Officer 4] Bill Miller, in the back seat of the aircraft," Holcroft said. "We've downloaded the armaments on the aircraft and the air tower knows we've got student drivers on board, so as long as Bill's heart keeps ticking, they should make it safely."

The flight was 15 years in the making for Sgt. 1st Class Keith Trulove, from Zion, Ill., a crew chief in Company B, who flew on Jan. 25. He said the flight was a long overdue honor.

"I know my role as a crew chief, but it's always been at the back of my mind that maybe one day I could fly and see all the work I've done to get that aircraft off the ground," Trulove said. "For me, this is coming full circle."

Trulove said it has been his ambition to fly in an Apache since he joined the Army. He never expected the chance to materialize.

"This is an aircraft that's helped to stabilize Iraq and to be part of that, to be able to fly in this aircraft, is something special," he said. "I was humbled to be chosen because we don't complain about not being able to fly. So for this to come out of the blue is a pleasant surprise."

The flight was easily the highlight of the current deployment, Trulove said.

"I've done some things in my life which I consider notable and this is definitely up among them," he said. "After being out here for almost a year, today paid dividends."

Flying in the front seat on Feb. 11 was Spc. Zachary Andrade, from Coleman, Texas, a crew chief in Co. A, who said the flight was far different than flying on other aircraft.

"Just being in the actual cockpit with windows all around you and nothing blocking your view makes it feel like it's just you up there," Andrade said. "You can look out forever and see improvements we've made, like bridges we're building for the locals. It was nice to see that stuff."

Andrade said it can be frustrating not being able to fly on the Apache, which makes this program an excellent idea.

"I often feel isolated from other crew chiefs ... they get to fly on the helicopters they work on, so it's things like this that bring us all together," Andrade said. "Getting to fly up there and be a part of what the pilots do is not something we see every day. I wish we could do this more often." ▲



Looking out of the front window of an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter Jan. 25 Spc. Michael Moye, an Apache crew chief for Compzny A, prepares to fly in the front seat of the aircraft.

Pilot reaches pinnacle of career; son begins his

Story & photos by Staff Sgt. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

TAJI, Iraq – A 1st Air Cavalry Brigade pilot pinned on the highest rank within the warrant officer corps while his son, a recent graduate from flight school, watched from more than 5,000 miles away.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Cliff Mead, of Copperas Cove, Texas, battalion maintenance officer and UH-60 Black Hawk pilot for 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cav. Bde., 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – Center, recently joined the ranks of the few who wear Chief Warrant Officer 5 on their chest.

A decision more than 25 years ago led him to this point: a decision to quit his job.

Cliff was 18 years old at the time, newly married to his high school sweetheart, had a baby on the way, and had very little options in the way of employment.

“My dad is retired infantry. Never once did he steer me towards the Army, one way or another, growing up,” Cliff said. “It wasn’t until I quit the job I had that he said, ‘Well, you might want to talk to an Army recruiter then.’”

Cliff enlisted in the Army but after five years as a unit supply specialist, he decided he wanted to fly, so he applied for warrant officer school and flight school.

Cliff deployed first to northern Iraq for Operation Provide Comfort, helping Kurdish refugees with humanitarian aid in 1991. He then deployed twice to Bosnia, followed by three more deployments, including his current one to Iraq.

All along the way, his family has remained by his side, supporting him, and now emulating him.

His son, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Chris Mead, just began his career as an OH-58 Kiowa pilot: a point of pride for the master aviator.

“I’m really proud of the man he’s become, because that is his own accomplishment,” said Cliff. “What I also see out of that, though, is that he has to truly respect everything that I’ve done in order to want to [become a pilot]. So it makes me believe I got it right.”



Newly promoted Chief Warrant Officer 5 Cliff Mead (left), of Copperas Cove, Texas, battalion maintenance officer and UH-60 Black Hawk pilot, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, re-affirms his commitment to the Army by taking the Oath of Office, administered by Chief Warrant Officer 5 Don Washabaugh, from Collingswood, N.J., 1st Air. Cav. Bde. aviation maintenance officer.

As a child, Chris always knew that he wanted to be a Soldier and a pilot.

“I couldn’t think of any job that has more purpose than being a Soldier in the United States Army,” he said.

Chris grew up knowing that his father had a job unlike most others, but along with the bragging rights in grade school came the discipline of a type-A pilot, he said.

“The expectation in the house growing up was set high, and you were expected to meet his standard whether it be grades, behavior or good manners,” said Chris.

Those same rules and principles he was taught have carried over into his adult life.

Chris now carries the weight of other Soldiers’ lives in his hands, whether he is protecting ground troopers or his co-pilot in the seat next to him. The job demands discipline and respect of the inherent dangers, he said.

He credits his father’s type-A personality for the

reality that he’s following in his footsteps; something he is very proud to admit.

“I have always been proud of my dad and in what he does,” said Chris. “However, this pride has continued to grow as I grow as an aviator, and I’m sure that after my first deployment that I will have an even better sense of pride for what my dad has accomplished.”

He demonstrated his pride the day his father earned his promotion to Chief Warrant Officer 5 by watching dad and having his wife and two children from Fort Wainwright, Alaska, also watch via video teleconference.

Chris said he was glad to be able to see his father take what will probably be his last major stepping stone in his career before eventual retirement.

“It’s great to know that while being on opposite sides of the Earth we can still take part in the same event,” Chris said. “It is important for Soldiers to keep family ties strong and this event helped keep those ties strong.”

Chris said he plans to capitalize on that VTC technology from time to time for aviator advice.

“It’s great to have a mentor and a role model who can give the complete and honest truth,” Chris said. “I also know that I will get a straight answer no matter what the outcome is. There is no sugar coating.”

Although his job usually keeps him in the air, Cliff said he keeps himself grounded with the knowledge that his family is as much a part of his career as he is.

His wife, Kandace, who also watched his promotion from Fort Hood, Texas, never once questioned his decision to stay in the Army all these years. It wasn’t even until his 17-year career mark that the family had a talk about him staying in for at least 20 years.

Cliff and his wife have always felt that he should stay in as long as he’s enjoying what he’s doing; a fact that hasn’t changed the entire 25 years they’ve been married. He doesn’t foresee himself retiring anytime soon, and actually looks forward to his son continuing his legacy as a U.S. Army pilot.

“As far as my career up to this day,” said Cliff. “I wouldn’t trade it for the world.”



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Cliff Mead talks to his son’s family in Fort Wainwright, Alaska, through video teleconference before his promotion ceremony. Mead’s son, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Chris Mead (far left on screen), an OH-58 Kiowa helicopter pilot, just recently graduated flight school, following in the footsteps of his father.

5-7 Cav visits Medal of Honor recipient battle site

Story & photos by Spc. Jared Eastman
1st BCT-A, 3rd ID, USD-C

Officers from 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team-Augmented, 3rd Infantry Division, visited the battle site Feb. 6 where Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. 1st Class Paul Smith fought and died for his Soldiers near the Baghdad International Airport in 2003.

The visit was meant to teach the young officers the history of a fellow 3rd Inf. Div. “dog-face Soldier,” and give them insight into how they should develop their own Army careers.

“To stand there in that very same place, and it still looks very much like it did on that day in April 2003, you feel like you’re in touch with these people, you can kind of feel what [Smith] did – his spirit is there,” said Maj. Michael Sullivan, 5-7 Cav. plans officer and tour guide. “His story has played a special part in what I’ve done as an officer here.”

The idea had been in the 5-7 Cav. command group’s minds since they landed in country this past January. They were trying to find a way to professionally develop leaders as well as develop their knowledge of the history of the area.

“One of the ideas that came up first, from my perspective, was that we were close to the Baghdad International Airport where a fellow ‘dog-face’ Soldier earned his Medal of Honor,” said Sullivan. “I’m a huge history fan, and one of the great things about being in 3rd Inf. Div. is its storied history.”

Smith and his Soldiers were pinned down, so he told them to fall back while he stood his ground. His actions saved their lives, allowing



Soldiers of 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team-Augmented, 3rd Infantry Division take a moment of silence Feb. 6 while visiting the Sgt. 1st Class Paul Smith battle site.

them a safe passage back to regroup while he kept the enemy from advancing.

“His actions are legendary, and the fact that he sacrificed himself to save so many of his Soldiers makes me hold him in great regard,” said Sullivan. “When he backed that M113 (armored personnel carrier) into the corner and got up into the turret, he knew that was it. To me, that epitomizes what a ‘Marne Soldier’ is.”

You realize that he sacrificed himself for his Soldiers, but you also realize in the back of his mind there were thoughts of his family too, and he must have realized when he did these

actions that there was a chance he wasn’t going to see them,” Smith added.

The battle site now has a road running through it, as well as some recent construction but, the tower and the broken gate hinges through which Smith led a Bradley are still there. A small plaque hangs on a broken wall describing the events that took place there.

“The towers and walls that still have bullet holes in them are very memorable,” said Capt. Erik McFarlane, 5th Sqdn. signal officer, “It cements it in your mind that something really did happen here. A lot of the site has new construction and has been glossed over, but the tower with its bullet holes really leaves an impact on you.”

To many of the officers, Smith was someone everyone should strive to become.

“You like to think that you will perform as well as these guys did, but that’s what makes them so special,” said Sullivan. “They continued to focus on their jobs and were really looking out for their Soldiers. You kind of think about it all the time, whether it’s your first tour or your third tour.”

McFarlane agreed. “In a way, you hope you can live up to and be as good of a Soldier as he is.”

Sullivan said Smith’s sacrifice testifies to more than the spirit of one man in one division in the Army.

“It’s that dog determination that [says], ‘I’m going to stay, I’m going to fight; you’re going to bring it and I’m going to fight you no matter what,’” he said. “There’s a platoon of Paul R. Smiths out there; you just don’t know when they are going to come out. I have no doubt that these guys would perform to that level in any situation. “They’re doing it every day.”



Lt. Col. Kirk Dorr, 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment commander, places a note and his battalion coin in a section of the wall where the April 4, 2003, battle took place.

U.S., Iraqi artillerymen send live shells downrange

Story & photos Spc. Michael MacLeod
1st AAB, 82nd Abn. Div., PAO, USD-C

AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq – Speaking the common language of “gun talk,” U.S. and Iraqi artillerymen worked together to certify American howitzers with live rounds Feb. 21 for an upcoming partnered training operation.

Iraqi mortarmen with 7th Iraqi Division cross-trained on 105 mm howitzers – considered a light though lethal cannon – with artillerymen of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division (Advise and Assist), as the Americans fine-tuned guns that will play a part in a combined airborne and air assault training exercise this spring, according to Lt. Col. Jose Thompson, the 3rd Battalion commander.

“We are partnered with the 27th IA Brigade, which covers from Haditha all the way down to Hit,” said Thompson. “This is the start of a training relationship between our artillery platoon and their mortar battery.”

At some point in the future, the Iraqi Army will redevelop an artillery capability that currently only resides in their mortars, said Thompson.

Captain Sherief Butler, commander of the artillery battery, said that since the Iraqis were mortarmen by trade, they under-



U.S. paratroopers with 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division cross-train 7th Iraqi Division artillerymen on American 105 mm howitzers during a partnered live-fire training Feb. 21 at Al Asad Air Base. The training was in preparation for an upcoming combined airborne and air assault exercise.

stood the indirect fire concepts used on the howitzers.

“Once they realized that the same fundamentals for shooting are there, they were able to get a common ground and build off of that,” he said.

“They understand deflection and quadrant,” said Sgt. 1st Class George Martinez, the platoon sergeant responsible for training U.S. gunners. Deflection and quadrant are measures of horizontal and

vertical aiming, the basis of what they call “gunner’s talk,” he said.

“We have a foundation, so they could cross-train on our systems and be very successful at it, just as our guys could cross-train on their mortars and be very successful at it. We have a common language,” said Martinez, who has deployed twice each to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Most importantly, the Iraqi mortarmen know what all artillerymen know—there is no “good enough” when talking artillery, he said. There can be no tolerance for any deviation from the standard because the slightest mistake can kill the wrong people downrange.

Hussam Abd Al Jabber, a gunner with 27th Iraqi Army Brigade, agreed. Originally from Basra, Hussam has been a mortarmen for one year.

“I like firing the gun, but it is a very serious task,” he said.

During two days of training, the partnered forces fired more than 120 rounds at a desert range on the periphery of Al Asad Air Base.

Firing alongside Hussam was Pfc. Robert St. Clair, the number one man on the gun team, responsible for opening and closing the breech. According to St. Clair, the

team fired more than 9,000 rounds during the six months immediately prior to deploying to Iraq and set a record of 2,000 rounds fired in only four days at the Joint Readiness Training Center.

Prior to deployment, the leaders of 1/82 AAB decided to train up most of the artillery battalion as a “maneuver” unit since the Iraq conflict was already at the point where infantry and room-clearing skills were more needed than artillery.

They left a sole artillery platoon, which ironically, will provide not only the seed for a future Iraqi artillery section, but the platoon is actually the foundation to build the battalion back up again into an artillery battalion, said Martinez.

“Advise and assist is new for us,” said Martinez. “It’s a great opportunity for us to train our counterparts. It’s also great training for us for any future deployments to Afghanistan. Artillery is a big deal in Afghanistan.”

The brigade of advise-and-assist paratroopers are responsible for all of Al Anbar, Iraq’s largest province. Their yearlong deployment is scheduled to end August 2010. ▲



A howitzer crew member discards an empty artillery shell casing from a 105mm howitzer during the certification of their howitzers.

Paratrooper makes first jump with 1-82nd Airborne

Story & photo Spc. Kayleigh J. Sjoström

1st Advise and Assist Bde., 82nd Abn. Div., PAO, USD-C

AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq – Pfc. Matthew Fram did not expect to make his first jump after airborne school with 82nd Airborne Division in Iraq.

The chemical specialist with Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 319th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 82nd Abn. Div., made his first jump since graduating from the U.S. Army Airborne School Feb. 16 at Al Asad Air Base.

The jump was planned to refresh the airborne skills of paratroopers for a potential partnered U.S.-Iraqi airborne training exercise this spring.

“I’m excited to be a part of this [airborne operation],” said Fram prior to jumping. “I can’t wait to jump.”

Fram who grew up playing hockey and later played lacrosse at Clark University in

western Massachusetts, underwent the training required to become a paratrooper with relative ease.

During his senior year of college, Fram said he decided he wanted to do something different with his life. He joined the Army and attended Basic Combat Training Jan. 14, 2009, and graduated four months later.

“I wanted to do something exciting, and being airborne definitely satisfied that,” he said.

After completing airborne school, Fram was assigned to 82nd at Fort Bragg, N.C. In August 2009, he deployed with 1st Bde. to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Paratroopers are required to make five successful jumps at airborne school in order to become airborne qualified. Fram made his sixth jump with 1-82 AAB while deployed.

“This is the most unique experience I have had since I joined,” said Fram. “Not too many people can say their first jump with Division was in Iraq.”

“This is the most unique experience I have had since I joined.”

– Pfc. Matthew Fram



Pfc. Matthew Fram, a chemical specialist assigned to Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 319th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, adjusts his parachute Feb. 16 prior to making his first jump at Al Asad Air Base.

Cold, rain, mud: perfect time for a senior enlisted run



Photo by Spc. Michael MacLeod, 1/82 AAB, USD-C

RAMADI, Iraq – Senior enlisted paratroopers of 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, run past a palm grove at Camp Ramadi Feb. 25 during a four-mile early morning run. 1st Bde. is the Army’s first “production model” advise and assist brigade assigned the mission of security force assistance in Iraq.

Dedicated NCO boosts morale through food

Story & photo Spc. Rebecca Schwab
2nd BCT PAO, 10th Mtn. Div., USD-C

When it comes to preparing food for Soldiers, Sgt. John Barnes heeds Napoleon's advice.

"Napoleon said, 'An army marches on its stomach,' and he's right," said Barnes, noncommissioned officer in charge of the dining facility at Al Rashid, Iraq, the place of duty for Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division. "[Food] is one of the biggest morale boosters for a Soldier. Without food, there's nothing."

Barnes, of Los Angeles, was selected to be the featured Commando of the month because of his hard work at producing three meals a day for 45 Soldiers based at Al Rashid, as well as the 45 local nationals living there.

His job involves ordering needed supplies, planning meals and supervising his Soldiers as they complete daily tasks; a demanding job that begins well before the start of breakfast at 7 a.m., and well after dinner ends.

Barnes' first few weeks at Al Rashid were spent making his small dining facility clean and fully functional. When 2 Bn. Soldiers first got there, conditions in the facility were abysmal.

"It was unorganized. There was food everywhere – food that was bad," Barnes said. "There were rats. It wasn't a popular place until we got it cleaned up and organized."

Barnes and his Soldiers wasted no time getting the facility in order.

"As soon as Sgt. Barnes got here, he did what an NCO should do," said



Sgt. John Barnes, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the dining facility at Al Rashid, Iraq for the 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team and Commando of the Month, stirs rice in preparation for the evening meal.

Lt. Col. Joseph Wyszynski, of Philadelphia, and executive officer for the 9th Division Military Transition Team. "He took stock of the inventory, got rid of the old, [and] got new chow in here. His is a story about how one man can make a difference in the quality of life for the whole base."

Barnes' next challenge was providing a good variety of food for the Soldiers, even with limited supplies. He said he tries to make meals Soldiers will

look forward to, like yakisoba, a big favorite at Al Rashid. Yakisoba is a dish made of noodles, beef, green peppers and onions, mixed up with soy sauce.

"It's a lot more than boiling food in a bag," he said. "You gotta make it taste good. If you put out a bad meal, Soldiers are going to tell you about it. It's about the input you get from the Soldiers, what you can do to improve the food itself. I'll let them know if I can accommodate that or not."

It helps that for Barnes, cooking isn't just a job.

"It's something I have a passion for," he said. "When I cook, it's a stress relief."

Barnes began his military career in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he served in the infantry for five years before becoming a cook. After he left the Corps, he joined the Army to be a military food service specialist once again following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Barnes said he tries to pass on the lessons he has learned to the Soldiers working under him.

Spc. Danny Flores, from Dallas, works with Barnes in the dining facility, helping to ensure good meals get to Soldiers and that they order enough

food to support all the Soldiers at Al Rashid.

"[Sgt. Barnes] taught me a lot since I came to Fort Drum, more than any of my Advanced Individual Training instructors did," Flores said. "[We] come up with new ideas for food, what we can give the Soldiers, so they don't eat the same things every day."

Pvt. Christian Gonzales also works in the facility. A late deployer, Gonzales came to Iraq almost straight out of AIT. On top of being new at his job, Gonzales is from Puerto Rico and is still trying to learn English.

"It wasn't easy for me to adjust to this deployment," he said. "With Sgt. Barnes, it has been easier. I think he's a great NCO. He made it easy for me, and I like to cook – I'm learning."

Wyszynski spoke highly of the contributions Barnes has made – not just to the dining facility but also to the overall efforts of the Soldiers stationed at Al Rashid.

"He's a team player," Wyszynski said. "If there's work around here that needs to get done, he's the first to pitch in. He's an invaluable asset to everyone here and enables everyone to do their job." ▲



Sgt. John Barnes places food in containers in preparation for the evening meal.

Air Cav keeps Marines, Navy, Air Force in air

Story by Sgt. Travis Zielinski
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C

A specialty aircraft repair shop has become a valuable asset for all U.S. military branches operating out of Al Asad.

Providing aviation support for western Iraq, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division – Center, established Task Force 227. The Marines, Navy and Air Force were quick to realize that the task force brought along a group of Soldiers specifically trained in aircraft maintenance practices, which could be used on any aircraft throughout the military.

“There hasn’t been any back shop support on all of Al Asad for quite some time and word started to get out that we had guys with [a military occupation specialty] for engines, power train, airframe and hydraulics,” said Michael Bedsole, from Humble, Texas, a turbine engine maintainer in Company D, 4th Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB. “People started trickling in one by one and then it kind of became regular – they have been relying on us for the last four months.”

During the first repairs, shop personnel had somebody watching over them to make sure the repairs were done correctly. Now, the Navy and the Air Force drop off components to have them fixed, which shows the level of trust that has



Photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., USD-C
An AH-64D Apache attack helicopter crew from Company B, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division–Center, taxis back to their pad after a mission in the Baghdad area of operations Feb. 18. Apache crews fly in pairs, called attack weapons teams, to support U.S. and Iraqi forces when called upon day or night.

been established, said Bedsole.

The task force Soldiers recently completed hydraulic repairs and non-destructive inspections on Navy E8-6B Prowler electronic warfare airplanes, Marine CH-46 Sea Knight and CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopters, along with an airframe repair on an Air Force C-5 Galaxy airplane.

“It helped in just getting to know the guys. We thought the Marines were going to be jerks towards us, which some of them were,” said Spc. Ryan Stadelmaier, from Pittsburgh, an aircraft hydraulics specialist with Co. D, 4-227th. “Once we started to help them out, it became more of a partnership. We

helped them and they helped us.”

A mutual respect has formed among the Soldiers of the shops platoon and the other military branches. Certain parts, supplies and amenities that TF 227 did not have were acquired because of the willingness to support others outside the unit, said Bedsole.

“They would ask us if we wanted to trade for our work and that is how we got electricity just for our office,” said Bedsole. “We did some work for the Navy and they came over and wired our shop for us.”

One of the first repairs made by the task force was on a C-5 aircraft; a small piece of sheet metal on an engine cowling had started to sepa-

rate, exposing the engine to the possibility of debris getting inside and causing damage.

“I was actually awoken and told a C-5 aircraft needed to be repaired, and I thought, ‘Well, that is not our aircraft,’” said Pfc. Michael Cooley, from Elizabethton, Tenn., an airframe repair specialist.

Cooley explained if the task force did not have the ability to fix the C-5 aircraft, the Air Force would have been forced to delay its mission to Afghanistan and wait for someone to be flown in to make the repair.

“It was a master sergeant that got up to inspect my work and he thought it was great; he was praising my work,” said Cooley. “We told him we don’t have a problem doing this sort of thing because they are the guys that get us home.”

With very few staff, the Army shops team only had time to work on other military aircraft once their own missions were complete, making some days stretch into the 17th and 18th hour. Essentially, the shops personnel made the effort to help other units on their own time while also gaining experience they wouldn’t have normally received.

“We came here just as a task force, thinking that we were going to be working only on our airframes,” said Spc. Ryan Stadelmaier. “Since day one, it has been a great experience being able to get hands on with aircraft from the other branches.”

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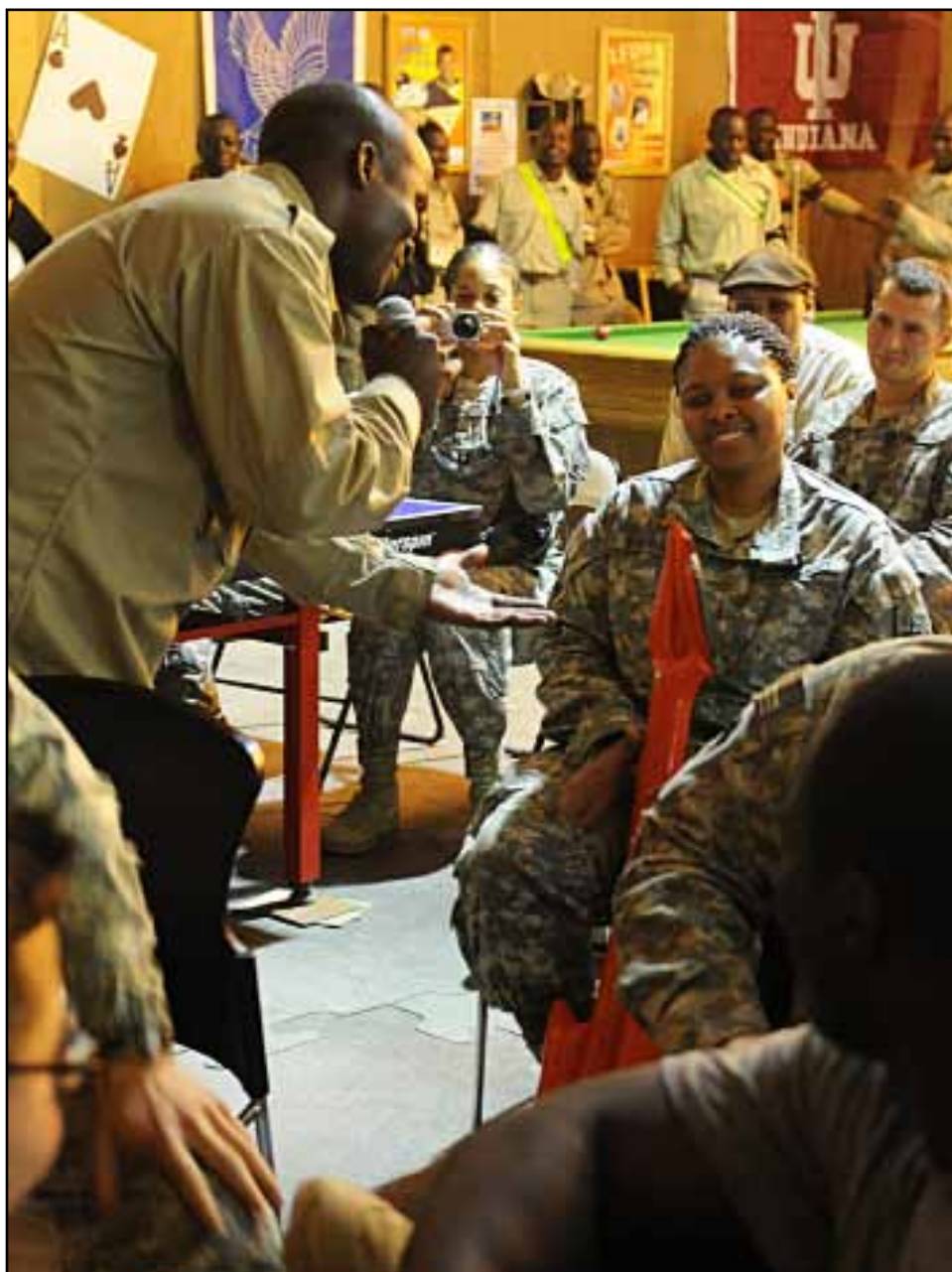
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NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH
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What America didn't see ...

Soldiers compete in spin-off version of popular American talent show



A man working in security forces reaches out for a female Soldier's hand while singing Boyz II Men's "On Bended Knee" Feb. 19 at the Scorpion Morale Welfare and Recreational center on Camp Liberty in a competition. He did not place in the competition but received a good tip from the judges: "Good song for your voice, but project your voice more next time." The competition allowed military members, civilians and security forces to compete for small prizes.



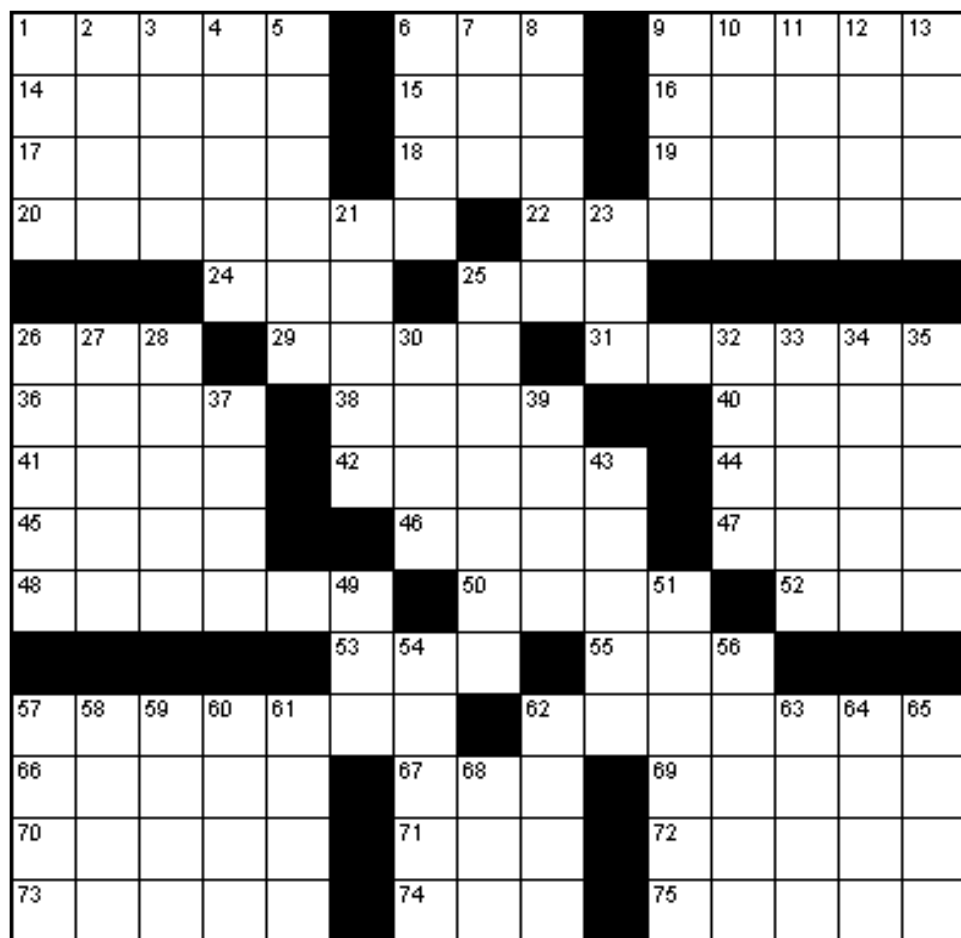
Cpl. Eric Page played guitar and performed two songs that he composed for an audience for a talent competition at the Scorpion Morale Welfare and Recreational center on Camp Liberty Feb. 19. Page, a Victoria, Texas, native and infantryman with Company B, 1-141 Infantry Battalion, 89th Military Police Brigade, received second place in the competition after wooing the crowd with his soothing voice.



*Photos by Sgt. Samantha Beuterbaugh,
366th MPAD, USD-C*

Capt. Sandra Knoll, Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Howard and Lt. Col. Arno Vorweck watch and listen intently to properly evaluate talent show contestants Feb. 19 at the Scorpion Morale Welfare and Recreational center at Camp Liberty. Judges routinely came to a unanimous decision, stating that the performances were good, but a recurring concern was voice projection.

CROSSWORD



Across

1. Dairy product
6. Observe
9. Fruit
14. Long-handled scoop
15. Levy
16. Underneath
17. Pertaining to birds
18. Creative production
19. Without restraint
20. Change into stone
22. Go in again
24. Spoil
25. Auto
26. Mature
29. Scottish lake
31. Ingenious
36. Troublesome child
38. Those people
40. Land measure
41. Method of attaining physical and spiritual wellbeing

42. Organic component of soil
44. Type of average
45. Brood
46. Light fog
47. Top of the head
48. Lecture
50. Scorch
52. Trap
53. Precedes 'for' usually
55. Guided
57. Industrial plant
62. Conveyance
66. Crowbar
67. Expert
69. Collection of maps
70. Liquorice-flavored seeds
71. Was victorious
72. Postage
73. Heart rate
74. Word negation
75. Sweet substance

Down

1. Applaud
2. Rant
3. Redact
4. Warning
5. Humble
6. Remain
7. Sense organ
8. Additional
9. Having the means to do something
10. Drudge
11. Secret scheme
12. Misplace
13. Pitcher
21. Foam
23. Epoch
25. Pharmacist
26. Chasm
27. Assemblage
28. Bird of prey
30. Pal
32. Incline
33. Expanse of water
34. Angry
35. Dogma
37. Acquire
39. Ruminant
43. No longer new
49. Garden tool
51. Go over once again
54. Crustacean
56. Repeat
57. Smack
58. Bill of fare
59. Malevolent
60. Smaller in amount
61. Woody plant
62. Part of a volcano
63. Tribe
64. Feeble
65. Catch sight of
68. Pigeon sound

Mar. 1 solution

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Snapshot: Two weeks in America's military history

World War II

In March of 1945, 3rd Infantry Division was pushing through France toward the Rhine River. Along the way they engaged the enemy in Southern France at an area known as the Siegfried Line.

The Siegfried Line named by Americans after the Siegfriedstellung, a similar defensive line during World War I, was built during the 1930s parallel of the French position known as the Maginot Line. The Germans called this line Westwall (Western Rampart), though the origin of the name can't be determined. Even though the French and German forces were located directly across from one another, very few engagements happened there at the beginning of the war. Neither side was willing to venture out of their areas of cover, this resulted in what was later called the "Phoney War".

On August 24, 1944 Adolf Hitler gave the order for the Siegfried Line to be refurbished and fortified. It took nearly 20,000 forced laborers of the Reichsbeitsdienst (Reich Labor Service) to renovate the line. When the work was finished the line was 390 miles long, stretching from the border of the Netherlands to the border of Switzerland. The line included 18,000 bunkers, tunnels and tank traps.

On March 15, 1945 Soldiers of 3rd Inf. Div. engaged the enemy at the Siegfried Line south of Zweibrücken. The engagement was short but effective. The division smashed through the line causing the last of the bunkers to fall. The line was no longer an effective stronghold and was abandoned.

After pushing through the line, the 3rd Inf. Div. continued on crossing the Rhine River on March 26. They drove on to Nurnberg and engaged a fierce battle, capturing the city block-by-block.

The division showed its dedication throughout the war and continued on to take Augsburg and Munich and at the end of the war were in the vicinity of Salzburg.

