



# DISPATCH

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## Rainbow 'stretches' over Iraq

By Staff Sgt. Duane M. Brown  
22<sup>nd</sup> MPAD

TIKRIT, Iraq -- In ceremonial fashion, honoring a job well done and welcoming the new, the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division assumed responsibility of Coalition efforts in Multinational Division - North Central, Iraq, Feb. 14.

In the ceremony, the torch was passed from Maj. Gen. John R. S. Batiste, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division commander to Maj. Gen. Joseph J. Taluto, 42<sup>nd</sup> ID commander, signifying an official transfer of authority.

"Soldiers of Task Force Danger have done everything humanly possible to support the Iraqi people

in establishing a new and better life, to include shedding blood for the Iraqi patriots," Taluto said.

Soldiers from the 1<sup>st</sup> ID have made great strides during their tenure in Iraq, Batiste said.

"Our successes over the past year have been achieved in partnership with the people of Iraq," Batiste said. "We have worked together to empower Iraqi Security Forces to defeat the insurgency and have conducted operations to kill or capture the enemy."

Results of the 1<sup>st</sup> ID efforts are evident in many facets of the Iraqi communities. Improvements include, but are not limited to, improved quality of life, new jobs and hope

given to people who were oppressed for decades by the former regime, Batiste said.

"Together we have built the foundation of a new beginning by developing relationships based on trust and confidence -- by changing people's attitudes," Batiste said. "Together, we have given the people the freedom to make their own choices about their leaders and how their country will be governed."

"I feel we have completed our mission here and set the 42<sup>nd</sup> up for success," said Staff Sgt. Deondre L. Long, division plans noncommissioned officer in charge, 1<sup>st</sup> ID.

Coming in on the heels of the Big

Red One, the Rainbow Division will continue to build upon the blocks already laid by its predecessors.

Taluto said Task Force Liberty will honor U.S. commitments to work with the Iraqis to strengthen freedom and establish a representative government in Iraq.

"Soldiers of Task Force Liberty are inspired and ready to take up a position alongside Iraqi citizens in the cause for freedom," Taluto said.

"Our pledge is to continue the march toward a free and peaceful Iraq."

Multinational Division-North Central Iraq will be supported by more than 22,000 soldiers under the command of the 42<sup>nd</sup> ID.



*Lt. Gen. John R. Vines, Multinational Corps Iraq commander passes the Rainbow flag to Maj. Gen. Joseph J. Taluto, 42<sup>nd</sup> ID commander, during the Transfer of Authority ceremony on Feb. 14. This marks the first time the Rainbow colors have been unfurled in a combat theater since World War Two.*

## Over the Berm Again - OIF 1 Veterans Return for OIF 3

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta  
42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division

CAMP WILSON, IRAQ — ‘Crossing the berm’ ... to Soldiers, it means passing through the rough-hewn sand wall that separates Iraq and Kuwait — the place, in space and time, that they begin to face potential combat.

Recently, some Soldiers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division crossed the berm for a second time.

The division’s 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, entered Iraq in early February on an approach march to its area of operations north of Baghdad. The march, which the battalion executed as a combat patrol, was close on the heels of the first free election in Iraq’s modern history, and nearly two years after Operation Iraqi Freedom 1, when the brigade, along with Coalition Forces, fired the opening shots in the fight that made Iraqi elections possible.

Like all of the unit’s OIF 1 veterans, Staff Sgt. Johnson of Mason, WV, had literally been down this road before.

“Coming across the berm the second time, you just think about what to expect,” Johnson said. “You think about the enemy being there, waiting for you.”

A veteran of Desert Storm as well as OIF 1, Johnson said he felt mixed emotions about retuning to Iraq for the third time.

“You never think you’ll come back to the same place three times,” Johnson said. “The only difference now is that this is a peacekeeping mission or humanitarian effort, compared to the first two times. We’re trying to get them on their feet.”

Unit member Spc. James Dalton of Mill Valley, CA, anticipated “a whole lot of nothing” when he crossed the berm the second time.

“That’s pretty much what we saw the first time,” he said.

The recent approach march was a far cry from Dalton’s experience in OIF 1. Then, he was involved in “miles long, running firefight” in the northwest corner of Baghdad.

“As we were driving we were taking small-arms fire and [rocket-propelled grenade] rounds,” Dalton said of his OIF 1 experience. He also recalled some horrific sights.

“Everywhere went, everything was on fire ... there were bodies everywhere,” Dalton said. “The country looks a lot better now.”

“I was nervous, which is natural,” said Sgt. Adam Marriott, a medic from Company B, about crossing the berm this time. “It’s a different situation now, though. The attacks are different.”

A Clarksville, Ohio, native, Marriott was with the battalion during the battle for southern Baghdad in OIF 1. According to Marriott, the fighting had caused a stockpile of enemy munitions to cook off, and long-range missiles “were spiraling over the column.”

“You don’t reflect on it until it’s over with,” said Marriott of his combat experiences in OIF 1.

That experience seems to have paid off. During a halt while driving through Baghdad this time, battalion Soldiers heard the distinct sounds of AK-47 fire. It turned out to be Iraqi authorities firing warning shots to clear traffic, but as veteran, Dalton said he knew immediately, from the sound, that the shots weren’t aimed at him.

“I listened, because if you hear a whizzing sound it’s coming toward you, but not near you,” he said. “If you hear a crack, it’s time to seek cover. I figured if I didn’t hear return fire from our side, it wasn’t a firefight. I’ve been under fire before. The first time is kind of a shock, but once you’ve been there and done that, it’s easier to do the right thing.”

The shooting occurred in an area Johnson recalled was the scene of heavy fighting during OIF 1. Johnson said he immediately began scanning his sector to find the source of the shooting.

“On a combat patrol, you’re really alert, because you don’t know what to expect,” Johnson said. “You know it’s out there, but you don’t know where. It just pops up. You have to stay low, next to the truck, so at least you have cover.”

You don’t have to look hard to find

combat patches in the battalion. Many soldiers wear the division’s distinctive, diagonally striped square patch on both sleeves, signifying that they took part in OIF 1. Nearly 35 percent of his unit are veterans, said Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Gary Brito, who is from Hyannis, MA.

“They understand the harshness of war. They are hardened soldiers,” he said.

Unlike OIF 1, OIF 3 is not a conventional fight, said Brito.

“This is more in the nature of stability and support operations,” he said. “We have to engage with the people and make them realize the benefits of democracy. I do not think brute force is the answer. Having said that, our soldiers are prepared to secure the country and help develop an effective Iraqi Army and Police force. Unlike OIF 1, it’s hard to tell the combatants from the non-combatants. Everyone’s in civilian clothes.”

Dalton agreed.

“It’s not strictly combat anymore,” he said. “It’s a low intensity conflict. The rules of engagement are more restrictive, and you have to be real careful not to hit civilians.”

Another change from OIF 1 is the unit configuration. As one of the Army’s new Units of Action, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Combat

Team fields a mix of maneuver elements, to include two infantry battalions, two armor battalions and a field artillery battalion. Brito described his unit as a “combined arms maneuver battalion.”

“[The new configuration] gives the commander on the ground some of the combat multipliers he wouldn’t normally have,” Brito said.

Both Dalton and Marriott were guarded about the Iraqi elections.

“It’s kind of up in the air,” Marriott said. “I think it’s a step forward, but I don’t live here, so it’s not my place to say if it’s a good or a bad thing.”

“It’s a step in the right direction,” Dalton said. “I don’t have enough knowledge to predict how it will turn out, but it seems like we’re trying to do the right thing over here.”

Both Soldiers, however, are committed to the fight.

“I look at what soldiers have done before me, and I figure I owe them something,” Marriott said. “Hopefully, my kids won’t have to deal with this.”

“We need to assist Iraq Security Force,” Dalton said. “We need to train and support them until they’re able to secure the country on their own. I take care of my little piece. If everyone does that, I figure everything will turn out ok.”



1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment Commander Lt. Col. Gary Brito studies his maps during the battalion’s combat patrol north into Iraq. The battalion is part of 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division.

## Task Force Liberty Soldiers Focus on Training Iraqi Security Forces

By Sgt. Blake Kent  
22<sup>nd</sup> MPAD

TIKRIT, Iraq – Students of the Iraqi Police Security Cohort Training Course, conducted by the 4<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army Division Training Academy, Tikrit, graduated February 17.

The IPS students spent 15 days learning police tactics and procedures such as marksmanship, land-navigation and individual movement techniques.

The training also included ‘Army values’ style training, focusing on the same values instilled in American Soldiers: loyalty, duty,

respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage.

“You are citizens of the brotherhood of police,” said Maj. Gen. Mizhir Taha Ahmed, head of the IPS in the Saladin province.

“Do not distinguish between race or creed of people, but see all citizens as equals, and distinguish yourselves through the justice which you serve,” Ahmed said.

“I think the students are responding to the training well,” said Staff Sgt. Thomas Hamilton of New Jersey, an advisor to the Iraqi instructors at the academy, and a drill sergeant with the 98<sup>th</sup> Division in New Jersey.

The training is all new to them, said Hamilton, but at least it gives them a basis for conducting their operations with both ethical and tactical proficiency.

Hamilton stressed the importance of the students continuing to maintain their training once they reach their posts in order to maintain and improve their skills.

All 365 students from the class will be returning to their hometown of Samarra, which has had difficulty in maintaining a police force with insurgents focusing their attacks on police stations and Iraqi Security Forces.

“These people of Samarra have suffered too long under the lawlessness of the insurgents,” Ahmed said of the important role the graduating police must play. “It is the time now to start our jobs and missions to bring the people the security they deserve.”

The graduates returned to Samarra immediately following the ceremony, returning to their families and beginning their security operations.

The IA Training Academy’s next class will be a Professional Leadership Development Course, which will be composed of Iraqi military from across the country