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Iraqis Upfront - Liberty Soldiers Take Backseat

By Staff Sgt. Duane M. Brown
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FIRE BASE BARBARIAN, Kirkuk, Iraq – Soldiers here work closely with the Iraqi police to keep the city safe despite the potential presence of insurgents.

With Iraqi police leading the way, Soldiers of the 116th Brigade Combat Team take the back seat, providing technical support and additional security.

"We are training them so we can walk away and feel comfortable about their level of competence to do the job right," said Staff Sgt. John Lamott, a squad leader and native of Boise, Idaho. "When needed, on-the-spot corrections are made, and

said Staff Sgt. Marvin Bettis, platoon sergeant with the 116th BCT.

Daily missions for the 116th BCT allow for meet and greet missions with the people of Kirkuk. These missions involve coordinating cordon and searches with the Iraqi police, and letting them do the door knocking while 2nd Battalion Soldiers pull security and interact with the locals.

"First we visit the IP station we are working with, to make sure that we are on the same sheet of music," Lamott said. "Here we go over the latest intelligence we have and they give us theirs."

From here, the door knocking begins.

"We let them lead, so we can evaluate their performance while they do Weapon Compliance Checks. They are good and really know what's going on," Lamott added.

During these checks Iraqi police look for anything out of the ordinary.

Citizens may possess one AK-47 assault rifle with one magazine or one pistol. Under no circumstances are they to have

rocket-propelled grenades, extra ammunition or improvised explosive material.

People are reacting well to the style of knocking and asking to search their homes, Bettis said.

"We make sure we let them know what we are doing and that it's for their safety

and the safety of surrounding neighbors," said an

Iraqi police officer from the Aruba station.

"Every time we stop, kids always run up to us. I figure if we win them over young, it will make a difference in the future," Bettis added.

Some of the Soldiers feel confident that it's time for the Iraqis to be seen as in charge.

"The Iraqi police have been running traffic



An Iraqi policeman checks registration papers of Iraqi citizens at a traffic control point in Kirkuk.

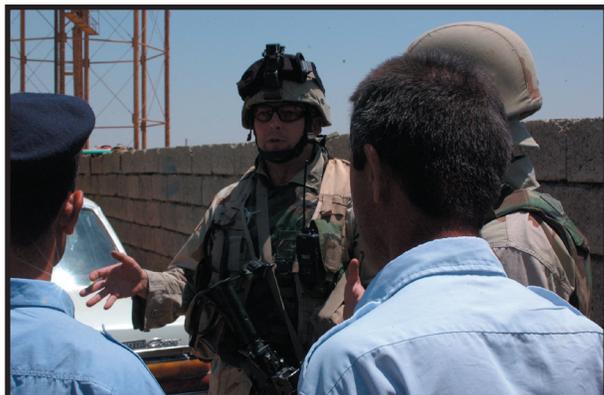
control points since May, and they have been doing a pretty good job," said Staff Sgt. Brad E. Attebery, 116 BCT and native of Weiser, Idaho. "Now we stay out of sight so the town of Kirkuk sees its police out in front, doing their job."

Even though the Iraqi police are running the traffic control points, it doesn't mean Coalition support is no longer needed.

"We're in the background to make sure they are doing their job right," Attebery said.

Attebery said Soldiers pull security in the back of the TCP to make sure no one attacks from the rear.

On the backside of the TCP, members of the



Staff Sgt. John Lamott, squad leader, 116th BCT, briefs members of the Iraqi police force in Kirkuk, before going on a weapons compliance check.

these are minor."

After each mission, a review is conducted through an interpreter to discuss what the police have done right and what areas need improvement.

Since they arrived in Iraq six months ago, the 116th BCT has been working with the Iraqi police and has a team of U.S. military police which trains the Iraqis.

Keeping the city secure requires a constant presence of law enforcement everyday. The 116th BCT helps make this happen.

In addition to day and night patrols in the city, the 116th BCT has a quick reaction force which is able to provide additional security, a Coalition Soldier said.

"The QRF are the first on the scene. They are out the gate within five minutes of being called, providing security for Coalition Forces and IP,"

"We're in the background to make sure they are doing their job right"



An Iraqi policeman searches a car stopped at a traffic control point in Kirkuk.

community often surround the Soldiers.

"They are very cautious of us at first. They want to feel us out and see what type of people we are," said Sgt. Samuel E. Tozer, team leader, with the 116 BCT and native of Meridan, Idaho.

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Band Adds Music to Independence Day

By Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SUMMERALL, Bayji, Iraq – Despite the 42nd Infantry Division Band's war-time mission of pulling hours of guard duty, the Soldiers still make time to practice and perform for the Soldiers of Task Force Liberty.

On July 4, Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Summerall enjoyed some musical selections performed by one of the band's five-person groups, "A Moments Notice."

The band, consisting of the vocal talents of Sgt. Jennifer Castle, saxophone player Sgt. Vincent Ciralo, guitarist Sgt. Juan Ortega, drummer Sgt. Daniel Gonzalez and keyboardist Staff Sgt. Richard Alexander, performed for the Soldiers during lunch and dinner as they celebrated the United States's Independence Day.

Spc. Patrick Grubert, a member of the 42nd Infantry Division Artillery commander's personal security detachment, said he thought having the group play for Soldiers was a good idea.

"It was a real morale boost," Grubert said. "It is a special treat. It is like sitting at chow, I forgot that I was in Iraq for a second."

Castle, a native of Pawling, N.Y., said she enjoys singing for the Soldiers in Iraq, because for a moment they can just listen and not worry about whatever might be stressing them out.

"It largely affects morale," Castle said. "I feel like I am doing my part, if I can take Soldiers away from where we are for even just a couple of minutes. I don't know what everybody is going through at different times of the day or week or whatever, but when they hear the music they can kind of just escape and it just makes it really worth it. It makes me feel awesome," she said. "It is really just an indescribable

feeling that you get when you are up there and people are enjoying it and they clap and they tell you that you did a good job. It is a really good feeling."

Alexander, from Levittown, N.Y., agreed that the music helps the Soldiers to take their minds off of the war around them.

"I think it just gives them a break you know from their day and it is just a little piece of home and they get to hear some music," he said. Ale

Alexander said the band members spend a lot of time practicing in order to put on a show.

"It takes a lot of practice for us as a band, or any of our bands, to be able to perform," he said. "If you are watching us play in the (dining facility) or the (Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Center), we are playing a show that is an hour long. It takes us about three hours of rehearsal a day just to get enough music up to that level so we can perform an hour."

Castle said one of the biggest differences about performing for the Soldiers in Iraq and not back home is her M-4 Carbine.

"It is weird to a point," she said. "Having a weapon strapped to your back is something you're not used to."

Besides performing with a weapon, playing in Iraq can come with some different challenges, Castle said.

"The equipment tends to be a problem sometimes," she said. "The power goes out. It always does in this country, but it is not too much of a hindrance really where we are. We really haven't had any incidents luckily."

Alexander said the group has really enjoyed playing in Iraq and has received praise for their talents.

"We have received very nice compliments from everyone where we have played and it is kind of nice to hear that," he said. "The most memorable thing for me, I think, is getting the opportunity to play for our unit and other units."

Close Shaves, Great Cause

By 116 BCT
Public Affairs Office



A 116th Brigade Combat Team Soldier gets his hair shaved for Operation Desert Eagle June 25.

FOB WARRIOR, Iraq- Soldiers from the 116th Brigade Combat Team (BCT), in a joint operation with the airmen of the Air Force's 506th Air Expeditionary Group (AEG), participated in a bald-off to show support for kids with cancer June 25.

One hundred and sixteen Soldiers and Airmen stationed in northern Iraq took part in Operation Desert Eagle, by volunteering to shave their heads to show their support for children with cancer and to send the message that they care.

The event was the brain-child of a Boise City Police officer from Idaho. He mentioned it to Staff Sgt. Thomas Wilson, a 116th BCT operations

sergeant. He planned and orchestrated a group photograph and the signing of a poster-sized picture of the newly bald participants, which he will hand-deliver to children with cancer when he goes home on leave.

"We're here doing a tough, dangerous job for our country. We volunteered to do what we do. Some folks back home think that makes us heroes. These kids didn't choose to go through what they are. They're the real heroes," said Wilson.

The 116th Brigade Combat Team is composed of units from Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Utah, North Dakota, Maryland and New Jersey. The unit is comprised of headquarters and staff sections, the 2nd and 3rd Armor Battalions, the 1-148th Field Artillery Battalion, the 1-163rd Mechanized Infantry Battalion, the 145th Support Battalion, the 116th Engineer Battalion and various intelligence, signal and specialized units.

The U.S. Air Force's 506th AEG is the unit responsible for security as well as projects and development of Kirkuk Regional Airbase (FOB Warrior). The base serves as home to the headquarters of both units. Some of the current components of the 506th AEG are stationed in Idaho.

"These kids didn't choose to go through what they are. They're the real heroes."

Iraqis Upfront

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"They treat us pretty good. We give them respect and they give us respect."

"Most of the citizens like Coalition Forces being in Kirkuk. They think we're doing a good job working with the IP and Iraqi army," he added.

The majority of people are helpful and cooperative with the IP. They volunteer information on anti-Iraqi force activity, an Iraqi policeman said.

"They do this because they know it will help everyone," said an Iraqi police officer. "There is only a small percentage that doesn't like us."

With the police growing more comfortable with their mission and the community continues to support them, the Iraqi police will run daily operations alone.



An Iraqi citizen thanks Lamott for helping keep Kirkuk safe from the insurgency. The man's house was searched during a weapons compliance check.

"When we leave country, they will pretty much be on their own," Attebery added.