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January 4, 2010

Toxic training helps service members keep safe, clean

By SFC Samantha M. Stryker
17TH Fires Brigade PAO



COB BASRA – U.S. forces respond to a request by Iraqi Security Forces to investigate a suspicious odor and liquids discovered during a routine search of a usually quiet neighborhood.

After donning spacesuit-like 'HAZMAT' suits, the team circles the building with detection equipment. Upon entering, they note a large number of black containers.

Twelve Soldiers and 3 Sailors recently trained in such a scenario during a 10-day Toxic Industrial Chemical Protection and Detection Equipment (TICPDE) training exercise on Contingency Operating Base Basra.

"You never know what could pop up," said Capt. Leann Yi, 17th Fires Brigade Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear officer-in-charge.

The team has to be prepared to respond to any kind of hazardous material or toxic industrial chemical leak from a lab or a chemical manufacturing company in the area, the Cerritos, Ca., resident said.

When 17th Fires Brigade first arrived at COB Basra, Yi and Staff Sgt. Ronny Rome-



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Samantha M. Stryker

"It was challenging being in the level 'A' suit. You have limited dexterity and limited visibility because of the condensation in the mask."

— Sgt. 1st Class Michael Blackwood
CBRN Specialist, 203rd Military Police Battalion

ro, 17th FB, CBRN noncommissioned officer in charge, from Arrington, Va., was informed by the 34th Infantry Division CBRN section that former Multi-National Division South – Iraq did not

have a TICPDE team. The brigade coordinated with Multi-National Corps – Iraq CBRN TICPDE for trainers and equipment and told subordinate units to send their CBRN troops.

Karen Kirkpatrick, an instructor with the U.S. Forces CBRN TICPDE team, was one of the people who answered that request. The 80-hour course is the same training received by state-side emergency services personnel, Kirkpatrick said.

For the military, this training is usually given to CBRN specialists prior to deployment. However with the high operational tempo and the limited number of trained CBRN troops, it isn't provided all the time.

The training requires at least nine people for a team to travel to a site and bring all the equipment needed. Fifteen military members showed up for this training. Included were an Army mechanic and three naval hull maintenance technicians.

During the classes, trainees learned to inventory and operate all the protection and detection equipment.

They also rehearsed the roles each team will play when working in a hazardous environment. First they practiced as the initial-entry team, then as the identification and detection team and finally as the sample-collection team.

Rebuilding the Jewel of Majarr Al Kabir

By 2nd Lt. Anthony Greco
4th BCT, 1st Armd. Div.



COB ADDER – Escorting and assisting Provincial Reconstruction Team efforts to build up the civilian infrastructure is almost a daily task for many Soldiers deployed to Iraq these days. However, the project that members of Task Force Pathfinders participated in Dec. 18 could be extra sweet.

Second Platoon, “B” Battery, 2nd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force Pathfinders rolled out that day with eight members of the Department of Defense’s Task Force to Improve Business and Stability Operations (TF-BSO) to the city of Al Majaar Al Kabir, in southern Iraq’s Maysan province.

They were escorting TF-BSO personnel to a evaluate the Al Majaar Al Kabir Sugar Factory, in need of renovation. The manager of the sugar factory brought in engineers and representatives from several departments within his corporation to meet with the taskforce.

TF-BSO recently completed two inspections with “B” Btry. The first was an initial evaluation of the factory’s buildings. The second was to examine the machinery inside and the sugar cane fields once used to supply the factory.

The fields still provide sugar cane, but, without the means to refine it into a finished product, locals have to sell the cane to factories outside of Maysan. The refined sugar then makes its way back to the province and is resold at increased prices in local markets.

The partnership between the Maysan PRT and the Soldiers of “B” Btry is a new one in Iraq, part of the Army’s ‘advise and assist’ concept to better integrate military support into build-up civilian infrastructure.

“The battery does a great job supporting our operations and projects in any way they can,” said Steven Banks, Maysan PRT’s team leader, “We’re delighted to have such great and enthusiastic partners.”

While this partnership consists mostly of escort missions to various projects, “B” Battery also conducts Commander’s



Photo by 2nd Lt. Anthony Greco

Soldiers of “B” Battery, 2nd Bn., 29th FAR “Pathfinders” secure the perimeter of the Majaar Al Kabir Sugar Factory during an inspection by business and stability improvement experts Dec. 18.

Emergency Response Program (CERP) inspections and reconnaissance missions to assess Maysan’s civil capacity needs.

Each CERP project is a direct result of a recognized need within the Maysan province, coordinated with the provincial government, but requiring funding and expertise local elected leaders simply don’t have. Projects cover a variety of civilian needs and are steadily making an impact on the overall quality of life of the citizens of Maysan.

The rehabilitation of the sugar factory is a TF-BSO-led project with help from the Maysan PRT.

Donna Carter, the Maysan PRT’s economic advisor, said the facility was “once a thriving industry in Maysan.” The factory was capable of providing all of Iraq with its sugar supply and was once referred to as the “jewel of Majaar Al Kabir,” but the factory had since been left neglected and abandoned.

“Its state of disrepair stands as a symbol of the despair, frustration and anger felt by many in the province,” said Carter.

“Revitalization of this major factory will have a far-reaching impact,” Carter said, “not only for the people of Maysan, but also for a legacy of American good will we hope to leave.”

For more of 2nd Lt. Greco’s stories, visit:

www.TheRedBulls.org/Greco

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

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34th Inf. Div. PAO: Lt. Col. Kevin Olson
OIC, Command Information: 1st Lt. Shamika Hill
NCOIC, Command Information: 1st Sgt. David Bennett
NCOIC: Staff Sgt. Chris Carney
Managing Editor: Sgt. Ben Kibbey
Graphics Designer: Sgt. Francis Horton
Layout/Design: Spc. Francesca Stanchi
Staff Writers: Sgt. Francis Horton, Spc. Sam Soza,
Spc. Samantha Johnson, Pfc. J. Princeville Lawrence

Contributing Units

-  3rd BCT, 3rd Infantry Division
-  17th Fires Brigade
-  4th BCT, 1st Armored Division
-  12th Combat Aviation Brigade
-  367th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Media Queries please contact 34th Inf. Div. Public Affairs Office at MND-S_PAO@iraq.centcom.mil

Making their way

By Spc. Samantha Johnson
367th MPAD



COB BASRA – The day starts early for the escorts on Sgt. Keith Paulson's team, and even earlier for the "Bumblebee Crew," the Iraqi workers they escort on Contingency Operating Base Basra.

This is the third group of local workers for COB Basra. They used to be called "The Blue Man Crew," known for their blue jumpsuits. They now wear black and yellow, but the foremen still wear blue.

The local men wake up early to make the lengthy

walk from their homes in the nearby villages of Basrah to navigate all three checkpoints and begin work at 9 a. m.

On a typical day, 80 worker's make their way through the gates.

Once through, they line up, get on buses and go to the block yard and other various job sites. Their jobs include stacking fallen blocks, emptying sand bags, and picking up garbage around the base.

All of the work helps with overall base improvement.



Photos by Spc. Samantha Johnson

Sgt. Keith Paulson escorts the workers and foremen of the "Bumblebee Crew" – named for the color of their uniforms – on COB Basra. When the latest group started, they took a pay cut from \$17 to \$9 per day. This was hard for some of them, but they said that they like working for Paulson, and for him they would stay. Their current pay is now \$13 per day.

"We work hard and by the end of the day we can see what we've done" Paulson said.

The old Blue Man Crew started out making \$17 per day, but when the latest group started, they took a pay cut to \$9 per day. This was hard for some of them, but they said that they like working for Paulson, and for him they would stay.

Now they are back up to \$13 per day.

The workers in the Bumblebee Crew have seen and heard a lot.

One worker, Muhsen ABD Al Zahra recalled when he was in the Iraqi Army in the 1980's and his leg was seriously injured.

It was a "big battle" close to the Iraq-Iran border when the Iranians attacked his unit.

"Every time I just keep looking at the injury and I keep remembering what happened to me in the war," he said through an interpreter.

Muhsen has been working for the Babylonian Woman Co. for two and a half years now and thanks God that he was able to find this job, he said.

Most of the workers have dreams of living in

the United States.

"Personally I would love to go to the United States and start a new life there," said one foreman, who wished to remain nameless. He has been a foreman for three months.

The foreman's father was a soldier in the war with Iran and was injured. Despite that and having two brothers and seven sisters living at home, the foreman said they had a "good childhood."

The Bumblebee Crew have collectively seen a lot of change in their time, and with the 34th Infantry Division preparing to redeploy, the workers and current escorts said they hope that it's a smooth transition.

Working with the group means a lot to Paulson, he said.

"This is a very rewarding job, knowing where we came from, where we started out and what it has become, and we have personal relationships with each other," he said. "We have a lot of things in common right now and it's just very rewarding."

For more of Spc. Johnson's stories, visit:
www.TheRedBulls.org/Johnson



The "Bumblebee Crewwork" make a dirt road on COB Basra passable after heavy rains. The locals on the crew have to wake up early to make the lengthy walk from their homes in the nearby villages of Basrah to get through three checkpoints and start work around 9 a.m.

From Page 1
TOXIC

Before the scenario-based training took place, the trainees played a quick game of football, but with a twist: the teams took the field in their HAZMAT suits and air tanks.

"It was challenging being in the level 'A' suit. You have limited dexterity and limited visibility because of the condensation in the mask," said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Blackwood, a CBRN specialist with the 203rd Military Police Battalion.

The Cleveland, Ala., native agreed with his fellow trainees about the difficulties identifying and collecting samples when actually wearing the 26-pound, Level "A" Hazardous Material training suit and breathing apparatus.

There wasn't much time to rest for the newly trained team.

Less than two days after they completed the training and became the division's only trained TICPDE team, they accompanied the explosive ordnance disposal team on a mission to remove a missile with 500 pounds of explosives from Basrah city.

For more of SFC Stryker's stories, visit:
www.TheRedBulls.org/Stryker



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Samantha M. Stryker

Staff Sgt. Timothy Price, 308th BSB, 17th FB, is scrubbed-off as he makes his way through the decontaminating process during HAZMAT training at COB Basra, Dec. 15. Price, a CBRN specialist, took part in 10 days of training designed to familiarize service members with CBRN equipment and how to operate it in a toxic environment.

HOMETOWN HIGHLIGHT

Cleveland lies within Blount County, dubbed the "Covered Bridge Capital of Alabama" since it has more historic covered bridges than any other county in the state.

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Sunday, January 17, 2010

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This is an opportunity to sell your items privately, from service member to service member or to donate items to charity! Provide your own display, and set your own prices. Pick up bags to store donations* prior to Jan. 17 at the Red Bull MWR tent.

***SUGGESTED ITEMS** - clean towels and bed linens, useable running shoes, civilian clothes, etc.

***PROHIBITED ITEMS** - uniform clothing items, undergarments, any military equipment, any item with an NSN, and weapons.

Employer awards include:

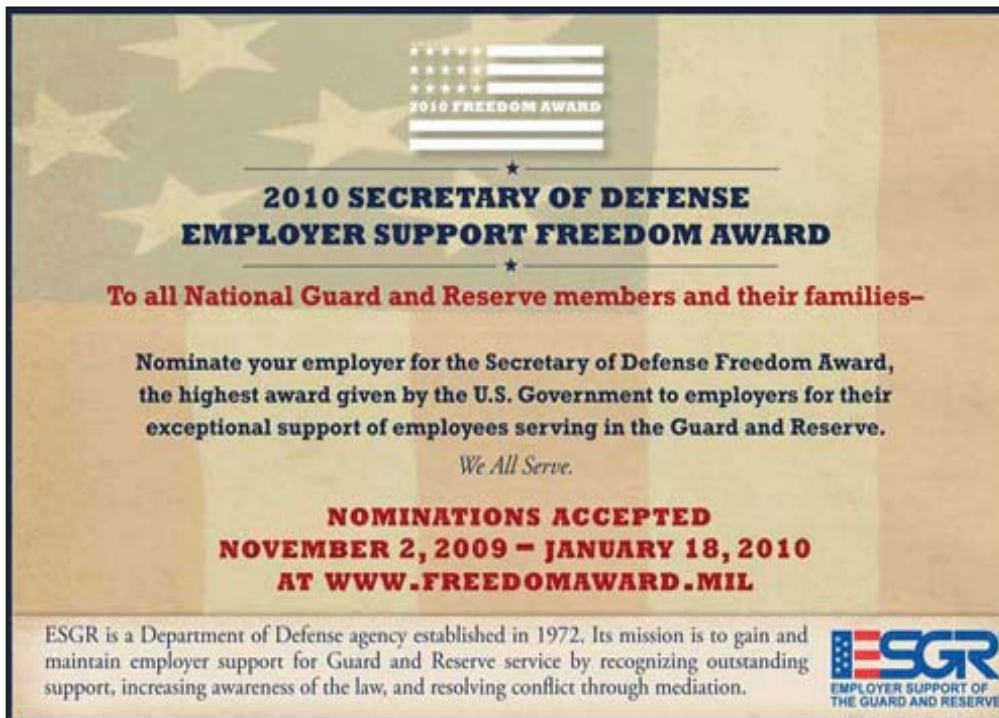
Patriot Award Certificate of Appreciation.

ESGR awards this certificate and a Patriot lapel pin on behalf of the Department of Defense. All members of the National Guard and Reserve forces are eligible to nominate their employers for the Patriot Award certificate. A certificate will be given to all employers that are nominated. This nomination is subsequently used by the local ESGR Committee as the basis for consideration to receive higher level awards.

Above and Beyond Award. It is given in limited numbers by state and territory ESGR committees. It recognizes employers at the state and local level who go above the legal requirements for granting leave and providing support for their employees.

Pro Patria Award. It is presented to those employers who demonstrate exceptional support for our national defense by adopting personnel policies that make it easier for employees to participate in the National Guard and Reserve. Each committee may give only one annually.

Employer Support Freedom Awards. The Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award is the U.S. Government's highest recognition awarded employers for their support of Guard and Reserve service.



Recognize employers for support www.FreedomAward.mil

Time is running out for members of the National Guard and Reserve and their families to nominate employers for the 15th Anniversary Freedom Award, the highest recognition given by the U.S. Government to employers for their support of employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve.

The award was created to publicly recognize employers who provide exceptional support to their National Guard and Reserve employees. It is the highest in a series of employer recognition awards given by the Department of Defense and is presented annually by the Secretary of Defense.

Service members are encouraged to visit www.FreedomAward.mil through January 18, 2010 to nominate employers. Award nominees will be recognized by the Department of Defense and announced in March 2010. The 15 award recipients will be announced in early summer.

Almost one-half of the U.S. military is comprised of the National Guard and Reserve and the Department of Defense shares these citizen warriors with their civilian employers, many of whom provide significant support to their employees serving in the National Guard and Reserve.

The National Committee of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) sponsored awards program is designed to recognize employers for policies and practices that are supportive of their employees' participation in National Guard and Reserve service. All employer recognition and awards originate from nominations by individual Reserve component members.

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Around the world in 34 seconds



COPENHAGEN - Danish police said on Saturday they shot and wounded a Somali man with al Qaeda links when he tried to break into the home of a cartoonist whose 2005 caricatures of Prophet Mohammad sparked global Muslim outrage. The 28-year-old man, armed with a knife and axe, failed to get into Kurt Westergaard's home in the town of Aarhus late on Friday and was shot in the leg and hand after he threw the axe at a policeman, a police spokesman said. The man, now under arrest, had "close ties to the Somali terror organization al-Shabaab as well as to al-Qaeda leaders in East Africa," the Danish Security and Intelligence Service PET said in a statement. The man, who had a legal residence permit for Denmark, was also "suspected of being involved in terror-related activities in East Africa," it said. The security service said the man, who would be charged with attempting to kill Westergaard and the police officer, had been involved in a "terror-related network" that had long been under investigation in connection with threats to Westergaard.



NEW YORK - New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg pledged on Friday to promote a more open U.S. immigration policy during his third term, much as he made a campaign against illegal guns a hallmark of his second term. "With leaders from across the country, we will assemble a bipartisan coalition to support President Obama's call for comprehensive immigration reform that honors our history, upholds our values, and promotes our economy," Bloomberg said upon being sworn in for his third term as mayor. The White House has said it will aim for immigration reform in 2010, possibly including a path to citizenship for the 12 million immigrants who live in the country illegally. Bloomberg, who considered running for president in 2008 as a political independent, raised his national profile by assembling a coalition of 500 U.S. mayors who banded together in a campaign against illegal guns. On the hot-button issue of immigration, he favors more liberal laws on allowing immigrants into the country and legalizing those who lack documentation. That will draw opposition from advocates of tightening the border and deportation of illegal aliens.



PASADENA, Calif. - Ohio State's bowl woes are over, thanks to a sturdy defense and a quarterback who finally played up to his enormous potential. Terrelle Pryor passed for a season-high 266 yards and two touchdowns, rushed for 72 more and threw a 17-yard scoring pass to DeVier Posey with 7:02 to play, ending the No. 8 Buckeyes' three-game BCS skid with a 26-17 victory over No. 7 Oregon in the Rose Bowl on Friday. Posey had eight catches for 101 yards, and Brandon Saine caught an early TD pass for the Buckeyes (11-2), who put together a remarkably fluid offensive performance in their first trip to Pasadena since 1997. That offense relied on Pryor, the sophomore quarterback who has had a hard time matching his enormous hype. With a Rose Bowl effort that evoked memories of Vince Young's breakout performance in the same stadium four years ago, Pryor shook off his early mistakes and led the Buckeyes confidently through a tense fourth quarter. "I just wanted to lead the team as best I can," Pryor said.



ROME - A Sicilian man stole sweets and a packet of chewing gum so he could get arrested and spend New Year's Eve in a jail cell rather than be with his wife and relatives, Italian media reported on Friday. The 35-year old Sicilian first showed up at a police station on Thursday asking to be arrested because he preferred spending the night in prison rather than with his family, but was rebuffed because he had not committed a crime, the Agi news agency said. The man immediately went to a tobacco shop next door, where he threatened the owner with a box cutter as he grabbed a few sweets and a packet of gum. He then waited until police arrived to arrest him for robbery, the news agency said.