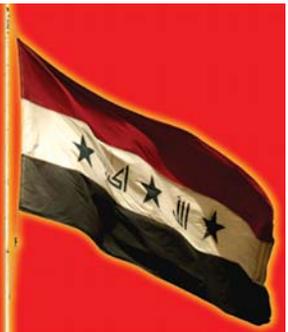




THIS WEEK IN IRAQ



Vol. 1, No. 2

Published by Multi-National Force - Iraq

August 24, 2005

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A look to the future:

Iraqi Security Forces arrive at dam

Story and photo by Lance Cpl. Marc Fencil
2nd Marine Division

HADITHA DAM, Iraq — The first wave of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) arrived here, marking a

large step toward the transition of local control from Coalition Forces to the country's own forces.



From right, Army Capt. Greg T. Brown, Iraqi Col. Muhammed, Lt. Col. Lionel B. Urquhart, and a translator review the details of a map.

Although the Iraqi troops do not conduct missions independently, the Soldiers conduct daily joint patrols with Marines from 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment.

“More training for the officers is necessary before the Iraqis will

See *FUTURE*, Page 9

Iraqi Army gets ready for the mission

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE GABE, BAQUBAH, Iraq — Maps line the walls as Soldiers sit around a “U” shaped table briefing their commander on the mission plan and the intelligence they had gathered.

The commander, dressed in a uniform pattern once worn by U.S. troops and speaking in Arabic, talks to his fellow officers about his expectations, as a group of Soldiers dressed in the U.S. Army's current desert combat uniform take notes.

Listening and mentoring is what these Coalition Soldiers of the military transition team (MiTT) at Forward Operating Base Gabe, Baqubah, Iraq, are doing to help their counterparts of the 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division, prepare to completely take over operations in their area.

Coalition Soldiers are not only providing advice, but they also lend a hand where the Iraqi Army still needs help, said Lt. Col. Daniel Kessler, MiTT team leader.

“We support them with assets that they basically don't have,” said Kessler, a Latrobe, Pa., native. “Right now there are very few operations in our [area of operation] that are Coalition led.”

The help the Coalition Soldiers provide is not something that Col. Saman Talabany, 2nd Brigade commander, said he wants to do without, but he said his Soldiers are ready to take over the mission when that day does come.

“When they leave, we have a good capability to do everything, but I don't like to say that because I'm not looking to when they leave,” Talabany said.

Kessler said he believes that Talabany and his Soldiers are ready to take over the mission because they have proven they are capable of carrying out these missions.

See *LEAD*, Page 9

Casey predicts success in Iraq, calls mission 'realistic'

By John D. Banusiewicz

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The commander of Coalition Forces in Iraq Aug. 17 predicted success in what he called the “realistic” mission his troops are performing.

Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr. spoke with NBC “Today” program host Matt Lauer in Baghdad.

“We’re going to get where we want to be, and we’re going to be successful here,” Casey said. “I’ve been here a little over a year now, and the longer I’m here, the more comfortable I am that this mission is ... realistic and that we can achieve our objectives.”

Although terrorists continue to launch more than five dozen attacks around Iraq each day, Casey pointed out that most are ineffective. “One of the interesting points is of the 60 or 70 attacks a day, only around 20 of those attacks are effective [and] actually produce a casualty,” he said.

Though he said suicide bombings represent the biggest change in enemy tactics since the war in Iraq began, the general noted a downward trend in the number of attacks using suicide bombers and car bombs. “Over the last four months, suicide bombs have come down steadily,” he said. “Car bombs have come down steadily for the last three months. We had a third less car bombs in July than there were in June.”

The persistence of the insurgency has surprised some observers, but Casey said it's no surprise to people who study such issues. “If you’re a student of history,” he said, “you realize that the average insurgency in the 20th century has



Gen. George W. Casey Jr.

See *CASEY*, Page 3

Iraqi Constitution draft submitted, up for debate

By Lt. Col. Steven A. Boylan

Combined Press Information Center

INTERNATIONAL ZONE, BAGHDAD, Iraq — The Constitutional Committee presented a draft constitution to the Transitional National Assembly at 11:45 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 22. The approximately 38-page draft constitution was accepted by the National Assembly in principle; however, the National Assembly deferred the official vote for an additional three days to narrow the differences between the Sunni, Kurds, and Shittes.

The Iraqi National Assembly President, Huchim Al Hasani, said, “We received the draft of the constitution, but there are some points that are still outstanding and need to be addressed in the next three days.”

United States Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, meeting with reporters immediately following the announcement stated that, “Iraq has made a huge step forward on agreement on the draft by two-thirds of the Assembly.” He further stated that they would take three more days to build consensus on all issues as well as to build support among the Sunni’s.

This draft provides equal rights for all Iraqis as well as addressing the issues of Islam within the government.

“The sacrifices of the U.S. servicemen and women are the ones that have made this possible for Iraq,” said Khalilzad. “What we will see now is the national compact or roadmap Iraq to work through their issues with each other and we are encouraged to see them do this,” he said.

Key issues to be addressed are the issues of federalism and the Kurdish territories as well as the sharing of wealth from the potential oil revenues across Iraq, instead of in those areas that have the oil fields.

Upon completion of the draft and its acceptance, the next step will be voter education prior to the Oct. 15 referendum where the Iraqi people will determine for themselves whether they will reject the current draft or accept the draft as their first freely developed and chosen Constitution setting forth the rule of law for Iraq.

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Iraqi voter registration: a team effort

Story and photo by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE NORMANDY, Iraq — To ensure Iraqis in the Diyala Province are confident they can vote safely for the upcoming constitutional referendum and in the December national elections, Task Force Liberty Soldiers are working closely with local police and officials to make sure everything runs smoothly.

With the start of voter registration, Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 34th Armored Regiment and 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, stopped by five voter registration sites Aug. 4 near here in Dali Abbas, Muqdadiah, Abu Sayda and Al-Wajihya.

The mission's purpose was to make sure everything was under control by checking on security and addressing any concerns of the Iraqi election personnel, said 1st Lt. Daniel Brillhart, executive officer, Company B, 2/34.

"Everything we saw was very positive," said Brillhart, a native of York, Pa. "Iraqis were prepared to conduct the registration, and Iraqi Security Forces had the scene secured at each location we went to, showing they don't need extensive Coalition involvement to set this off without a hitch."

Sgt. 1st Class Brain Kerkove, 1/30th, feels this is a positive step towards Iraqis taking back their country.

"They need to be able to feel confident enough to get out here and vote," said Kerkove, a native of Savvana, Ill. "That way they can go



1st Lt. Daniel Brillhart, executive officer, 2nd Bn., 34th Armored Regt., talks with an Iraqi police officer outside a voter registration site in Al Wajihya, Iraq, Aug. 4.

ahead and continue on with the constitution process and the elections coming up so they can actually run their country without our help."

Brillhart said during the election process, all security will be conducted by Iraqi police at the voter registration sites and Iraqi Army in the vicinity. His Soldiers will provide a safety net should any incidents occur, he added.

At the registration sites, Brillhart was pleased with the seriousness of which the election personnel enforced the rules.

After visiting the sites, Brillhart said he and his men are confident the Iraqi people in the Diyala Province are well on their way to building a better democratic Iraq.

Casey

from Page 2

lasted nine years. And so there may have been people who expected this to be quick, but that's not the nature of insurgency, and that's not the nature of the war that we're fighting."

Casey said he expects Iraq to emerge with "a representative government that represents the human rights of all Iraqis [and] security forces that can maintain domestic order and deny Iraq as a safe haven for terrorists."

"The Iraqis will ultimately defeat the insurgency," he said. "And I believe when that happens, we'll be helping the Iraqis do that."

The general emphasized the U.S. commitment to see the mission through. "As far as the Iraqis having to defend themselves before they're ready, that's just not going to happen," he said. "The president has said we're going to stay here until the job is done."

With a new draft constitution expected on the near horizon and a national referendum on that constitution planned in October, Casey said the continued political progress means a "tough fight" still lies ahead.

"We've said repeatedly we expect the political process to be contested," the general said. "If you're an insurgent looking at this, you don't like the outcome. The outcome [is going to be] the defeat of the insurgency."

On Monday the Iraqi Air Force conducted its first humanitarian assistance flight. An Iraqi C-130 from the 23rd Squadron flew an Iraqi mother and her 9-year-old son, with a defective heart, from Baghdad International Airport to Basrah. The mother is accompanying her son on a commercial flight to the U.S. and onward to Tulane University Hospital and Clinic in New Orleans.



Heroes of the Week

Medic receives Bronze Star Medal for Valor

3rd Infantry Division Division Support Brigade Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — A Soldier assigned to the Division Support Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, received a Bronze Star Medal with “V” device Aug. 11 at the DSB ministry center.

Sgt. Eric G. Sullivan, a combat medic with the 550th Area Support Medical Company, Brigade Troops Battalion (BTB), DSB, was awarded the medal by Brig. Gen. Mark E. O’Neill, assistant division commander for support for the 3rd Inf. Div.

“We are all very fortunate to have leaders – noncommissioned officers of the caliber of Sgt. Sullivan, who in that moment when they had to make that one decision, they were very clear about what they needed to do,” said O’Neill.

Sullivan, from Tampa, Fla., was honored for his actions April 20 during an attack on the convoy he was supporting.

A vehicle in the convoy was hit by a vehicle borne improvised explosive device, said Capt. Kenneth A. Hoisington, the adjutant for BTB. Sullivan’s vehicle pulled alongside the burning Heavy Equipment Transporter

and checked to see if the vehicle had been evacuated. Fortunately, the truck was empty. However, the convoy was unable to move out of the area while engaged in a terrorist cross-fire. Heroically, Sullivan and his fellow Soldiers dismounted and returned fire, Hoisington said.

During the engagement, Sullivan spent two magazines of ammunition defending his fellow Soldiers before noticing multiple Iraqi civilian casualties during the attack.

Sullivan immediately designated a casualty collection point and started directing Soldiers to collect the casualties, said Hoisington. He then decisively directed combat life savers and other Soldiers, and began to triage the casualties.

Because of his quick thinking, ability to remain calm under fire and knowledgeable treatment, 11 of the 14 casualties survived, said Hoisington.

Sullivan then helped evacuate the casualties to Camp Liberty, where he continued to direct the patient-carrying vehicles to various treatment facilities, effectively managing resources, said Hoisington.

After the ceremony, Sullivan modestly deferred honor to the 3rd Battalion, 117th Field Artillery Regiment, Alabama Army



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Peter Chadwick

Brig. Gen. Mark E. O’Neill, left, the assistant division commander for support for the 3rd Inf. Div., pins the Bronze Star Medal with “V” device on Sgt. Eric G. Sullivan.

National Guard, for their force protection support during the ambush.

“Everybody in the Army is a warrior and a member of a team,” said Sullivan.

“I think we’d all agree that if we were going outside the wire, we’d want you with us,” said O’Neill.



Colonel preps for independent operations

Story and photo by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE GABE, BAQUBAH, Iraq — Maps line the walls as Iraqi Soldiers brief their commander on the mission plan and the intelligence they had gathered.

Col. Saman Talabany, commander of 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division, said his Soldiers are ready to take over the mission when the American advisory team leaves.

Lt. Col. Daniel Kessler, military transition team leader, said he believes that Talabany and his Soldiers are ready to take over the mission, because they have proven they are capable of carrying out these missions.

Talabany said he has dedicated Soldiers who know their mission is important and are willing to fight for the people of their country.

“I have good Soldiers,” he said. “I can say great Soldiers, because they are all ready, they are ready to die

for their country as you see in the missions all the time.”

Going out on these missions and getting information that may help the country and protect the Soldiers is important, Talabany said, as he instructed his intelligence officer during the meeting.

“It is too easy to get information because we are the same color, same language, same culture with those guys and it is too easy to go inside the people to get information,” Talabany said. “I told him that he cannot get any information if you sit beside your air conditioner in your room. They have to go out and they have to speak to the people. They don’t have to wait for those people to come and tell them this information.”

That is just what these Iraqi Soldiers are doing said Kessler, going out and making sure their country is a safe place to live.

Talabany said these missions are important.

“If we sit in our home, in our room, we have no problem with anyone, but when the Soldiers go outside to do a mission or to do his job (there are) problems,” he said.



Col. Saman Talabany



Heroes of the Week

A small group can make a big difference

By Maj. John McPherson

BAGHDAD, Iraq — There is a small group of Australian Defence Force people working in and around Baghdad making a big difference to the progress of the Coalition in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Iraq.

They are unusual in that they are embedded into elements of the headquarters run by the United States, and work not only with Americans, but also people from a number of other nationalities.

Based predominantly at Camp Victory, the reputations of these 27 Australians are held high throughout the Coalition. They are a mix of Army, Navy and Air Force commissioned and non-commissioned officers, and their duties directly affect the outcomes of the Coalition operation.

They are employed in all facets from troop movement, resource and sustainment, telecommunications, intelligence, explosive ordinance advice, engineering and legal, all the way through to designing and maintaining Web pages and troop morale.

And the group is just as diverse as their jobs. As Flight Sgt. Matt Clarke, who works in signals and communications, explained, “The most junior member of the group — and only female — is Army Cpl. Rebecca Kane, who is responsible for the movement of all embedded [non-U.S.] troops into and out of the theatre. The most senior, Royal Australian Navy Capt. Paul Kinghorne, is chief of resource and sustainment.”

Most are specialists in their respective areas of expertise. Another giving witness to this is Lt. Col. Craig Hersant, who has a highly important role for Multi-National Corps - Iraq where he has responsibility for the tasking and operation of a wide range of surveillance assets.

These members of the Australian Defence Force work tirelessly with their Coalition counterparts daily.

The good old Aussie “G’day Mate” is often heard throughout the halls of the Al



Courtesy photo

Some of the Australian Defence Force personnel embedded within the Multi-National Force at Camp Victory in Baghdad, Iraq.

Faw Palace headquarters although, sometimes, with a range of American and other country accents.

But there should be no doubting the impact their contribution is having on the wider coalition efforts to restore this country to its former grandeur and their work deserves to be fully recognized on the broadest possible front.

Soldier repairs wheelchair for war-crippled girl



TF 3/116 Armor photo

A crippled girl waits while Sgt. Scott Thompson, TF 3/116 Armor, fixes her wheelchair.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq — A sergeant from the 116th Brigade Combat Team’s Task Force 3/116 Armor repaired a war-crippled girl’s wheelchair, leaving a good impression on the people of Azadi, Iraq, July 30.

“When we first saw the little girl, our hearts went out to her,” said Thompson. “And, to make matters worse, her wheelchair had also become a casualty.”

Thompson immediately went to work repairing the broken chair and had it fixed a short time later.

Sgt. Scott Thompson, a TF 3/116 Armor gunner, and his fellow Soldiers noticed the immobile

girl and the broken wheelchair while doing routine patrolling in Azadi, a recuperating war-torn village in Kirkuk Province.

According to the Soldiers, the girl’s disability was the result of fighting between Coalition Forces and terrorists during the early stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“The reaction of the people to my small act of service was noticeable,” said Thompson. “I instantly became a hit with the village.”

Providing small acts of service to Iraqis is one way the 116th BCT Soldiers are accomplishing their larger mission while deployed in north-central Iraq.

Iraqi Security Force tops 183K



Photo by Ann Bertucci

Public Order police officers march in review during a May 19 graduation ceremony for the 4th Public Order Bde. at An Numaniyah Military Base.

By Civilian Police Assistance Training Team

AN NUMANIYAH, Iraq — Iraqi police graduated 1,163 Public Order Brigade officers here Aug. 11 after they completed a six-week training program conducted at the Civil Intervention Force Academy at An Numaniyah Military Base.

The Public Order police have been utilized as a bridging force to restore and maintain law and order in cities where the police force has not yet been established or will be reconstituted due to insurgent activity.

They provide a critical security presence and ensure the safety and security of the local populace.

During the six-week course, students receive training in policing skills, weapons training, urban operations and close quarters tactics, as well as human rights and police ethics.

The officers attending the course came from areas throughout Iraq and will be deployed to their respective assignments following graduation. More than 4,600 officers who previously completed the course have been outfitted, equipped and deployed in support of security operations.

Iraqi Security Forces kill Al Qaeda lieutenant in Iraq

By Combined Press Information Center Press Desk

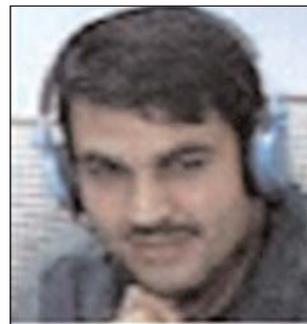
BAGHDAD, Iraq — Terrorist Abu Zubair, also known as Mohammed Salah Sultan, was killed Aug. 12 by Iraqi Security Forces in an ambush in the northern city of Mosul.

Zubair was a known member of Al Qaeda in Iraq and a lieutenant in Abu Musab Zarqawi's terrorist operations in Mosul. He was sought by Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces for his involvement in a July suicide bombing attack of a police station in Mosul, resulting in the death of five Iraqi police officers. He was also suspected of resourcing and facilitating suicide bomber attacks against Coalition, Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi citizens through-

out the country.

When Zubair was killed, he was wearing a suicide device consisting of an explosive pack across his stomach armed with pellets.

"Abu Zubair's death, as well as recent captures of terrorists in northern Iraq, is making a difference in Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces efforts to disrupt terrorists operating in this part of the country," said Col. Billy J. Buckner, spokesman for the Multi-National Corps. "Terrorists are doing all they can to stop the rise of a free Iraq, but their bombs and attacks have not prevented Iraqi sovereignty, and they will not prevent Iraqi



Abu Zubair

democracy," Buckner said.

During the week of Aug. 6 through 12, Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces captured three bomb makers and six foreign fighters, as well as found and cleared 101 improvised explosive devices.

On July 27, Security Forces conducted a raid on a safe house in Mosul,

arresting six terrorists and finding terrorist propaganda to include a letter written, to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. In the letter the author, Abu Zayd, a terrorist operating out of Mosul, complained of the poor leadership in Mosul and mistreatment of foreign fighters.

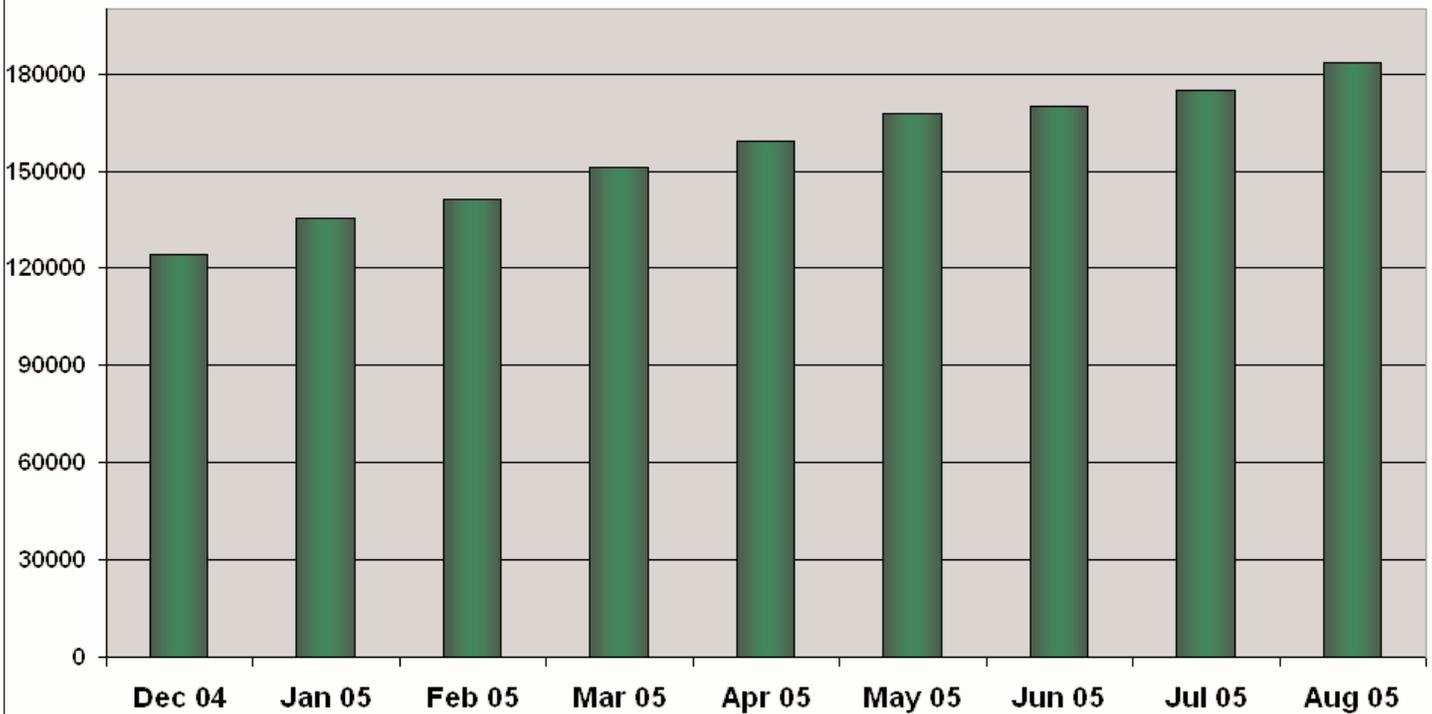
HVI KILLED/CAPTURED

- Abu Zubair, Abu Musab Zarqawi lieutenant, killed by Iraqi Security Forces in Mosul.

FOREIGN FIGHTERS KILLED/CAPTURED

- Four detained: two Sudanese and two Syrians.
- In Ramadi, combined forces apprehended two suspected insurgents who claimed to be Jordanian.

Iraqi Security Force Trained and Equipped



Iraqi Army captures 16 suspected anti-Iraqi force operatives

By Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraqi Army Soldiers continue their successful efforts to identify and capture suspected anti-Iraq force operatives in hideouts across Iraq. On Aug. 11, three separate operations led to the capture of 16 suspected AIF operatives in Khalis, Bayji, and Khan Bani Sa'ad, according to Multi-National Forces reports.

Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division, conducted an early morning raid near Khalis resulting in nine suspects being detained, three of whom were on a targeted list.

In Khan Bani Sa'ad, six suspects were detained following a raid designed to capture individuals believed to be involved in recent drive-by shootings. Task Force 2/34 and elements of the 4th Iraqi Army Division confiscated three AK-47 automatic rifles, two 9 mm pistols and one bus. The bus is suspected of being the vehicle used in the shootings.

A possible escaped detainee was captured by Soldiers from the 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division in Bayji. The suspect was driving a dump truck at the time of his capture. This same detainee is suspected of escaping from the Iraqi Army compound in Tikrit three months earlier.

No injuries or damages were reported in the operations.

Security Forces Status

As of Aug. 15, approximately 183,000 Iraqi Security Forces personnel have been trained and equipped. Of those, about 101,000 are Ministry of Interior Forces. This includes the forces of:

- Iraqi Police Service
- Public Order Division
- Special Police Commando Division
- Emergency Response Unit
- Department of Border Enforcement
- Highway Patrol
- Center for Dignitary Protection.

Additionally, approximately 82,000 are Ministry of Defense Forces, consisting of the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Special Operations, the Air Force, and the Navy. Currently, there are well over 110 Army and Special Police combat battalions that are "In the Fight." The bulk of those are "Fighting Alongside" Coalition Forces, while almost three dozen are "In the Lead" or "Fully Independent."

Detainee Operations Update

New internment facility construction underway

AS SULAMANIYA, Iraq — Construction is well underway at Fort Suse, a new Theater Internment Facility that will house nearly 2,000 detainees.

Iraqi contractors are currently renovating the facility, which used to be Iraqi military barracks. The facility required extensive renovation, and contractors are working double shifts in order to complete the renovation as quickly as possible.

This new facility will improve the quality of life for both the security detainees and Coalition Forces and expected to be complete by Sept. 30.

Camp Bucca expansion complete

CAMP BUCCA, Iraq — With the completion of the expansion at Camp Bucca, all security detainees are now housed in hard-sided buildings with heat and air conditioning in all compounds.

These hard-sided buildings provide improved protection and durability of detainee living quarters and greatly improve the safety and protection for detainees and Coalition Forces alike.

The expansion project, which was done with Iraqi labor, created jobs for the local Iraqi populace, which in turn helped rebuild the local economy.

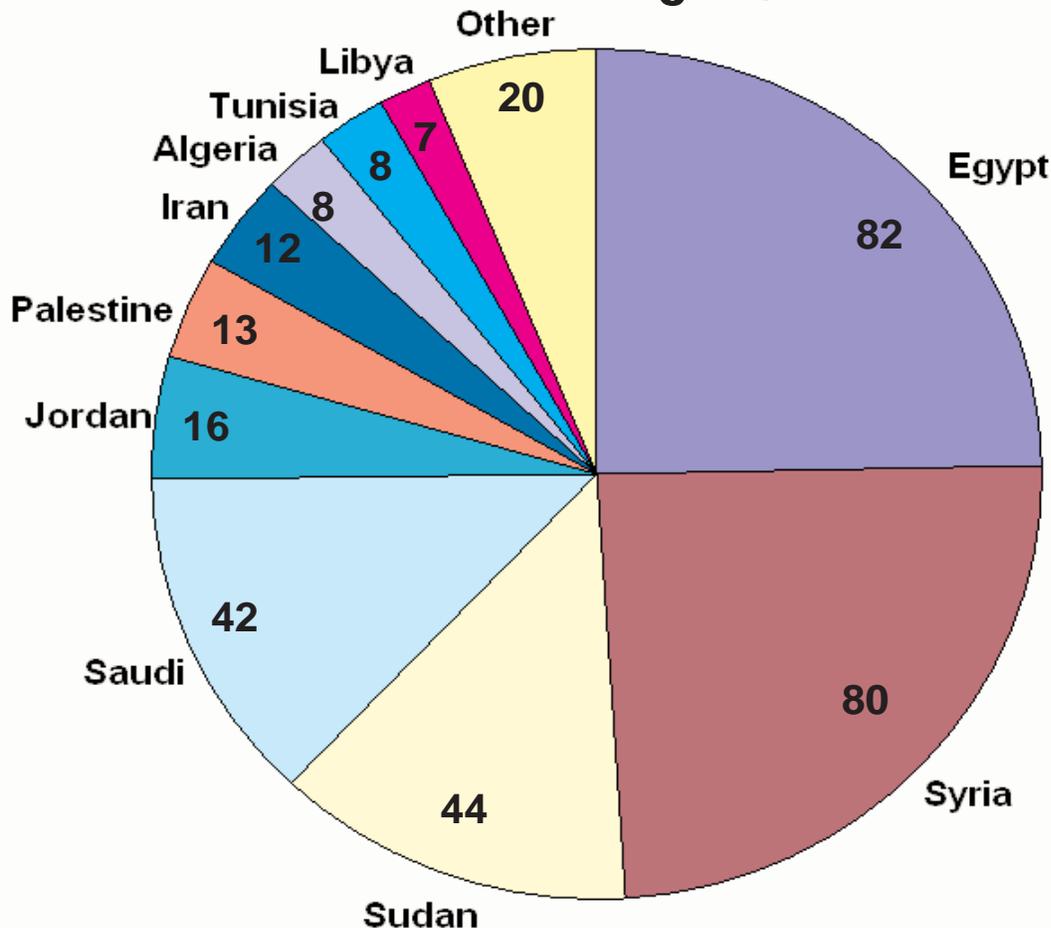
MeK members repatriate to Iran

CAMP ASHRAF, Iraq — With assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Ministry of Human Rights, ten former members of the Iranian Mujahedeen-e Khalq Organization based at Camp Ashraf returned home this month.

These former members requested to be repatriated back to Iran upon arrival at the Coalition controlled facility. Since late 2004, over 300 former members of the organization have returned home to Iran through the amnesty program provided by the Iranian Regime.

Foreign Fighters Captured: 332

Jan. 30 – 21 Aug. 21, 2005



Lead

from Page 1

"[We believe] we've got one of the better Iraqi Army brigades," Kessler said. "We've got three of our battalions that are almost ready. Three of our battalions are actually executing independent



Photo by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson

Col. Samam Talabany, commander, 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division, and Lt. Col. Daniel Kessler, military transition team leader, listen to a briefing Aug. 10, at Forward Operating Base Gabe, Baqubah, Iraq.

operations with minimal Coalition Forces' support. I am not aware of another Iraqi Army brigade that has the same level of proficiency as our battalions."

"I have good Soldiers," he said. "I can say great Soldiers, because they are all ready, they are ready to die for their country as you see in the missions all the time."

"It is too easy to get information because we are the same color, same language, same culture with those guys, and it is too easy to go inside the people to get information," Talabany said. "I told him [you] cannot get any information if you sit beside your air conditioner in your room. They have to go out and they have to speak to the people. They don't have to wait for those people to come and tell them this information."

"Our role as a Coalition is more into supporting the Iraqis, both the Army and the police, as they basically start doing the brunt of all operations within our [area of operations]," Kessler said.

"They are executing roughly three times as many operations in terms of cordon and searches, raids and executing flash check points and other types of patrols, as Coalition Forces right now."

Talabany said these missions are important, and that is why he and his Soldiers know they can not just sit back and ignore the problems in their country. "If we sit in our home in our room, we have no problem with anyone, but when the Soldiers go outside to do a mission or to do their job [there are] problems," he said.

Future

from Page 1

conduct operations independent of the Marines," said Army Capt. Greg T. Brown, a 15-year veteran responsible for advising the ISF.

The integration of the Iraqis into Marine patrols presented Brown and the Marines challenges because Iraqi officers involved themselves in every facet of military operations during Saddam Hussein's regime — a stark contrast to the small-unit leadership that is the foundation of the Marine Corps.

"This top-down leadership is the greatest challenge in shaping these forces into an effective fighting force," explained Brown. "The lowest individ-

uals in the platoon should know the details."

Marines and Iraqis are currently paired up squad for squad for the ISF to observe and emulate Marine tactics. Approximately half of the Iraqi Soldiers served in the armed forces during Saddam's rule, but the remainder have no military training. Recruits in the ISF complete a four-week training period in the town of Taiji for their version of basic training.

While it is obvious to even the casual observer that much more work is needed before becoming self-sufficient, the ISF has been experiencing both isolated and widespread success. Recently, Iraqi Forces joined forces with Marines in the city of Hit during Operation Sword and now live and work in the

city, providing their citizens a permanent Iraqi Soldier and Marine presence.

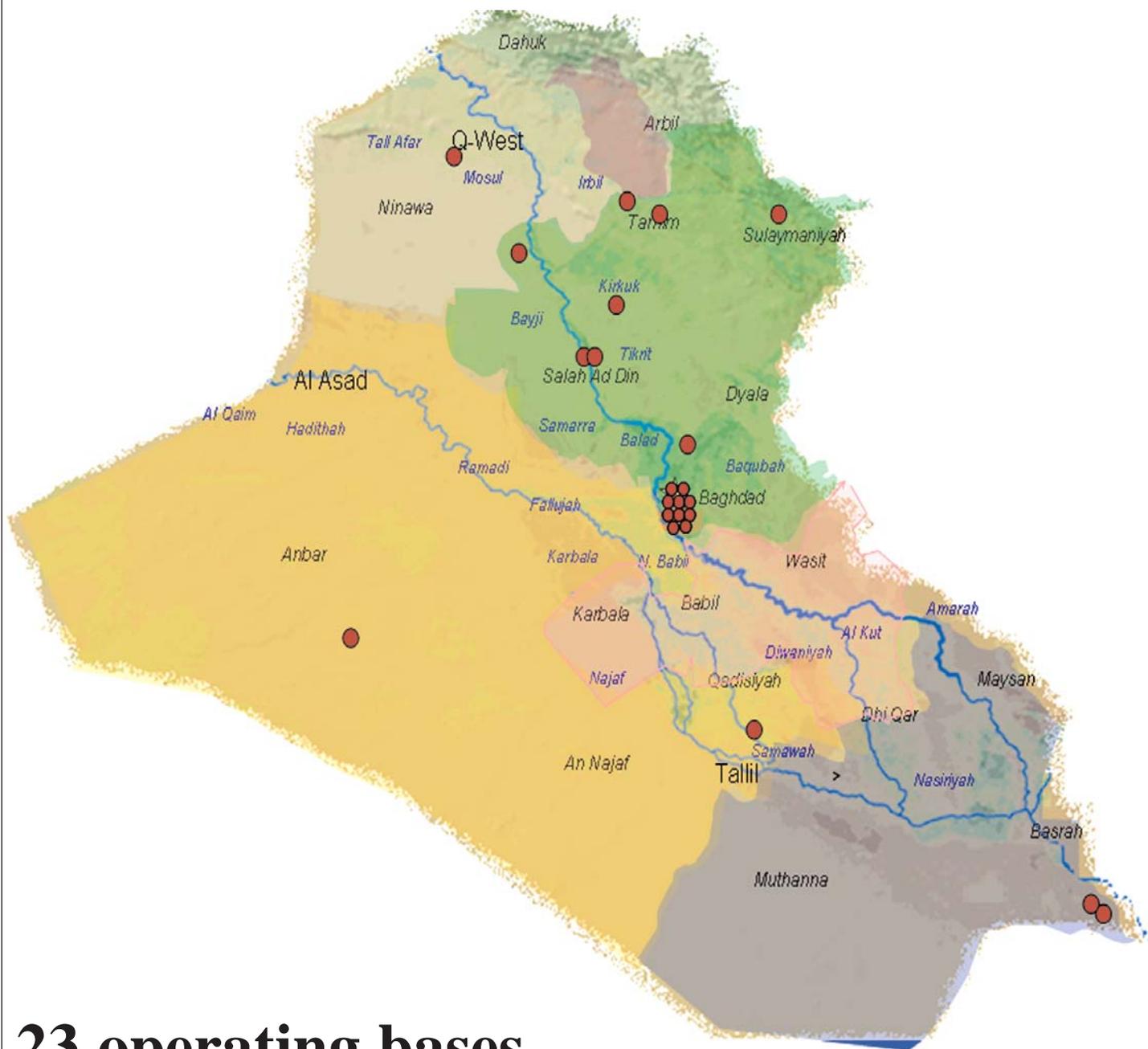
Marines are aware the Iraqis will eventually assume complete responsibility for their country's security but until then, they will continue to provide critical support and aid on operations with Marines as they continue improving their combat skills.

"Already, we are seeing an increase in the information that locals are bringing forth as a result of having soldiers who can effectively communicate with the people," said Brown. "Before, the locals just gave us the stone face.

"They are here for good and to show the locals that soon there will be a permanent face, and that will be of the ISF," Brown said.

The first international flight to land in Basra in 15 years arrived Monday, receiving a warm welcome from local officials. A Sharjah-based Phoenix Air Boeing 747 arrived from Dubai with 22 passengers. The company will begin two flights a week between Dubai and Basra, Iraq's second largest city, officials said.

Return of Bases



23 operating bases returned to the Iraqi government

Legend

● operating base

What a difference a year makes in Iraq

By Col. John Ottenbacher
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

BAGHDAD, Iraq — From a bloody battlefield and one of the most dangerous places in Iraq, to a safe, prosperous and growing community of over one-half million, the Najaf Teaching Hospital reflects the changes of the city of Najaf. One year ago on Aug. 27, the battle for Najaf ended and the Najaf Teaching Hospital was closed. It had been looted and its medical equipment destroyed by the Sadr Militia who had used its eight floors as a military fortress. Its basement flooded, windows and walls riddled with bullet and mortar damage. To many in Najaf, the hospital looked hopeless. Now the hospital is open, seeing hundreds of patients per

day and housing 80 in patients. It is a training hospital for 200 medical students, 50 pharmacy students and 100 resident doctors who are looking forward to improved and expanded services.

This is a true success story brought about by a close partnership of Iraqi doctors and a U.S. team of doctors, engineers, project managers, contractors, Soldiers and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civilians. When finished, the hospital will house a new magnetic resonance imaging scanner, have computed tomography scan services, and have increased specialty surgical services, including its first open heart surgical team. It will employ 1,250 people, in an area where good jobs are hard to come by.



U.S. Navy photo by Chief Petty Officer Edward G. Martens
Hassien-A-Yassr Alghzali is treated by U.S. Army Col. John Ottenbacher at the TF 198th Battalion Aid Station at FOB Hotel, Najaf, Iraq, April 20.

Najaf residents move forward with new freedom

Story and photo by Lt. Jeff Thomas
Political Military Economic Department
Multi-National Force - Iraq

NAJAF, Iraq — The sounds of war have been replaced by the sounds of progress in Najaf. Only one year ago this month, this community of about 600,000 people had front row seats to a battle that threatened to destroy not only their homes, but also one of the most holy places in the Islamic culture.

For Shia Muslims, Najaf has been the seat of instruction and guidance since the 7th century. Today, residents of Najaf and the millions of pilgrims expected to make their religious journey to the Imam Ali Shrine, located in the heart of the city, can live and worship freely and safely.

The ability for Shia Muslims to visit and worship in this remarkable city is only one of the success stories. A growing economy, awareness of the democratic process, and the impact of the Coalitions reconstruction efforts all add up to Najaf being a city headed for a better future.

Economic growth is not hard to find. Hundreds of new homes are being constructed and even more are being refurbished. People buy and sell goods, and the streets are crowded with many late model vehicles. Interviews with local citizens indicate as many as 75 percent of Najaf residents have a TV, and most get their signal from satellite systems. This statistic is not hard to believe. Rooftops are covered with satellite dishes, both in prominent homes and in more impoverished residences.



A shopkeeper in Najaf shows off his shelves that are stacked with goods in the city of Najaf.

The reconstruction effort in Najaf is comprehensive. When the current effort is complete, more than 450 projects will have been completed with an economic value of over \$145 million. The primary emphasis is on projects that bring clean water and reliable electricity to the residents.

The people of Najaf are witnessing the rebirth of their community. The economy is growing, their political process working, and the quality of life improving through the reconstruction effort. Najaf is a city that demonstrates what can happen when the citizens, their government, and the Coalition work together. Najaf is clearly a city that is moving ahead.

TF Liberty Soldiers help rebuild Iraq

Story and photo by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE NORMANDY, Iraq — Coalition Soldiers are providing Iraqis with money to improve their way of life, and in order to ensure projects like the ones in Diyala Province are progressing on schedule, Soldiers conduct routine checks of these sites.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, Task Force Liberty, are working with the people of Diyala Province to build schools, improve the water supply, pave roads and rebuild their local government.

The work the Soldiers are doing is helping to rebuild the city services, said 1st Lt. Jeremy Krueger, civil military operations officer, and native of Pensacola, Fla.

"I think the projects in our [area of operations] are important," said Krueger. "What we are doing is improving the infrastructure for this whole area that has been torn down over the last several years. It's helping the population immensely. It is providing new schools, new roads, new water projects and water supplies that they have never had.



Iraqis work to build a school in Diyala Province.

Also, some of the projects are businesses that are going to provide some revenue for the area."

The unit is still working on developing more projects in order to better the area, said Sgt. Maj. Matthew J. West, civil military operations sergeant major and a native of Dallas.

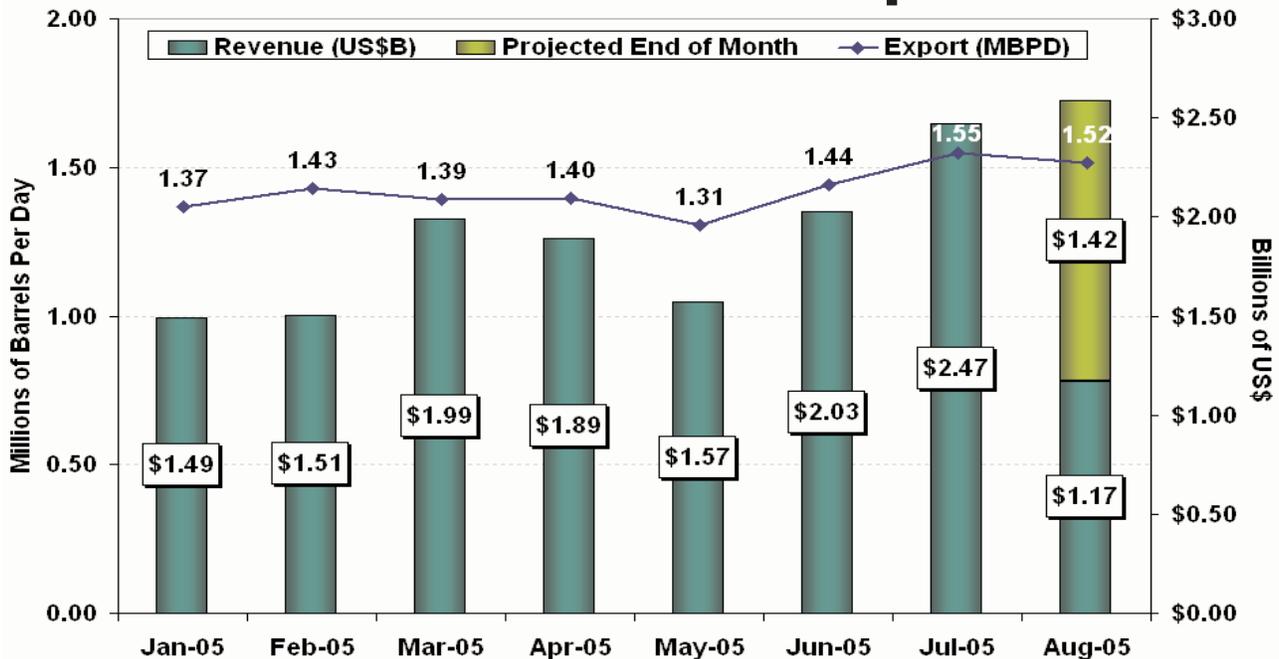
"Currently we've got 83 projects that have been submitted or currently working," West said. "Out of those, we have a variety of different types of projects. The majority of our projects right now [include] anywhere from 35 to 40 schools that are being rebuilt. We have a lot of water projects through three of our major cities and also sewage projects, which are probably the next highest big-money projects that we are working right now."

Krueger said he believes they are making progress with the people of Diyala Province.

"We get a lot of support from cities and even with a lot of the individual residents," he said. "We get a lot of positive feedback when we go out and do some of these projects and inspect them."

Part of the unit's job is to help local leaders learn how to develop their infrastructure and run operations on their own, Krueger said.

Oil Production Snapshot



- 2003 Revenue \$5.08 Billion
- 2004 Revenue \$17.01 Billion
- 2005 Revenue \$14.12 Billion (to Aug. 14, 2005)

Source: Department of State
Iraq Weekly Status Report Aug. 17, 2005

Sustainable Economic Development Conference summary

By Lt. Col. Jeffery Eck

Political Military Economic Department
Multi-National Force - Iraq

"Economic freedom is an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom."

Milton Friedman, Nobel Laureate, Economics, 1976

Twenty-seven percent of Iraq is arable farmland and historically has always employed a high percentage of the country's labor force. Today, after decades of infrastructure neglect, the agriculture sector employs and provides livelihoods for approximately 20 percent of that labor force. Production decreases during the past 10 to 15 years have been significant due to many policy distortions and inadequate technology upgrades. Incredibly, agriculture sector production could grow by as much as 200 percent and still not meet all of the domestic demand for agriculture products. U.S. Government experts, as well as the Iraqi Government, identify agriculture as a key sector to Iraq's development.

In an effort to address this underdeveloped economic sector, the U.S. Embassy, partnered with the Political Military Economic Directorate of Multi-National Force - Iraq, hosted the first in a regular series of strategic economic conferences aimed at developing sustainable economic strategies throughout Iraq. The conference series represents a joint effort between MNF-I, Coalition embassies and the Iraqi Government. This first conference, held Aug. 21-22 in the U.S. Embassy (Presidential Palace), concentrated on the agricultural sector. The conference featured a series of interactive program overviews from the Iraqi Minister of Water Resources, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Industry and Minerals, U.S. Agency for International Development, Britain's Department for International Development and Italy's Cooperazione Italiana. Dr. Barham Saleh, Iraqi Minister for Planning and Development, as well as Ms. Nasreen Mustafa Sadiq Barwari, Iraqi Minister of Municipalities and Public Works, both spoke at length with the assembled group, detailing their vision for economic development



Courtesy photo

Iraq's Minister of Industry and Minerals fields questions from military, aid agency and Department of State members during the Sustainable Economic Development Conference Aug. 22.

in Iraq. Dr. Barham Saleh stressed his satisfaction with the CERP program and noted that he is actively looking for the right mechanisms to reform the subsidy system in Iraq - a system that consumes roughly 50 percent of Iraq's annual budget. Additionally, he stressed the importance of building capacity through the continued effective use of the Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committees. Nasreen Mustafa Sadiq Barwar, in an impassioned presentation, stressed that the Coalition and Iraqi Government must sustain the investment we have made thus far in Iraq.

The conference concluded with a Coalition working group that detailed portions and solicited comments on the draft effects-based Economics Annex to the MNF-I Campaign Plan. Based on this session, the draft will be adjusted, incorporating specific feedback from the conference participants. Overall, this first conference helped lay the foundation for future economic conferences. The series will continue to pull together the right people and the right issues in an effort to effect change at this critical time in Iraq's economic development.

Word on the street



U.S. Army 1st Lt. Austin Leakes talks with an Iraqi store owner about his quality of life, government and his feelings about the U.S. military presence in Najaf, Iraq, Aug. 19. Leakes is with the 198th Armor Regiment, 155th Brigade Combat Team.

DoD photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jeromy K. Cross



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division

The Gulf Region Division (GRD), United States Army Corps of Engineers, provides quality, responsive, and full spectrum engineering services to Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) and Iraq in support of military and civil construction, and aggressively assist the Iraqi Government to assume full responsibility for national reconstruction. As of Aug. 20, 2,766 projects (with USAID) started with a program value of \$6.5B. Currently 1,087 projects are ongoing at a program value of

\$4.6B and 1,679 projects completed at a program value of \$1.9B. During August numerous Commanders Emergency Relief Program (CERP) projects continued to develop and are being scoped and prepared for contracting.

GRD has numerous projects ongoing in all sectors throughout Iraq. These include security and justice, public works and water, oil, buildings, health and education, transportation and communications and electricity.

Iraqi Reconstruction

Reconstruction projects as of August 2005

SECTORS	Starts	Complete
Border Posts	231	97
Points of Entry	9	4
Military Facilities	112	54
Police Facilities	333	184
Fire Facilities	89	51
Prisons / Courts	25	16
Misc. Facilities	19	13
Security & Justice Total	818	419
Water Treatment	208	128
Sewer Projects	33	24
Water Resource Projects	28	21
Misc. Facilities	23	20
Public Works & Water Total	292	193
Water Injection Pump Stations	8	6
LPG / LNG Plant Refurb	0	0
Dedicated Power	5	2
Misc. Facilities	21	5
Oil Total	34	13
Schools	806	694
Primary Healthcare Centers/Clinics	153	9
Hospitals	28	11
Public Buildings	67	59
Misc. Facilities	16	15
Buildings, Health & Education Total	1070	788
Village Roads	106	66
Expressways	2	1
Bridges	7	5
Airports (FAA Certification Ready)	9	2
Ports	5	2
Railroad Stations	96	64
Transportation Other	7	5
Postal Facilities	24	23
Communications	17	13
Transportation & Communications Total	273	181
Generation	21	18
Transmission	18	12
Distribution	139	63
Monitoring & Control	4	4
Electricity Total	182	97
USAID Total	123	1
Total Program	2669	1691



U.S. Corps of Engineers photo by Jim Gordon

The Kani-Koly School, outside of Dohok, northern Iraq, is a project that will require extensive plumbing and water-source (well) service upgrades.



Courtesy photo

A construction worker puts mortar on the outside walls of the Hamdan Police Station in Basrah, Iraq, July 27.



This week in Multi-National Corps - Iraq

Coalition operations: a week in review

Multi-National Division - Baghdad

Operation Thunder continued in Baghdad the week of Aug. 14.

Significant actions included the capture of 88 suspected terrorists (for a total of 345 since the operation started) and discovery of four caches of bomb-making material. This week's operations in Baghdad demonstrated an increased aggressiveness and initiative amongst the Iraqi Army and police forces in planning and executing complex independent and combined operations.

To date, Iraqi Army Soldiers have arrested over 170 suspects, including at least 30 specifically wanted for crimes against Iraq.

Residents of the Abu Ghraib district in Baghdad asked for help in creating a neighborhood watch program. This is a very positive sign of the residents' lack of support for the insurgency and a desire to take responsibility for their own security.

Operation Thunder makes strides toward normalcy, improved security operations and much greater control by Iraqi Forces — all supporting the Iraqi government and building toward an independent Iraq.

Multi-National Force - West

Operation Quick Strike in the Haditha Dam area ended last week. Significant developments included the capture of 21 terrorists, with 15 additional terrorists killed and the destruction of over 1400 artillery rounds near Musayyib. Strong security forces lead to greater success in governance. Economic improvements include a newly consistent 12 hours of electric power and running water.

Multi-National Force- West

Operation Guardian Sword continued in Anbar Province, focusing on Operation Quick Strike in the Haditha Dam area, which ended Aug. 16, and Operation Strategic Separation in the Musayyib area, which ended Thursday. Multi-National Force -West with Iraqi Security Forces continue offensive operations throughout Anbar Province to build a secure environment for the upcoming referendum and elections.

Significant accomplishments include the capture of two foreign fighters from Jordan, destruction of a suicide car bomb factory, and the discovery of a cache of 36 surface-to-air missiles.

Multi-National Force - Northwest

Highlights for the week include the initial operating capability of Combat Outpost Rawah, the continued deployment of the Iraqi Intervention Forces and the recovery of a weapons and explosives cache by 3rd Company, 3/1/1 Iraqi Intervention Force (IIF). The IIF have demonstrated improved initiative setting up independent traffic control points, moving into the town and conducting meetings with city leaders.

Border interdiction primarily seems to have affected smuggling of black market goods. Offensive operations resulted in at least five sui-

cide car bombs destroyed prior to detonation by Coalition Forces. Operation Sayaid continued with the capture of 82 insurgents, including one Sudanese and one Syrian foreign fighter, and 12 weapons caches.

Multi-National Division - North Central

A series of raids from Hawija to Balad resulted in the capture of three targeted individuals. The Kirkuk city council held a joint press conference with local leaders to announce they had come to an agreement and would move forward to help all the people of Kirkuk.

A series of raids resulted in the capture of an improvised explosive device (IED) instructor who also coordinates strategic planning and emplacement of IEDs. Also, Coalition Forces in Ad Dwar captured two terrorists suspected of IED attacks in the area.

Combined raids in Dali Abbas and the Gerinada district of Kirkuk resulted in the capture of 14 terrorists and computer media, including a Baath Party member with ties to other targeted individuals.

Multi-National Force - West

Tips from informants in the Iskandiriyah area led to the capture of seven terrorists responsible for IED and mortar attacks, and in Fallujah, a tip led 3/4/1 Iraqi Army to a weapons cache and three terror suspects. A tips line call led Coalition Forces to a man linked to suicide car bombs in Hit.

Combined operations led to the capture of 13 suspected terrorists southwest of Baghdad, two in Habbaniyah with a sack full of passports, and two terrorists in Fallujah wanted for coordinating insurgent activities.

Multi-National Force - Northwest

In Mosul, 3/21 Infantry captured Abu Sabhan, who is responsible for logistical support to anti-Iraqi forces in Mosul. Coalition ground and attack aviation forces foiled an indirect fire attack in the Saddam neighborhood, killing two insurgents and capturing two complete mortar systems.

Combined forces capture 11 anti-Iraqi forces, including two responsible for rocket-propelled grenade attacks in Mosul and two targeted individuals.

A combined operation in Mosul captured Abu Tayyba, who is associated with chemical agents, and 25 drums of unknown chemicals.

A follow-on operation uncovered 300 gallons of unknown chemicals, chemical manufacturing equipment and a close associate of a high-value insurgent. Soldiers captured a leader who preaches jihad north of Qayyarah.

Polish commander thanks Salvadoran contingent

Maj. Gen. Czerwinski, praised the contribution of El Salvador's Soldiers towards building better health education and transportation systems in Al Hashymiyah.



This week in Multi-National Force - West

Corpsman pounds village streets providing care

Story and photo by Cpl. Ken Melton
2nd Marine Division

HADITHA, Iraq — While patrolling through the streets of Iraq, Marines and Sailors often find themselves under the watchful eyes of the city's residents. One corpsman seems to receive more stares than anyone else.



Petty Officer 3rd Class Chan Vang, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regt., gives local children candy during a patrol.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Chan Vang is only 4 feet 11 inches tall. However, height does not interfere with his job as a "devil doc" with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment.

"I feel like I work twice as hard when it comes to patrolling," the Minneapolis, Minn., native said. "Along with the extra load I have to carry, I have to take extra steps to keep up, but it's my choice to be here and I don't mind."

Vang joined the Navy in 1998 with hopes of seeing the world and helping people along the way. He got his chance when he deployed to the hostile environment of Iraq's Al Anbar province in March 2005. He and other medical personnel have helped dozens of people including other Sailors, Iraqi civilians, Iraqi Soldiers, and Marines on numerous occasions.

One such occasion he vividly remembers occurred in May 2005 when with a squad with Mobile Assault Platoon-7. The unit suffered losses when insurgents used

a hospital as a refuge while they attacked the unit with small-arms fire and a suicide car bomb.

"It was really hard to be trying to save people who you knew on a personal level," he said. "I knew I had to be strong for them, and they knew I would do the best job I could do."

Vang was assigned to I Co. in July and began conducting patrols as part of a permanent military presence in the city of Hit. Though he is often frustrated by the enemy's cowardice, he is still happy to be here helping the Iraqi people.

As the missions continue, Vang knows his contributions are not overlooked and by helping the people of Iraq, they can form an organized and stable nation.

He has seen fallen comrades from both services and his job as a "devil doc" requires him to fight alongside them and try to save as many lives as he can.

"They treated me like another rifleman until someone got hurt or needed help and it was my time to shine as a corpsman," Vang said smiling. "I thank them for treating me like an equal, like a Marine, in spite of my size."

U.S. Marines, Iraqi Army: making a difference

By Cpl. Ken Melton
2nd Marine Division

HADITHA, Iraq — Soldiers with Iraqi Security Force (ISF) and Marines with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment conducted a patrol here interacting with the locals and meeting with key members of the community.

Lt. Col. Nooman J. Mohammed, commanding officer of the local ISF, and Capt. Kevin J. Klostermann, the executive officer with Company I, led their troops

through the city to identify community needs and disrupt insurgent activities.

"We stopped by a few businesses and talked to people as we passed by," said Klostermann, a 34-year-old Buffalo, N.Y., native. "We want the people to know that we are here to help keep the insurgents out of their city."

The Marines' and Soldiers' first stop during the patrol was at a nearby women's clinic.

The staff at the clinic discussed numerous problems including shortage of workers and medicines, lack of patients

due to fear of insurgents and poor utilities at the clinic.

Klostermann and Mohammed noted their concerns to bring them to the attention of members with 5th Civil Affairs Group.

"Apparently some of their medicines, including their controlled substances, were stolen by insurgents," he said. "And the poor condition of their city's water is the main cause for diseases, something that we will hopefully be able to help fix in the future."

The patrol continued into the busy city market where

Marines and Iraqi Soldiers handed out fliers and interacted with the local populace. The officers spoke with the business owners and purchased items at several stores as a sign that they also wanted to help their economy as well as protect them from insurgents.

"It's great that we have the ISF here with us," the 1995 University of Rochester graduate. "They get a better response from the people and when they see that we are here together it helps build trust in Multi-National Forces."



This week in Multi-National Division - Central South

Children return to rebuilt school in Abu Gharaq

By Multi-National Division Central - South

Education is a strong foundation of every society. It gives the possibilities to develop and to build a better future. That is why Multi-National Division - Central South (MND-CS) Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) projects are designated not only for electricity, potable water and other key infrastructure reconstruction, but they also help the Iraqi people develop an educational system.

Last week, MND-CS CIMIC finalized the next project. It was a rebuilding of the school in Abu Gharaq, west of Al Hillah. The school is designated for about 500 children, who will start a new school year soon.

Educational projects play an important role in MND-CS CIMIC activities. From the beginning of MND-CS staying in Iraq, our CIMIC realized 477 educational projects for over \$14 million. The



Courtesy photo

mission of the MND-CS CIMIC in Iraq is taking part in many activities concerning civil environment.

CIMIC supports Iraqi people in the rebuilding process. The most important issues are water, electricity, medical, educational and security infrastructure. To increase the economical development in Iraq CIMIC implements projects trying to employ as many Iraqis as possible in the provinces of Qadisiyah, Babil and Wasit.

Salvadorian rotation update

By Multi-National Division Central - South Public Affairs

A new rotation of the Salvadorian contingent started its duty in Multi-National Division - Central South, Iraq. It consists of 380 Soldiers, stationed in Al Hillah. Salvadorian Contingent mission in support of MND-CS is focused on civil military cooperation, humanitarian assistance, training and advising ISF.

The last rotation of Salvadorian Soldiers organ-

ized and conducted 85 projects to help Iraqi people. Projects included typical CIMIC operations, such as water supply and sewage systems, education, health care, public security and transportation. One of the biggest projects was building the water supply system in Al Hashymiyah. Due to Salvadorian activities, thousands of Iraqis received help. Salvadorian Soldiers assisted also Iraqi Army units in everyday military training.

Polish Army Maj. Gen. Piotr Czerwinski, MND-CS commanding general, thanked Salvadorian Soldiers who had finished their duty in Iraq for their tremendous activities and determination presented in the process to help Iraqi people.



Courtesy photo

Iraqi Army secures Iraq's future

The 8th Iraqi Army Division is leading the way in success stories for the Iraqi Army. With over 25 percent of all Iraq in its area of responsibility and two border regions to secure, it is safe to say these Soldiers stay very busy. The 8th Div. is projected to be the first Iraqi division to take over its own area of responsibility without Coalition Forces' assistance. This is an amazing feat considering the division just started up just over 18 months ago.

"In the beginning we had nothing — no Soldiers, no barracks, equipment or vehicles," said Maj. Gen. Farhood. "Now we have trained Soldiers and non-commissioned officers and are at about 75 percent completion on a new facility that will house our Soldiers and provide office space for the division headquarters. But most importantly, the Soldiers serving in the 8th Div. have received top-notch training and are now conducting their own patrols, checkpoints and operations."

The 8th Div. has even stood up its own Non-Commissioned Officer Academy in Al Kut, where Iraqi Soldiers now train others without the assistance of the Coalition Forces. This is a significant step in ensuring the Division will be able to develop and maintain a strong NCO corps. Currently, the academy graduates between 120 to 150 NCOs each year.

"The 8th Div. is growing day by day, and I am confident that by the end of next year the 8th Div. will be able to maintain the security and stability within the five provinces within our area of responsibility," said Farhood. He also said he would like to ask the Iraqi people to cooperate with the 8th Div. to become one hand in an effort to get rid of terrorism and insurgency, while spreading security and stability at the same time.



This week in Multi-National Division - Northeast

International friendship through tae kwon do

CAMP ZAYTUN, IRBIL, Iraq — Since July 9, instructors from the Zaytun Division here has been conducting five weeks of intensive tae kwon do master program training for 27 students. This tae kwan do program carefully begins to extend earlier than usual. So the program

will be instructed by expert masters who have professional tae kwan do licenses.

This program progresses for three hours per day under the expert master's demands and was designed how to learn the skills, understand the vocabulary and study the spirit of tae kwon do. Last week's training also included programming aimed at all trainees who would like to upgrade to earn black master designation.

Additionally, the Zaytun Div. gives the tae kwan do robes, \$70 (U.S.) compensation, \$50 dollars for traffic fees and \$3 dollars daily lunch fee for student's convenience.

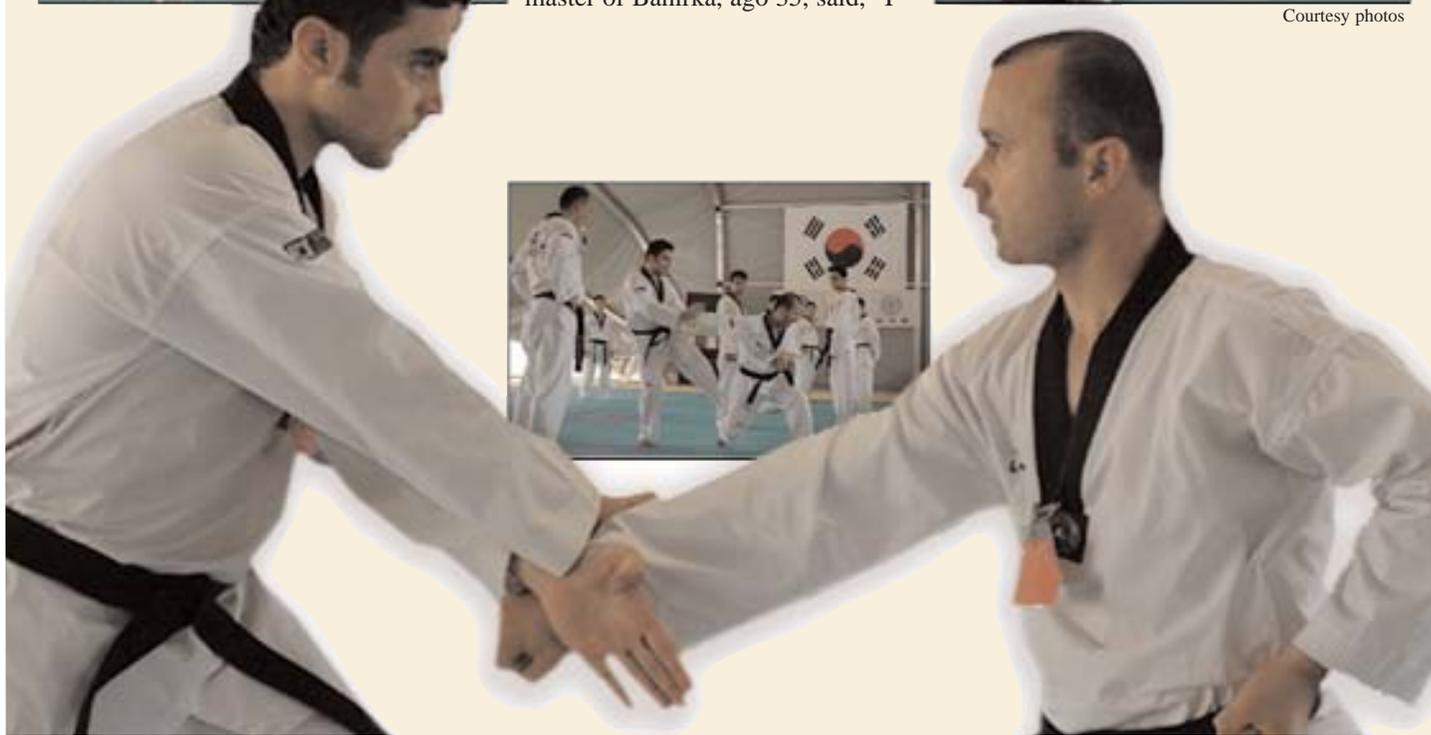
One of participants, Tara Hussain, master of Bahirka, ago 35, said, "I

want to learn the tae kwan do, so I visited the tae kwan do's studio at the Zaytun Division ... that will be more helpful for me to teach my students".

Moreover, the Zaytun Div. is trying to expand the tae kwan do program to all of Irbil for public relations.



Courtesy photos



U.S. Central Command commander visits Camp Zaytun

U.S. Central Command commander, Gen. John Abizaid, visited Camp Zaytun on Aug. 18 and encouraged the Zaytun troops who have executed the reconstructing missions in Irbil.

After an introduction and a brief of the present state of the division, the general said, "I thank the Zaytun Div. for your devotion to reconstruction of Iraq, and the Republic of Korea is one of the most friendly nations with U.S." In a meeting with 500 Zaytun Soldiers, he saluted them. Zaytun Soldiers then responded by a thunderous clapping of

hands and shoutings.

He visited the Vocational Training Center of the Camp Zaytun and said to local trainees, "I am very impressed with a view of the Zaytun officers training the local people. I expect a bright future of Iraq. ROK, U.S., and Coalition will continue to reconstruct the regions of Kurd."

He praised the Zaytun Soldiers for their dedication and said, "I could make sure that Zaytun Div. have respected the customs and cultures of Iraq and helped the local people."



This week in Multi-National Division - Baghdad

Infantrymen make a difference in Abu Ghraib district

Story and photo by Spc. Ricardo Branch
Task Force Baghdad Public Affairs

ABU GHRAIB, Iraq — The platoon of U.S. Soldiers donned their combat gear, climbed aboard Humvees and prepared to roll out for another day's duty in Baghdad.

This time, however, the Task Force Baghdad Soldiers were on a different kind of mission.

The Soldiers — from 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, attached to the 256th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division — were not out to fight terrorists, but to do something special by cleaning up a soccer field for the children in their sector of Abu Ghraib July 29.

"It's really sad when you see kids walk around barefoot playing soccer in a trash-filled lot," said Spc. Jake Butler of 2/130th Inf.

"[The Iraqi kids] don't have much and are always asking for things," said the Pekin, Ill., native. "We can't give them everything, but we'll do what we can to make them happy."

The desire to make a difference for the children prompted one member of the team, Cpl. Samuel Shehorn, of Mt. Carmel, Ill., to coordinate the effort to visit and set up a soccer field for the kids.

"Back at home, I have two girls who can go play soccer anytime," Shehorn said. "Over here, the older kids use the soccer

field while the younger ones play in a small trash-filled lot."

Bothered by the fact that small children played in a trash dump, Shehorn gathered soccer supplies, coordinated the construction of goals and planned with his company commander, Capt. Eric Kampwerth, to visit the small "soccer" lot along with his platoon.

The commander credits the soccer field cleanup as a success when Soldiers are permitted to go above their duty to achieve something.

"This is a fantastic example of what Soldiers are capable of doing if you allow them to," he said. "I can't say enough about these men. They've always done extremely well, and it's gratifying to see them and perform what they want to do."

Armed with shovels, rakes and trash bags, the Soldiers of 2/130th Inf. began the task of clearing years of neglect from the small lot.

Many of the infantrymen, some who volunteered on their day off, realized their goodwill gesture may be overlooked, but if their work brings happiness to even one child, then their effort will have been worth it.

"What we're doing is showing the kids we care," Shehorn said. "If the area looks good, the kids may get a little pride in their surroundings [and

keep the area up]."

After their two trailers were loaded with broken glass, stones and hundreds of pounds of trash, the infantrymen got out the soccer balls and played with the children.



Spc. Mike Campbell, 130th Inf., 256th BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., hands out toy and candy donations to children in Abu Ghraib, Iraq, July 29.

Iraqis protect Soldiers after car bomb

2nd Brigade Combat Team
Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Following a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack on Coalition Forces in Baghdad Aug. 6, residents of the Sumer Al Ghadier District took action — action that was a pleasant surprise to the Soldiers on the ground.

After the U.S. medics treated the wounded at the scene, local residents constructed a hasty barricade with trees, bricks, and anything else available, to further protect the Soldiers from additional danger.

"This is the first time that I can

remember where Iraqi civilians actually built a barrier to protect my Soldiers," said Lt. Col. Steven Merkel, commander of 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division. "The Soldiers are still talking about the helpful actions of the local community and have asked to go back to the neighborhood to thank those responsible."

Capt. David Ahl, 1-9 FA information operations officer, said, "It became very obvious that the Iraqi people are tired of terrorist activity. When I saw them putting up barricades to protect us after the VBIED exploded, I knew right then that the days of terrorist

activity are counting down fast."

The Baghdad citizens, so quick to lend a hand, not only helped to physically protect the Soldiers, but were also forthcoming with valuable information about the area, which led to the apprehension of a man suspected in involvement in a previous VBIED attack.

"The continued commitment of the Iraqi people to help their Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces demonstrates, more than ever, that they are growing increasingly intolerant of the violence brought on by the terrorists and more eager to play a positive role in the future of Iraq," Merkel said.



This week in Multi-National Division - North Central

Tikrit palace returned to Iraqi Army

Story and photo by Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DAGGER, Tikrit, Iraq — FOB Dagger was officially handed over to the 4th Iraqi Army Division by the 1st Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Liberty, during a ceremony here Aug. 14.

“This is actually a pretty historic event,” said Maj. Robert M. Butts, executive officer for the Brigade Troops Battalion. “This FOB was actually first set up by the 4th Infantry Division. They set up their base of operations here after Operation Iraqi Freedom I. This is the same place elements of the 4th ID were stationed when they caught Saddam Hussein. It’s one of Saddam’s palaces being given back to the Iraqi people.”

One Iraqi Soldier said this would help give security to his people.

“We are proud to take this step toward taking control of the security of our country,” said an Iraqi officer who wished to remain anonymous. “We will prove we are capable of this mission.”



Iraqi Soldiers salute their national flag during a transfer of ownership ceremony at FOB Dagger Aug. 14.

Before handing over FOB Dagger, Soldiers of 1st BCT coordinated moving Coalition troops out and moving the Iraqi Soldiers onto the installation. It turned out to be a big project, and both sides ran into hurdles during the move, Butts said.

“The biggest problem has been communications with the Iraqis,” he said. “They are a division coming from a long way away, and we are a brigade that hasn’t really had much interaction with them. We had to work through their military transition team to conduct operations. We also had a problem trying to do too many things at once. But it actually went a lot smoother than I thought it would.”

The 1st BCT commander said the ceremony showed the Coalition’s dedication to Iraq’s future.

“The passing of this facility is a simple but solemn ceremony that vividly demonstrates the Coalition’s and the Iraqi Army’s commitment to the future of Iraq,” said Col. Mark E. McKnight, 1st BCT commander. “This is the second base we’ve turned over in about three weeks. We will turn over ... two more bases before the New Year. It’s a very good day, as we see more Iraqi flags flying over the bases.”

Iraqi Army trains its future leaders

Task Force Liberty Public Affairs

TIKRIT, Iraq – More than 150 Iraqi Soldiers graduated from the Primary Leadership Development Course (PLDC) in a commencement ceremony at the 4th Iraqi Army Training Academy here Aug. 15.

The Soldiers, who were nominated by their units to take the course, underwent training at the academy ranging from basic map reading and weapons proficiency to leading physical training formations, human rights, drill and ceremony, military courtesies and marching.

The focus of the course was for the Soldiers “to show what they already know, and for us to hone their skills into squad and platoon leaders for their units,” said academy trainer Staff Sgt. Sean Knudsen.

“This was a good group of Soldiers,” Knudsen said. “Each class has more experience and development. The Iraqi Army is making some positive headway.”

Some of that headway can be seen in the cadre of the academy itself. Once completely run by Coalition Forces, it is now “almost entirely Iraqi run,” according to Master Sgt. Chris Sharpe, the academy’s senior drill instructor.

“I hate to say it, but there’s really not a whole heck of a lot for us to do,” said Sharpe. “We check up on them a couple of times during the day, but they’re running this academy, almost 100 percent.”

Sharpe made these remarks some weeks ago, following the graduation of 193 Iraqi police officers from the cohort training class here. The recent PLDC graduates were visibly elated following the commencement

ceremonies, and some spoke about their futures and the future of Iraq.

“I hope to help civilians and keep my country safe,” said Kurdish Sgt. Achmed Kareem Hiyas. “The only flag to us is the Iraqi flag. The important thing to remember is that there is no difference between any of us — Kurds, Sunni, Shia, Turkomen or Arab.”

“I am honored to graduate today,” said Sgt. Omar Kaleefa Ishmael. “I was with the old army under Saddam Hussein. What I see now is different. This is progress.”

Sgt. Ali Rasheed Hamid said he is proud to be Iraqi and an Iraqi Soldier. Democracy means unity, he added.

“We want democracy,” he said. “With democracy, our rights will be saved. Under democracy, all the lakes flow into one river.”

A look at Iraqi progress



Courtesy photo

From left, a male Iraqi contractor and Hana Esmail, a contract employee and team leader with Gulf Region South, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, discuss the progress of the Basra City courthouse with an USACE representative.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Suzanne M. Day.

Iraqi Army Soldiers from the 2nd Bn., 2nd Iraqi Army Bde., train with their personnel carriers at the Diyala Regional Training Facility at FOB Normandy.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Suzanne M. Day.

Iraqi Army Soldiers from the 2nd Bn., 2nd Iraqi Army Bde., hold their company colors during a transfer of authority ceremony at Forward Operating Base Normandy, Iraq, Aug. 1.



Photo by Chief Photographer's Mate Edward G. Martens.

Iraqi Army Soldiers from the 2nd Bn., 4th Bde., 8th Div., participate in a "Shoot House" live fire weapons training exercise at FOB Kalsu, Iskandariyah, Iraq.

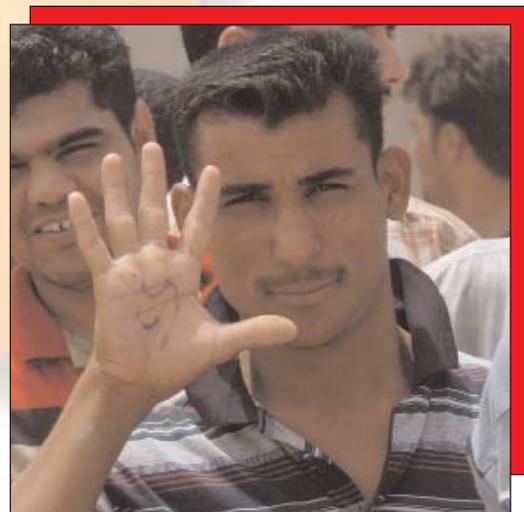


Photo by Chief Petty Officer Edward G. Martens

An Iraqi citizen shows his participation number as he prepares to receive his certificate of acceptance after completing the initial screening process to go to the Iraqi Police Training Academy in Iskandariya, Iraq.