



THIS WEEK IN IRAQ



Vol. 1, No. 16

Published by Multi-National Force - Iraq

November 30, 2005



U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Dallas Walker

The honorable Hamad Hamood Shekti, governor of Salah Ad Din Province, walks with Maj. Gen. Thomas Turner, commander, 101st Airborne Div. and TF Band of Brothers, before the transfer ceremony at FOB Danger.

Saddam's Palace in Tikrit turned over to the Iraqis

Story by Pfc. Cassandra Groce
133rd Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

TIKRIT — The Iraqi government took control of Saddam Hussein's palace complex from U.S. and Coalition forces in a historic ceremony on Nov. 22 in Tikrit.

Four different U.S. Army units have used the complex as a forward operating base since 2003.

"Now it is the property of the Iraqi peo-

ple," said Hamad Hamood Shekti, governor of the Salah Ad Din territory. "Tourists will be allowed to see the palaces."

Col. Mark McKnight, commander of 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, handed the "key to the city" to Shekti during the ceremony, signifying the release of U.S. control.

"The passing of this facility is a simple ceremony that vividly demonstrates the continuing progress being made by the Iraqi government and their people,"

See *PALACE*, Page 4

Top Stories

New batch of Inspectors General graduate, Page 2

Treating Iraqi people with goodwill, Page 3

Iraqi Police Academy adds new training, Page 4

Doctors give baby Tabitha a new lease on life, Page 5

Taking home a souvenir above all others, Page 7

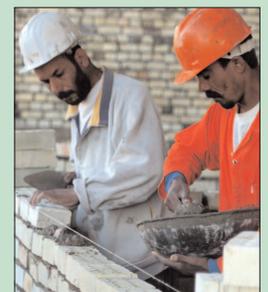
Coalition, Iraqi Forces' operations review, Page 8

Marines drop Steel Curtain on the border, Page 9

Tip from Iraqi helps uncover weapons cache, Page 10

A little bit of Nashville in Tikrit, Page 11

Building a future in Iraq, Page 12



CG's Weekly Message ...

By Gen. George W. Casey Jr.
Multi-National Force - Iraq
Commanding General

Today marks the end of Central Command's annual Coalition conference. The Coalition conference is important for many reasons, not the least of which is to lay out future requirements and maintain the momentum we have achieved in 2005. As of Nov. 1, there were 63 Coalition partners involved with Iraq, 28 of those have contributed troops. Coalition partners provide many important items to the fight: intelligence exchange, basing, troops, and financial or equipment donations. Everyone plays a vital role and none is more important than the other. All contribute to making Iraq a state at peace with its neighbors and an ally in the war on terror.

If you look at the year in review, quite a lot has transpired. The Jan. 30 election was an overwhelming success for the people of Iraq. More than 8 million people went to the polls to elect the Iraqi Transitional Government. Iraqi security operations, with Coalition support, denied insurgents the initiative, preventing them from causing Election Day violence.

Again, with the Constitutional Referendum last month despite numerous insurgent threats, refer-

endum day violence was actually down and more than 9 million people voted.

Through it all, Coalition members and their Iraqi Security Force partners conducted counter insurgency operations nationwide. Effective operations have driven insurgents out of areas such as Tal Afar, Fallujah and al-Qaim while Iraqi stay-behind forces deny safe havens and promote security.



Gen. George W. Casey Jr.

Next is the national election on Dec. 15. The Coalition will support the ISF in allowing maximum participation by Iraqi citizens to ensure a free, safe and fair electoral process.

However, it is not over after the election. Lots of hard work remains in the areas of security, governance and economic development, where Coalition support is more crucial than ever. Following the election, the Coalition must assist in swiftly establishing the institutions which underpin successful government and provide essential services. Borders must be secure, free from the destabilizing effects of foreign terrorists and domestic insurgents and Iraq needs assistance in rebuilding the economy. A robust economy will provide the foundation for success.

For all of these reasons Coalition support is vital to the success of Iraq and why we must maintain the momentum into 2006.

The search is over with new batch of IGs

Story by Senior Airman Mark Woodbury
Multi-National Security Transition Command
- Iraq, Public Affairs Office

BAGHDAD — The first Iraqi Inspectors General class of more than 60 people graduated in the International Zone's Al Rasheed Hotel, Nov 24.

The two-week course prepared officials from within the Ministries of Defense and Interior for future roles as IGs within their ministries.

The role of the IG is to track the status of each unit, to investigate any complaints sent to them about the units and to report this information to the heads of their respective ministry.

The course highlighted three basic training modules within the IG career field: inspections, assistance and human rights.

The inspections module familiarized students with general IG preparedness, conduct, and what constitutes a complete and effective inspection.

The assistance module familiarized students with general action processes for resolving official complaints while the human rights module familiarized the students with their responsibilities.

"The most important thing I learned through this course was the concept of human rights," said Iraqi Brig. Gen. Abdulkareem of the Ministry of Defense. "This is the type of information we need to embrace as a people to build a strong and unified Iraq."

For another student, the concept of an IG inspection being used as a tool to make the group better was the most valuable information learned in the course.

The Iraqis saw inspections as a way to find fault, said Riyadh, a Ministry of Defense marine engineer. "To understand that an inspection is a tool to improve the situation within the unit, is a whole new concept for many of us here."

The hope of those who organized the course is to continue with a series of IG courses held periodically throughout the year. The courses will be designed to build and reinforce ideas taught in the first course.

MNF-I Commanding General
Gen. George W. Casey Jr.

**Combined Press
Information Center Director**
Lt. Col. Barry A. Johnson
barry.johnson@iraq.centcom.mil

Command Information Chief
Capt. Bradford E. Leighton
bradford.leighton@iraq.centcom.mil



Editor.....Spc. David J. Claffey
david.claffey@iraq.centcom.mil
Assistant Editor.....Spc. Richard L. Rzepka
richard.rzepka@iraq.centcom.mil
Command Information NCOIC.....Sgt. Jeffery M. Lowry
jeff.lowry@iraq.centcom.mil

This Week in Iraq is an authorized publication produced by Multi-National Force - Iraq. Contents are not the official views of the U.S. Government or DoD. The editorial content is the responsibility of the Public Affairs Office of the Multi-National Force - Iraq. Questions and comments should be directed to the editor at MNFInewsletter@iraq.centcom.mil.

Treating Saba Al Bor with goodwill

Story by Sgt. Matthew Wester
3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division
Public Affairs Office

SABA AL BOR — A group of humvees barreled down a dusty road in Saba Al Bor, a bustling Iraqi town of 90,000 people northwest of Baghdad.

The Soldiers in the humvees weren't entering the city for combat, but rather to link up with a group of Iraqi Army troops and set up an impromptu clinic for the town's residents. It's all part of a larger program of partnering with the Iraqi government and security forces to improve life in this corner of Iraq.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Kevin Bromley

Army Spc. Gregory Dent, a medic assigned to 3rd Bde., 1st Armored Div., examines an Iraqi girl in Saba Al Bor. Medical personnel treated nearly 300 patients with various ailments in about four hours.

Members of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division from Camp Taji, along with Iraqi Soldiers from the 2nd Mechanized Battalion, 1st Mechanized Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division and supporting units, set up the clinic in Saba Al Bor Primary School. There Army medical professionals treated more than 300 patients.

"We bring (the residents) in and try to treat as many as we can for any acute medical ailments that they have," said Army Capt. (Dr.) Daniel Bauer, a surgeon for 3rd Brigade. "We saw a lot of colds and we saw a few people with chronic medical problems like back pain and joint aches."

The medics and doctors brought several large boxes of medicine with them and prescribed the proper medications for patients on the spot.

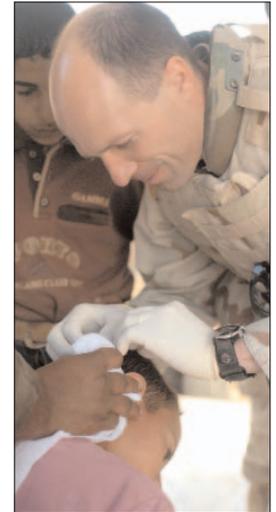
Hundreds of people lined up outside the school and made their way inside the facility for treatment in the building's freshly painted breezeway.

U.S. and Iraqi troops worked together to secure the site during the medical mission. Iraqi Army Soldiers helped with crowd control both inside and outside the building.

In the school, Bauer and the other medical personnel continued to see patient after patient, trying to alleviate some of their aches and pains.

He said the event went well, but hopes to build a trend toward Iraqi doctors caring for their own people in permanent clinics.

"We're working with civil affairs to help create and fix up several clinics in the area," Bauer said. "Once we get those clinics fixed up and complete, the Iraqis will be able to work a little bit more independently with their own medical supplies, seeing their patients on their own, and being able to handle more of these chronic problems themselves."



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Matthew Wester

Army Maj. (Dr.) Troy Denunzio, field surgeon for 2nd Bn., 70th Armor Reg., 3rd Bde., 1st Armored Div., checks a patient with a fungal infection.

New Najaf stations a source of pride for police

Story and photo by Denise Calabria
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Gulf Region Division

NAJAF — Nestled between a bustling city thoroughfare and a cheerful, all-girl elementary school stand two recently renovated Iraqi police stations. These facilities provide more than 250 Iraqi police a safer base to serve and protect Najaf citizens, and for the first time in their careers, the means to do so with pride.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division follows a two-pronged strategy in carrying out the Iraq reconstruction effort.

GRD is working large-scale capital projects such as power plants, water treatment plants, and oil infrastructure facilities. These endeavors are

expensive, take longer to build, and often are not seen by many Iraqis.

However, servicemembers, Army civilians, and Iraqi national employees of the GRD also are working small-scale, essential service projects such as schools, clinics, police stations, local power and water distribution facilities that are much less expensive to build, but more visible to the Iraqi people.

On a visit to Najaf, Col. Richard Stevens, GRD Deputy Commander, toured the two police stations to meet with the police officers.

"This station is a prime example of Iraqi security forces having the facilities to increasingly take the lead in transferring security responsibilities to civil authority," said Stevens.



Iraqi police assigned to the newly modernized Najaf police station show their approval.

Iraqi Police Academy adds new training

Story by Sgt. Lorie Jewell

Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq
Public Affairs Office

BAGHDAD — As the latest class of Iraqi Special Police Commandos begins six weeks of military-style training at the Special Police Forces Academy, instructors are expanding the curriculum to include classes on law, ethics and human rights.

In the classes, students learn about the Geneva Convention and what Islamic religion has to say about human rights, said an Iraqi captain who teaches the course. He asked not to be named for security reasons. The course also covers examples of right and wrong from the current events and history of Iraq and other countries.

“One of the most important things we teach is the relationship between cops and civilians,” the captain said through an interpreter. “It’s a complicated relationship. All over the world there are people who hate the cops. We want students to think about how to build friendly relationships.”

Since the first class of commandos graduated in June, three advanced classes of officers and two basic classes have rotated through the training. The law, ethics and human rights curriculum was first introduced in the last officer course, but is being taught for the first time in the current basic course.

Having a good relationship with the public is vital in the fight to stamp out terrorists.

“They’re learning that by appeasing the public, they can get more information that will help them get more bad guys,” said Army Sgt. 1st Class Carl Paris, who helped develop the Academy earlier this year as a member of “Team Commando,” a group of civilian and military advisers led by Army Col. James Coffman and Army Lt. Col. Martin Spann.

Iraqi leaders and Coalition advisers are encouraged by the progress the Academy has made since it started in May. The first class of 97 commandos was taught largely by civilian and military advisers. The bulk of that graduating class now makes up the teaching staff.

“For the most part, 95 percent or so, they’re running it on their own,” said a civilian adviser who asked not to be named. “We’re mainly just helping with logistics. They’ve really come a long way.”

Palace

from page 1

McKnight said. “Two years ago, Coalition forces fought to rid this nation of an oppressive regime. Since that time, Coalition forces ... have resided on FOB Danger, working alongside Iraqis to protect the four provinces of north central Iraq.”

Although 28 other Coalition bases have been turned over to the people of Iraq, the Tikrit palace complex is the most significant transition. The complex is on more than 1,000 acres of land along the Tigris River. There are 136 buildings on the property, with a combined 1.5 million square feet of administrative and living space.

The province was and will stay “a symbol of national unity and brotherhood in Iraq” Shekti said.

“[Today], we celebrate the transfer of the presidential palaces to the patriotic Iraqi hands, signifying the many aspirations and goals of the great citizens of the Salah Ad Din province,” Shekti said.

Shekti said he looks forward to Iraq’s inde-

pendence, when all multinational forces are able to leave Iraq, and wants to prove the people of Iraq can manage their issues independently.

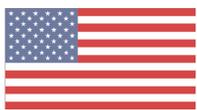


U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Dallas Walker

Abdullah Hussein, deputy governor of Salah Ad Din Province, raises the Iraqi flag in a symbolic moment in history as the people of Iraq took control of FOB Danger in Tikrit.

The completion of a fire station in Khan Bani Sa'ad, Diyala Province, will increase fire security, fire fighting capability, and serve as a training facility for firefighters.

Work is complete on the Ninewa Road Segment 6 project that gives villagers better access to Mosul, a route used every day by the local population. The \$2.3 million project paved about 14.3 miles of unimproved roads through the rolling terrain in rural Sinjar village. An average of 10 Iraqi workers were employed on the site daily.



Heroes of the Week

Man's best friend keeps Camp Victory safe

Story and photo by
Pfc. Joshua R. Ford
Multi-National Corps - Iraq
Public Affairs Office

CAMP VICTORY — Servicemembers from the Air Force, Army and Navy are protecting Camp Victory's entry control points, not with weapons, but with their sense of smell.

Eighteen K-9s and their handlers attached to XVIII Airborne Corps, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, are on the job. The dogs sniff out explosives and identify car bombs, stopping terrorists before they can get onto Camp Victory.

"There are several types of explosive materials we are looking for out there," said Army Sgt. William Brown, explosive dog handler, HHC, XVIII Abn. Corps. These explosive materials include C-4, dynamite and the not-so-common ingredients of other explosives.

The Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen train their dogs by conducting mock bomb sweeps with live explosives or taking them

through a basic obedience course the handlers built.

"Our main reason for the basic obedience course is to challenge the dogs with unfamiliar surroundings, like having to jump through a window or run on narrow surfaces," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Leon Gray, explosive dog handler, HHC, XVIII Abn. Corps. "The course helps the dogs negotiate unusual surroundings."

Since the handlers arrived in Iraq, they have learned a lot about each service's method of training K-9s.

"Even though all the dogs have gone to the same school, each service has their own way of training the dogs and different ways of keeping records," Gray said.

The dogs perform two main jobs.

"There are detection dogs and patrol



Air Force Tech Sgt. Leon Gray, explosive dog handler, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, XVIII Airborne Corps, runs his dog Blesk through an obstacle course at Camp Victory.

dogs," said Army Spc. Chris Tillman, explosive dog handler, HHC, XVIII Abn. Corps. Detection dogs are trained to sniff out illegal substances and explosive materials where patrol dogs are trained to track and attack the enemy.

Doctors give baby Tabitha a new lease on life

Story and photo by
Sgt. 1st Class Carolanne Diggs
Multi-National Force - Iraq
Public Affairs Office

ABU GHRAIB — Four-month-old Tabark Abdul Rahman, known as Tabitha to the Abu Ghraib medical staff, was given a grim prognosis on life.

When she arrived at the Abu Ghraib hospital she was malnourished, dehydrated, in renal (kidney) distress, was suffering from diarrhea and had a bad cough. X-rays showed she had pneumonia. After two months in and out of Baghdad Children's Hospital, Iraqi doctors sent her home to die.

Tabitha's father, Abdul Rahman, couldn't accept that his 4-month-old daughter was going to die, so he

approached Coalition Forces for help.

Rahman, a translator with the 306th Military Police Battalion, and a Soldier approached Maj. (Dr.) Brad Wenstrup, chief of surgery, asked if he could look at his ill daughter. He presented lab work and a hand-written summary of the child's condition from a doctor at BCH.

Wenstrup told Abdul that the military hospital, designed to provide medical care to detainees and the Soldiers in the area, ordinarily did not treat civilians unless they have been injured by Coalition Forces, but he

would see what he could do.

Task Force 344 does not have a pediatrician on staff. They mostly deal with trauma patients and day-to-day clinical services, so they made some calls. Wenstrup called together several doctors in the hospital, including Dr. Robert Natoaloni, family medicine, whose wife is a pediatrician in Long Island, N.Y. Natoaloni called his wife on the telephone and held the child up so that she could hear the cough over the phone. Based on tests and the phone consultation, a tentative diagnosis of the child was made.

Tabitha was treated for pneumonia. When she was released, she was already gaining back weight and was alert and active.



Tabark Abdul Rahman recovers at the Abu Ghraib medical facility, after being treated for pneumonia.

Projects planned or started since Sep. 28 (\$6 million)

- 5 border posts - \$1.36 million
- 4 substations - \$4 million
- 1 water tower - \$175,000
- 1 water treatment plant - \$232,000
- 1 school project - \$225,000

CERP (Commander Emergency Response Program)

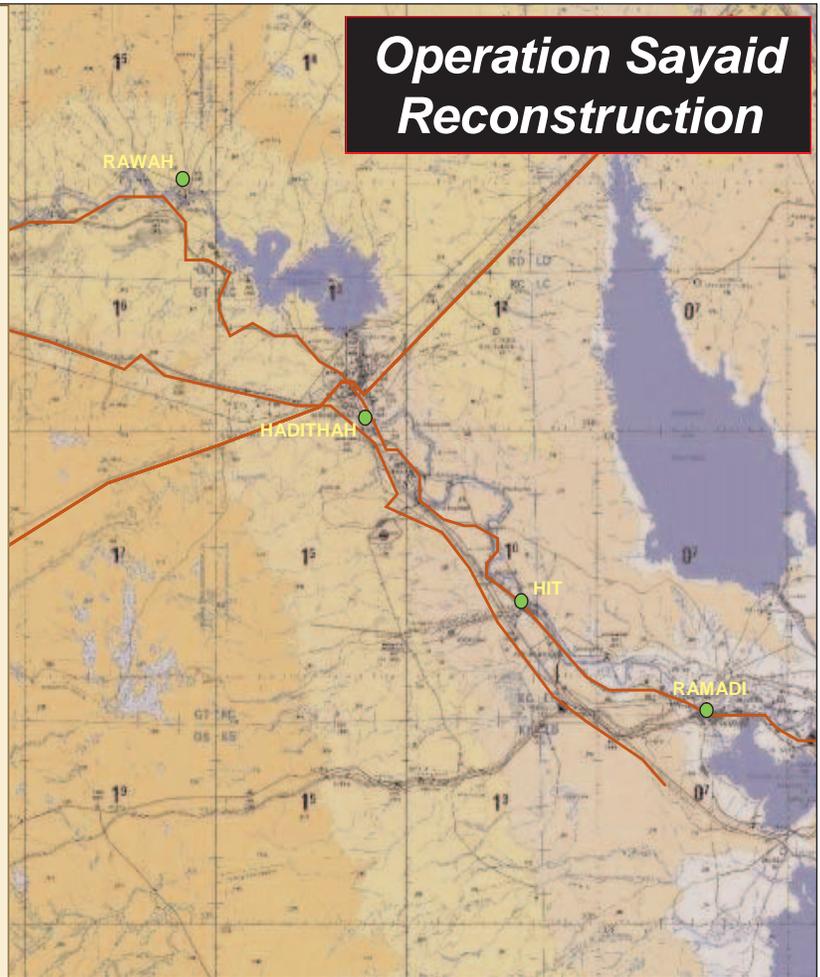
Active or ongoing (\$11.2 million)

- Health - \$3.8 million
- Electricity - \$174,000
- Water - \$875,000
- Education - \$2.6 million
- Transportation - \$572,000
- Agriculture - \$16,000

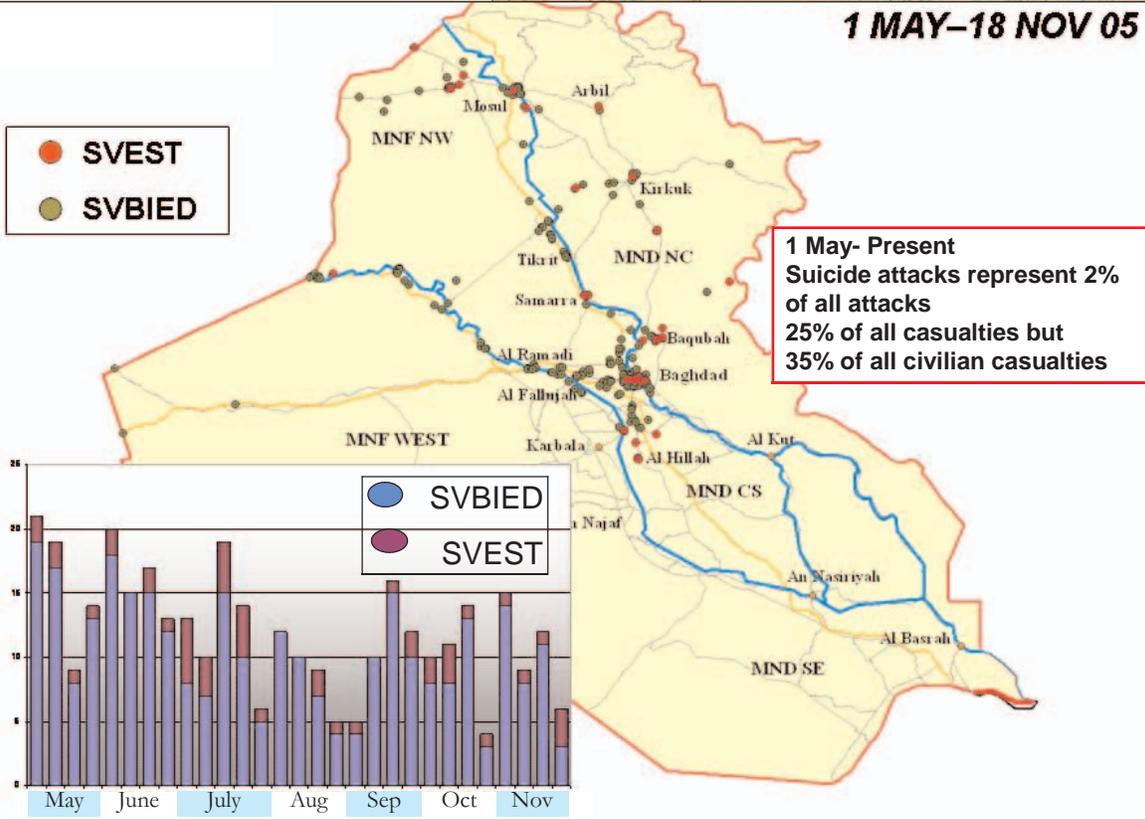
IRRF (Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund)

active or ongoing (\$22.3 million)

- Health - \$1.98 million
- Education - \$6.15 million
- Water - \$2.26 million
- Fire Stations - \$142,000
- Electricity - \$11.75 million



1 MAY-18 NOV 05



Taking home a souvenir above all others



Story and photo by
Sgt. Richard W. Way
366th Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

FOB COURAGE — A rock, handful of sand, Iraqi money and pictures are some of the items that Soldiers and civilians take home as a souvenir of their trip to Iraq.

Of all these items that make the trip home to the United States, one is sure to be treasured for years to come, proudly passed from generation to generation. Old glory has quickly become a popular item among Soldiers stationed at Forward Operating Base Courage.

Dedicating the star-spangled banner at the base began in 2004, when the unit of a fallen Soldier requested the embassy fly a flag they could send to the Soldiers family in remembrance of their comrade. Now, flags are being

dedicated to family members, friends, schools, former employers and others.

Sgt. 1st Class Jaime Barrientos, battalion construction supervisor for the 94th Engineers at FOB Courage is attached to the U.S. Embassy economic development office. Barrientos is also the flag detail, raising and lowering the colors every day since January. He took on the roll without hesitation and said it is a worthwhile project.

“It seems like it was something good for the Soldiers,” said Barrientos. “It does not cost any money and they really were looking forward to their certificate with the flag. It has a lot of meaning for the Soldiers and especially for their families.”

During he first few months of the project, about 10 flags were dedicated a month.

“The pace picked up around April,” said Barrientos. “We have been doing around 80 to 120 flags a month.”

Sgt. 1st Class Jaime Barrientos raises the American Flag above the U.S. Embassy on FOB Courage.

Patrol foils IED terrorists

Task Force Baghdad Soldiers stopped terrorists from placing improvised explosive devices on a road south of Baghdad on Nov. 26.

Soldiers from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division saw two Iraqis digging holes near the site of an earlier IED attack. Attack aviation helicopters were called in to look closer and confirmed the men placing explosives.

Seeing the aircraft, the men dove into a ditch to hide, but the helicopters were still able to engage the terrorists, killing one and injuring the other.

While clearing the area, Soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment came across the IED which had a detonation cord running up the road. An explosive ordnance disposal team was called to the site and conducted a controlled detonation of the IED.

Iraqi overwatch

A resident from the Tissa Nissan area of east Baghdad flagged down a patrol from the Iraqi Public Order Brigade on Nov. 27, and told them of a possible roadside bomb.

U.S. Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 64th Armor responded, providing security and keeping civilian traffic at a safe distance from the IED until an explosive ordnance disposal team arrived.

“It’s great to have the Iraqi and U.S. Forces working together to secure Iraq,” said Maj. David Fivecoat, operations officer for 1/64th Armor.

The roadside bomb consisted of two 82 mm and one 60 mm mortar rounds with an electronic detonating device.

More than 60,000 residents in the village of Tamurat and Iraqi military personnel from Al-Kasik Military Training Base have more reliable drinking water with repairs complete on 16.7 miles of pipe and a water compact unit at Aski Mosul.

Work is complete on an institute for educators. The \$1 million Institute of Prep Teachers in the Hit District, Al Anbar Governorate, provides 22 classrooms for about 600 students studying to become Iraq's future teachers. Each classroom seats 25 to 30 students. An average of 45 Iraqi workers were employed on the project daily.



Coalition, Iraqi Security Forces' Operations Review



By Staff Sgt. Julie Nicolov
Multi-National Corps - Iraq
Public Affairs

Coalition Soldiers are finding they can depend more heavily on the Iraqi Army for things that just two years ago would have been impossible. Continuous training between the Iraqi and American Soldiers has led to increased independence, showing the world that the Iraqi Army is close to standing on its own.

Soldiers with 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, 3rd Infantry Division in Balad, come in daily contact with their counterparts in the Iraqi Army and can see vast improvement from when they first arrived in country 10 months ago.

"When we first got here, they needed equipment, uniforms, training ... but they've really come a long way," said Sgt. Rick McNamara, a civil affairs Soldier at



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Andy Dunaway

U.S. Army Soldiers from 1st Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 327 Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne, scan an area before linking up with the Iraqi Army to conduct a joint foot patrol through Shumait.

Forward Operating Base Paliwoda in Balad.

Training the new Iraqi Army along lines similar to the U.S. Army was a priority for Coalition forces. The old Iraqi Army had been organized in the antiquated Soviet-style organization that lacked a strong group of noncommissioned officers.

"You were either an officer or enlisted. For the officers, their leadership style was very different from what we are accustomed to," said Capt. Eric Haynes, military transition team leader, whose mission is to train and equip the new Iraqi Army.

Iraqi Soldiers on Paliwoda work closely with their U.S. counterparts in the first aid station, tactical operations center, motor pool, and the Joint Coordination Center.

The Iraqi troops have also taken the lead on patrols in the Baqubah area, preparing to take over security from 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment.

"They will do the clearing and we're there in case they need any support," said Sgt. 1st Class Richard Bryant, platoon sergeant.

During patrols, Iraqi troops are matched with American Soldiers of similar grades.

"This allows them to work together and

continue the training from the Soldier level to the senior leadership level," said Capt. Pat Moffett, commander, Battery A, 1/10th Field Artillery.

Moffett has seen the progress with the Iraqis first hand.

"When we first got here, we did a lot of individual operations," Moffett said. "In the last five to six months, [the Iraqi Army] has been conducting their own operations. In some cases, they've actually requested us to stay out of the way."

The artillery Soldiers recently conducted a

joint patrol with the IA, clearing a palm grove in search of terrorists and weapons caches. The mission allowed the 1/10th Field Artillery leaders time to evaluate the performance of the Iraqi Army.

Although nothing turned up during the patrol, the mission was considered a success, Moffett said. "We didn't find any caches, but the Iraqi Army moved well."

The joint patrol between the Soldiers of two different nations was a step toward giving the Iraqis full responsibility in the Baquba area, Moffett said.

Iraqi Soldiers in the Tikrit area are also taking the lead from coalition forces in security measures.

A vehicle-borne improvised explosive device was detonated in Cataseea, just north of Tikrit, on Nov. 13. Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment responded, only to find the IA Soldiers had the situation under control.

Capt. Sam Donnelly, commander of Company A, 2/7th Inf., said the Iraqi Army has come a long way during the last few months working with their American counterparts.

See *OPERATIONS*, next page

MNF-I Operations Summary: Nov. 19 to 15



Courtesy photo

Combined operations: 271
IEDs found and cleared: 175
anti-Iraqi forces detained: 282
foreign fighters captured
or killed: 13
Weapons caches found
and cleared: 72

Marines drop Steel Curtain on the border

Story and photos
by Cpl. Micah Snead
II Marine Division (FWD)

HUSAYBAH — The Marines of 3rd Platoon, Company L, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, pushed through buildings, streets and the constant threat of improvised explosive devices and enemy attacks to bring stability and security to two Iraqi border towns in western Al Anbar province.

The platoon took part in Operation Al Hajip Elfulathi (Steel Curtain) in the Euphrates River Valley cities of Husaybah and Karabilah, along with more than 2,000 Marines, Sailors and Soldiers from Regimental Combat Team 2 and 1,000 Iraqi Army Soldiers.

“Our mission (was) to clear and search everything we came across,” said 2nd Lt. William J. Milana, 3rd Platoon commander. “We moved in coordination with every other unit through the cities and conducted detailed searches as we went.”



Marines from Company L, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, engage in a rooftop firefight during Operation Steel Curtain.

Operations

from previous page

“The people here have really toughened up a lot,” he said. “The Iraqi Army now takes the lead in situations like this and we just get situational awareness. A VBIED is not able to stop the whole day like it use to.”

“They’re saving lives,” said 1st Lt. James Bithorn, 5/7th Inf., platoon leader. “U.S. lives, Coalition lives. We’ve seen an outpouring of civilians coming forward with information, wanting to

The goal of the operation was to restore security along Iraq’s border with Syria and to destroy the Al Qaeda in Iraq network operating in the region.

“Up until this point, we haven’t been able to go into the city,” said Lance Cpl. Travis W. Garrett, a 3rd Platoon rifleman. “This is our chance to pay back the people who’ve been taking shots at us whenever they get a chance. Now, they won’t be able to shoot and run.”

With gunfire, mortar blasts and detonations ringing out across the city, the platoon swept through by day and rested at night. In addition to being the platoon’s first combat operation since clearing the city of Sadah in October,

Steel Curtain was an opportunity to get to know their Iraqi counterparts. A four-man fire team of Iraqi Army Soldiers was attached to each squad in the platoon and it didn’t take long for the Marines and Iraqis to bond.

“I was very impressed with them, personally and professionally,” said Sgt. Sean T. Selman, a rifleman and squad leader. “We initially conducted a hand-and-arm signal class to make sure they were on the

same page with us, but they were ahead of the game. They knew our procedures for movements, searching and clearing and were just as eager as we were to fight the enemy.”

“Personally, it was encouraging because I think our greatest key to success will be the Iraqi people taking the defense of their country into their own hands. As that happens more and more, our job will become much less difficult.”

The platoon and all of Company L then moved into the

river valley north of the cities and conducted searches for Al Qaeda in Iraq members who may have fled. The company then moved to eastern Karabilah and began clear and hold operations there.

The platoon uncovered more IEDs as they moved deeper into the city.

“I would rather face a firefight with the enemy all day and all night than have to deal with IEDs,” Selman said. “It’s the worst enemy in the world because you can’t fight it back. All we can do is deny this region to the people who would plant them here. These are people who don’t care if what they do kills an American or an Iraqi. They are only interested in chaos.”

Once the cities were cleared, the Marines moved back to Camp Gannon to rest, then they headed out again to prepare security positions in and around Husaybah and Karabilah.



Marines from Company L, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, provide security while members of their platoon clear a building during in Husayba.

help us and wanting to help the Iraqi Army. The people are really getting behind them. Without the Iraqi Army, U.S. success in this region would be nil.”

The Coalition footprint will continue to shrink as the Iraqi Army and other Iraqi security forces gain the confidence and experience to take control of more of their country. Coalition forces have given more than 25 installations back to the people of Iraq with the confidence that the Iraqi Army can keep the areas secured. Four more installations will be relinquished to the Iraqi government in the coming months.

Anonymous tip helps uncover weapon caches

Story by Spc. Carlos Caro
1st Battalion, 87th Infantry

BAGHDAD — When local residents provide information on where terrorists are hiding their weapons, Iraqi and American forces are quick to respond.

An anonymous tip prompted Iraqi Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division and U.S. forces from Company D, 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry, to conduct searches in west Baghdad Nov. 20-21. It was a mission that eventually rooted out hidden weapons and the terrorists themselves.

“The amount of weapons and munitions found (on the first day of searches) was enough to arm a small cell, maybe eight men,” said Sgt. Paul Casiano of 1/87th Inf.

The American and Iraqi forces turned up caches hidden inside four parked cars Nov. 20, and rounded up three suspected terrorists at the scene.

“The weapons inside the cars were enough to lay down some serious firepower,” Casiano said. “Luckily, the insurgents were discovered along with the cache.”

The caches included 10 assault rifles, six machine guns, six hand grenades, two rocket-propelled grenade launchers with eight rounds, a mine, and thousands of rounds of ammunition for the rifles and machine guns.

“I couldn’t believe that we found this many weapons in four small cars,” said Staff Sgt. Robert Cortez. “It is really awesome that we found all these weapons and detained the (suspected terrorists). All the hard work of gathering intelligence and gaining the trust of the local nationals has really paid off.”

The next day proved even more productive, as the Iraqi and American Soldiers turned up even larger caches on a section of farmland that once belonged to Saddam Hussein. Less than 20 minutes after beginning their mission, the Soldiers found a

mortar round hidden inside a bus parked in an old garage. Once Soldiers began thoroughly searching the vehicle, they could barely believe their eyes.

Inside a hidden compartment was a large cache. The Soldiers seized 37 blocks of explosives, 75 demolition charges, 400 feet of detonation cord, hundreds of blasting caps, 33 mortar rounds, 30 hand grenades, 29 RPG rounds, 20 hand-grenade fuses, 86 assorted radios, four night-vision devices, four light anti-tank weapons, three mortar fuses, two sub-machine guns, a sniper rifle, a video camera, a laser range finder, and several thousands of rounds for different weapons.

“It was a gun show,” Casiano said. “With all the weapons ... brought out from a hidden panel inside the bus, there were enough weapons to arm at least 30 men.”



Courtesy photo

Soldiers from 2nd Bn., 1st Bde., 6th Iraqi Army Div. and D Co., 1st Bn., 87th Inf., inventory weapons and bomb-making materials found in West Baghdad on Nov. 20. An anonymous tip prompted the Soldiers to search the area for hidden terrorist weapons.

Cedar Shopping Spree

U.S. Army photos by Staff Sgt. Engels Tejada



Spc. Adam Wilberger (right) and Pfc. Tobin Walker, engineers with the 110th Quartermaster Co., shop for memorabilia and gifts at a Camp Cedar II bazaar. Twelve Iraqi vendors sold rugs, jewelry, ancient artifacts and other products.

Pfc. Dominique McKinsley, a security guard with the 254th Quartermaster Co., shops the jewelry at a bazaar that the 119th Corps Support Bn. hosted at Camp Cedar II. Soldiers had the opportunity to buy local and regional items without going off post.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jeanine Kinville

Country music singer Aaron Tippin performed for Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Div. and TF Band of Brothers at the post gymnasium on FOB Speicher in Tikrit.

A little bit of Nashville in Tikrit

Story by Sgt Dallas Walker

101st Airborne Division

Public Affairs Office

Sgt. Ryan Matson

101st Combat Aviation Brigade

Public Affairs Office

TIKRIT — Country music star Aaron Tippin, who crooned such hits as “Kiss This” and “You’ve Got to Stand for Something (Or You’ll Fall for Anything)”, spent his Thanksgiving with the Soldiers of Task Force Band of Brothers, 101st Airborne Division, at Forward Operating Base Speicher.

Tippin started his visit with the Soldiers by eating Thanksgiving dinner at the Eagle’s Nest Dining Facility, where officers from the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade served turkey, crab legs and all the traditional holiday fixings. He didn’t do much eating however, as he was approached by a steady stream of fans in the dining facility seeking autographs and pictures.

“Since you guys can’t be home with your families for Thanksgiving, I don’t mind being away from mine,” Tippin said. “I just appreciate everything you guys do for us.”

Tippin signed everything he could before heading on a tour of the 1st Battalion, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, flight line, where

Soldiers gave him an up-close-and-personal look at an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter. Tippin, who said he is a helicopter pilot himself, sat in the cockpit and was briefed on the aircraft’s controls and features.

While at the flight line, Tippin again made sure every fan who wanted one got a picture and an autograph. Soldiers brought up guitars, CDs and various other items to be autographed while Tippin, donning a black T-shirt with the 1st Battalion “Expect No Mercy” logo on it, signed them all.

At the flight line, one Soldier shook Tippin’s hand and told him, “You’re a great American, sir!” Tippin looked at the Soldier as he walked away and said, “I think you may have that one backwards.”

After spending a few hours with the Soldiers, Tippin departed the area to tour the rest of the installation, including the 101st Airborne Division headquarters, before his 8 p.m. performance at the installation gymnasium.

“I think it was good of him to take time out of his schedule to come visit us and show his support and patriotism,” said Capt. Jason Shultz, battle captain for Task Force Band of Brothers. “He was very sincere. I think it meant more to him to be here with us for Thanksgiving.”

Iraqi, U.S. forces clean up mean streets

Story by

Sgt. 1st Class David Abrams

Task Force Baghdad

Public Affairs Office

BAGHDAD — Iraqi Army and Task Force Baghdad Soldiers continued to pursue terrorists during operations in districts of Baghdad.

During more than 2,400 patrols through the capitol city, Iraqi and U.S. forces detained terror suspects, seized weapons caches and found improvised explosive devices before they could be detonated.

Military officials also had help from Iraqi citizens as they came forward with information about terrorist activity in their neighborhoods and villages.

On Nov. 21, a local resident told Soldiers from 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division about an IED which had been placed around a weapons cache in an area west of Baghdad. U.S. forces cordoned off the area and began searching houses and questioning residents. Two terrorists were detained and processed into the Iraqi judicial system.

Another tipster reported an IED concealed in a pile of rubble along a road in East Baghdad on Nov. 22. Soldiers from 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry secured the site and called in an explosive ordnance disposal team which disarmed the device, made of two 57 mm rockets and a 130 mm round.

Public Order Brigade troops operating in

Salman Pak, south of Baghdad, detained three terror suspects and confiscated a small weapons cache on Nov. 23. The arrests resulted from information provided by an Iraqi citizen.

Iraqi Army Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, working a checkpoint on Nov. 22, detained three people in a vehicle when it made a U-turn in front of approaching Soldiers. The individuals threw a compact disc out of a window and started to flee, but were quickly stopped by a squad of IA Soldiers. After being questioned, the three suspects admitted they were responsible for attacks against U.S. forces in Baghdad, Fallujah and Najaf. The CD contained documents and video footage of terrorist attacks.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Patrick J. Dixon

An Iraqi construction worker hammers down tile for a walkway at an Iraqi Highway Police Headquarters construction site in Fawwar. This site is being assessed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Qadisiyah Province, to ensure the construction and buildings are completed and up to standards.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Charles W. Gill

Iraqi army Soldiers move Hesco baskets into position along the perimeter of the west checkpoint of Route Raider in Taji. Placement of the baskets is part of an effort to bolster fortifications around the checkpoint.



Iraqi workers lay bricks for an interior wall at the Hai Al Jami'a Public Health Clinic in Najaf

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo by Denise Calabria



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Patrick J. Dixon

Iraqi construction workers erect a wall at a medical center in Al Jadida.

Building Iraq's Future