

Iraqi Army moves to occupy US base

Document signing opens compound to Iraqi Security Forces at COS Kalsu

By Staff Sgt. Garrett Ralston
3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment PAO

BABIL, Iraq – The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and representatives of the 2nd Battalion, 31st Iraqi Army Brigade, signed official documents Feb. 5 that will provide Iraqi Security Forces a new compound on Contingency Operating Site Kalsu.

Development of the new compound will allow more joint missions for the two units, while supplementing security in and around COS Kalsu.

“The completion of this project is one of the initial lines of effort for the Regiment,” said Lt. Col. Wilton C. Jackson, the 31st BDE Stability Transition Team chief, and native of Jackson, Miss.

Commander of the 3rd ACR’s 1st Squadron, Lt. Col. Gregg Athey, signed the papers alongside Iraqi officials, marking the start of a transition to a self-sufficient security force.

Planning for the compound began in November 2010 and a piece of ground within the COS was selected and prepared for the layout of the site.

Since then, hundreds of barrier walls have been put in place around the future compound site to provide force protection, making it safe for the ISF to operate within the perimeter.

Within the compound, the ISF will have insulated living quarters, complete dining facilities and the space necessary to sustain an effective security force.

The compound sits near the center of Kalsu and is a convenient location for the force to work with their USF counterparts in their ongoing advise-and-assist mission.

“This new site will allow for an increase



Photo by Staff Sgt. Garrett Ralston

Lt. Col. Gregg Athey, commander of the 1st Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and sCOL Adnon, commander of the 31st Brigade of the 8th Iraqi Army, exchange official transfer documents at Contingency Operating Site Kalsu Feb. 5. These documents signify the transfer of portions of COS Kalsu from the United States Forces to the Iraqi Security Forces.

in training and missions between USF and ISF,” said Capt. Joseph L. Marshall, commander of the 89th Chemical Company, 3rd ACR. “Our partnered missions will be much easier when we live right next door to each other.”

Once settled in, the Iraqi battalion

will have a convenient staging base to operate in key areas between Kalsu and other outlying checkpoints.

Jackson said the move would allow the Iraqi brigade to expand its area of operation and greatly improve their security efforts in the area. ▼



Photo by Staff Sgt. Chancelcherie DeMello

Ten students from the Basra University arts and music academy performed some of their finest Arab melodies as well as an innovative excerpt from Beethoven's "Symphony No. 9" during a musical workshop held by the 36th Infantry Division Band at Contingency Operating Base Basra.

US and Iraqi musicians harmonize at music workshop

By Staff Sgt. Chancelcherie DeMello
305th MPAD, USD-S PAO

BASRA, Iraq – Soldiers of the 36th Infantry Division Band at Contingency Operating Base Basra dedicated a day of instrument familiarization and music rehearsals to 10 students of the Basra University arts and music academy.

From the French horn to the bass guitar, the band kicked off the day with a musical workshop on different instruments and genres of music.

"We thought we could help them with resources and also teach them how to play," said Austin, Texas native Chief Warrant Officer Jeffrey Lightsey, band commander.

"We showed them a little bit about every ensemble that we have; the different styles that we perform and classes on each individual instrument," said Spc. Carlos Meda a native of Austin and a Tuba player with the band.

The band members played music ranging from a spiritual hymn and a Dixieland style of "Amazing Grace" to a meringue march from the Dominican Republic.

To give back to the band for volunteering their time, the

students played some of their finest Arab melodies as well as an innovative excerpt from Beethoven's "Symphony No. 9."

"I think that they played very well," Lightsey said. "Their style is very different and, modified to their style, it sounded great and they had fun doing it."

A wealth of musical knowledge was exchanged as Soldiers and students shared comments, questions, ideas and personal experiences related to music.

"Everyone loves music and can understand a feeling through music," said Meda. "It is an expressive way for anyone."

"The interaction with music, you can do a lot with it," Lightsey said. "We are looking to continue this, do a lecture series and play a little bit and explain some historical pieces, as well as get them to use computer programs and get them up to par with unfamiliar equipment."

The reemergence of music education in Iraq looks promising, he added, and the introduction of American music would add to the Iraqi students' repertoire and serve as a bridge between their cultures.

"It shows that we are here for peace," said Meda. "We are here to start a good relationship and music helps with that." ▼



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Route clearance operations maintain OIF tempo

By 1st Lt. Mark Verburg
1st Bn., 68th Armor Reg., 3rd AAB, 4th Inf. Div.

BASRA, Iraq – Last September combat operations in Iraq officially ceased, but for the combat engineers assigned to Exile Company, whose mission is to protect the force, nothing has changed.

Although the combat mission is complete, combat engineers, or sappers, of Company E, 1st Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Advise-and-Assist Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, perform route clearance operations throughout Basra Province, providing safe mobility for U.S. and Iraqi forces.

“Exile Company provides freedom of maneuver and protection to the force. We do this by clearing IEDs, obstacles, and terrain that U.S. and Iraqi forces maneuver on so they are able to conduct security and partnership operations,” said Capt. Greg

Polk, of Cincinnati, Ohio, commander, Company E.

Company E’s two platoons provide route clearance for the entire southeast corner of Iraq, regularly clearing 600 miles of roadway spanning a 7,000-square-mile area in support of Operation New Dawn.

Each route clearance element has taken on a larger land area as a result of the drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq. More area to cover has required a fundamentally different approach to clearance, one focused on managing mission times to cover as much key terrain as possible.

Staff Sgt. Jesus Zambrano, squad leader, 3rd Platoon, is currently on his third tour in Iraq, and he sees the difference in route-clearance operations this time compared to past deployments.

“Last tour we cleared only 80 or 90 kilometers per mission at 20 kilometers per hour. That gave us maximum time to

observe possible threats,” said Zambrano, a native of Del Rio, Texas. But he said that having greater area to cover forces route-clearance teams to work smarter and more efficiently, maximizing the assets and information available to them.

Route-clearance planners lean heavily on company intelligence support teams for crucial input into the route-planning process. Keeping bomb emacers off-balance in a 7,000-square-mile area is a tall order. Intelligence assets help bring precision in getting the route-clearance patrols to the right place at the right time to deter IED emacers or find IEDs before maneuver patrols can be targeted.

“We use all intelligence, indicators, and historical data available to predict and target when and where we should be on the battlefield to conduct our operations,” said Polk.

Exile Company looks to Staff Sgt. Joseph Carpenter of Thornton, Colo., and Sgt. Patrick Kohls of Colorado Springs, Colo., for intelligence support. The two collect and analyze IED data and brief each Exile Company patrol on the most current information before they execute their mission.

Company E’s approach has proven effective in the unit’s area of operations. Total IEDs per month since October have averaged just over three, compared to an average of nearly six per month earlier in the tour.

By pushing the enemy out of familiar areas, Exile Company has assisted Iraqi security forces in detecting possible attacks and decreased the lethality of attacks that do happen.

“Insurgencies rely on striking the larger force where it is vulnerable and when it is unexpected. Our route-clearance operations minimize those opportunities,” said 1st Lt. Matt Fumagalli of Westmont, Ill., platoon leader.

Measurable success is encouraging to Soldiers, but as the drawdown continues, keeping roads clear of IEDs becomes more and more challenging. Exile Company is committed to meeting that challenge.

“All missions in a combat environment will carry a certain amount of risk. It is our job to mitigate it and do everything we can to lower the odds for our side,” said Polk. “The last IED in this conflict will receive no less attention than any other in my eyes.” ♡



Courtesy photo

Combat engineers evaluate the deterioration of a highway near Basra. Company E, 1st Bn., 68th Armor Reg., 3rd AAB, 4th Inf. Div., is responsible for clearing over 600 miles of roads throughout Basra Province as well as assessing damage and deterioration of key infrastructure.

Carving on the COB:

How a Soldier's newly acquired skills helps him to sustain Soldiers' stomachs and spirits

By Sgt. Jason Kaneshiro
305th MPAD, USD-S PAO

BASRA, Iraq – At Contingency Operating Base Basra, where everything from the dusty gravel roads to the concrete barriers remains a featureless gray, there is a place where a colorful handicraft is practiced every day.

Doing his part to sustain and support personnel on the COB, Sgt. Neri Flores Jr., a food service noncommissioned officer with the 36th Infantry Division, skillfully wields a paring knife and an eye for art to serve up a kaleidoscope of fruit carvings along with the usual dining facility fare.

“To achieve that final product and put it on display; it’s very satisfying,” said Flores.

What some may find surprising is that his fruit-carving skills have only been acquired since his arrival here.

When he assumed his duties in the DFAC, Lopez saw one of the civilian employees from Bangladesh who worked alongside him take a watermelon and turn it into a blossoming flower.

“I was amazed at what he was able to do with just a paring knife,” Flores said.

Even after nearly 22 years of military experience, Lopez still felt there was much that he could learn and he decided to learn what he had just seen Chef Saidul Islam do.

“I’ve been cooking since I was 16 years old,” said Flores. “But every day you learn something. I’ve never closed myself from learning anything.”

In a reversal of the “advise and assist” role that U.S. Div. – South personnel normally perform, Islam took Flores as a student and said that he could teach him to do the same thing within a month. But after only 30 minutes, Flores was able to make his first simple carving.

“He was amazed at how quickly I was able to do it,” Flores said.

To begin, Flores looks at a picture of something suitable to carve, sometimes even a picture of another carving. He then takes a toothpick to the fruit and traces out the basic shapes and outlines of what he wants to create. After that, he follows his traced outline and plunges his blade into the fruit, judging the depth of each cut to the relative texture and color he desires in the final product.

The process can take him up to an hour, and in those moments he is able to take his mind off of the stresses of being in Iraq and away from his family on his first deployment.

“To me, it’s something that’s very relaxing,” said Flores. “It puts me at ease.”

Flores said he also hoped that coming to the DFAC and seeing something so colorful and creative helps provide a similar reprieve for others who see his work.

“Hopefully they get something from it,” Flores said. “Hopefully it takes their mind off of what’s outside.”



Courtesy photo

Sgt. Neri Flores Jr., a food service noncommissioned officer, holds up one of his fruit carvings. Flores quickly learned the skill from a third-country national who worked alongside him while deployed with the 36th Infantry Division in support of Operation New Dawn.



Headquarters Snapshots: Who We Are



Spc. George Bray - This quiet, easy-going specialist from Austin, Texas is a jack of all trades. He has served in the Army for 10 years. His first seven years was on active duty and he deployed once to Iraq, in 2004-05, where he conducted patrols on the streets of Baghdad. Since then he has had numerous duties from gunner, loader and driver for a tank to being a recruiter, and then becoming an instructor at Fort Knox, Ky. Bray is now a human resource specialist with the 36th Infantry Division. He enjoys hanging with friends at home and cooking on the grill. Before joining the Army, Bray worked at a nursing home in three departments-the kitchen, housekeeping and maintenance. His best time there was when he got to shoot the breeze with some of the residents during the holidays. "Around the holidays, you could see which families didn't want to deal with their parents," Bray said. "So they just stuck them in the home and left them there. All that they wanted was someone to sit there and listen to them. I made it my goal everyday to go and talk to somebody."

Master Sgt. Lotta Smagula - This charismatic and energetic noncommissioned officer from Austin, Texas has known the Army practically her entire life. The "military brat" traveled back and forth between Europe and the U.S. as a child. She joined the active-duty Army in 1986, around the time her father retired as a sergeant first class. "When my father retired, I just couldn't live in one place for the rest of my life...so I joined the Army," Smagula said. The 24-year veteran, who has several military occupational specialties, said this is her third deployment. She is now the chief medical NCO for U.S. Div.-South. In 1990, she joined the Texas National Guard. She was later selected in 2002 to be on Active Guard Reserve status (AGR). When she is not in uniform, Smagula plays softball and enjoys reading. She is also a big University of Texas fan who enjoys anything and everything about UT, she said. After being promoted to master sergeant, she asked her father, "How does it feel that your daughter outranks you? I was very quickly told that I would never outrank my father," she said.



Capt. David Lusk - The Canadian native started his military career in 2003 when he enlisted in the Navy Reserve. "I tried to join right after the invasion of Iraq," Lusk said. "It was just the fact that we were going to war and I wanted to do my part." In 2004 Lusk received his license to practice law and began work as a public defender in Hawaii. In 2006, he joined the Hawaii Army National Guard, then later received a commission as a judge advocate general officer in 2007. Lusk now has a private practice. He currently works for the Staff Judge Advocate as the chief of Rule of Law for U.S. Div.-South. He said he volunteered for this deployment. "Really, it was to get the deployment experience," he said. "I am sure I am going to go again." Lusk said he plans on furthering his law education in the future. When not practicing law, he teaches criminal justice and accounting at Heald College in Hawaii. Lusk also wrote a science-fiction novel called "A Man of War."

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barbara.reilly@iraq.centcom.mil

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1900 - New Believers Bible Study

2000 - Bible Study Classes

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COB Basra Chapel

1000 - Contemporary Service

1130 - Traditional Service

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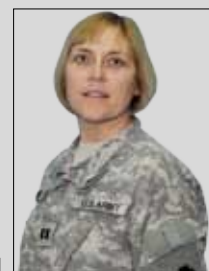
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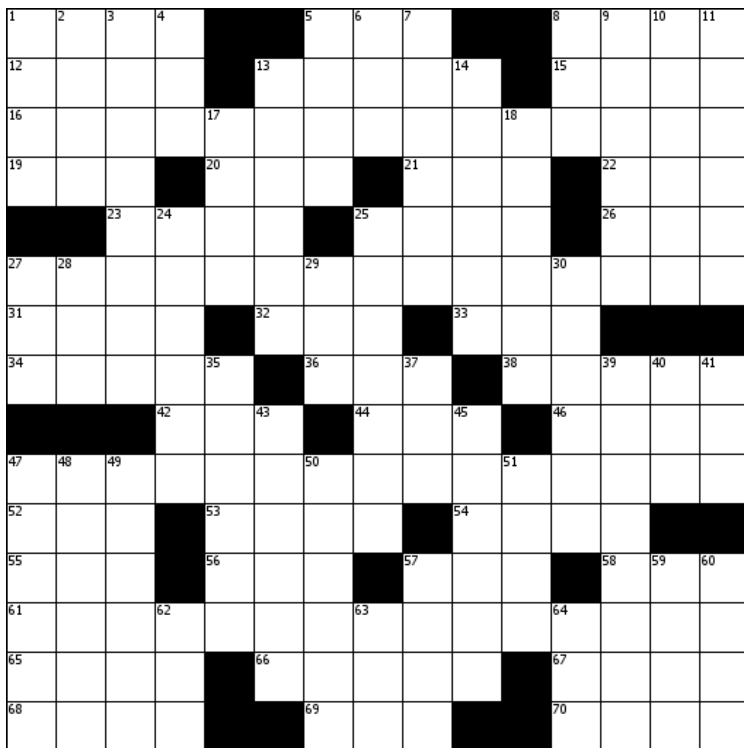
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Anonymous Tip Hotline on NIPR

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Capt.
Lisa Ann Lerma





Across

1. Site of the Taj Mahal
5. Faux --- (blunder)
8. "Edward Scissorhands" star
12. Tries for the prize
13. Exhorts
15. Malarial fever
16. Start of a Yogi Berra quip
19. Disco guy on "The Simpsons"
20. Hooded snake
21. Weigh heavily on
22. Jr.'s son
23. Poison ivy problem
25. Darling
26. U.S. visitor since 1976
27. Part 2 of the quip
31. Once again
32. Highway bailout
33. Society newsmaker
34. Low point
36. Choose
38. Lacquer ingredient
42. --- cit. (where cited)
44. "___-la-la!"
46. Puerto ---
47. Part 3 of the quip
52. Time of note
53. Nice notion?
54. Musical Tommy
55. Irving or Grant
56. Circus safeguard
57. Blow it
58. Good place to get in hot water
61. End of the quip
65. Debussy's "Clair de ---"
66. Silence breaker
67. Became frayed
68. Cartesian conjunction
69. Grassy expanse
70. Apt name for a guy in debt?

Down

1. Ovid's bird
2. Kind of wrap
3. Came full circle
4. Grate stuff
5. Make ready
6. Long trailer
7. Nasal partition
8. '50s sitcom staple
9. Snob
10. Discipline
11. Fashionably small
13. End result
14. On the agenda
17. Manhattan border river
18. City in SW England
24. Freely
25. Ranch hand
27. Pallid
28. Santa --- wind
29. Soft murmur
30. King of the fairies, in folklore
35. Rodeo feat
37. Truck scale unit
39. Supplement to the main event
40. Hostile, as a reception
41. Turn-downs
43. Officers in training
45. Souped-up wheels
47. Short-legged hound
48. "Knight Without ---"
(1937 Marlene Dietrich film)
49. Hen's work
50. Upgrade the machinery
51. Baby's output
57. Sicilian landmark
59. A Dumas
60. Revival cry
62. Prefix with classic
63. "A Boy Named ---"
64. Afternoon hour

Sudoku

8						1	4	7
		4		9				6
	2	3	7			8		
		9			1			2
			3	2				
	8				9	4		
		1						
9		6	1	4			3	8
5				6	3			



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Photo of the Week



Photo by Spc. Ashley Vera

The 36th Infantry Division's Special Troops Battalion makes their mark with a mural on a concrete barrier T-wall in Kuwait. The Texas Army National Guard unit deployed to southern Iraq in December in support of Operation New Dawn and took over responsibility of U.S. Div.-South from the 1st Inf. Div. in January. The 36th Inf. Div. will continue the U.S. Forces-Iraq mission to advise and assist the Iraqi Security Forces and the Government of Iraq during the critical transition period that will see the complete withdrawal of U.S. military personnel by Dec. 31, 2011.

Think your photos are good enough for the Photo of the Week? Send them in! Just e-mail us your photo in a high-quality format, along with your full name and rank and a description of what your photo is about and when it was taken. Remember to include full name, rank and job title of each person in your photo. We look forward to seeing what you can do.

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