

Welders armor Iraqi troops, Page 9



Photo by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas

U.S. Army Col. Mark Littel and Iraqi Army Maj. Gen. Nesayef Khudaier test their musical skills on traditional taiko drums after the Japanese Soldiers finished their cultural performance for the visiting generals and other guests at the Japanese compound in An Samarra, Iraq.

Iraq, MNF-I observe Iraqi Air Force birthday

By Sgt. W. Watson Martin
214th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP COOKE, TADJIL, Iraq — Iraqi and coalition leaders and Iraqi Airmen met at this joint coalition and Iraqi air base last Friday to celebrate the 74th anniversary of the Iraqi Air Force — the first year of its revival with coalition assistance.

“Today we gather in this precious place to remember the birth of the Iraqi Air Force and the arrival of the first squadron in 1931,” said Iraqi Air Force Commanding General, Maj. Gen. Kamal Al-Barzanjy.

With the assistance of coalition forces, the Iraqi Air Force continues its ongoing reconstruction. Hangars filled with neglected Russian and French aircraft have been replaced by Huey and Jet

Ranger helicopters, C-130E transports and numerous surveillance aircraft. More than 1,400 Iraqi Air Force personnel take great pride in the responsibility of maintaining their new equipment.

Al-Barzanjy gave thanks to the countries of Jordan and the United Arab Emirates for the help and effort they have put into training Iraqi Airmen. Special thanks were also given to the United States for the gifts of the C-130Es and its training of Iraqi troops; the United Kingdom was given thanks for their support as well.

Distinguished guests Al-Barzanjy and Brig. Gen. James Schwitters, commanding general of the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team in Baghdad, strode past the display of aircraft to their respective seats while Iraqi honor guards snapped and rendered salutations with weapons and bugles alike.

Inside an open hangar, tables filled with refreshments and gifts

became the backdrop for the ceremony that would pay tribute to the 74th Anniversary of the Iraqi Air Force, the fallen comrades who paid the ultimate price for freedom and the birth of Helicopter Squadron Two.

An Iraqi military band using old and new instruments played the Iraqi National Anthem while the crowd stood, and some rendered salutes. After a moment of silence two helicopters — one Huey and one Jet Ranger both clad with desert shades of paint — flew by the open hangar.

“We are proud to see our pilots flying our aircraft, which are going to play an important role in providing security and stability for our nation,” said base commander, Col. Satte. “This is a stepping stone in Iraq’s sovereignty. Congratulations to Iraq’s

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Understand heat stress, avoid heat injuries

With temperatures already exceeding 100 degrees in many parts of Iraq, start preparing to meet the heat of summer

By Sgt. Misha King
Scimitar Assistant Editor

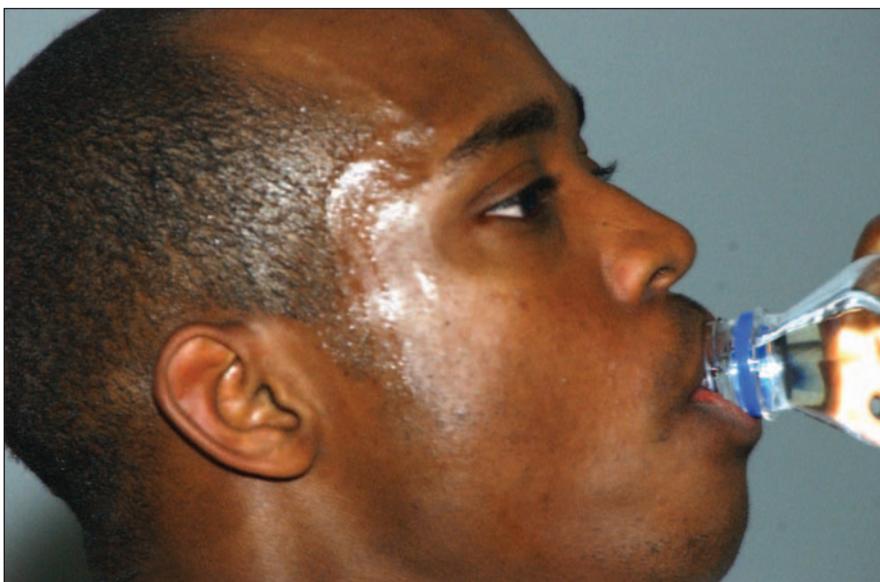


Photo by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas

Sgt. Tariq Umaru takes a break to cool off and stay hydrated during an outdoor basketball game. Drinking plenty of water and resting frequently during high temperatures help prevent heat injuries.

CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq

— Although it is only spring in Iraq, temperatures already hitting the high 90s and low 100s makes one raise a sweaty brow and wonder just how hot the summer months will be and how to beat that incredible heat. Wondering is the result of not being educated, but the Multi-National Corps - Iraq surgeon's office and the 12th Medical Detachment here have the answers personnel in Iraq need to make it through the next several months without becoming a heat casualty.

Most people in the military have probably heard of heat injuries at some point in their careers. There are three types — heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. It is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of each injury to avoid further injury, said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Lee. A. Fordyce, environmental health officer for the MNC-I surgeon's office.

“The first stage of heat injury is heat cramps, which are characterized with cramping in the large muscles, usually in the legs,” Fordyce explained. “There is sweating, dizziness and weakness. When suffering from heat exhaustion, a person shows amplified symptoms of heat cramps and may experience headache, nausea, vomiting, dry mouth, clammy skin and profuse sweating.

“Heat stroke is the most severe of the injuries. The symptoms from the first two stages are amplified, except the person stops sweating and is dry to the touch,” Fordyce contin-

ued. “The body temperature can get very high, and the person may be unresponsive and possibly go into a coma.” Heat stroke is a medical emergency, and brain damage and death can result.

Knowing the types of heat injuries and the symptoms helps detect heat injuries, but there are several things people can do to protect themselves as temperature and exertion levels rise.

“During extreme temperatures, people should drink at least one, but not more than one and one-half quarts of water every hour, not to exceed 12 quarts per day,” said Maj. Tathetra M. Joseph, chief of preventive medicine, MNC-I surgeon's office. “However, individuals should know their own body's composition to ensure they don't flood out the electrolytes in their system by drinking too much water.”

Physical training is an important part of military personnel's daily routines, but high temperatures can lead to overexertion and injury, defeating the point of training.

“It's best to do physical training early in the morning or late in the evening when the sun is down,” said Joseph. “The earlier or the later, the better.”

Moreover, physical training is not the only activity sometimes conducted in the heat of day. Daily missions sometimes require personnel to be exposed to high temperatures.

“People should stay out of the sun as much as possible,” Joseph said. “It is important for leaders to try to conduct as many missions as possible early in the morning, or late in the evening. Make sure your troops wear sunscreen that is at least SPF 15 or greater. Wear boonie caps because they're wide-rimmed and they protect the face and ears from possible skin cancer. Wear lip balm and sunglasses.

“Also, leaders need to make sure they enforce water intake

See **HEAT**, Page 4

Forward-deployed troops offered chance to show Mom they care

By Samantha L. Quigley
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Service members in remote locations may be wondering how they're going to get even a simple Mother's Day card to dear old Mom this year.

Cardstore.com, a partner in DoD's America Supports You campaign, has the answer to that dilemma.

The company is offering forward-deployed troops in Afghanistan and Iraq the opportunity to send their moms a Mother's Day card at no cost.

Just by logging into the company's Web site and taking a few simple steps, starting with picking a card, service members in the two countries can send their mothers a traditional paper greeting card from wherever they may be this Mother's Day.

Service members choose a card, write a

message and then tell Cardstore.com when the card should be mailed. The company prints a “high-quality greeting card” and sends it through the U.S. Postal Service.

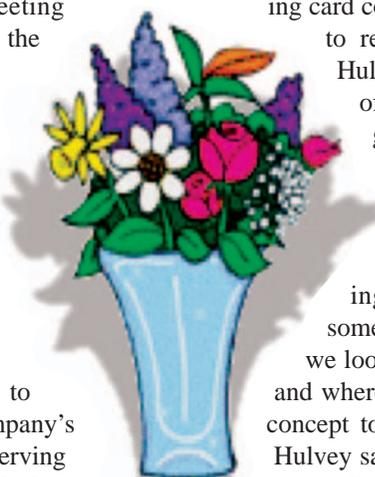
“They can actually put a photograph of themselves on the face of the card,” said Al Hulvey, Cardstore.com's chief executive officer. “They can make it a very personal kind of touch to their mothers.”

A special code is needed to access this offer on the company's Web site. Service members serving abroad can find the code in ads that have been appearing in Middle East editions of the *Stars & Stripes* newspaper since April 22. Three of those ads will run

over the course of a week.

The Emeryville, Calif.-based online greeting card company was looking for a way to reach out and do some good, Hulvey said. He said company officials realized what troops give up while they're deployed in regard to maintaining communication with loved ones.

“When we looked at helping, reaching out and doing something for a group of people ... we looked at where there was a need and where we could bring our business concept to really help in that process,” Hulvey said. “It's obvious that the military folks are sacrificing a lot for this country and it's very difficult for them to ... keep in touch with the people they care about.”



It just seemed like a natural thing for the company to do, he said.

The America Supports You team is excited about Cardstore.com's support of the troops.

“We are thrilled that Cardstore.com has joined the team and is supporting our military men and women in the Middle East,” Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Allison Barber said in a joint America Supports You and Cardstore.com press release. “We applaud them for helping troops stay in touch with their families back home through this unique Mother's Day opportunity.”

Orders can be placed from April 22 to May 8, Mother's Day. Though to guarantee on-time delivery, orders need to be placed no later than May 2, Hulvey said.

He said the company is looking at more opportunities like this. Hulvey also said that he hoped Cardstore.com's program would emphasize that America supports its troops.

MNF-I Commanding General
Gen. George Casey

MNF-I PAO
Col. Robert A. Potter

Command Information Chief
Maj. Patricia C. Anderson
patricia.anderson@iraq.centcom.mil

Command Information NCOIC
Master Sgt. Michele R. Hammonds
michele.hammonds@iraq.centcom.mil



Editor.....Staff Sgt. Brett B. McMillan
brett.mcmillan@iraq.centcom.mil

Assistant Editor.....Sgt. Misha King
misha.king@iraq.centcom.mil

Staff.....Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn
timothy.lawn@iraq.centcom.mil

Staff.....Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas
ferdinand.thomas@iraq.centcom.mil

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Air Force

from Page 1

people and Armed Forces in building the new Iraqi Air Force, successful from God.”

Helicopter Squadron Two Commander, Lt. Col. Ali, said, “My coworkers and I join this aviation class with its blood flowing through our veins. We are eager to serve the Air Force and our country as people before us.”

Though God lay at the root of faith for better days to come in Iraq’s Air Force, the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly (TNA) will play a key role in its successful formation. “On behalf of my brothers in the Iraqi Air Force, I will make the Air Force for our people,” Al-Barzanjy said. He asked the government to continue support of the Air Force.

“We remember all the people who started the Air Force and built it up to the same standards as the advanced countries,” Al-Barzanjy said. The previous years of neglect will be undone and Iraq will recreate the spirit of its Air Force, he said.

Afterwards, the two generals sat in the Huey to get a close-up of the future of Iraq’s Air Force while Iraqi media swarmed them.



Photo by Sgt. W. Watson Martin

Iraqi Air Force Helicopter Squadron 2 takes a group photo with U.S. service members while they celebrate the Iraqi Air Force’s 74th anniversary and the first anniversary of its revival.

Coalition leaders discuss future, transitioning, training

By Sgt. Michael J. Carden
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq — More than 60 Coalition leaders representing 26 nations, including Iraq, gathered for a Senior National Representatives Conference April 15 and 16 at the Al-Faw Palace on Camp Victory to discuss future transitioning and training efforts for Iraqi security forces in the Operation Iraqi Freedom theater.

Italian Maj. Gen. Antonio Satta, chief Coalition operations, Multi-National Corps - Iraq, welcomed the group with a video picture slide show of Coalition troops working with their Iraqi counterparts. He also expressed his appreciation for the Coalition’s participation and dedication in refurbishing the country and preparing the Iraqi people for self-governance.

“The Coalition has done a superb job training our Iraqi counterparts,” Satta said. “A capable Iraqi security force is the key to their success.” Our main efforts have now shifted ... toward building the Iraqi government to conduct and defend [their own] counter-insurgency operations.”

Satta also spoke of the importance that representatives from their respective countries maintain a viable presence in Iraq.

The national commander of the Australian Contingent, Air Commodore Greg Evans, agreed. The Australian Contingent currently has 400 troops. By the end of May, the contingent will be nearly 1,000 strong, Evans said.

Evans also said he was looking forward to meeting his Japanese counterparts because many of the arriving

Australians have been tasked with providing security for the Japanese engineers in Southeastern Iraq near Basra.

“This conference is very important because it’s much easier to work with people you actually know rather than those who you’ve never met,” Evans said. “I’ve just met my Japanese colleagues, who I will be working with when our new troops arrive.”

Many of the additional Australians will be training Iraqi logistical units as well. They are in the process of beginning the Iraqi Army Service Support School in Taji, Iraq, just north of Baghdad. They plan to teach the Iraqis about the importance of combat service support. Although the Iraqis have a large number of infantry troops trained, they are very weak when it comes to the logistical aspects of a military, Evans said.

“This will be the nucleus of the Iraqi Army,” Evans said. “We will be teaching them about maintenance, supplies, transportation and pretty much all of the little things that make an army run. We’re only a few weeks from starting the first course.”

“We’re very thankful for what the Coalition has done for our country,” said Iraqi Maj. Gen. Nesayef Khudaier, senior Iraqi Army liaison officer, MNF-I. “The Iraqi Army has been very well trained and has been doing some missions on their own, such as protecting oil pipelines and conducting reconnaissance missions.”

Khudaier said although the Iraqis have shown improvements in many different areas of the country, conferences such as this one are a great opportunity for the senior Coalition leaders to learn from each other.

Heat

from Page 2

and not allow thirst to be an indicator of dehydration, because if you’re thirsty, your fluid level is already about a quart low” she added. “It’s the leaders’ responsibility to ensure the troops are fully aware and educated on heat casualty symptoms and prevention.”

“People working outside during the day should keep hydrating all the time,” Fordyce reiterated. “Drink even if you don’t think you’re thirsty. Also, if you know you’ll be doing hard work the next day, start drinking water the night before.”

Besides drinking plenty of water and modifying work schedules, Fordyce said how we wear our clothing can help reduce the risk of heat injury. Military personnel are limited on what they can wear because regulations require they wear a full military uniform. But if possible, Fordyce recommended wearing loose sleeves, loosened collars, and unbloused trousers to help keep cooler in high temperatures.

But how does one know when it’s too hot to conduct certain activities outdoors?

“Company-sized units should use a wet bulb globe temperature (WBGT) gauge to determine the work-to-rest and fluid replacement cycles in hot environments,” said Staff Sgt. Steven M. Thiede, operations noncommissioned officer in charge of the 12th Medical Detachment. “It basically mimics the body’s ability to dissipate heat. There are three thermometers: a dry bulb, which shows the actual temperature; a black bulb, which shows temperature if one is wearing all black; and

a wet bulb, which shows humidity, or how your body dissipates heat.

“Those figures are taken to a slide scale and it gives you a heat index and a heat category. These figures are important for a unit’s risk analysis. The higher the heat index or heat category, the higher the rest cycle and the more water one should drink. This helps prevent heat casualties from occurring.”

When the heat category reaches four, which is 88 degrees or higher on the WBGT index, it is not safe to do strenuous work for extended periods of time because the risk of heat casualties increases, Thiede said.

Ultimately, everyone is responsible for his or her own actions. However, having a battle buddy, wingman, shipmate, or friend who knows your limitations can be the link in preventing a heat injury and in turn, saving the mission.

“A heat casualty will really degrade the mission because when a troop goes down, all the medical attention and assistance affects the group as a whole,” Joseph said. “So, the buddy system is extremely important. The best thing to do is to make sure that your buddy really knows your physical condition — what you’re capable of doing and what you’re not capable of doing. Sometimes you’re not aware that you’re worn down, but your buddy will start to pick up on signs. So, it’s important to know each other.”

Recognizing the types of heat injuries and knowing tips on avoiding them are only two-thirds of the equation. What should people do if they or their buddies become heat casualties?

“Seek medical attention,” Joseph stated firmly. “If someone is exhibiting the signs

and symptoms of heat exhaustion, call for a medic, or if a medic is not available, call for a medevac. If one is exhibiting signs of a heat stroke, call for a medevac immediately.”

As the sweltering summer months

approach, remember that as service members and civilians, our mission comes first. But more importantly, don’t forget the mission is compromised if personnel are not there to conduct it. Beat the heat — don’t let the heat beat you.

		Easy Work		Moderate Work		Hard Work	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weapon Maintenance • Walking Hard Surface at 2.5 mph, < 30 lb Load • Marksmanship Training • Drill and Ceremony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking Loose Sand at 2.5 mph, No Load • Walking Hard Surface at 3.5 mph, < 40 lb Load • Calisthenics • Patrolling • Individual Movement Techniques, i.e. Low Crawl, High Crawl, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking Hard Surface at 3.5 mph, > 40 lb Load • Walking Loose Sand at 2.5 mph with Load • Field Assaults 			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work-rest times and fluid replacement volumes will sustain performance and hydration for at least 4 hours of work in the specified heat category. Fluid needs can vary based on individual differences (± ¼ qt/h) and exposure to full sun or full shade (± ¼ qt/h). • NL = no limit to work time per hour. • Rest means minimal physical activity (sitting or standing), accomplished in shade if possible. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAUTION: Hourly fluid intake should not exceed 1½ quarts. • Daily fluid intake should not exceed 12 quarts. • If wearing body armor add 5°F to WBGT in humid climates. • If wearing NBC clothing (MOPP 4) add 10°F to WBGT. 			
Heat Category	WBGT Index, F°	Easy Work		Moderate Work		Hard Work	
		Work/Rest	Water Intake (Qt/H)	Work/Rest	Water Intake (Qt/H)	Work/Rest	Water Intake (Qt/H)
1	78° - 81.9°	NL	½	NL	¾	40/20 min	¾
2 (GREEN)	82° - 84.9	NL	1/2	50/10 min	3/4	30/30 min	1
3 (YELLOW)	85° - 87.9°	NL	¾	40/20 min	¾	30/30 min	1
4 (RED)	88 - 89.9	NL	3/4	30/30 min	3/4	20/40 min	1
5 (BLACK)	> 90°	50/10 min	1	20/40 min	1	10/50 min	1

Cultural awareness program backers seek support

By Master Sgt. Michele R. Hammonds
Command Information NCOIC

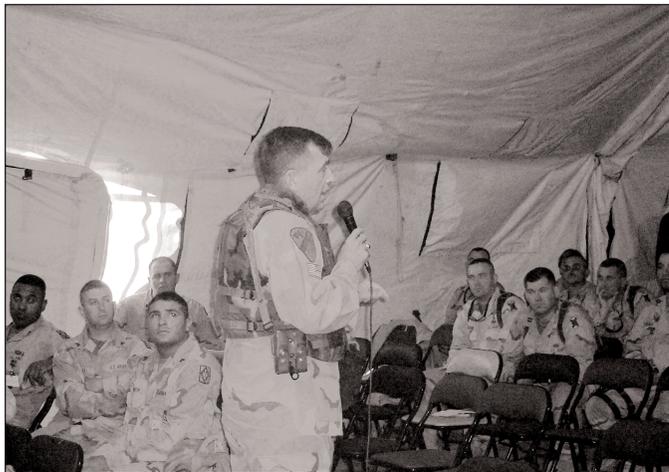
INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq — Military leaders hope to launch a mandatory cultural awareness program to educate new arrivals of Coalition forces, contract and civilian workers here about the Iraqi people, their culture and customs.

Similar to a new-employee orientation, once approved, the cultural program would be implemented as required training for all newcomers serving in Iraq.

It is the job of Lt. Col. Richard D. Welch, program manager and assistant chief of staff G5, 1st Cavalry Division, to drum up support to keep the program running permanently. Although the program is not currently required for new incoming personnel, it is available here, and Welch hopes to change that.

The culture awareness program is one of many programs spearheaded by the National Iraqi Assistance Center aimed at helping Iraqi people.

"I am trying to stand up this program at the national level, but policy has to be written first," he said.



Courtesy photo

Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division, addresses Soldiers at one of the Iraqi Cultural Awareness Training sessions. He or one of the assistant division commanders explained to each group the importance of the training as a force protection measure.

Welch knows senior U.S. military leaders and the Iraqi ambassador will first need to endorse the program before commanders and civilian leaders will require their service members and civilian employees to attend the instruction. All personnel coming to Iraq to work with the Coalition forces would participate in an eight-hour class about Iraqi culture as part of the program.

Cultural awareness is a program developed to provide information about Iraqi society, its customs and culture.

"It's a complex society — which can be a cultural minefield because of the country's makeup of social and tribal networks," Welch added.

Training military personnel about the Iraqi culture is taught as a force protection measure. This way, service members receive information about the dos and don'ts of the culture and customs to avoid becoming a target or offending the locals.

"It is force protection just like you would train to protect yourself from vehicle bombs, improvised explosive devices or small arms fire," he said. "So, we try to tell our Soldiers that everyone is an ambassador for his or her country. If you do good things [the Iraqis] will remember good things Americans did, and if you did bad things, they will remember that as well."

While it is each military member's responsibility to act in a proper way while accomplishing the mission, this is not always the case. Welch described a scenario in which service members raided a house during a military operation. The door was kicked in and the male of the house was grabbed and dragged outside in front of his family. The Iraqi male felt humiliated because service members invaded his house without being invited. This could have been a double whammy if his daughters or wife had not been properly dressed at the time of the raid.

"You can do everything right in your mission, you can conduct your mission tactically 100 percent correctly," he said. "You can also create a cultural nightmare and disaster for yourself even if you do it militarily correctly."

Welch advises service members to be aware of the Iraqi culture as they conduct their military mission.

"I have told them, 'You can't separate it,'" he said. "You have jumped into a culture here just like jumping into a pool of water. You are surrounded by a strange culture, and you need to incorporate it into your mission analysis. So when you plan your mission you need to then ask yourself, 'If I do my mission this way, what impact will it have on the culture?'"

Because misunderstanding the Iraqi culture can be deadly if a coalition member makes a mistake, Welch and his eight cultural awareness instructors have tried to minimize casualties since they first began managing the program in 2004. The first troops to attend their cultural awareness course were the 1st Cav. Div. Soldiers prior to deploying to Iraq in 2004.

Maj. Maria Emery, NAIC Women's and Children's Issue Center team leader, said the cultural awareness program was originally put together by 1st Cav., Welch and a group of Iraqi nationals, to educate Soldiers on different Iraqi issues and about its society.

"They have a basic language and history class," said Emery.

Last month, 1st Cav. Soldiers redeployed back to Fort Hood, Texas while Welch, who was attached to the unit as a mobilized Army Reserve Soldier, stayed behind to gain more support for the program.

"We taught Soldiers how to act and survive in this culture," said Welch. "Building relationships with groups like the children or the women who would be teaching the children is important."

If you establish positive relationships with Iraqi children, who are our future, then they can grow up and be productive adults, said Azhar A. Jasim, culture awareness instructor, director and coordinator of the Women's and Children's Issues Center. Jasim, an Iraqi citizen, praised the cultural awareness program.

"Children who come in contact with U.S. military personnel will grow up and remember them," said Jasim, who helped train 3rd Infantry Division Soldiers earlier this year before they deployed to Iraq. "When they see the uniform, they can have a positive image of American service members."

Welch managed to take time out to attend a seminar this month for the 4th Infantry Division leadership to plug the cultural awareness program. Even though he was not taking the time out to visit his Ohio hometown during campaign season because he was deployed to Iraq, Welch was voted to serve another term as district attorney.

"The support was overwhelming," said Welch, who believes he will receive similar results in making the cultural awareness program mandatory training for all coalition forces and civilian employees.

For more information about the culture awareness program call DSN 318-270-0200 or 0240, Iraqna 07901939592, or MCI 914-360-0734.

Aussies teach logistics to Iraq Army

By Spc. Mary Rose
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

TAJI, Iraq — A team of Australians in Taji graduated the first class of Iraqi Soldiers, April 18, in an Iraqi Army supply, transportation and maintenance schoolhouse they helped complete in March.

The team implemented a five-week course at the Iraqi Army Support and Services Institute, with lessons for both Iraqi officers and noncommissioned officers.

When the team got to Taji to set up the institute they had to start from the ground up. The buildings on the training grounds were empty and had no power or water. They took the buildings that were still structurally sound and repaired them, then did everything necessary to get the school off the ground, from building cement walls to ordering sticky notes, said Lt. Col. Warren Jolly, officer-in-charge, Iraqi Army Support and Services Institute Military Transition Team.

"The Iraqi Army doesn't have a logistical system up and running, so we had to start from ground zero," Jolly said.

Doctrine is constantly being developed at Multi-National Corps - Iraq and Multi-National Force - Iraq levels and passed down to the institute level concerning appropriate tactics, techniques and procedures for the training system, so the Iraqis feel comfortable with the instruction given, Jolly said.

"It is not a training system that belongs to any other army. We have tailored it to the Iraqi Army and have worked it through the

Joint Headquarters of the Iraqi Ministry of Defense to get it endorsed to help us adjust the things that we might not have hit on the mark this time around to develop a new system that they're comfortable with," Jolly said. "We are teaching something that the Iraqi Army will find workable."

The institute has 50 Coalition and 35 Iraqi personnel mentoring and delivering the training. There are 23 translators who work with the instructors and mentors, translating in front of classrooms and transcribing doctrine.

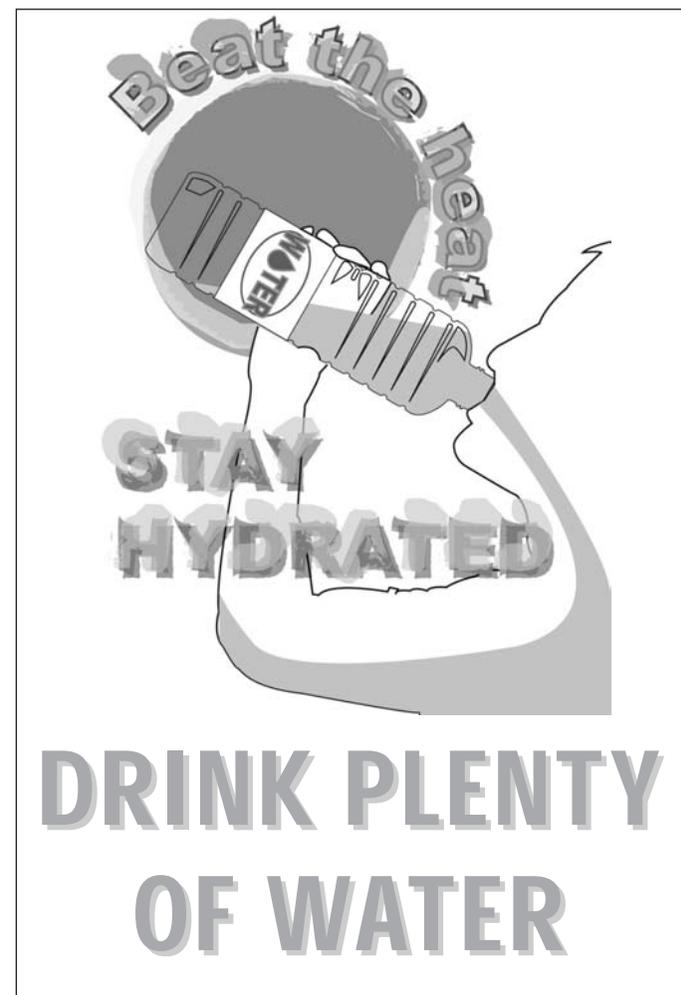
"We're delivering the course work and actually developing it at the same time," Jolly said. "We have a lot of people burning a lot of hours to make this successful."

The majority of the people who are instructing and mentoring at the institute have had previous instructor experience, said Maj. Kenton Madsen, senior instructor. He said the experience of the instructors varies, but the quality of the instructors is very high.

Instructors have been concentrating on more practical, hands-on, instruction — especially with the NCOs, Madsen said. "Quite quickly we realized that some of the students weren't so bright scholastically, but just because they can't read or write doesn't mean they aren't smart."

The hands-on experience being given to the students has been excellent, he added. The training the Iraqis are receiving from this institute will certify them as maintenance, transportation and supply supervisors in the new Iraqi Army.

"We can only hope that after our job is done here they can take what we teach them and build a solid foundation. This Army is at war and they need to make sure they are trained up," Madsen said.



Iraqi Security Forces exceed 155,000; positive trends continue

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — There are more than 155,000 “trained and equipped” members of the Iraqi security forces, and trends are clearly positive, a senior defense official said during a Pentagon background briefing April 22. What’s more, U.S. troop strength in Iraq went under 140,000 this week with the completion of the rotation of forces in and out of the country, he said.

And, while there has been an increase in the number of attacks in Iraq, it is small, and Coalition and Iraqi officials are keeping an eye on such attacks.

The increase “is not significant in and of itself because the weekly number of attacks tend to fluctuate,” the official said. “We don’t believe this is indicative of increased levels of planning, coordination and sophistication of attacks. The general trend of the number of attacks has been decreasing since the January elections.”

One disturbing anomaly is with car bombs. About half of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices are now being detonated by suicide bombers, the official said. In the past, the number of “suicides” was about 30 percent. “We don’t know yet what that means, but that is a particular note we’re watching with interest,” he said.

He said there has also been an increase in tensions among ethnic groups in various areas. The official said this is a direct outgrowth of the Abu Musab al-Zarqawi strategy. The al Qaeda-affiliated Jordanian has been trying to pit Sunni against Shia and Arab against Kurd in Iraq. This is something the Iraqi government and the Iraqi security forces are going to have to deal with in the weeks and months ahead.

The coalition and the Iraqis understand that the battle against the insurgents is different than a conventional operation. “The nature of insurgencies is that they are long-term affairs,” the official said. “From the U.S. military perspective, the focus is on helping the Iraqis defeat this insurgency themselves.”

Commanders in Iraq continue to evaluate forces and operational concepts employed to defeat the insurgency. “Clearly everybody wants to defeat the insurgency as quickly as possible,” the official said. “But there is a reality that defeating an insurgency can be a long-term affair. There is no timeline.”

Iraqi forces are doing well, this official said. Between 1,500 and 3,000 more soldiers and police are joining the country’s forces weekly. “Certainly the capabilities vary from unit to unit, but the trend is clearly positive in development of the forces,” he said.

One of the challenges all Iraqi units have is sustainability, the official said. The government and the coalition are working hard to develop forces that can sustain themselves. The Iraqis have taken over many sectors in the country, which the official called a positive trend.

Some of the Iraqi units are doing quite well. The Iraqis have far better human intelligence than the coalition does, for example. “They are Iraqis and we’re not,” the official said. “It’s a little easier for them to gain that intel off the street.”

U.S. mentors are working with Iraqi units to help them gain experience and run their own operations.

The number of U.S. forces in Iraq has dropped below 140,000, the official said. This is down from the 170,000 American troops in Iraq in January. In Kuwait, the number of U.S. troops is also down to 14,000.

The main reason the numbers are down is because the latest troop rotation is finished. The numbers will rise again shortly as the next rotation begins. “During these transitional periods the number of troops in the region increases while units conduct relief-in-place operations,” he said.

The official said there will be fewer reservists in the next cycle of troops going into Iraq. “The key is not so much, ‘Is it active or is it reserve?’ but ‘Is it right?’” he said. “Is it the right mix of forces to meet the commander’s requirement in theater?”

Pesticide spraying through end of May

BAGHDAD, Iraq — The Iraqi government is conducting date palm spraying for insects for approximately one month beginning May 3 in order to revitalize the Iraqi date palm industry. The coalition is working with the Iraqi government to safely conduct the spraying in the effected areas. Spraying will occur in the following governorates: Baghdad, Divala, Karbala, Hilla, Kut and Najaf.

The airplanes spraying the pesticide will be CH-801 light planes with a single propeller, and they are expected to be painted yellow with a lateral blue stripe on each side.

All Coalition forces and Iraqis should avoid being sprayed directly. If personnel accidentally come into contact with the pesticide, they should contact local medical personnel for advice and treatment.

Another patriot gives all for Iraq

MOSUL, Iraq — Col. Khalid Najim Abdallah, Director of Corrections for Ninewah Province, was assassinated by terrorists in Mosul Friday. His vehicle was stopped by terrorists who shot and killed Abdallah and wounded his wife and child.

Abdallah was the fifth public servant of Ninewah Province assassinated in the last five weeks. Brig. Gen. Younis Mohammad Sulaiman, Public Information Officer for the Mosul Police was assassinated on his way to work April 17. Lt. Mohammad Salih Talab, a member of the Explosives Ordinance Disposal section of the Joint Coordination Center, was assassinated on his way to work April 11. Ajeel Muhsin Al Ajeel, along with his driver, was shot in his vehicle outside Mosul General Hospital on April 10. Gen. Waleed Khashmoula, the Director of the Anti-Corruption Department,

was assassinated by a suicide bomber on March 20.

Abdallah received high praise from many of his peers. His confinement facility was selected by Baghdad officials to be the model for which all other prisons in Iraq were to be based. Abdallah was even recently asked by the Minister of Justice in Baghdad to oversee all prison operations in Iraq.

Thousands show up to join Iraqi police

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — Demonstrating Iraqis’ growing desire to be part of the security of local neighborhoods and streets that is sweeping the nation, more than 2,000 citizens showed up for an Iraqi Police recruiting drive April 16 near Camp Taji.

Iraqi Army and police forces secured the area and helped process the applicants. They screened many of them and took in about 750 for further testing and screening, which included both a physical fitness and written test. About 130 made it through the day’s processing.

Coalition military police provided advisory support to the mission. They also assisted with the physical fitness test and some of the logistics involved in the screening.

This police station, about seven miles east of Camp Taji, is in a joint IA and IP location.

Sgt. Jeremiah Hawk, of the 64th Military Police Company, 720th MP Battalion, said about 130 of those who successfully passed the entrance screening go to a local police academy.

He said they are taking names of others who passed and those would likely go to a training academy in Jordan.

Hawk said the local IP station commanders asked for volunteers in their communities to show up for the recruiting event and attributed the turnout to the station commanders’ drive for new recruits.

Madain search uncovers large stockpiles of weapons

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Craig Zentkovich
2nd Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

MADAIN, Iraq — Following an early-morning cordon and search of this city south of Baghdad, Iraqi Security Forces supported by Task Force Baghdad Soldiers, discovered weapons caches at two separate locations April 18.

Prior to Monday’s search, Madain (also known as Salman Pak) had for months been known as a terrorist staging ground for improvised explosive device attacks against Iraqi and U.S. forces.



Iraqi Army Soldiers, with the support of 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, secure an open area north of Salman Pak April 18. Both units served as a quick reaction force for the Iraqi security forces assault on the insurgents in the town.

Items discovered and later destroyed by an explosive ordnance disposal team from Task Force Baghdad’s 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, included more than 50-82 mm mortar shells, rocket-propelled grenades and launchers, rockets, high-explosive artillery shells, and a pair of 250-pound Russian-made bombs.

Additionally, dozens of rigged IED initiation devices and spools of wire were found in a nearby shack.

A sport utility vehicle at



An Iraqi Army Soldier dismounts from a 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, Bradley Fighting Vehicle, and secures his sector of fire on the highway north of Salman Pak in the early morning hours of April 18. The IA and 3-7 Cav. forces served as a quick reaction force for the Iraqi security force’s mission in Salman Pak that day.

the site contained three 155 mm artillery shells wired and packed with additional explosives. Iraqi and U.S. forces provided security of the sites while EOD removed the threat.

“The mission was very successful,” said Lt. Col. Michael Johnson, commander of 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment. “The [Iraqi forces] were able to secure Salman Oak and find a large weapons cache where IED vehicle bombs were being manufactured.”

In the town center, Iraqi Security Forces, numbering in the hundreds, celebrated after reclaiming a police station that had not been occupied by Iraqi Police personnel for months.

“The U.S. forces had a very small part in the operation,” Johnson said. “[3-7 Cav.] served as a quick reaction force, if necessary. This was an all Iraqi-planned and executed mission.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

First Iraqi Soldiers complete logistics course

TAJI, Iraq — Iraqi Soldiers stood on the hot pavement of the parade ground with the Iraqi Flag waving proudly above their heads. These Soldiers lined up in neat rows were the first class to graduate from the Iraqi Army Support Services Institute in Taji April 18.

More than 100 trainees officially became logistics Soldiers, having learned the skills necessary to re-supply and support their units.

The skills taught at SSI are vital to the Iraqi Army's expanding role as the security force for Iraq. In the past, Iraqi Army units have relied on Multi-National Force logistical support when conducting day-to-day operations.

The school is a joint operation run by the Iraqi Army and Australian Forces. Today, the Iraqi Army is moving towards complete and autonomous security operations with their own logistical support. (By Sgt. Kevin Bromley, 3rd Brigade, 1st Armor Division Public Affairs Office)

Soldiers deliver sheep to Haifa residents

BAGHDAD, Iraq — In celebration of Mohammed's birthday, Soldiers from 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division teamed up with Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division and delivered 25 sheep to the residents of Salhiya

and Sheik Maruf April 20.

"The delivery of the sheep was coordinated with Mohammed's birthday and it was a huge success," said Lt. Col. Robert Roth, 4/64 battalion commander.

As the Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers brought the sheep, "the people on Haifa Street were dancing and clapping," Roth said.

Mawlid an-Nabi is a special holiday for many in the Muslim faith and is celebrated to mark the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. The holiday was celebrated April 21 this year.

The Soldiers of 4/64 thought that giving away sheep would extend their friendship to the residents as well as help some families have a good meal.

Reconstruction efforts pay dividends

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Reconstruction efforts in the Salah ad Din province return big dividends to the Iraqi people. In the Iraqi reconstruction program, visible signs of progress are everywhere, with the two biggest events last month being the completion of the Bayji Gas Turbine Upgrade, and renovated schools.

As summer approaches, the Bayji project places an additional 260 megawatts of electrical power on the national grid. Completion of this \$54 million project rehabilitating two gas turbines is a testament to overcoming a challenging

environment of fuel shortages, security issues, funding constraints, parts shortages and an unskilled local labor workforce.

School renovations top the list in reconstruction efforts in Salah ad Din. These renovations are providing students with an improved learning environment and helping to inspire pride in the local community. Last month, 31 schools were completed, 10 of those in the Samarra District. April projections are for another 44 schools to be completed.

Renovation projects in Salah ad Din will affect more than 13,000 Iraqi students and boost the local economy in the form of labor, materials, and subcontracts. The use of local contractors and local labor has been instrumental in inspiring pride in the local communities and injecting money into the local economies.

Two transportation projects, the train stations in Heliwat and Al'Fat'ha, were completed last month. The transportation infrastructure improvements include reconstruction of over 26 kilometers of village roads in remote areas of the province, creating all-weather roads to support the reliable transportation and delivery of goods and services to hundreds of local Iraqis. The projects include replacement of failed drainage structures, repair to the road sub base and placement of an asphalt concrete road surface.

Two primary health clinics in Salah ad Din province were started last month. Seven additional planned clinics are nearing their start date. These projects will provide "turn-key" health clinics with furnishings, equipment, and supplies making the new facilities fully operational. The clinics are being sited in local cities and villages where the people will have direct access to health care.

Two electrical substation projects have started in the province, the beginning of a \$20 million contract for five substations and one feeder line. These projects will upgrade the existing distribution network of power throughout the province. (By Mike McAleer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment uncases colors again in Iraq

**Story and photo by
Sgt. 1st Class Donald Sparks
3rd ACR Public Affairs**

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq — Nearly one year after ending its tour of duty during Operation Iraqi Freedom 1, the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment unfurled its colors on Iraqi soil once again April 13.

Donning their traditional Stetson hats and spurs, more than 200 troopers of the Army's first-ever cavalry regiment stood in line as Col. H.R. McMaster, regiment commander, explained the unit's mission in support of OIF 3.

McMaster paraphrased a quote from the 28th commander of the regiment, Gen. George S. Patton, to symbolize the importance of the regiment's role in fighting the war on terrorism.

"Many years from now when your grandchildren ask you what you did or where you were during the Global War on Terrorism, you'll be able to tell them you were not at home watching it on television or placing a yellow ribbon on your bumper," McMaster said. "You can tell them you were here on the ground fighting the war on terror."

The regiment of mounted riflemen was organized by Congress May 19, 1846, and it brought into existence a



new organization in the American Army: a regiment of riflemen mounted and equipped with Model 1841 percussion rifles to provide longer range and more firepower than the smoothbore weapons of the infantry and dragoons.

Frequencies



Al Asad	93.3 FM
Ar Ramadi	107.3 FM
Baghdad	92.3 FM and 107.7 FM
Balad	107.3 FM
Camp Taji	102.5 FM
Fallujah	105.1 FM
Kirkuk	107.3 FM
Mosul	105.1 FM
Q-West	93.3 FM
Ridgeway	107.1 FM
Sinjar	107.9 FM
Talil AB	107.3 FM
Tikrit	93.3 FM
Taji	107.7 FM

Worship and Prayer Schedule for the International Zone

Sunday

- 9:30 a.m. — Choir Rehearsal
- 10 a.m. — Catholic Mass (3rd BTC)
- 10:30 a.m. — General Christian
- Noon — Episcopal/Lutheran/Anglican
- 2 p.m. — Latter Day Saints
- 4 p.m. — Catholic Confession
- 4:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass
- 6 p.m. — Contemporary Protestant

Monday-Friday

- Noon — Catholic Mass (Mon.-Thurs.)
- Noon — Catholic Communion Service (Tues.)
- 5:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass (Fri. at Camp Steel Dragon)
- 6 p.m. — Jewish Shabbat Services (Fri.)
- 7:30 p.m. — Prayer Service (Tue.)
- 8 p.m. — Bible Study (Thurs. at Senior Advisors Conf. Rm.)
- 8:30 p.m. — Bible Study (Wed. at Ambassadors Conf. Rm.)

Saturday

- 11:30 a.m. — Catholic Mass (Camp Headhunter)
- 12:30 p.m. — Buddhist Worship
- 4 p.m. — Catholic Confession
- 4:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass

Daily Islamic Prayer

For more information, call DSN 318-239-8659.

CHILDREN OVERWHELM TROOPS

In DiYala

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn
Scimitar Staff

FORWARD OPERATING BASE CALDWELL, DIYALA, Iraq — Dozens of gleeful children poured from nearby mud and brick buildings and mobbed the armored column of Humvees and a cargo truck. The Soldiers, taken aback, asked themselves, “Where were the village men, the parents?”

Col. Dennis J. Adams, commander of the 278th Regimental Combat Team, and his Soldiers of the Tenn. Army National Guard made a goodwill visit to the village. They delivered basic living supplies and farm equipment. When some of his Soldiers asked where they were going, he answered, “a village where all the men and boys are gone.”

The grueling three-hour trip from Forward Operating Base Caldwell included a convoy link up with Iraqi Soldiers. From the flat arid desert around Caldwell the convoy traveled through rolling green hills dotted with shrubbery and small slender trees. The countryside village near the Iranian border was littered with old trench lines, fighting positions and destroyed relics of previous battles.

Umar-Bill (pronounced “Homerble”) estimated to be around 300 years old, is named after the ancestor of a local elder, Saamed Umar Billy, a Pesh Merga war hero. Billy believed his great-great-grandfather founded the village after he and his family were exiled from their native village in a tribal dispute.

The Soldiers pulled into the village and established hasty-defensive positions around the town. Billy, along with several high-ranking Pesh Merga border commanders and village elders, greeted the troops of the 278th. The visitors and their hosts toured an elementary school.

Passing crowded classrooms they could hear children singing. Children studied cartoon books that described the dangers of explosive ordinance littering nearby fields.

Teachers struggled to maintain the children’s focus as they longed to see the U.S. Soldiers. In a sense, American service members are now the heroes of the Kurdish population of Iraq, said Billy.

The Kurdish people had suffered many years under Saddam Hussein. Every villager had a tale to tell; Billy had lost a wife and daughter in 1988. He was wounded four times while fighting Saddam’s brutal dictatorship. Billy’s village had more than 300 residents killed during Saddam’s era. According to local accounts at least 15 young village females were sold abroad into sexual slavery. The lack of teenage and adult males came from Saddam’s murderous purges. As a

result 80 families had assumed parenting several hundred orphaned children.

After touring the village Adams and his staff were invited to a small home for a formal meeting. Beginning with a traditional cup of hot tea, the village elders poured out their concerns and requests to Adams.

Meanwhile, Soldiers assigned as security found themselves besieged by children, flocking around them, poking and proding their weapons and gear, some begging for food or trinkets. A nearby Soldier said, “Offer them a bag of candy or a pack of pencils; they will take the pencils every time.”

As the visit ended and the Humvees moved out, children were visible through a cloud of dust as they tried to keep up with the vehicles.

After arriving at Billy’s farm the Soldiers carried a new generator down a hill to an irrigation canal. There they were invited to enjoy a traditional Kurdish feast of fresh cucumbers, tomatoes and onions, ground salt and flat bread. A lamb had been butchered and was being cooked as the village elders, commander and his staff sat in a cool shaded area. A gentle breeze blew through the seated gathering, and the aroma of grilling meat made mouths water as lunch was served.

After Soldiers and village elders finished the meal they talked of old Iraq and the new Iraq. “Finally our people are free,” said Billy. He spoke in disgust as they talked of Saddam. “The bottom line is the Americans are heroes and have brought justice,” he said.

Justice for the Kurds is bittersweet, because all the men are killed and buried. Tragically, they do not know where the missing men are buried, Billy said. These children are a new generation, he explained. The oldest child in the village is 15 years old. One elder, a survivor who is about 73 years



Children find it difficult to pay attention while singing a song as Soldiers (not shown) stand in class entryway and watch.

old, had lost 23 members of his immediate family. Others escaped and returned, Billy said.

When asked about the future, 54-year-old Billy replied, “I am an old veteran fighter in the Pesh Merga Union of Kurdistan party. Now I am a farmer, a farmer by nature.” Billy receives a government pension of \$450.00 each month.

Translating Billy’s story was Dara, an American Kurd working for a civilian contracting firm and assigned to the regimental combat team. He was born and raised in the Iraqi border village of Arkwazy. Dara’s father was murdered in 1980 by Saddam’s secret police. “A very brave man, God bless his soul,” he said. Dara moved to America in 1984, only returning at the onset of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

As the dinner ended, Adams and the Soldiers of the 278th Regimental Combat Team concluded their visit with a Kurdish folk song about going into battle. Photos were taken, hands shaken and promises made. As the Soldiers departed, several of them commented that they gained a heartfelt sense of accomplishment from helping the village.



Kurdish children playfully swarm around a Humvee and Soldiers from the 278th Regimental Combat Team.

Texas welders up-armor Iraqi forces

Story and photos by Sgt. David Foley
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — As terrorists continue to attack Coalition and Iraqi forces with ambush tactics and roadside bombs, up-armored vehicles have become the first line of defense.

After realizing the need for armored vehicles, the United States has more than tripled its output of up-armored Humvees and other military vehicles, while Iraqi forces continue to use “soft-skinned” vehicles for their operations. U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers from the 217th Machine Shop, 203rd Maintenance Company, Grand Prairie, Texas, are beginning to change that.

The shop, which is comprised of 10 people, most of whom are welders, has been building armor kits for Iraqi forces vehicles since they arrived here about two months ago.

Spc. Alejandro Guevara, the shop’s star welder, who has been welding in the civilian market for seven years, said he feels good about this deployment, and that he is glad to be able to help the Iraqi army.

“Time goes by fast, and I feel good because we are doing something good,” he said. “They say [the armor] helps a lot, and it feels good helping other people.”

The Soldiers design and create door panels, windshield guards, fender guards



and cab coverings for American and Iraqi vehicles. They also create boxes that protect the troops who ride in the back of 2.5-ton and 5-ton vehicles.

All the armor is crafted from three-eighths-inch thick Hard Ox steel, which provides the same protection from small-arms fire and improvised explosive devices as the factory-built Kevlar-reinforced doors and cabs used on many American Army vehicles.

Chief Warrant Officer Clark Keller, allied trades technician, 217th Machine Shop, said the unit’s mission will have an ongoing effect on the stabilization of Iraq because they’re helping Iraqis take care of themselves.

“If we can get them up and running with up-armored vehicles, they can take on more of the Coalition’s missions, especially convoy missions,” he said. “The end result of that is us going home sooner.”

Seeing the looks on the Iraqi Soldiers’ faces is a great reward for the unit, Keller said. However, the real reward has yet to be seen.

“The smiles and thank yous make it worthwhile, but if we save one life, that definitely makes it worthwhile,” he said.

Keller has not seen the result of an IED attack on one of the vehicles, but has seen the results of other incidents and said the armor holds up quite well.

Adding armor to Iraqi vehicles was not something the unit had ever trained for and actually came as quite a shock to some of the Soldiers.

“We don’t normally do this,” said Staff Sgt. Robert Gray, another of the 217th’s welders. “We normally do quick-fix jobs. At [the National Training Center] we support maintenance. We work in a fabrication shop fixing radiators and doing body repair.”

Working on the Iraqi vehicles in a deployed environment has forced the unit to work at a faster pace because of the high demand for up-armored vehicles, but Gray said it is a refreshing change of pace.

“When the Iraqis pick up their vehicles, they are like a kid with a new toy,” he said. “It feels great.”

Guevara said the Soldiers in his shop don’t go out and fight like the infantry, but said they do the best they can to protect those who do.

“If everybody does his job and everybody works together, then we can do a lot of good work,” Guevara said. “I know it’s hard for them to put their lives in danger, but my job is to make the armor, and that is the best I can do,” he said.

Guevara’s comrades agree.

“Our job is to weld and protect,” said Pfc. Mandaline Hollenback, the only female welder on the team. “Their job is on the streets. We all need to play our part.”

Hollenback said the team is finally settling in and production is beginning to increase.

“When we started, everything went pretty slow,” she said. “It was a lot of tedious work and was very monotonous, but we are getting faster.”

The team has shown enough determination to win the heart of their commander.



Spc. Patrick Paris, a machinist with the 217th Machine Shop, 223rd Maintenance Company, Grand Prairie, Texas, uses a drill press while creating a bumper guard for a Humvee at Camp Taji.

“They are the best,” said Capt. Alfredo Garcia, commander, 203rd Maintenance Company. “I couldn’t have picked a better group. They are all focused on the mission at hand, and we are moving forward.”

Moving forward is very important for Iraq right now Garcia said.

“This is a very big step in the right direction,” he said about adding armor to the Iraqi vehicles. “It improves the Iraqis’ ability to take over for us. That, in the long run, will be beneficial for both countries.”



Above, Pfc. Mandaline Hollenback, a welder with the 217th Machine Shop, 223rd Maintenance Company, Grand Prairie, Texas, welds an armored box that will go in the back of a 5-ton truck to protect Iraqi Soldiers during security operations.

Left, Spc. David Greer, a welder with the 217th Machine Shop, uses a grinder to smooth out the edges of a piece of Hard Ox steel after cutting it to add armor to an Iraqi vehicle.

PCO repairs water problems through training

Story and photos by
Lt. Cdr. Abram McGull
Project and Contracting Office Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Lurking beneath the parched brown sand of Iraq lies one of the nation's worst enemies.

"We have estimated that there are 500,000 water leaks throughout the country that rob it of safe and sufficient potable water," said Akram Rabadi, Project and Contracting Office, water program manager. Jordanian by birth, the engineer has spent most of his 23 years solving water problems around the world.

"Water is a challenging subject for the Middle East," explained Rabadi. "And [water] is one of the areas where you can do the most good for people."

He is among many who rolled up their sleeves, packed their bags and headed for Baghdad. Through the generosity of U.S. taxpayers, PCO is managing \$18.4 billion to rebuild Iraq's decaying and neglected infrastructure. And at the top of the list of the things to do in Iraq is water.

Recently, Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Long, Jr. has undertaken the task as the director of PCO. Long brings to the newly-formed democratic nation of Iraq a vision that encompasses hope for the underdog.

"I'm responsible for six sectors that include transportation and communication; building, health and education; oil; electricity; security and justice; and public works and water. Each of these vital municipal services had been severely neglected for the past 30 years, and consequently the citizens of Iraq have suffered as well," Long said.

He continued, "The massive infrastructure reconstruction and materials procurement for Iraqis are all designed to rebuild and equip this modern day democracy with a turnkey operation where they can oversee and man-

age the infrastructure through the capacity building programs."

The PCO had several problems that encumbered any would-be success in Iraq. The World Bank had estimated that Iraq would need approximately \$56 billion to rebuild the neglected nation. At that figure, the United States were contributing nearly one-third of the needed monies to move Iraq forward. However, PCO was confronted with the looming problem of an underemployed population and a work force that had not been equipped to maintain modern day improvements.

Long said, "If Iraqis are going to succeed in today's economic environment, we have to ensure they gain modern-day construction, program management and business-like skills to foster their growth into a competitive global marketplace."

The PCO addressed the underemployment problem by having the Iraqis rebuild their own nation with their people. By the end of March, PCO and other U.S. governmental agencies (USAID, CERP, MILCON, MNSTC-I) operating in Iraq had employed approximately 167,000 Iraqis. But there still remained the problem of equipping the Iraqis with the skills to operate and manage the



The training team of Flour AMEC fixed three water pumps. The pumps repaired provided enough water for 72,000 people in Al Kufa city.



New water department employees receive on the job training for using leak detection equipment.

new reconstruction.

Through extensive consultation with each governorates' water director general, it quickly became apparent there wasn't enough money to tackle all the water leaks around the country.

"It became too risky to go to all the cities and train the water departments of all the directorates, so we decided to bring the trainees here and teach them to train others," said Scott Vela of Oklahoma.

"The capacity development program consists of two-week hands on field training", Vela said. "This capacity training is followed by extensive three weeks of hands-on observation by instructors in the respective cities of the former students."

The training curriculum covers operations, inventory control, equipment, safety, maintenance and data gathering. The primary thrust of the training is to equip the students to return and train others in their respective governorates. In addition, the PCO water



Trainees learn how to use different tools and repair equipment on site.

capacity program provides the heavy equipment, tools and materials that are designed to resuscitate the various dying water departments throughout Iraq.

"We have conducted training in five cities and trained 150 in Baghdad," Vela said. "So far we have trained 2,000 water department employees countrywide." To the non-water observer, the meager figure of 2000 may seem like a drop of water in a huge bucket. However, if the capacity development plan proceeds as planned, by the end of 2005, with all 17 major cities water employees being trained, it will impact 8.5 to 12.7 million Iraqi citizens.

The PCO is responsible for contract management and execution of approximately \$12.1 billion of the \$18.4 billion Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund designated by the U.S. Congress to support the reconstruction of Iraq. For more information contact Tom Leonard at 1-914-822-5316 or visit the Web site at: www.rebuilding-iraq.net.

Children in Romania are thinking about children in Iraq

Story and photos by Capt. Carol Florea
Public Information Office, 2nd Infantry Battalion
"Calugareni," Romanian Army

NASIRIYA, Iraq — The project "Children for Children" started with the idea from journalist Mario Balint, the special correspondent of Romanian public radio in Iraq. At the beginning it was simply organizing a drawing contest in the schools in the Romanian infantry battalion's area of operations, an area that covers the eastern region of Dhi Qar Province, with its center in Nasiriya.

Management of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting



Iraqi children of the Ad Fudliyah Kindergarten seem to enjoy their new toys, distributed to them from a Romanian detachment, 2nd Infantry Battalion "Calugareni."

Corporation approved the project and extended it also in Afghanistan; this is another country where a Romanian contingent is deployed for peace support operations. Two children from Kabul and two Iraqi children from the Nasiriya area were declared winners of the contests organized in those two countries. They were invited to spend their holiday in Romania, all expenses being paid by the RRBC, and transportation provided by the Ministry of National Defense.

At the same time, several journalists of the Romanian public radio got involved in collecting toys for the Iraqi children. The toys were donated by Romanian school children in Bucharest and other cities of Romania where Radio Romania has regional studios — Cluj, Constanta, Iasi, Timisoara, Targu Mures, Resita and Brasov.

Although the financial value of this project is not so large, the symbolic gesture of the Romanian children demonstrates they have found a place in their hearts and minds for children of Iraq. It is proof that Romanian children understand the difficult situation in Iraq, according to officials. Fifteen years ago, Romania succeeded in overthrowing the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and went through a similar period like the one Iraq is going through now.

Thirty large boxes filled with toys were transported to Iraq by a Romanian Air Force C-130 Hercules aircraft. Working together with Capt. George Duta, officer for civil - military missions, Radio Romania's special correspondent, Radu Dobritoiu started the humanitarian operation in the schools from the Nasiriya region. On April 19, a Romanian detach-



Romanian Capt. George Duta, CIMIC Officer, 2nd Infantry Battalion, gives an Iraqi child a stuffed animal sent from children in Romania.

ment from 2nd Infantry Battalion "Calugareni" distributed several boxes of toys to Ad Fudliyah Kindergarten, southeast of Nasiriya. Maj. Petrescu Daniel, commander of the Romanian Infantry Battalion, attended the activity. Inside the school he personally gave toys to the Iraqi children.

Together with Dobritoiu, Duta, they planned two future civil-military missions in schools and kindergartens in the Romanian area of operations, where the rest of the toys will be offered to the children.

Fijian Soldiers earn U.N. Special Service Medal

Story and photos by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas
Scimitar Staff

INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq — Standing on a large slab of concrete in the 90 degree Baghdad sun with sweat pouring off of their bodies, Fijian Army 1st Infantry Battalion Soldiers were awarded the United Nations Special Service Medal at the U.N. compound here Saturday.

The medal was presented to the Soldiers for serving 90 or more days in the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. The 1st Infantry Bn. has been here for five months and has been greatly honored by this recognition, said Fijian Army Col. Meeli Saubulilayau, Fiji Army Contingent commander and battalion commander of the Guard unit here.

“Today, I think I am the proudest person here. Receiving the gratitude from the United Nations is something special to [my Soldiers]. It means every person here appreciates the job they do,” Saubulilayau said. “I got to see the troops perform greatly afterwards in the cultural show. They were enjoying themselves and their morale was high. I am proud of that.”

Since December 2004, the Fijian Army Guard unit, which is composed of 130 Infantry Soldiers, has guarded the U.N. compound to the best of their abilities, Saubulilayau said. The U.N. personnel who were directly affected by their presence were just as excited to present the medals as the Fiji Soldiers were excited to receive them.

“It was a humbling and honoring experience to present the medals to the Soldiers on behalf of the secretary general,” said Ashraf J. Qazi, special representative of the secretary-general of UNAMI. “Without the Fijian Army, we couldn’t



Ashraf Qazi, special representative for the secretary-general of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, pins a medal on one of the Fijian Soldiers.

be in Iraq. They provide us with security. They are an essential part of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.”

Providing security is a job that may seem simple but is very complicated. Standing on your feet all day wearing 30 to 40 pounds of gear in the hot sun can be a difficult task, Saubulilayau said.

Regardless of the difficulty, the Fijians took on the task and guarded the compound with a strict set of rules, Saubulilayau added. “Our daily duties are to provide guard duty on the roads, rooftops, and man various gates around the property. We keep watch on every person who wants to enter the facilities. If we say ‘no’ to an individual, it is simply ‘no.’ If we suspect anything, then that person will not enter.”

Being firm is one thing for which the Fijian Army will be remembered in the years to come, Qazi said. However, their military has made history, not just by

receiving the medal in support of UNAMI and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 1st Infantry Battalion is the first Fijian Army Guard unit to be deployed to a combat zone since World War II, according to military officials. This is also the first time Fijian Army female Soldiers have been deployed to a combat zone.

With one month to go until their departure, the Fijian Army will make history in a third way, Saubulilayau added. They should leave the combat zone with all 130 Soldiers they came with.

Making history is something the Australian Army has also done in working with the Fijian Soldiers, said Australian Army Col. Neil Thompson, senior military advisor to the special representative of the secretary-general of UNAMI. He said the experiences he shared with the Fijian Soldiers were memorable.

“It is quite an honor to receive the U.N. Special Service Medal,” he added. “When I knew I was coming to Iraq, the last thing I expected was being part of a formal parade to receive a medal. The Fijian contingents were magnificent. I am very proud to be a part of this.”



The battalion's head Warrant Officer leads the battalion in a salute to the commander and special representative for the secretary-general of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

Nothing inside is hidden from radiology flight



Tech. Sgt. BJ Newhard plots an exam for a CT scan here. She is the noncommissioned officer in charge of the 332nd Expeditionary Medical Support Squadron's radiology flight and is deployed from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

Story and photo by Senior Airman Colleen Wronck
332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq — A flight of Airmen working in the Air Force Theater Hospital here take up-close and personal pictures all day.

The radiology flight Airmen take pictures of people's insides so doctors can better heal their patients.

“In this deployed environment the conditions aren't as good as what we're use to, but we make a great team, and we're gaining experience,” said Tech. Sgt. BJ Newhard, noncommissioned officer in charge of the 332nd Expeditionary Medical Support Squadron's radiology flight.

The Airmen perform X-rays, CT scans and ultrasounds for the hospital's emergency rooms, intensive care units, wards and outpatient clinics.

“Without our imaging, [some] patients couldn't come to the theater hospital and would be diverted to another location,” said Sergeant Newhard, who is deployed from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. “On an outpatient basis,

we mostly see occupational or physical therapy patients, but we also see a lot of seriously injured patients who need their images taken with a portable X-ray unit in the ER.”

The Airmen performed 526 CT scans, 76 ultrasound and 1,200 X-rays in the last month.

“The [number] of patients doesn't go down,” said Senior Airman Jack Barnes, 332nd EMDSS ultrasound technologist, also deployed from Lackland AFB. “I work the mid-day shift, and during that time we start having more patients come in. I've seen so many more than I ever have back home.”

Sergeant Newhard said working in the theater hospital is stressful, but it is a different kind of stress.

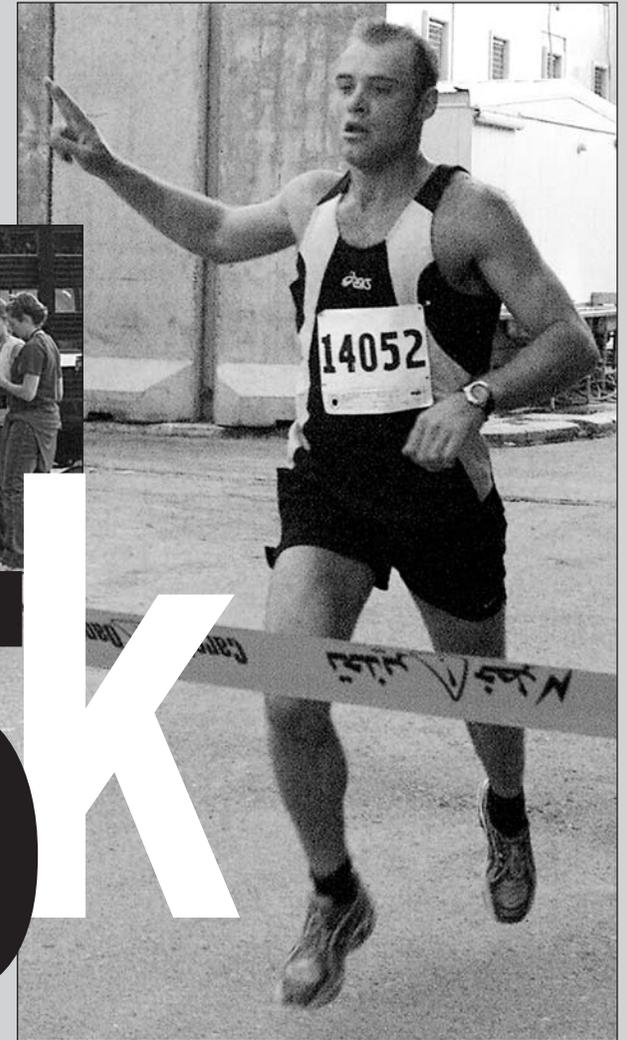
“Back home we see oodles of patients, and the stress is getting all of them taken care of,” she said. “Here, the stress is mostly emotional because we're seeing our guys hurt.”

Newhard said a typical day in radiology can vary. “Our day really depends on how many traumas we have to X-ray and how many other patients we follow up on,” she said. “We have a tight-knit group here and work well together.”

International



More than 100 runners from the International Zone and beyond, take off from the starting line at the Embassy Compound April 22 in the Earth Day 5K fun run. Right, Henrick Solgaard crosses the finish line to take first place in the race with a time of 17 minutes, 55 seconds. Carney Elias took first place among the women with a time of 21:45. Branden Vasher took 1st place in the men's 40 and older category, and Susan Reinert took first in the women's 40 and older category.



5K

Photos by Sgt. Okan Scott

MP canine recovering from combat injuries

Story and photo by Spc. Mary Rose
Multi-National Corps – Iraq Public Affairs

CAMP SLAYER, Iraq — After the April 2 terrorist attack at Forward Operating Base Abu Ghraib, Iraq, a Belgium Malinois trained as a narcotic and patrol dog went missing. He was found injured two days later.

During the Abu Ghraib prison attack, the kennel facility's rooftop was hit by rocket propelled grenades and small arms fire. A short-tailed dog with reddish-colored fur, BO, muscled through the plywood door on his kennel and escaped out of the secure room he lived in.

For the next two days BO's handler, Staff Sgt. Chad O. Jones, along with others, scoured the compound looking for him. "I felt like one of my Soldiers was missing," said Jones, 529th Military Police Company, 18th Military Police Brigade, Darmstadt, Germany.

"After 24 hours I thought he was dead," Jones said. "He's like my son or my troop. I've been with him for almost two years. I train him, bathe him and feed him ... he's my partner."

Jones was going to keep searching for BO until he found him, said Staff Sgt. Jimmy Blankenship, kennel master, Multi-National Corps – Iraq. "Never leave someone behind."

If BO didn't survive, he would have been the first canine killed in action in a combat zone since the Vietnam War, Blankenship said.

BO was found curled up in a corner of an abandoned building on April 4 by a Marine stationed at Abu Ghraib. He hadn't had anything to eat or drink since he disappeared.

"He was covered in mud and he was bleeding from his paws," Jones said.

Jones said BO was looking for him, but because he was in a scud bunker the dog couldn't find him. "BO is gun-

fire aggressive, so I know he didn't quit moving for two days," Jones said.

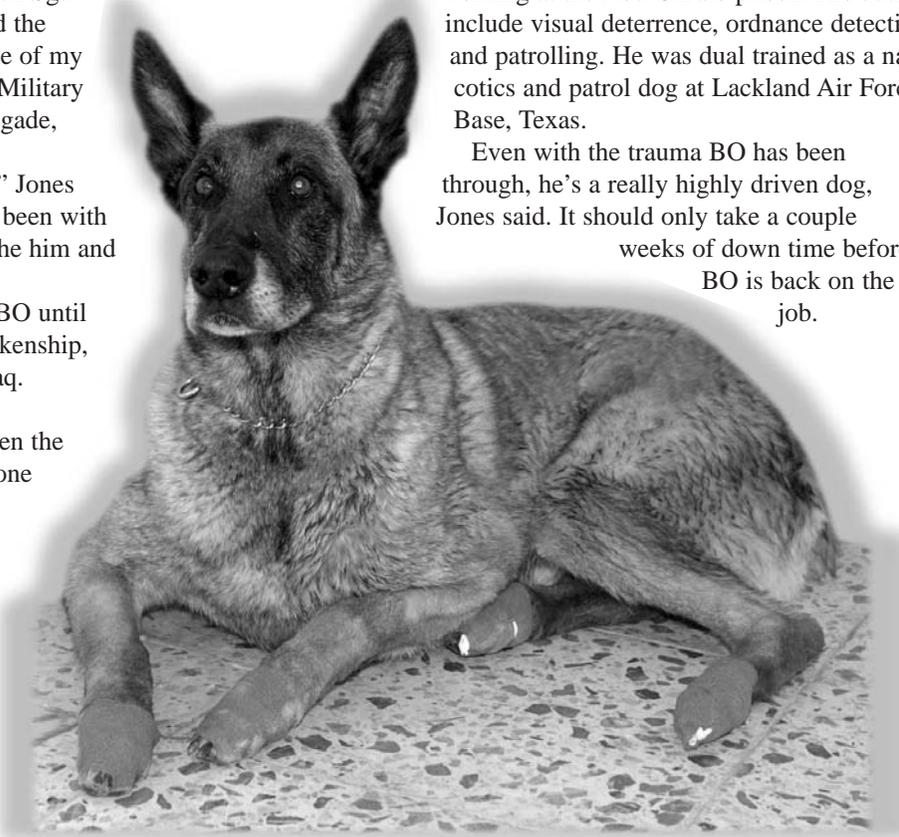
Once he was located, he was transported by the 115th Field Hospital to the International Zone in Baghdad for treatment.

Brown-eyed BO sustained lacerations on all four of his paws, an injury to his right eye, two puncture wounds on his belly from razor wire and severe dehydration. The hair was shaved off an area of his leg where the doctors gave him fluid injections. He was also wearing bandages on his feet.

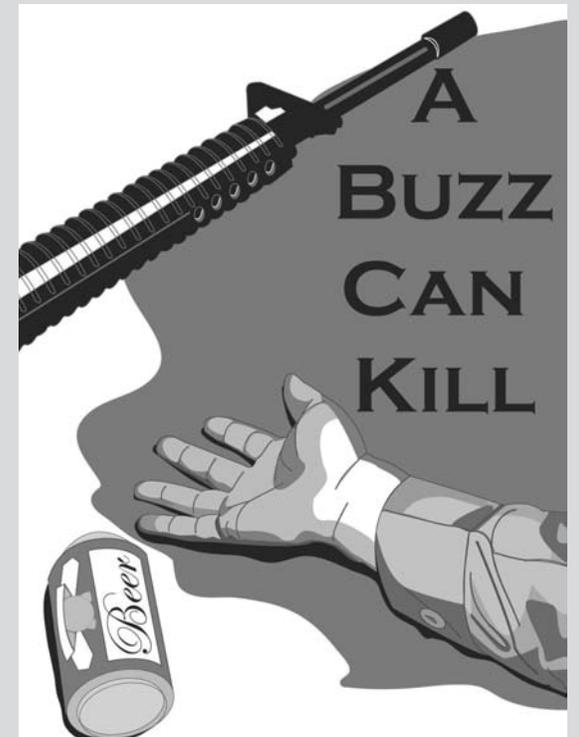
After receiving stabilizing care at the IZ he was moved to Camp Slayer, Iraq, for relaxation and further supervision from a veterinarian.

BO and his handler Jones have been in Iraq since January working at the Abu Ghraib prison. His duties include visual deterrence, ordnance detection and patrolling. He was dual trained as a narcotics and patrol dog at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

Even with the trauma BO has been through, he's a really highly driven dog, Jones said. It should only take a couple weeks of down time before BO is back on the job.



OPSEC



Scimitar Slapstick



Art by Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn

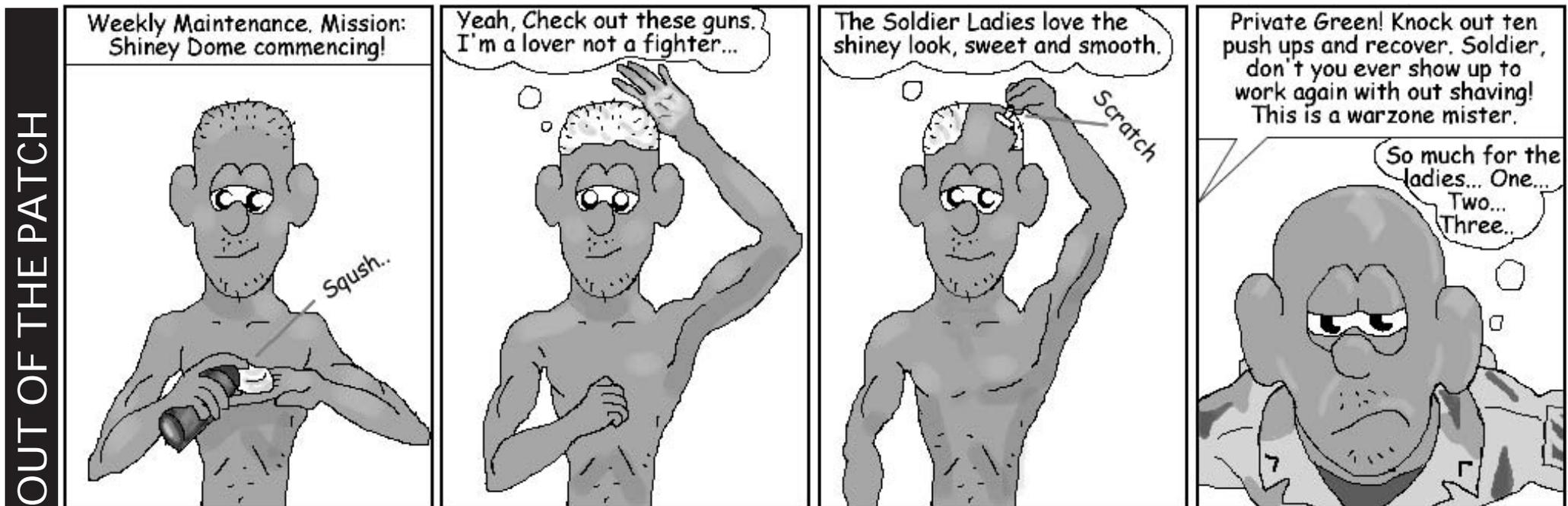


Art by Maj. James D. Crabtree

Downrange



Art by Jeffery Hall



OUT OF THE PATCH

Art by Chief Warrant Officer Mark J. Hart

Marines, Soldiers keep Taqaddum safe

Story and photo by Cpl. C.J. Yard
2nd Force Service Support Group

CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq — For about 100 Marines serving here, they could not be closer to the warrior ethos of “Every Marine is a rifleman.”

The Army’s 2nd Battalion, 112th Armor, 36th Infantry of Austin, Texas, whose primary duty is to guard Camp Taqaddum, is augmented by Marines from a Provisional Rifle Company with Headquarters and Service Battalion, 2d Force Service Support Group.

The Provisional Rifle Company consists of Marines from Headquarters and Service Battalion, 2d Maintenance Bn. and 2nd Supply Bn. within the 2d FSSG.

“Second FSSG was tasked with augmenting the 2/112th,” said 1st Sgt. Jerry Neal, Communications Co. first sergeant, Headquarters and Service Bn. “This was all done pretty quickly, too. The Marines reported in January and arrived in country in March. Within the short time from when the company was stood up, the Marines had a lot of training to do and they also completed the pre-deployment checklist.”

The Marines, some of whom are reservists, traveled to Marine Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., for a Revised-Combined Arms Exercise, Security and Stability Operations at March Air Force Reserve Base, Enhanced Marksmanship Training, crew-served weapons familiarization course and Entry Control Point personnel and vehicle inspection training.

Once here, the Marines joined forces with the 2/112th and began standing watch at observation posts and manning ECPs.

According to Neal, a Greensboro, N.C., native, Comm. Co. provides administrative



Cpl. Kevin Boston, an armorer assigned to the Provisional Rifle Company with Headquarters and Service Battalion, 2d Force Service Support Group (Forward), keeps a vigilant watch over the entrance area of Entry Control Point 1 while Army Sgt. Chris Coufal, a rifleman with the 2nd Battalion, 112th Armor, 36th Infantry of Austin, Texas. The Provisional Rifle Company consists of Marines from Headquarters and Service Battalion, 2d Maintenance Bn. and 2d Supply Bn. within the 2d FSSG.

support, but operationally the Marines are taken care of by the 2/112th for their billeting and work schedules.

“The command sergeant major of the 2/112th is doing an outstanding job of taking care of our Marines,” said Neal.

“[The 2/112th] is really taking care of us,” said Brandon J. Johnston, a reservist ammunition technician with the PRC. “We get treated just like we are part of the Army. We get the same living provisions and entitlements they do.”

Johnston, a Smyrna, S.C., native, said he heard of provisional rifle companies while in

boot camp, and volunteered to become a rifleman for the deployment.

“This is what I joined the Marine Corps for,” said Johnston. “I’ve been waiting for a year-and-a-half to go to Iraq. It makes me feel good knowing that I’m over here protecting the lives of everyone on the base.”

Observation posts have two service members on them at all times. The Marines stand watch with a Soldier or another Marine.

“We teach them our tactics and they teach us about theirs,” said Lance Cpl. Christopher Picasso, a maintenance management clerk assigned to the PRC. “We also get competitive

with each other. We’re going to be doing the Army’s physical fitness test to find out who is the best ‘PTer’ out here.”

The Marines are also planning to teach the Soldiers some of the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program.

The camaraderie, not just between the Marines, but with the Soldiers as well, is growing every day, according to Picasso, a Walnut Creek, Calif., native. “[The Marines] started coming together right from the beginning. Out here though, we are making some good friends with some of the Soldiers.”

The Marines and Soldiers divide the day into eight-hour watch schedules, working in shifts.

Cpl. Crystal Perimon, a Caroline, Va., native who stands watch at an ECP, feels that her job is one of the most important aboard the base.

“I search all the vehicles that enter through the ECP for [improvised explosive devices],” said the ground electronics repair technician. “It is up to me to make sure that nothing gets on this base that could hurt anybody else. It makes me feel really good because I know that I have an immediate purpose.”

“The Marines here are doing an outstanding job,” said Staff Sgt. Andrew McCormack, a Colorado Springs, Colo., native and motor transportation maintenance chief assigned to the PRC. “These guys are doing a thankless job with a smile on their face. I would take these Marines anywhere in the world with me.”

Azerbaijani Soldiers protect 2nd largest dam in Iraq

Story and Photos by Sgt. Julie Nicolov
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD, Iraq — They are a quiet company, standing at strict attention for a briefing from their commander, Maj. Elhan Salbutov. The moment he releases them, personnel on detail run silently to their posts. Others



Two Azerbaijani Soldiers rush to their posts during a training drill at Haditha Dam, Al Anbar Province Iraq.

on a later shift erupt into a flurry of Azuri — the official language of Azerbaijan.

The company-size element is the only Azerbaijani unit in Iraq, but its mission to guard and defend Haditha Dam is critical.

Haditha Dam is a clean hydropower plant with six turbine engines putting out 660 megawatts of power at full capacity. It can hold 8.2 million cubic meters of water, making it

one of the five largest dams in the Middle East, according to www.dams.org.

The dam’s location, as well as its importance to the survival of the Iraqi people, means that the Azerbaijan Soldiers must remain vigilant at all times. The dam is located in the Al Anbar Province, between the city of Ramadi and the Syrian border.

“They are working in a very dangerous situation, probably one of the most dangerous situations in the country,” said Maj. Gen. Mario Marioli, deputy commanding general, Coalition Operations, Multi-National Corps — Iraq.

Army Rangers secured the dam on April 1, 2003 to keep Iraqi insurgents from using it as an unconventional weapon of mass destruction, according to www.globalsecurity.org.

However, under the watchful eyes of Azerbaijani Soldiers, Haditha Dam reached full operational power in June 2004. It was the first time all six turbines worked since 1990.

Haditha Dam is a vital asset to the future of Iraq. Protecting it is a tall order for a country the size of Maine.

“We secure this area from all points: west, south, east and north,” said Capt. Osef Qijbadov, logistics officer, Azerbaijan Company.

The Azerbaijani Soldiers, known as AZs by U.S. troops, free up the Marine reservists of 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment of Ohio to patrol and protect the surrounding town.

“Marines patrol the area at all times of the day. We secure their armory, supplements and personnel,” Qijbadov added.



A UH-60 helicopter flies over Haditha Dam, the second largest dam in Iraq. The dam, which is guarded by Azerbaijani Soldiers, provides electricity for one third of the country.

In addition to manning outposts and securing the cogs that make daily life on the dam run smoothly, some Azerbaijani Soldiers, who affectionately refer to themselves as “Spider Company,” make their presence known under the dam as well.

“There are underground tunnels here, and our guys patrol them day and night,” Qijbadov said. “We secure them to make sure no insurgents put mines there.”

Approximately 800 local workers keep the dam maintained and operational.



A Salvadoran Soldier motions to an Iraqi basic trainee Soldier it is time to stop. The Salvadoran Soldier is part of Cuscatlan Battalion IV at Camp Charlie, Al Hillah, Iraq.

Salvadoran Army helps rebuild, protect Iraq

Story and photos by Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas
Scimitar Staff

CAMP CHARLIE, AL HILLAH, Iraq — Every sunrise lights a window of challenges for the El Salvador Army's Cuscatlan Battalion IV. The Soldiers of this battalion battle language barriers with the locals, the blazing heat, and Iraqi bugs and animals on a daily basis en route to completing their missions.

The mission of Cuscatlan Battalion IV is wide-ranged. The Soldiers, who are on six-month deployments and in their fourth rotation, are providing force protection, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts in Al Hillah and six other cities, which are their primary places of duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"We have reconstructed schools, clinics and roads. We want this country to be a democracy. That is what we are working for," said Staff Sgt. Wilfredo Galicia, a Cuscatlan Battalion Soldier. "I am really proud to be here helping the Iraqi people."

The effects of war are plain as day on the streets of Al Hillah, Al Hashimiya, At Thaliyah, Al Kifl, Ash Shumali, Al Qasim, and Al Madhatiyah. Numerous houses and buildings are vacant with broken glass and brick scattered on the ground. There is garbage everywhere except in dumpsters and landfills. When the Salvadoran Soldiers visit or patrol the cities in their area of responsibility, children magically appear out of their hiding places begging for anything the Soldiers will give them. Seeing the children's faces and their way of life have helped motivate the Soldiers to support OIF to the best of their ability, Galicia said.

Salvadoran Soldiers have assisted and completed a number of missions since April 2003, some of which include building schools, bridges, water systems, roads, health centers, and veterinary clinics.

"The schools we are helping reconstruct are important projects because in Al Hillah there are about 500 students," said Maj. Salvador Montano, officer in charge of school reconstruction projects. "We are building better classrooms and facilities with better quality plumbing and electricity in order to give better conditions to the students."

Each city under the Salvadoran Soldiers has one or more of these projects under way. The 380 Soldiers in Cuscatlan originally had 68 projects when they began in 2003. So far the majority of those projects

have been completed.

"We want to help the Iraqi people feel more secure," said Sgt. Carlos Jimenez Aueurre, a Cuscatlan Soldier. "If there is anything we can do to make them feel safer, we will do it."

Helping with the reconstruction of Iraq is not the only project to which the Soldiers have applied themselves. Cuscatlan also helps train the Iraqi Police and Iraqi National Guard. They guide the basic trainee Soldiers through a number of different phases and training exercises. Currently, the Soldiers are guiding a platoon through basic rifle marksmanship training. The language barrier is difficult, but the ING troops slowly understand what they are trying to teach them, Aueurre said.

Along with BRM, the Soldiers have given the ING some extra training. The training consists of quick reaction drills and defensive movements. Cuscatlan Soldiers also train the ING to conduct first aid and evacuate casualties properly. The training and efforts in reconstruction are something the Iraqi people have noticed and thanked the Salvadorans for, Aueurre said. "When the Iraqi people see the Salvadoran Army, they want to talk to us. It is a great feeling to know we are making a difference here and to know we are a part of history."

According to the Soldiers, El Salvador translates to "The Saviour," so along with their efforts to rebuild the cities; they have tried to improve living conditions for the Iraqi people. The difference the Soldiers deployed here are making should not be forgotten, Aueurre said. Along with the rest of the Multi-National Forces, Salvadoran Soldiers have become a part of history.



A Salvadoran special forces Soldier keeps a close eye on the Iraqi basic trainee Soldiers as they continue to perfect their defense tactics. The Soldier is a part of Cuscatlan Battalion IV at Camp Charlie, Al Hillah, Iraq.

Coalition Corner

... highlighting countries
serving with MNF-Iraq



El Salvador

local name: *El Salvador*

The Republic of El Salvador is located in Central America, bordering the North Pacific Ocean, Guatemala and Honduras. It is slightly smaller than Massachusetts, the smallest Central American country and the only one without a coastline on the Caribbean Sea. Spanish is the official language for the 6.6 million Salvadorans who live here, but some indigenous Amerindians still speak Nahua. The currency system used in El Salvador is the U.S. Dollar.

Although relatively small in size, El Salvador is bountiful in historic and natural attractions. San Salvador, the country's capital, lies at the foot of the San Salvador volcano, one of more than twenty volcanoes in El Salvador. La Libertad is one of many surfer destinations along the 307 kilometers, or 191 miles, of beautiful coastline. Just northwest of the capital, in a town called Chalchuapa, lie the ancient Mayan ruins of Tazumal. Situated in an area believed to have been first settled around 5000 B.C., these ruins are considered the most important and best-preserved in El Salvador.

One cannot say he or she has experienced this country until he or she has tried pupusas, a Salvadoran national food. Pupusa is a plump corn tortilla, stuffed with ingredients such as cheese, pork, beans, and loroco, a Salvadoran edible flower. It is then cooked on a griddle until lightly browned and devoured while still warm. A true Salvadoran way to enjoy Pupusa is topped with Curtido, another national food that is the Salvadoran version of sauerkraut.

El Salvador has also made its mark in the world of celebrities. Famous supermodel Christy Turlington, who has been the face of Maybelline Cosmetics and Calvin Klein, was born to a Salvadoran mother. Jaime Rodriguez, a soccer legend who played for El Salvador, Mexico, Germany, Japan and Finland during his career, proudly claims El Salvador his home.

When asked what he misses most about his country, Lt. Col. Nelson E. Hernandez of the Salvadoran Air Force said, "I miss the food, but what I really miss is the volcanoes. There is no place in the country where you can stand and not see at least one volcano!"

El Salvador — yet another piece of the Multi-National Force - Iraq puzzle, dedicated to rebuilding Iraq.



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Coalition Corner is compiled by Sgt. Misha King, assistant editor, scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil.

Runners go distance at first Boston Marathon in Iraq

By Spc. Jeremy D. Crisp
Multi-National Corps - Iraq
Public Affairs

BASE CAMP ADDER, TALLIL, Iraq — The 109th running of the Boston Marathon was conducted April 18 with the typical fervor and excitement that a race of its stature brings to the New England area. Only this year, the race not only took place in the streets of Boston; it was also run on the desert flatlands of the Ali Air Base in Southern Iraq.

Three hundred fifty Soldiers, Airmen and civilians deployed to Iraq were given the unique opportunity to run in the Boston Marathon, and they did just that under coor-



Photo by Spc. Jeremy D. Crisp

Sharon L. Phillips, 407th Expeditionary Contracting Squadron, from Los Angeles Air Force Base, proudly wears her Boston T-shirt to honor the Tallil Air Base/Boston Marathon. This is Phillips first marathon, and she said "I think it is going to be like a tattoo, once you get your first one, it isn't enough. I have a feeling it's going to be addictive."



Photo by Spc. Jeremy D. Crisp

Luis A. Soto, a mechanic with the 89th Transportation Company, Fort Eustis, Va., digs in as he comes to the turnaround point at the Ziggurat of Ur during the Ali Air Base/Boston Marathon, April 18 at Tallil, Iraq. This was Soto's first marathon and he said "We've been blessed by the weather we've had and being able to run to the Ziggurat was very special."

dination with the Boston Athletic Association, the Outdoor Life Network and Base Camp Adder's Morale, Welfare and Recreation department.

The idea for the race came from New Hampshire National Guardsman Capt. Rodney T. Freeman of 1st Battalion, 172nd Field Artillery, Manchester, N.H. A native of York, Maine, and officer-in-charge of Base Camp Adder's MWR, Freeman said he originally wanted to have a road race every month to offer an opportunity for service members to get out and break their routine.

"Then I thought it would be kind of neat to have a marathon in conjunction with the Boston Marathon," Freeman said.

"In January I sent an email to the B.A.A. telling them that I was thinking of conducting a marathon here, and they jumped in with both feet," he said. "The Outdoor Life Network then wanted to have video coverage broadcast with their video coverage, and it just exploded from there."

A marathoner and distance runner himself, Freeman said he had always wanted to run the Boston Marathon, but has never had the chance to. Once he brought the marathon to Iraq though, he thought he would be able to run. However, things didn't quite work out that way.

"I just thought I'd run with ten or twenty people and one Humvee. We could throw a cooler in the back with a bunch of water and Gatorade in it, and we could all just run together as a big group," Freeman said. "We weren't going to time it or have a challenge; we were just going to cover the 26 miles. But it just kept getting bigger and bigger. It got to the point where I just didn't have time to run with the workload I had, but that was OK, because I thought it was a great day and a really successful event."

Once Freeman noticed a rising interest in people wanting to run the race, he took every step to get as many people involved as he could. One way he did that was the advent of a relay run.

"As it started to catch on a little bit, we decided maybe we should do a relay and that would get more people involved," Freeman said. He added that the relay idea was in part a way to curb untrained participants from trying to run 26 miles. "We did that for the runners' safety," he said.



Photo by Master Sgt. Lek Mateo

Army Sgt. Luis A. Soto, of Morovis, Puerto Rico, and a Soldier of the 89th Transportation Company based in Fort Eustis, Va., finished in 3 hours and 3 seconds, taking first place in the race.

A significant part of the running of the Iraq/Boston Marathon was the opportunity for competitors to run to Iraq's historical Ziggurat of Ur. The Ziggurat is a massive stepped pyramid near what is thought to be the birthplace of the Biblical Abraham.

Freeman said that under normal conditions, people wouldn't be allowed to run to the Ziggurat because it is outside the gates. To combat that, he coordinated a security team on the day of the race "so runners can go out to the Zig in a safe environment."

"The scenery was beautiful!" said Keith E Matiskella, intelligence officer, Army Corps of Engineers. "We're lucky to have the real estate here to run a marathon, and if anything else, you got to see the Temple of Ur," he said.

Along with running to the Temple of Ur, competitors ran along a grueling section of terrain with nothing but the pavement and dessert sand to guide them. Once running to the end of that part of the route, they had to turn around and run back through it to complete the journey.

The winner in the female category, Elizabeth North,

dietician, 86th Combat Support Hospital, Fort Campbell, Ky., said "the back 40 section was a little bit of a mental challenge, but you put your mind to it and get it done."

This was North's first marathon, and she said being able to run in this race was particularly significant. "This marathon here was a great thing to do," she said. "To be able to train for this in your down time and run in this race has been absolutely amazing, it was a perfect day."

This was also the first marathon for overall winner Luis A. Soto, a mechanic with the 89th Transportation Company, Fort Eustis, Va. Soto finished by walking a good portion of the last mile due to back problems, and still finished in a respectable 3 hours, 3 minutes and 19 seconds.

"I've run many five- and 10-kilometer races, but it has been 12 years since my last half marathon," Soto said. "The fact that it was my first marathon makes this interesting. The things we have to go through while deployed makes this very special."

Freeman said the main reason for such a great turnout, which included hundreds of runners, was that, "a lot of people running just want to say they ran the Iraq/Boston Marathon," he said. "Just imagine when you are back in the states and someone asks, 'Have you run a marathon?' You can say, 'Yes, I ran one in Iraq while fighting the war on terror.' Not your everyday running story."