



# DISPATCH

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## As-Sulayminayah Province Hosts Iraqi Governors Conference

Story by Maha Saba  
IMTnews

AS SULAYMINAYAH, IRAQ -- The Four Provinces of Task Force Liberty's Area of Responsibility are as diverse in their culture as they are geographically. Bringing these divergent interests together is another step closer in solidifying Iraq's freedom and security.

The Governors from Kirkuk, Salah Ad Din, Diyala and As Sulayminayah Provinces have been meeting monthly at Forward Operating Base Danger in Tikrit to identify common issues and concerns within their provinces.

For the first time, the Governors of North Central Iraq met in As Sulayminayah Province on April 20. "The significance of the move to the local province reinforces the transition here in North Central Iraq. This demonstrates the ability of the local political leader's to take control of their citizens future", said Maj. General Joseph J. Taluto, 42nd ID and Task Force Liberty Commander. "I am proud to participate and see this forward momentum taking place."

Taluto expressed his pleasure at the cooperation between the Iraqi Police and Coalition Forces and for the vital role that the provincial councils are contributing to managing local affairs.

The primary focus of the conference was maintaining open discussion concerning infrastructure issues, reconstruction projects, security, public services, as well as health and education improvements.



The Governors from all four provinces in North Central Iraq hold a press conference. Photo by MAJ Richard Bartoszuk, 1st BCT PAO

Task Force Liberty Engineer Brigade Deputy Commander Lt. Col James Lettco provided updates on reconstruction projects, in which the largest share of reconstruction dollars is focused on the production of electric power. Several power plants are under construction in Baiji and Kirkuk and are expected to be operational by November. Continued renovations are taking place on older power plants in Dibis and Baiji.

The transportation sector is also witnessing many changes, specifically in regards to railway movement as renovations to the railroad lines connecting Baiji and Kirkuk continue.

Providing protection for oil pipelines closely located to power plants in Baiji is a high priority and was a main topic of discussion by Governor Hamad Humood Shugti of Salah Ad Din Province. "These pipelines have been attacked by terrorists many times," said the Governor.

All four Governors strongly agreed on the importance of industrial reconstruction and the need for agricultural improvements in order to overcome unemployment and achieve economic prosperity.

## Task Force Liberty and Iraqi army conduct night air assault



Through a night vision lens, Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Liberty prepare to move into the town of Al Mukhisa for a knock and search mission during the early morning hours in mid-April.

Story, photos by Staff Sgt. Peter K. Towse  
42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

AL MUKHISA, IRAQ--Soldiers, by the hundreds, surround the town of Al Mukhisa and move closer, tightening their grip on the anti-Iraqi forces living there. One by one, helicopters land and armored vehicles move in during the largest air assault mission since the beginning of OIF 3.

"Our intent was to capture insurgents that have been operating in this area," said Lt. Col. Roger Cloutier, the battalion commander of the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Liberty. "We are here to prevent them from becoming a coherent, organized force."

"Elements from my battalion and the 205th Iraqi army battalion led the air assault," Cloutier said. "The ground assault was led by 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment and a scout platoon from the 205th Iraqi army battalion. We also had close air support from the Air Force."

Coalition Forces and Iraqi army soldiers conduct searches of houses looking for illegal weapons, explosives, anti-Coalition propaganda and any information that will lead them to the insurgents. As they walk from door to door, they pass out candy and smile at the children.

Lt. Col. Cloutier came with a clear message: Help us, or help the terrorists. A large group of local townspeople gathered to hear what he has to say. "We are here to build you schools, we are here to build you hospitals and we are here to make sure your water is clean," Cloutier said holding out his hand. "We cannot do these things if you continue to harbor terrorists."

As he spoke, Bradley fighting vehicles rolled past the group. An F-15 fighter jet does a fly-by of the area and all sound is drowned out from the jet engine roaring past.

"I will leave this town if you do not tell us where they are hiding," Cloutier said as he talked with them for several minutes trying to get them to cooperate with Coalition Forces. "You give me no choice." As he turned to leave, there was fear and doubt on the faces of the crowd.

"The local population appears reticent in cities that have a lot of insurgent activity," Cloutier said. "They are afraid because if they are seen talking with Coalition Forces, they, or their families will be targeted by terrorists after we leave."

Soldiers started to pull back and walk toward the edge of town, continuing to pass out pamphlets and handshakes as the children smiled and waved.

"A Soldier in Iraq has to be ready to fight one second and then transition to handing out leaflets, passing out candy, or just helping the local population," said Cloutier. "It is a challenge and we ask a lot from our Soldiers and I think they are doing a great job."

An Iraqi civilian steps forward with information about insurgents. He is quiet and nervous, but compelled by the freedom Coalition Forces are providing.

"We came here expecting to fight," Cloutier said. "Anti-Iraqi forces chose not to do that today and there was cooperation today from the local population. Many suspected insurgents were detained. Four of those detained were on our high value individuals list."

As Coalition Forces prepare to leave, the Iraqi army continues to search houses and check identification cards. There is a calm in the air as the Iraqi civilians and the Iraqi army politely talk and cooperate with each other, taking steps toward a free Iraq.

"My Soldiers and the Iraqi army did phenomenal today," Cloutier said. "They were motivated, disciplined and well-trained."

Hugs and handshakes are exchanged as the Iraqi army takes over the mission.

"This has been a particularly challenging mission," said Col. Steven Salazar, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team. "Our intent was to come in and disrupt the operations of the anti-Iraqi forces. It is clear by this successful joint operation, that we have done this."

"3rd Brigade works with the Iraqi army every day," Salazar said. "As we conduct more and more operations in the future, they will continue to get better. The 205th Iraqi army Battalion is the most proficient in Iraq."

Cloutier stated that he plans on coming back to this town to sit down and discuss future projects with the leaders of the town and the townspeople.

"The Iraqi people have spoken and they have chosen their government," Cloutier said. "I would tell the terrorists that it is time to come in from the cold. Fight your battles with ballots, not bullets."

## Tiger Battalion leads the way in military transition operation



*Soldiers of the 205th Iraqi army battalion inspect the identification of a local Iraqi citizen during a knock and search operation in the city of Baqubah, Iraq. Iraqi soldiers routinely garner support from local citizens in gathering information and locating insurgents.*

Story, photos by Staff Sgt. Peter K. Towse  
42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division Public Affairs

BAQUBAH, IRAQ--Soldiers of the 205<sup>th</sup> Iraqi army battalion, also known as the Tiger Battalion, led Operation Sergeant Thea'a — the first Military Transition Team (MTT) operation, named after the most recent Iraqi soldier killed in action.

"A MTT is an embedded concept," said Capt. Michael Whitney, the commander for Alpha Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Liberty. "We link up with our Iraqi counterparts and offer mentorship, advice and training. We go on missions together and we help each other during and after the mission."

The purpose of this mission is to capture or kill terrorists in the city of Baqubah.

"I am sure this mission will be a success," said Pvt. Waleed Sattar Jabar, a soldier in the 205<sup>th</sup> Iraqi army battalion. "It will be a success because the Iraqi army is always successful."

A handful of officers from 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, working as observers, listened closely to the briefing of the mission.

"What we are trying to do here is transition," said Lt. Col. Roger Cloutier, the battalion commander of

the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. "We want the Iraqi army out front. We want to help the Iraqi people help themselves."

"We have been preparing for this mission for a few weeks," said Col. Dhia Ismael Abid Al Tamimi, the 32<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Commander. "My soldiers planned the mission, will do the mission and will fight if they have to."

Iraqi army vehicles converged on the streets of the city as over 150 Iraqi army soldiers cordoned off a section and start the search. Walking house to house, they quietly searched each room for any information that would lead them to capturing anti-Iraqi forces.

"They are doing remarkably well," said Staff Sgt. Lloyd Pegues, an instructor at the Iraqi Army Academy. "They knock, greet the man of the house and respectfully check the house. If they find something, they take the proper measures to collect or detain what they find. If they do not find anything, they hand out pamphlets."

The people of Baqubah greet them with smiles and welcomed them into their homes, offering tea and bread to the soldiers. "We believe in the Iraqi army and think that what they are doing is a good thing," said a 30-year resident of Baqubah. "We have a lot of confidence in them."

During the operation, six people were detained for questionable actions and missing identification cards.

"The Iraqi army did very well today," said Cpt. Wahab Ali Abid Altememy, a captain in the 205<sup>th</sup> Iraqi army battalion. "The Iraqi civilians cooperated with us and they gave us information about the bad guys."

Each street was blocked from any traffic as foot soldiers and yellow pickup trucks with machine guns provided security.

"My job as an Iraqi officer is to provide security to the Iraqi civilians," Col. Al Tamimi said. "The Iraqi army and the Iraqi civilians worked together today and that makes for a good situation."

Coalition Forces continued to remain in the background of the operation, giving advice when needed and making sure the operation was a success.

"They are doing excellent today," Whitney said. "The 205<sup>th</sup> is the best that I have seen since I have been in country and they can only get better."

As the detainees were loaded in trucks, the Iraqi army prepared to leave Baqubah. They continued to pass out pamphlets and interact with the local population.

"The Tiger [battalion] works for the people of Iraq," said Col. Al Tamimi. "We will achieve success together for the future of Iraq."