



# SCIMITAR

MNF-1's Cutting Edge



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Dec. 30, 2005



One of six suspected terrorists detained stands behind the weapon and licence plates found during a search of his home

## DETAINED Air Assault mission nabs terrorists

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Jesse Rigglin  
3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division

**TIKRIT** — An air assault mission conducted by 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, resulted in the capture of several suspected terrorists and the seizure of a large cache of ammunition in Muslakhah, Friday.

Elements from Company C, 1-187, landed in Muslakhah aboard UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and began searching the village for individuals listed as being involved with terrorism in the area. Within one hour of touching down, they identified and detained two individuals on the list of suspects.

“Every day we win small victories,” said Capt. Christopher Judge, Company C commander. “But when we can get someone on our list, it is a huge boost.”

By the day’s end, the unit had apprehended six individuals.

During the air assault mission, Soldiers of Company D, 1-187, began an amphibious assault on an island in the Tigris River adjacent to Muslakhah. While patrolling the banks of the island, they discovered a cache of more than 100 mortar rounds – 45 82 mm rounds and 64 120 mm rounds. They also seized 20 rockets and 600 rounds of small arms ammunition.

“We are trying to make it difficult for [terrorists] to operate [in Mulakhah],” Judge said. The town of Muslakhah, north of Al Fatah, is near an oil pipeline that is under construction. This will bring much needed revenue to the area when complete. Attacks on the workers have disrupted its construction. Iron Rakkasans continue to work with Iraqi forces to reduce attacks and safeguard the pipeline.



Company D Soldiers conduct an amphibious mission in part with the air assault operation in Muslakhah.

# Paladins fire from Speicher

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Mills

1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division

**FOB SPEICHER** — Glory's Guns in the form of 1st Platoon, Battery A, are making their presence known at Forward Operating Base Speicher near Tikrit. The platoon, from 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, were stationed at FOB Summerall near Bayji.

The move was made soon after the 101st Airborne Division's 3rd Brigade took over the Bayji sector, said Cpt. J.T. Townsend, assistant fire support officer, 1st BCT.

"They were brought down (to FOB Speicher) because of the increased indirect fire threat," said Townsend. "Once Danger closed there was a higher indirect fire threat (to the Division Headquarters on Speicher)."

Their coverage of Bayji since their move to Speicher from Summerall has not changed significantly, said Townsend.

1st Platoon was busy during their tenure at Summerall. While there, Townsend said, they shot the second highest number of rounds in the 1st BCT area of operations. They were also one of only two platoons to conduct artillery raids.

During one raid, said Staff Sgt. Donnie Neal, a Memphis, Tenn. native and the 4th Section chief, the platoon rolled outside the gates of Summerall to the outskirts of Bayji.

"It was fast and furious," said Neal. "We pulled in, shot and then left."

Besides the occasional artillery raid, Neal admitted that manning the gun day in and day out "gets kind of old."

"(Operation Iraqi Freedom I) was different," said Neal.



A M-109 Paladin from 1st Platoon, Battery A is engulfed in dust, sand and smoke immediately after firing recently on FOB Speicher.

U.S. Army photo by Maj. Richard Bartoszuk

They moved fast and reacted to where the enemy was, he said. "OIF III was more planned out."

1st Lt. William Dennison, 1st Platoon platoon leader, said living at Summerall wasn't bad at all. "We were totally

detached (from our battalion)," said Dennison. "It was just me and the platoon sergeant. We were on our own."

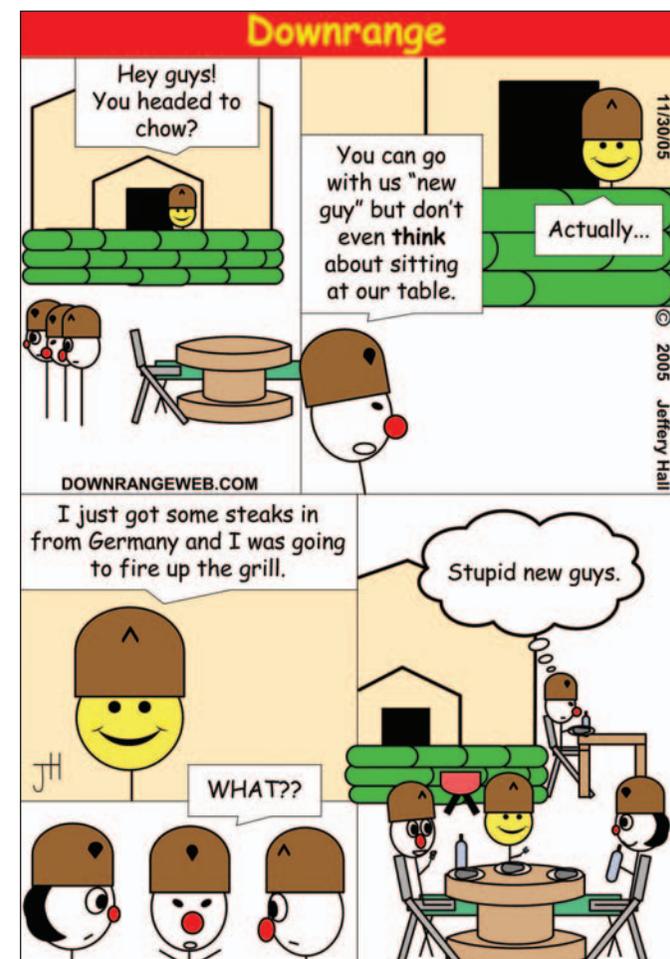
"(The platoon's deployment to Iraq) was what we expected," he said, "except maybe not to shoot so much."

## USO tours Iraq



U.S. Army Photo by Spc. Derek Delrosario

Country singer Mark Wills and Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders Lynlee Allen, left, and Misty Cleveland entertain troops during the Sergeant Major of the Army's Hope and Freedom Tour USO show at Camp Liberty. The show also included hip-hop band Soul Jahz; country singers Keni Thomas, Craig Morgan; actress Traylor Howard and comedian Al Franken. "It's always good to see (the troops). It is always fun, moving, gratifying and humbling," Franken said.



To learn more about Iraqi and Coalition successes, log on to: [www.mnf-iraq.com](http://www.mnf-iraq.com) and click on the logo to download this week's issue.

PERSPECTIVES

# Loose lips sink ships Loose keyboards risk lives

**Army Office of Information, Assurance, and Compliance**

Fewer people would know about a deployment or operation if you screamed it out at the Superbowl than if you posted it on a web log or web journal.

Common sense will tell you not to discuss sensitive subjects on the streets of Baghdad. The same common sense should apply on the highways of cyberspace.

Servicemembers need to keep this in mind, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it could land them in a world of trouble.

The technology of communication is a double-edged sword and often the sharper edge is being used against you. There have been too many instances of sensitive information being made public.

For example, an officer posted a picture of his tactical operations center, complete with secret documents showing troop rotations. Another example was a Soldier in theater who posted when his unit's laundry runs were. That information has IED opportunity written all over it.

The list of what should not be posted on an unsecured site or sent via unsecured communication channels is almost endless. It includes the obvious like troop movements, operational details, planning issues and any classified material. But it also includes any personal information, information that could be used to put you, your fellow servicemembers, or even your own family at risk.

This is also a matter of situational awareness; knowing what seemingly innocent information could be useful to the enemy. Each unit's operational security professional needs to advise supervisors on means to prevent the release of sensi-

tive information. Every servicemember, regardless of rank and position, has a personal responsibility to safeguard what makes it onto the Internet. In order to ensure sensitive and unauthorized information is not posted, check with your immediate supervisor for approval before your next blog entry or site update. More information on OPSEC can be found at

[https://opsec.1stiocmd.army.mil/io\\_portal/Public/Pages/Sections.cfm?Section=Opsec](https://opsec.1stiocmd.army.mil/io_portal/Public/Pages/Sections.cfm?Section=Opsec)

This is a very serious matter and the fallout from even one instance of releasing unauthorized information can be severe. Senior Army Commanders have clearly stated the Army must "hold people accountable that place others at risk." Relevant punitive measures are spelled out in AR 25-2 and are worth a thorough reading.

Soldiers have been fined and demoted because of information put on a BLOG that could have helped the enemy. But the consequences of allowing mission and personal information to get out is more dangerous than simply running the risk of a fine. It could kill your fellow servicemembers and put your family members in harms way.

Psychologically, keeping information tightly guarded is a challenge, especially for servicemembers in a wartime environment a long way from friends and family. There is a great urge to connect and let people know what is going on. Often it seems that just a little bit of information can't hurt.

Everyone needs to remember that there are many ears and eyes focusing on these little pieces of information. A terrorist manual found in Afghanistan stated, 80 percent of information gathered on the enemy, you, is gathered openly. The technical abilities, resourcefulness, patience and determination of enemy operatives cannot be underestimated – watch what you BLOG!

## Scimitar Pulse

*Do you post or read web logs?*

"No, we don't have access to the Internet. Watching TV and movies is my thing, I'm a homebody."

**Army Sgt. Ivan Sanchez**  
703rd Field Support Battalion,  
3rd Infantry Division  
West Hartford Conn.



"I read blogs. A lot of people write encouraging stuff and some people don't. They don't know the real story because they're not here."

**Army Spc. Juan J. Morales**  
703rd Field Support Battalion,  
3rd Infantry Division  
San Bernadino Calif.

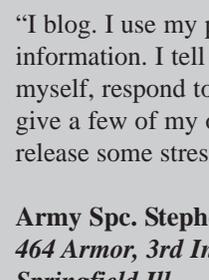
"No, I check my bank account and e-mail. That's all I care to do."

**Army Cpl. Kyle L. Paul**  
703rd Field Support Battalion  
3rd Infantry Division  
Berrysburg, Pa.



"I think they allow people to put out bad information. Newspapers put out good stuff."

**Army Sgt. 1st Class David W. Mahnken,**  
Headquarters and Headquarters  
Battalion, 18th Airborne Corps  
Ventura, Calif.



"I blog. I use my personal profile information. I tell them about myself, respond to comments and give a few of my own. It helps me release some stress."

**Army Spc. Stephen Souther**  
464 Armor, 3rd Infantry Division  
Springfield Ill.



### ON CYBER PATROL

As covered or mandated by AR 25-2



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

**MNF-I PAO**  
Col. Dewey G. Ford

**Combined Press Information Center Director**  
Lt. Col. Barry A. Johnson  
[barry.johnson@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:barry.johnson@iraq.centcom.mil)

**Command Information Chief**  
Capt. Bradford E. Leighton  
[bradford.leighton@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:bradford.leighton@iraq.centcom.mil)

**Command Information NCOIC**  
Sgt. Jeffrey M. Lowry  
[jeff.lowry@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:jeff.lowry@iraq.centcom.mil)

**Editor**.....Sgt. Jeffrey M. Lowry

[jeff.lowry@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:jeff.lowry@iraq.centcom.mil)

**Assistant Editor**.....Spc. Rick L. Rzepka

[richard.rzepka@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:richard.rzepka@iraq.centcom.mil)

**Staff**.....Spc. David J. Claffey

[david.claffey@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:david.claffey@iraq.centcom.mil)

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# Wing Marine flys Helps Iraqi women vote

Story and photo by  
Cpl. Cullen J. Tiernan  
2nd Marine Aircraft Wing

**AL ASAD** — One of the important roles in providing security for the Iraqi National Assembly elections Dec. 15 was that of a female U.S. service member who searched female Iraqis at voting stations.

Marines from the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing at Al Asad eagerly volunteered to play a part in history and help the women of Iraq secure rights for themselves in a free society.

Cpl. Jessica M. Hereford, an avionics technician with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 266, volunteered to be part of Operation Liberty Express. She left the safety of a secure installation, experienced the groundside of the Marine Corps and the ever present threat of improvised explosive devices while enabling the women of Haqlaniyah, to vote.

"I never expected for there to be so many voters," said Hereford, a New Market, Ala., native. "There was a huge turn out. I thought I would be searching a couple women, and we ended up searching more than 500. In the first hour alone, more than 200 women showed up."

Hereford said she and other Marines attempted to keep count of the voters, but it soon proved impossible as the voters didn't stop coming. She said the women were very friendly, and she didn't have trouble searching any of them.

"One of the women was blowing us kisses and gave us some Iraqi candy," said Hereford. "An elderly woman was smiling and trying to thank us in Arabic. I couldn't tell what she was saying at the time, but the one English word she knew was democracy and she kept saying it and smiling."

For many of the Iraqis in western Al Anbar province, it was their first time voting as military operations have freed their towns from the death threats of the insurgents.

"All the cheering and smiles made me feel really good," said Hereford. "The experience helped me to see the bigger picture in Iraq. Working on the flight line, sometimes you forget about what is going on outside the wire and you feel like what you do isn't so important. Now, that I've been on the receiving end of air support, I see how important our work is."

Hereford remembered sitting on Haditha Dam, cold, dirty, hungry, tired and ready for air support to fly her to Al Asad.

"Seeing the birds flying in made me feel so happy," said Hereford. "There is



Cpl. Jessica M. Hereford, an avionics technician with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 266, stands next to a CH-46 helicopter at Al Asad.

no doubt in my mind the work we do here makes a difference."

Hereford said as soon as she returned to base, Marines from the squadron asked her about her experiences outside the wire.

"Our commanding officer does his best to keep the Marines informed on what we as a squadron have accomplished, but unless you are outside the wire viewing IED scares and the threat of death, you may not have a solid grip of what your work is for," said Capt. Jennifer Schrantz, a CH-46 pilot with HMM-266 and a Seaford, Va., native. "During the election, Hereford had an excellent opportunity to see the people she is here to help, and enable Iraqi women to vote."

Schrantz said this was a great opportunity to spend some time walking in another person's shoes. She said ground and aviation Marines do not often have

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***"All the cheering and smiles made me feel really good. The experience helped me to see the bigger picture in Iraq. Working on the flight line, sometimes you forget about what is going on outside the wire and you feel like what you do isn't so important. Now, that I've been on the receiving end of air support I see how important our work is."***

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Cpl. Jessica M. Hereford

a clear understanding of the challenges faced by one another, but her unique experiences, including riding in convoys, has broadened her perspective.

"A Marine is always a rifleman first," said Warrant Officer Herman E. Holley, the avionics officer for HMM-266 and an Ocilla, Ga., native. "This is what makes us all well-rounded Marines. Hereford is a talented avionics technician who constantly tries to broaden her knowledge of all the avionics systems on the CH-46E. She continually tries to help other Marines out in any way she can."

Holley said Hereford is an outstanding Marine, who earned a meritorious promotion to corporal while stationed in Iraq. He said she had previously said she would like to participate when the Iraqis held the referendum in October, but during this election she got her chance.

"Hereford joined the squadron only two months before our deployment to Iraq and she hit the ground running," said Master Sgt. Henry Kunzig, the avionics division chief for HMM-266 and a Wilmington, Del., native. "She is motivated and eager to learn. When a job she was working on is completed, she asks to go out and join the Marines working on other jobs. She doesn't want to limit herself to avionics, and wants to become an aerial observer."

Kunzig said Hereford fits right in and gets along with everyone at HMM-266. During the election, he said her chance to interact with the local population was a great opportunity when considering the magnitude of what was taking place here.

"I wanted to play my part in history," said Hereford. "One of the reasons I joined the Marine Corps was for these experiences. I volunteered for the mission, and if I could do it again tomorrow I would."

## Marines clear path to safety

Story by Lance Cpl. Joel Abshier  
2nd Marine Logistics Group

**AL ASAD** — Many servicemembers in Iraq have stories to explain their proudest moments.

For Chief Warrant Officer Alan J. Clyne, commanding officer of maintenance detachment, and Master Sgt. Scott E. Witmer, maintenance detachment operations chief, both with Combat Logistics Battalion 2, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward), their moment was one to remember.

Clyne and Witmer provide the Marines from 3rd Marine Division, 6th Marine Regiment, with supplies to sustain the fight; ranging from ammunition to chow during Operation Steel Curtain in cities along the Syrian border at Camp Gannon on Nov. 5.

But their most appreciated delivery was also the most unexpected.

"We got a call from the 3/6 operations chief saying there were some Marines unable to get out of the city," Witmer said. "We were told there was no way for Humvees to reach the Marines."

The infantry Marines were pinned down in an area commonly known to servicemembers at Camp Gannon as "IED Alley." IED's, or improvised explosive devices, are the most frequently used weapon against coalition forces here. The name is given to this area because of the abundance of debris, barriers and litter there making it virtually impassable for most ground vehicles and extremely dangerous for those who do travel the route.

After reviewing a map with the location of the Marines, Witmer and Clyne responded and created a plan to reach the pinned down squad.

"The idea was to clear a path through IED alley using a bulldozer," Witmer said. "However, neither of us knew how to operate one."

Running out of time, Clyne situated himself in the driver's seat of a mammoth, armored D9 bulldozer and forced himself to learn the controls quickly.

"The big thing was to maintain momentum," Clyne said. "When you are in a tight situation, sometimes plans go out the window."

As Clyne hastily maneuvered the controls in the bulldozer, Witmer boldly walked in front and guided Clyne to areas that needed clearing.

"[Witmer] was crazy," Clyne said laughing. "Rounds were flying all over the place and he just kept on going."

The two steadily plowed through everything standing between them and the trapped Marines, including a number of towering barriers that would have stopped most vehicles in their tracks.

With a newly refined path through the sea of debris, Humvees were able to reach the surrounded squad to provide heavy fire support that allowed all the Marines to return safely to Camp Gannon.

"I hate to say it but it was a lot of fun," Clyne admits. "It made us feel that we were part of the fight."

In the end, Clyne and Witmer took a map, a bulldozer and a little courage and responded selflessly to assist their brothers-in-arms when they were needed most.

# NCOs inducted

Story by Sgt. Rachel Brune  
101st Sustainment Brigade

The 101st Brigade Troops Battalion, 101st Sustainment Brigade, inducted noncommissioned officers from each of its subordinate units into the NCO Corps.

The ceremony included skits illustrating the "Warrior Ethos" and the "NCO Charge," or the responsibilities of noncommissioned officers to their subordinate Soldiers.

"Never compromise your integrity and always be the standard bearer," said keynote speaker Command Sgt. Maj. James Spencer, 71st Corps Support Battalion, giving advice to the noncommissioned officers.

The 101st Airborne Division, under which the 101st Sustainment Brigade falls at its home station of Fort Campbell, Ky., has a long history, as does the NCO Corps, said Spencer.

Although NCO Induction Ceremonies consist of different elements, each includes a moment when the NCOs must step across a line to take their places in the Corps, said Spencer. Later in the

ceremony, Spencer helped present plaques and leadership books to the inductees who crossed that line.

"Our names are now among the long line of heroes who have served before us," said Spc. Kadija Kamara, Company B, 101st BTB, optical fabricator. "We are here in ... the fight against terror. We are here to give the Iraqi people a chance at a life filled with religious, personal and social freedoms."

Kamara, from Jersey City, N.J., was the 101st BTB Soldier of the Month for October 2005.

Sgt. Cynthia Taylor, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 101st BTB mechanic, attained the rank of sergeant on Dec. 1. She enlisted in the Army at the rank of private first class a little more than two years ago and is now on her first overseas deployment.

"It feels really good," said Taylor, who resides with her family in Oak Grove, Ky. "I feel honored and privileged to be inducted."

When asked if she had anything to say to her fellow inductees, Taylor said: "Now get back to work!"

## SECDEF announces troop reduction

Story by Spc. Rick Rzepka  
Scimitar Assistant Editor

**BAGHDAD** — It's the beginning of the end for U.S. troops in Iraq.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced Friday, that two brigades of troops, around 7,500 Soldiers, would not be deploying to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The reduction will drop troop levels in Iraq to less than 138,000, in an attempt to strike a balance between Iraqi security forces and coalition troops.

The curtailment, which comes on the heels of the parliamentary elections, is a sign Iraqi forces are feeling more confident in their role as guardians of the Iraqi people.

The success of the election was a combination of the plan developed by the Ministry of the Interior and the work of Soldiers and leaders at the provincial level, said Gen. George W. Casey, MNF-I commanding general. By this summer 75 percent of Iraqi brigades will be in a position to lead, he said.

"This is a message to the Iraqi people that security forces are growing stronger," said Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari speaking to the press. After a thor-

ough evaluation of Iraqi forces, Multi-National Force-Iraq joint forces command and the Iraqi government have made the recommendation to President George W. Bush for a reduction.

This step also sends a clear message to the terrorists who are trying to destabilize Iraq and spread fear, said Al-Jaafari.

"We feel very pleased with the accomplishments of Iraqi security forces," said Rumsfeld. "They did an excellent job of providing security during the election."

The election and the abatement of coalition forces is a significant stepping stone on the path to democracy, however the U.S. should not lose sight of the mission here, said Casey. Those (servicemembers) who are staying should not be looking over their shoulders thinking they're next to go, he said. "Stay focused on the mission. It's not going to happen overnight."

The hard work and sacrifices of coalition troops have made democracy in Iraq a possibility, said Rumsfeld who thanked American troops for their efforts here. As Iraq continues to progress, "the world will be watching with high expectations," he said.



Spc. Julio Castillio of 3rd ID's 3-69 Infantry pulls security from his turret while patrolling the streets of downtown Samarra.

## 3-69 leaves Samarra in good hands

Story and photo by  
Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski  
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**SAMARRA** — The 3rd Infantry Division's 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor, is wrapping up their yearlong tour by handing over their area of operations here in Samarra to the 101st Airborne Division, Air Assault.

The 3-69th Soldiers have been here for 11 months and have seen their share of combat. They have also seen the Iraqi Security Forces increase their ability to protect their people from anti-Iraqi forces.

Lt. Col. Mark Wald, the battalion commander and Saratoga, Calif., native was excited about what his unit did in the past 11 months.

"When we first arrived here in February of 2005 our mission was to kill, capture and detain the anti-Iraqi forces and get the level of enemy activity down to a point where competent capable Iraqi security forces can step in, take the lead."

Insurgent activity is down to such a significantly low level that U.S. forces can now transition Iraqi security forces currently into their area of operation to take the lead where coalition forces are now in support, said Wald.

Sgt. Steven Narron a gunner with Company B said "I have seen the discipline level of the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi Police and the Ministry of the Interior go up a whole lot since we've been here. The equipment they have and the soldiers they are getting have really improved."

Staff Sgt. Jeffery Peets, a scout with the battalion and team commander of a vehicle in the Quick Reaction Force, has also seen his share of combat. "Several months ago we would have two or three incidents a day. Now it's down to one or two every three days. They are really on the ball now," said Peets, who is originally from upstate New York. "This Iraqi Army as well as the Ministry of Information and Iraqi Police I believe have really got a hold on this city," said Peets.

Capt. Matthew McCain, fire support officer for the 101st Airborne Division, said, "We are looking forward to working with the Iraqi Security Forces and building upon the great job that the 3-69 Infantry has done in this area."

The 3rd Battalion 1-187 Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, from Ft. Campbell, Ky., will take over this area of operations. The 1-187 will work with and support the Iraqi Security Forces.

## Scarred Iraqi boy wants to return to school

**BAGHDAD** — Several members of the U.S. Embassy public affairs office in Baghdad are requesting help this holiday season in giving a positive future back to a 9-year-old boy named Hussein from Baghdad.

Hussein was severely burned in a rocket attack which left him permanently scarred and unable to attend school. The school Hussein attended won't let him return because his burns frighten the other students.

The boy's father is trying to raise enough money to send him to a plastic surgeon in Amman, Jordan for a facial operation.

Hussein's plight was recently mentioned in a Wall Street Journal article by Anne Bodine, a mediadevelopment officer in the U.S. Embassy here

Bodine reminded readers that "miracles come in small doses" and that the courage of people like Hussein is inspiration for the rest of us to "effect miracles for peace."

Those who want to make a contribution to the effort to help Hussein, please e-mail [orensteinta@yahoo.com](mailto:orensteinta@yahoo.com).



Photo courtesy of Todd Orenstein  
Hussein, 9 years old, wants to return to school.

# Engineer learns from experience in Iraq

Story and photo by  
Suzanne M. Fournier  
Gulf Region Division  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**CAMP ADDER** — Deploying to Iraq with an Army unit offered a unique opportunity for an Air Force officer to be blue in a green world.

U. S. Air Force Academy instructor, Maj. Alberto Mezarina volunteered because he wanted to do his part to fight the global war on terrorism.

“Even though I wear the Air Force uniform, I’m part of the Department of Defense and as operation tempo increases and our forces grow smaller, we find ourselves able to fill needs across the Department of Defense,” Mezarina said. “I’m an Air Force civil engineer working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. I work with Department of Army civilian colleagues.

The team goes beyond joint purple operations, blending colorful Coalition force flags of the Italian Joint Task Force with British, Australian, Romanian and Japanese military forces.

He says he hit the ground running in July and has been running ever since. Initially, Mezarina was resident engineer in charge of construction in the Thi-Qar Province near Nasiriyah. Three weeks later, he was named Area Engineer for Thi-Qar and Methane Provinces with more than \$464 million in Iraq Redevelopment and Construction projects and responsibilities to coordinate with the new Iraqi government officials and multinational forces.

“Working in Iraq presented multiple challenges, but as an academy teacher, communication comes naturally. I’ve seen walls of inhibition come down by bringing the right people together and by simply facilitating communication. Set a few facts and techniques in front of someone, begin dialogue and you can inspire change and build consensus,” Mezarina said.

He used his communication talents to

enhance understanding of statements of work and set limits to endless modifications.

“We’ve made progress and now the time is ripe to raise our expectations. We can no longer be satisfied with simply swapping swords for plowshares. We’ve paved the way by sharing safety and quality standards in construction. I’ve witnessed the changes and am confident the local professionals can live up to any expectation. Today, we see Iraqis conducting on-site training and adhering to safety,” Mezarina said.

Getting clear statements of work with better specifications and drawings in addition to limiting modifications were among many challenges he faced.

“By the time you add up all the modifications, you could have funded an additional project. Construction scopes of work were especially vague in early contracts, so we made adjustments,” said Mezarina. “After a while, I’d only allow 15 percent in modifications of the total contract price.”

One of the most fulfilling aspects of his job was sharing western work practices with the local national civil engineers and learning different ways to accomplish the same results. The Air Force engineer had two dozen Iraqi employees working numerous job sites every day, sometimes at the risk of their lives.

“These men and women have courage, character and commitment to the future of Iraq. They are well-educated, civil, mechanical and electrical engineers, but have never had the chance to reach their full potential under the former repressive regime,” he said. “Americans have acquisition laws, and regulations to follow and this is American money so we follow American laws. It took a little explaining, but we were able to demonstrate these laws were there to protect customer and contractor alike.”

Mezarina conceded that American engineers learned as much, if not more than they taught. They learned more, than technical exchange. They learned about culture, sacrifice, patience, and expedience. Iraq isn’t America and they learned to adapt.



Maj. Alberto Mezarina confers with Iraqi directors general at the Thi-Qar Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committee meeting.



Photo Courtesy of Erich Langer, PCO Public Affairs

Iraqi Minister of Electricity Dr. Muhson Shlash (left) and Project and Contract Office Director Hugh Exton Jr. sign the Project Partnership Agreement in ceremony Nov. 30 in Baghdad’s International Zone.

## Landmark partnership forged

Story and photo by Jenna Bisenius  
Gulf Region Division  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**BAGHDAD** — An exciting new way of doing business sprang up between Iraq’s Ministry of Electricity and the Project and Contracting Office recently.

In their partnership agreement, the PCO agreed to reimburse the ministry for up to \$16.7 million for two future power projects in southern Iraq. The move, PCO officials say, could save more than \$6 million over usual contractor costs — money that officials can spend on other projects.

The Project Partnership Agreement covers the construction of a new 10-bay, 132-kilovolt substation in Najaf, and reconstruction of the 400-kilovolt overhead line between Hartha and Khor in Basrah. A financial first for the MoE and a trial run for future agreements, the PCO-to-ministry funding means more than just saving money according to PCO Director, Hugh Exton Jr.

“Through this partnership, we anticipate significant savings will be made, but more importantly, this agreement will put the ministry in control of project development and implementation. It is our belief that through partnerships such as these, the successful transition to Iraqi autonomy will take place,” said Exton.

To cement the agreement, officials conducted a signing ceremony Nov. 30, in Baghdad’s International Zone. Signatories, Exton and Minister of Electricity Dr. Muhson Shlash, expressed their hope that the partnership would pave the way for similar agreements.

“This signing ceremony formalizes the desire of both the PCO and the Ministry of Electricity to work together for a better future for Iraq,” said Exton. He added that the agreement would enable Iraqis to assume a larger role in their country’s electrical infrastructure

reconstruction and “contribute to the reconstitution of Iraq as a whole, secure, and independent nation.”

“With this agreement, the ministry is showing that they are willing to take on the role of rebuilding of their country,” said U.S. Army Col. David Bender, PCO electricity sector program manager. “Up until now, the PCO contracted directly with private companies and managed the electricity infrastructure rebuilding work. But under the agreement, the ministry will be responsible for project contracting and management — with minimal supervision by us — and we will reimburse the ministry once the work is complete.”

The quality control and quality assurance role will also shift to the ministry, according to Bender.

The shift in responsibility is an important step towards eventual handover of leadership to Iraqis, said Bender. “Capacity building, or helping Iraqis become self-sustaining, is critical for Iraq’s future. They have to be able to maintain the country’s infrastructure once we’re gone, and programs such as the PPA will give them

the kind of experience they need to be able to do that.

“The signing of this agreement marks a critical milestone because it signifies a shift from the Coalition’s leadership of reconstruction to the ministry’s leadership. In this way, the Ministry of Electricity will be empowered to continue the rebuilding effort when the Iraq Reconstruction and Relief Fund program concludes.”

The Hartha-Khor overhead line is the primary system element in transferring electricity from generation sources in southern Iraq to Baghdad. The new Najaf new substation will add capacity to the substation’s system and transition electricity from the transmission system to industrial, commercial, and residential areas. The substation will have the capacity to serve more than 100,000 residents.

**“The signing of this agreement marks a critical milestone ... it signifies a shift from the Coalition’s leadership of reconstruction to the ministry’s leadership.”**

Col. David Bender

# Treasure hunters of Balad

## Infantry platoon perfects art of locating weapons caches

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Dallas Walker  
101st Airborne Division  
Public Affairs Office

**BALAD** — They were the last platoon from their company to start doing patrols.

Composed of cooks, communication specialists, medics and a couple of infantry guys, the Soldiers of the Cobra Black One platoon, Company C, 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry Regiment, took to the streets outside of Logistical Support Area Anaconda with not much of a mission at all.

“We were like the black sheep of the battalion,” said Sgt. Alike Naluai, Co. C section leader. “We would just sit on a route and pull security.”

After a couple of weeks, someone gave them an idea — one they weren’t thrilled about in the beginning, but ended up paying off in the long run.

Master Sgt. Beau Tatsumura, from the battalion S3 shop, helped show the platoon the ropes of hunting for weapons caches in June.

“He really motivated and encouraged us to go out and find weapons caches,” Naluai said. “We figured we’d give it a try.”

The platoon spent several weeks searching, but to no avail.

“We really hated doing cache searching at first because we had no method,” said Spc. McHuy McCoy, Cobra Black One medic. The team would go out and find nothing.

They ended up getting advice from 1st Lt. Ranjan Singh, Co. B platoon leader, Naluai said. His platoon had led the battalion in caches found at that point.

Singh’s platoon started out much like Cobra Black One did — unsuccessful.

“We decided we needed a system,” Singh said. One day, we were out on patrol and we saw something we thought could be used to mark an area for future reference.”

From that point on, they looked for areas with similar markings, Singh said.

Singh’s platoon found 44 weapons caches, the most in the battalion between April and June.

“It kicked off a cache craze,” Singh said. “Everyone wanted to check out a mine sweeper and look. Of course, they found nothing.”

They found nothing because they didn’t know what to look for, Singh said.

Singh and his Soldiers changed missions to finding high-value terrorists, so he decided to share his secret to finding caches with the Soldiers of Cobra Black One.

Then it happened. It was a day that these Soldiers would never forget — July 27.

“Sergeant Naluai and First Lieutenant [Sam] Tagavilla came over the radio and said they think they found something. Everyone got excited and waited by the radio to hear what was going on,” McCoy said, who was pulling security at the time. “Then they pulled out a mortar. Then they pulled



1st Lt. Sam Tagavilla, Company C, 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry Regiment, hands some small arms ammunition to Spc. McHuy McCoy, while searching an area in the Abu Krawar village for weapons caches.



Sgt. Alike Naluai, Company C, 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry Regiment, searches a roadside for weapons caches in the Abu Krawar village outside of Balad, Dec. 4. Naluai is a part of Cobra Black One, a group of Soldiers whose mission is to find and remove weapons caches.

out 10 mortars. Then they pulled out 30 mortars.”

According to Naluai, there were 49 mortar rounds in that first cache — 30 60 mm rounds and 19 82 mm rounds.

“After that, we were hooked,” Naluai said. “We would sit on a route pulling security and decide to search a canal road.”

**“I’m OK with it because we have cooks driving, and we have commo guys gunning. This war is different”**

Spc. McHuy McDoy

Since that first find in July, the platoon has found 37 caches.

“We had to prove ourselves to the battalion,” Naluai said. “After we started to find the caches, our status has risen among our peers and

our command.”

Finding caches has become second nature to the Cobra Black One Soldiers. It is the main focus of their daily mission, McCoy said.

“We find scrap metal all the time. All day, you long for a cache. Finally, you hit something and you hear that clunk. Now you have to dig a little more [carefully]. Eventually, you find that burlap bag. Everyone comes and waits with anticipation to see what’s in the bag,” McCoy said with a smile. “Then it comes across the radio, ‘Cobra black has done it again!’”

The platoon is so successful at finding caches, they share the Tactics, Techniques and Procedures they have developed on finding weapons caches with other platoons, including the one who helped them get started.

“It’s beginning to work because elements who have never found a weapons cache before are beginning to find them,” McCoy said. He produced the presentation the company uses to learn how to find caches.

“For us, it’s exciting. It’s like a treasure hunt. It made us feel like we were contributing to this war,” Naluai said. “That makes less ammunition on the streets and less IEDs that can be made.”

“It’s hard work,” Naluai added. “This is the glory of cache hunting. Sometimes you get it. Sometimes you don’t. You have to be self motivated. It’s a job with no glory. I guess the trick to success is to think like [the enemy]. You have to learn to read the land to know how they would find it again.”

The team has found that not every mission will be one where they return with a large stash of weapons, but every mission is one where they make their presence known in the villages they patrol.

“I can truly say it has reduced enemy activity in our area tremendously,” McCoy said. “We are coming from a point where we were dealing with [a lot of] IED attacks a week.”

McCoy said the number of attacks has decreased tremendously. “It has made [terrorists] back out of this area.”

On more than one occasion, the platoon has come across a site that freshly dug up, indicating they are putting pressure on the enemy to move their activity, McCoy said.

Starting off their deployment as the “black sheep” platoon, with a mix of military occupational specialties, the Soldiers of Cobra Black One have made their time in Iraq invaluable to many.

“Being a medic, this job is far from what I thought it would be,” McCoy said. “I’m OK with it because we have cooks driving and we have commo guys gunning. This war is different. As a medic, taking IEDs off the street, I am still saving lives, just in a different way. To me, that’s satisfying enough.”

# Extraordinary care pa

## 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group

Story and photos by Sgt. Dallas Walker  
101st Airborne Division

**BALAD** – In a sea of tents and trailers on Balad Air Base in northern Iraq, shrapnel is being surgically removed from a limb, medics are racing to stop someone from bleeding to death, and another life is being saved from wounds inflicted on the battlefield.

It is that sea of tents that houses the Air Force theater hospital, where servicemembers and civilians receive the most advanced medical care possible in the Iraqi combat zone.

Run by the 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group, the hospital offers both trauma and specialized medical care throughout Iraq and serves as the theater aeromedical evacuation support hub.

“If you arrive here alive, you have about a 96 percent chance of leaving here alive,” said Col. (Dr.) Elisha Powell, commander, 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group.

The availability of specialized care at the hospital is like nothing seen in a combat zone in the past, making it easier to save lives, Powell said.

“What makes this hospital so successful in Iraq is that we push technology so far forward,” he said. “We’ve never pushed specialties this far onto the battlefield before.”

The hospital boasts a staff of surgeons specializing in procedures on the brain, heart, bones and soft tissue. It has six operating rooms and nearly everything a standard hospital has — all in the heart of a combat zone.

Bringing medical care to the battlefield increases a casualty’s chance for survival, Powell said. Although, he does not credit the hospital as being solely responsible for saving lives.

### First responders

“Medics and what they do, basic and advanced first aid, is where life saving begins,” he said.

The life of a combat casualty depends largely on the first level of medical care. The most important aspect of that care is stopping the bleeding.

“The number one cause of preventable death in Iraq is exsanguination – bleeding out,” Powell said. “If Soldiers don’t stop the bleeding and use the tourniquets put in their first aid kit, then [the casualty] probably won’t make it to us.”

### Dust off – Arriving at the hospital

The sound of medical evacuation, or medevac, pilots calling in their status echoes as Army and Air Force medics in the hospital’s patient administration office prepare for their landing, the crucial first minutes of a casualty’s arrival at the hospital. Most of the casualties treated at the hospital are brought in on a medevac flight.

“I give all the credit in the world to the flight medics,” said Air Force Staff Sgt. Jalkennen Joseph, emergency room medic. “I’ve never seen anyone perform their job above and beyond like they do. They do things you only see in movies or read about in books. They do it on a daily basis and they do it well.”

The medevac crews try to get casualties to the hospital within the “golden hour” — the first 60 minutes after injury.

“Getting patients here quickly, keeping them warm, and stopping the bleeding are the keys to lifesaving in trauma,” Powell said.

Within minutes of landing on the hospital helipad, the medevac crew and hospital staff take the casualty to the emergency room.

### The ER

“This is [the casualty’s] first stop in the hospital,” Joseph said. “Our job is to stabilize the patient. We check the ABCs.



U.S. Air Force Col. Elisha Powell, commander, 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group theater hospital, and Col. Jack Ingari operate on a 101st Airborne Division Soldier after an IED attack.

We check their airways, we check to see if they are breathing, and we check their circulation.”

Doctors assess the casualty in the emergency room to determine the appropriate course of action, Joseph said.

### The next step

The hospital staff prides themselves on quality rapid care — stabilizing patients and getting them out of the hospital.

“If a patient requires surgery to survive, it will be done here,” Joseph said. Most patients don’t realize they were here, he said. “Most of them are severely injured and unconscious. We stabilize them and send them to Germany as quickly as possible.”

Patients stay at the theater hospital the shortest amount of time possible, Powell said. The goal is to save their life and send them to a facility geared toward long-term care.

### The patient

The hospital provides care and treatment to anyone wounded in combat. Coalition Forces make up 60 percent of the patient load.

The remaining 40 percent of patients seen at the hospital are local nationals, terrorists and detainees injured during combat.



U.S. Army and Air Force medical personnel provide care. Approximately 400 patients a month are treated at the hospital.

“We give [Iraqis] the same medical care as anyone else,” Powell said. “Detainees get the same health care as the Soldiers, as the Iraqi Police, as the Iraqi Army. Our job is to provide the highest standard of medical care.”

### The team

The hospital is staffed mostly by the Air Force, with support teams from the U.S. Army and Navy as well as the Australian Army and Air Force. There are more than 350 medical personnel assigned to the theater hospital.

“We have all really clicked working together,” Joseph said. “We run this place smoothly, doing the same mission. We live by the hospital motto, ‘One team. One mission.’”

A majority of the U.S. Air Force personnel assigned to the theater hospital, including Powell and Joseph, come from Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio — one of only two military hospitals that treat civilian trauma patients.

### Put to the test

“Detainees get the same health care as the Soldiers, as the Iraqi Police, as the Iraqi Army. Our job is to provide the highest standard of medical care.”

# cked in ordinary tents

*provides troops with top-notch care*



cs rush a casualty into the emergency room of the theater hospital at Balad Air Base, Iraq. month are seen by the hospital -- most of which are treated for traumatic injuries.



Australian Army Cpl. Jake Morcom works with U.S. Air Force medical staff to stabilize a patient in the emergency room of the theater hospital at Balad Air Base on Dec. 3.

It was a day that most medical units only train for – the day that 29 severely injured Iraqi civilians came in the hospital after multiple car bombs exploded in Balad.

“It was really chaotic because there were just too many patients,” Joseph said.

“I think at first it overwhelmed the staff.”

The staff made it through, successfully. After more than 80 operations by 19 military surgeons, the same 29 civilians that came in to the hospital severely injured, left the hospital alive.

In the sea of tents, another life is being saved by a hard-working medic or an experienced surgeon with the best combat medical care available in Iraq.

“It’s an honor to be able to care for the wounded out here,” Joseph said. “It’s a lifetime experience. I can’t stress enough, it’s what we are proud and happy to do.”

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medical care.”**

Col. Elisha Powell



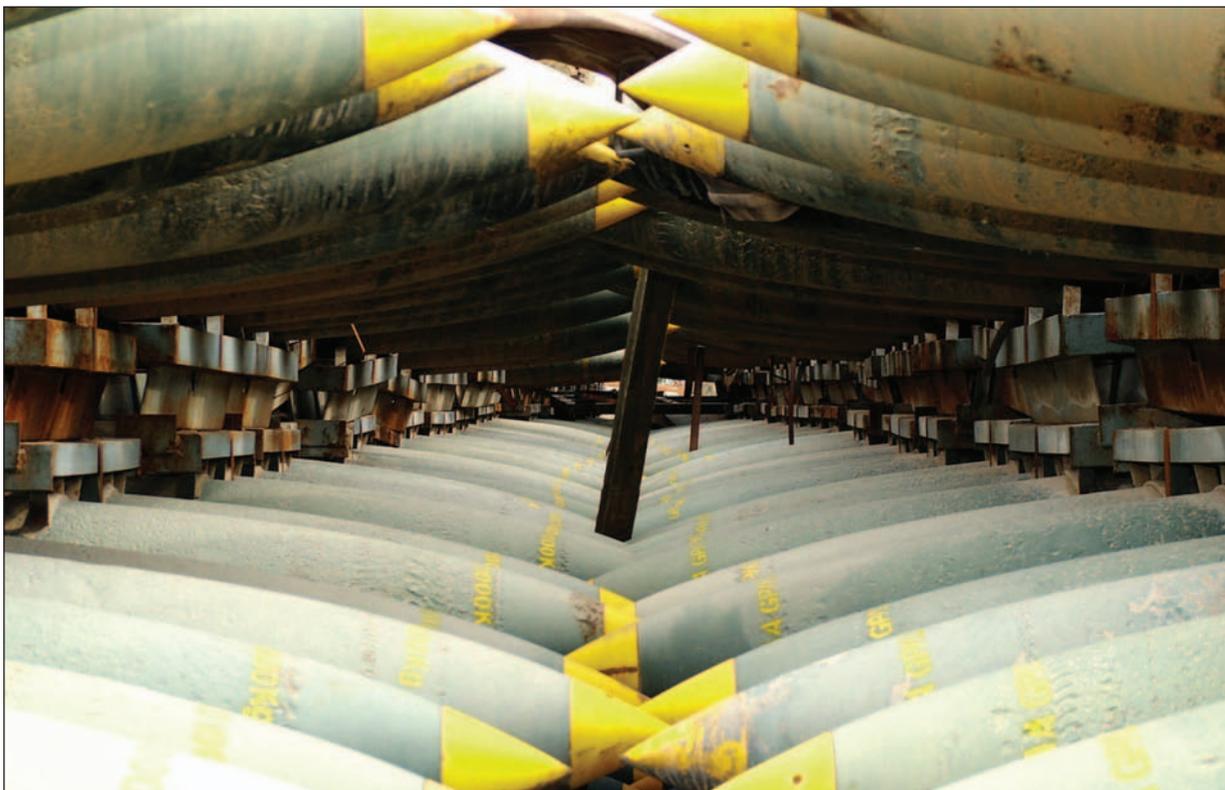
Medics with the 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group unload patients from a Black Hawk helicopter.



Sgt. 1st Class Neil Morrison, a Lebanon N.H. native and explosive ordnance disposal technician with the 710th Ordnance Company, balls up plastic explosives to be used in the destruction of a munitions dump.



Sgt. 1st Class Morrison packs a 1,000-pound bomb with plastic explosives in Taji, on Dec. 16. 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division was tasked with management of the Taji Ammo Dump, known as Area Echo. The unit diligently worked with contractors and explosive ordnance disposal teams to clear the compound of all munitions. Nearly 20,000 tons of munitions were destroyed in Area Echo.



Racks of 1,000-pound bombs were housed in the Taji Ammunition Dump near Baghdad.



A fireball and shockwave cone shoots into the sky in Taji, north of Baghdad. The white mist cloud was created when two shockwaves of simultaneously exploding bombs met. Explosive ordnance disposal technicians detonated the last seven, 1,000-pound bombs in Taji, Dec. 16.

# Big booms boost local economy

## *Ammunition dump project comes to a fiery conclusion*

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Kevin Bromley  
3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division

**TAJI** — “Fire in the hole...Fire in the Hole,” shouted Sgt. 1st Class Neil Morrison right before he detonated seven 1,000-pound bombs nearly simultaneously Dec. 16.

The resulting explosion and shockwave shattered the afternoon’s post-rain silence and signaled the end of a year-long project to rid an old Saddam regime ammunition dump of its deadly stores.

The ammunition dump, known as Area Echo, north of Baghdad, housed tons of ordnance stockpiled by Saddam Hussein’s military. The area contained everything from small caliber ammunition, mortars, and artillery shells to larger weapons such as 1,000-pound bombs and surface to air missiles.

Morrison, and Spc. Joshua Peltz, of the 710th Ordnance

Company busied themselves in the early morning preparing the last of the munitions for destruction.

“Each of the bombs contains almost 450 pounds of explosive material,” said Morrison. “We don’t usually get to detonate aircraft bombs ... we don’t get to blow up this much material very often.”

Morrison and Peltz prepared the bombs by placing plastic explosives and blasting caps in each one.

“We use three to four times the amount of explosives normally used in the fuses to detonate these bombs,” said Morrison. “We want to make sure it functions.”

3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division was tasked with management of Area Echo and diligently worked with contractors and explosive ordnance disposal teams to clear the compound of all munitions.

“Coalition Forces started clearing Taji around May 2003,”

said Capt. Eric Swenson, assistant brigade engineer.

Once the munitions are deactivated, the empty casings are de-milled by a contracting company. The de-milling operation gives jobs to local workers and infuses much needed revenue back into the local economy.

“We have a contractor that cuts the empty casings up and sells the scrap metal,” said Swenson. “The sale of scrap pays for the contractor’s operation and the salaries of the local citizens they employ.”

Swenson estimated that nearly twenty-thousand tons of munitions had been destroyed in Area Echo and the removal these munitions was a significant task that added to the safety of Coalition Forces and the Iraqi people.

“It means that insurgents can’t use the materials for building bombs and the Iraqi government can re-use the land for other purposes.”

# Kevlar works!

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski  
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**TIKRIT** — For many Soldiers, the Kevlar helmet is a necessary evil.

It can be cumbersome trying to handle a tray of food in the dining facility, and it can cause headaches and tension in the neck when worn on lengthy missions.

Sgt. Shawn Snyder of 3rd Infantry Division's 2/7 Scout Platoon is one Soldier who will never complain about wearing his helmet again. With good reason, it saved his life.

Snyder's mission was to escort an Explosive Ordnance Disposal detail as it picked up explosives the Iraqi people found.

"What we do is block off each end of the street so that they can go in and pick the stuff up," Snyder said.

Snyder was standing in the turret scanning his sector and waving off traffic for about 15 minutes when it happened. He recalled hearing a shot and feeling "a little jerk."

Snyder quickly called out to his driver and team commander to ask who was firing. Then he saw the Kevlar particles flying around, so he jumped down in the vehicle and wondered if he was dying.

Snyder removed his Kevlar and felt around on his head ... there was no blood. The round, most likely a 7.62 mm bullet from a sniper rifle, ricocheted off the upper left side of the helmet, shredding the outside and slightly cracking the inside.

"I didn't get a concussion, didn't even get a headache," Snyder said.

Snyder is married with a 13-month-old boy. When the 25-year-old Snyder told his wife what had happened, "she took it as best as a wife could, knowing a round almost killed her husband a month before he got home," he said.

Snyder will be allowed to keep the helmet as a memento when he returns to Fort Stewart Ga., in less than a month.



Sgt. Shawn Snyder, 2/7 Scout Platoon, 3rd Infantry Division, shows the Kevlar helmet which saved his nugget from a 7.62 mm round fired by an insurgent sniper.

# Operation Getting Comfy



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Tracy J. Smith

Spc. Thomas V. Patat, an infantryman with Company A, 2nd Bn., 121st Inf. Regiment, 48th Brigade Combat Team, moves his new mattress into his tent. Patat, a resident of Cochran, Ga., helped transport Iraqi Army National Guardsmen at Camp Lion's Den, an Iraqi Army Base Camp.

# Water Bearer

## Iraq's canal projects deliver water, self-sufficiency

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

**BAGHDAD** — Because of the desert-like climate and high salinity of water in southern Iraq, 2 million residents of Basrah have long relied upon the 149 - mile-long Sweet Water Canal to supply their water for cleaning, cooking, bathing, and washing.

Although local residents typically drink bottled water, once boiled, the water from the Sweet Water Canal is suitable for drinking.

Now, two Project and Contracting Office projects have ensured the canal's quality and reliability for many years, and provided local Iraqis the tools necessary to maintain this vital source.

The Sweet Water Canal, originally constructed in the 1990s, is a partially-concrete-and-earth-lined channel built through the marshes of southern Iraq, to compensate for the Euphrates River's salinity level throughout the region. Experts discovered that the soil originally chosen to line the canal in the Basrah region was inappropriate.

According to a PCO project manager, the lack of maintenance by the former regime, the use of a gypsum-rich soil, coupled with the canal's poor design and construction, resulted in canal breaches and the canal lining swelling, particularly in a 12.4- mile

stretch through Basrah Governate.

"The situation was further complicated when, after the toppling of Hussein's regime, looters stole the overhead electrical lines, poles and two mobile substations, thereby resulting in sporadic shutting-down of the canal's generators," said the manager.

Immediately after the war, several organizations became involved in the project to repair the canal. Officials awarded a contract to Washington International, Black and Veech. The company began daily patrols to inspect and identify canal breaches and investigate soil to the right and left canal embankments.

Experts found the proper soil adequate to repair the canal. The PCO acquired tools and heavy equipment to help the ministry of water resources manage the canal. A local company supplied the trucks to help with maintaining the canal.

"From signature of contract to delivery of the vehicles was four days. They fulfilled the contract to the last detail," said Michael Robson, a program manager with the PCO. "After delivery, we realized that spares and training were missing from the contract. This [local Iraqi] company provided the spares and basic training for no additional cost.

"Since it is a local company, at the end of the day, we can say we gave you the tools to do it yourself," said Robson.



They're looking at you.

Are you looking for them?



CHAPLAIN'S TALK

# The spirituality of camouflage

By Chaplain (Cmdr.) Mitchell Schranz  
MNF-I Chaplain



Chaplain Schranz

In recent years much research was done to come up with camouflage uniforms that provide maximum capacity to blend into whatever the operational environment may be. Much testing was put into researching, to come up with the best possible combination of digital patterns, colors, and hues.

A lot of thought also went into the design of the uniform to make it more functional. Although computers were an important part of the process, the most valuable input came from servicemembers in the field who knew exactly what was required of a good set of cammies. The results are the Army's new ACU's and the Marines DCU's.

There are many other types of field uniforms. Just sitting in the dining facility you can observe an interesting buffet of camouflage uniforms worn by different members of our Coalition partners. Some are colorful; some are brown, some green, some khaki. The purpose of all these uniforms is to make it more difficult for the enemy to see the wearer.

Beyond uniforms, I remember the time some of our Marines were kind enough to show me how they set up camouflage net-

ting over the tents. It was impressive how the tents truly blended into the surrounding foliage. When I was at sea, I often marveled how well a big grey warship blended into the seascape,

especially on an overcast day. It reminded me that in military history, the concept of camouflage is as interesting as it is important.

During the American Revolution, British forces took a beating at the hands of patriot sharpshooters because of the bright red coats worn by the English. Nice-looking uniforms, but good targets. Perhaps we owe our independence to those scarlet coats!

In the Civil War, Northern troops wore blue, and Southerners wore gray. In the latter stages of the war - when Southern states could not import certain dyes, uniforms were of a more khaki-brown color, which proved to have a greater camouflage quality.

During World War I, when the United States had to send large ships across the Atlantic's U-boat infested waters, it became necessary to come up with an effective way of "hiding" ships on the high seas. Realizing it was impossible to completely hide a ship, the goal

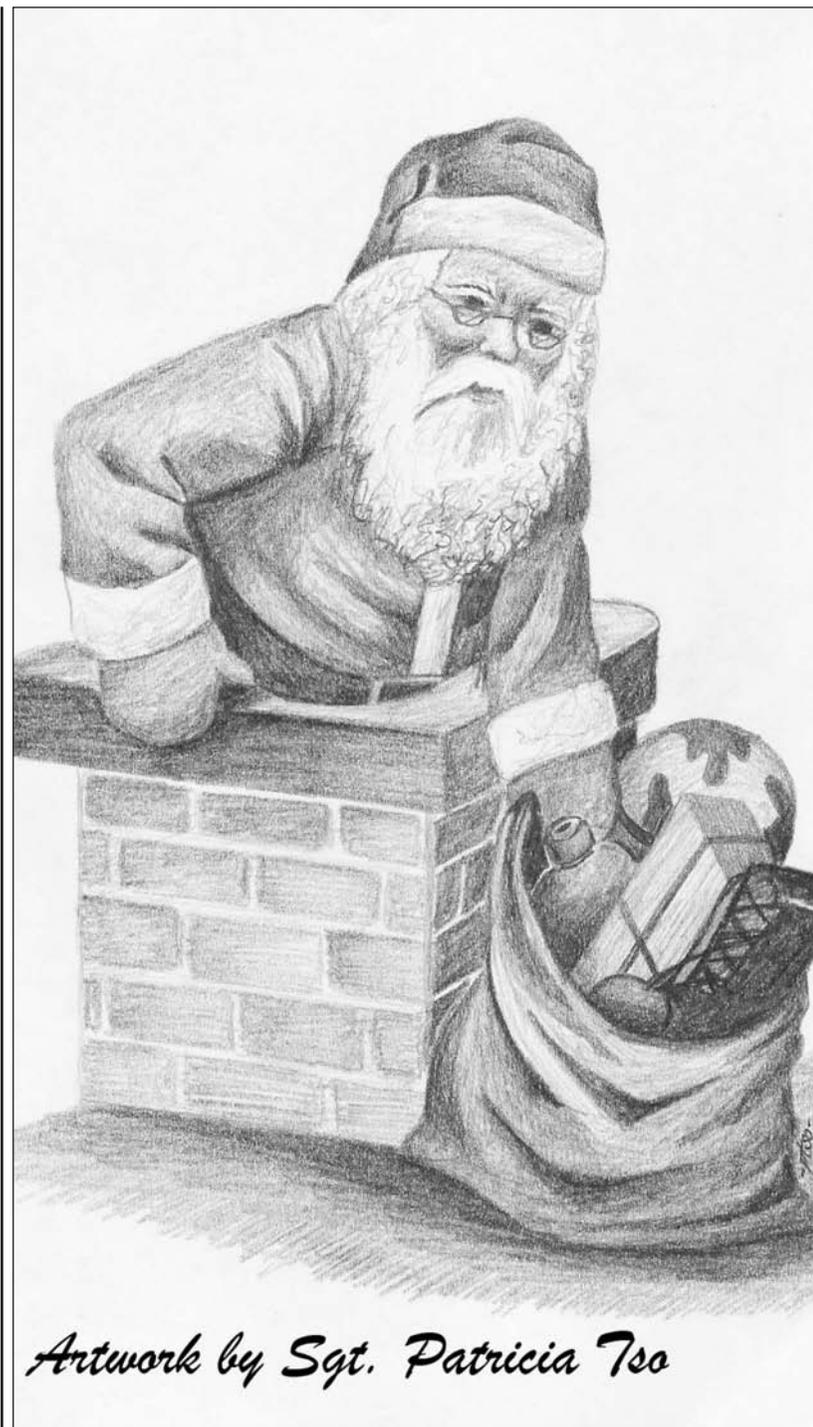
of camouflaging was to confuse U-boat commanders through "dazzle" patterns that visually broke up large areas of the ship's hull.

In World War II, German forces disguised large concrete bunkers on the French coast by painting the outsides like cafes, schoolhouses, etc. Inside were nests of heavy artillery pieces. Allied planners, for their part, created a phantom Army complete with dummy tanks, artillery and planes to fool the Germans into thinking that the D-Day invasion would be at Pas de Calais, vice Normandy. Thousands of Allied lives were saved by this deception.

We can see that sometimes the goal of camouflage is to hide, other times to confuse, and, at other times, to mislead. In the spiritual realm of life it is different. We cannot see God with our eyes, but we can find Him simply by calling upon Him with our hearts. There is nothing confusing or mysterious about this. He is always beside us, never hidden and always so easy to find. God is always there with open arms, ready to embrace us and comfort us — like a parent running to take care of their baby as he or she cries out in the night. Just call and He is there for you!

"The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth."

-Psalm 145



Artwork by Sgt. Patricia Tso

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### SECAF visits Airmen, opens CASF

**BALAD AIR BASE** — Secretary of the Air Force Michael Wynne brought holiday greetings to the Airmen of the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Dec. 18 and 19 and let them know that they are making a difference in the lives of Iraqi citizens.

"I want to pass on to the entirety of the 332nd and all its deployed units, thanks and a great holiday season from three grateful nations — the United States of America, the Iraqi Nation and the Afghani Nation," he said.

Wayne also attended the opening of the new 332nd Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility, which officially opened Dec. 19. Construction on the \$85,000 building began in September.

"With the move into this new semi-hardened facility, we are continuing to improve the care we provide our wounded warriors," said Col. Elisha Powell, 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group commander.

"The biggest improvement is the cleanliness of the facility," said Lt. Col. Teresa Millwater, a CASF chief nurse. "Patients who are injured are at higher risk for infection. Preventing infections will be easier, because there will be less dust and we have indoor hand-washing capabilities."

— Tech Sgt. Pamela Anderson and Staff Sgt. Tammie Moore contributed to this brief.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Chad Watkins  
Secretary of the Air Force Michael Wynne signs a CASF poster at the opening.

### BOB ON THE FOB by Sgt. Albert J. Merrifield



### geardo n. (gēr'·dō)

1. One who spends at least 50% of each paycheck (before taxes) on the latest & greatest gear, just to have the latest and greatest gear, regardless of whether or not that gear will actually help the wearer perform his/her duties. Often closely related to the *fobbitt*.

- "OOH, AH, WOW, I LOOK LIKE A DELTA OPERATOR" SUNGLASSES \$180.-
- "THIS THING WAS DESIGNED BY A S.E.A.L., IT MUST BE GREAT" SLING \$65.-
- "GOTTA MATCH THE ACU" GRENADE POUCH (HOLDS CELL PHONE) \$25.-
- "I CAN USE THIS TO STOP A RIOT IN PROGRESS" (IF I EVER LEAVE THE FOB) COLLAPSIBLE BATON IN ACU-PATTERN POUCH \$60.-
- "HEY, I CAN USE THAT TO STORE AMMO" (USED TO HOLD CANDY & SLIM JIMS) POUCH \$40.-
- "I READ A REVIEW THAT SAID THIS WAS THE BEST S.A.W. POUCH MADE" (JUST IN CASE I EVER HAVE A S.A.W.) POUCH \$49.-
- "WOW, THEY MAKE 9MM POUCHES IN ACU PATTERN?" (SOMEDAY I'LL GET A PISTOL) POUCH \$32.-
- NOT SHOWN- "MY M4 HAS MORE STUFF ON IT THAN YOURS" (BUT IT WEIGHS MORE THAN A .50 CAL) \$650.-
- "THESE GLOVES HAD THE COOLEST LOOKING AD IN THE MAGAZINE I WAS READING THE OTHER DAY" GLOVES \$85.-
- "I HEARD THIS IS THE TYPE THAT SPECIAL OPS WEARS" UNDERWEAR \$35.-
- "ALL SPEC OPS GUYS HAVE A DUMP POUCH, I READ IT IN 'SOLDIER OF FORTUNE' MAGAZINE" POUCH \$60.-
- "SOMEONE TOLD ME THAT THE RANGERS JUST ORDERED A BUNCH OF THESE 'CAUSE THEY'RE SO HIGH SPEED" BOOTS \$210.-

# Scimitar Slapstick

**Verify your surroundings.**

**Anything could contain an IED.**

**STAY ALIVE**

0051 IEDs KILL

**Downrange**

DOWNRANGEWEB.COM

Georgia was the 4<sup>th</sup> state to ratify the Constitution.

Hey P.C. Got any mail for us today?

Seatbelts only work if you use them.

MAIL STUFF!

MAIL STUFF!

12/28/05 © 2005 Jeffery Hall

Thanks P.C.

Everyone deserves respect.

P.C. is a nice guy but he watches waay too much AFN.

Always wear a helmet when using scissors!

JH

Art by Jeffery Hall

**Lifeline Laffs** by Jennings

**How We Got Presents In Iraq: Santa's UpArmored Sleigh**

**Shhhh!**

**Operational Security... OPSEC**

Keep cell phone and email commo free of sensitive information.

You don't know who's listening.

**Downrange**

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Yaacaaaaaaa!

GREASE

JH

1/01/06 © 2006 Jeffery Hall

DOWNRANGEWEB.COM

## Fightin' Words

1	16	17		18		9	19
2				10			
3			21			11	
4					23		
5			12			24	
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		7		22		14	25
8				15			

- ACROSS**
- Red Sox traitor
  - Giant monkey
  - Another Red Sox traitor
  - \_\_\_\_\_ war on terror
  - Chicago/NY train
  - \_\_\_\_\_ beer
  - Light emitting diode
  - Honest \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Alternating Current
  - Simpson's bus driver
  - United Europe
  - \_\_\_\_\_ and overcome.
  - \_\_\_ Jackson
  - childish movie rating
  - Fatbody size
- DOWN**
- Pelegro
  - Eat - past tense
  - Greek sun god
  - message from the boss
  - AF base in a mountain
  - The Supreme \_\_\_\_\_.
  - "Bravo" in spanish
  - to put an end to
  - military term for dispose of
  - where a mad scientist works
  - Midwest for a coke
  - Government issue

*Fightin' Words* solution from Dec. 23, 2005

H	O	M	E	B	A	S	E
U	R	A	N	I	U	M	
T	E	D	S			I	A
		E	I	G	H	T	
D	O	U	G	H		E	T
U		C	N	N		S	I
D		E			P	E	P
E	O		H	E	A	R	S

# Partners for Peace

## *Estonian, U.S. Soldiers keep Iraq safe*

Story and photos by  
Spc. Jeremy D. Crisp  
Mult-National Corps -Iraq

**CAMP TAJI** – A member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is playing a lead role alongside American troops in securing the future of Iraq.

Although small in numbers, the infantry soldiers from Estonia's STONE Platoon bring added force to the tank crews of the Fort Riley, Kan.-based 2nd Battalion, 70th Armor Regiment.

The platoon from Estonia is a highly trained volunteer force that performs infantry missions with skill and firepower like U.S. Army Rangers, said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Nicholas E. Wolf, one of two liaisons to the Estonians and a tank crewmember with Company A, 2nd Battalion.

"These guys are first-rate soldiers, and it is as a privilege to be a member of their team," Wolf said.

He works with the Estonians day in and day out, providing communications help with the unit in the field.

The Estonians patrol their own sector and have relieved some of the strain on the American unit.

When a U.S. company-sized mission is to take place, the Estonians are eager to be a part and assist in all facets.

While one section of the platoon may set up an observation point, another will cordon and search or act as a quick reaction force to any



**Estonian Sgt. 1st Class Jarmo Johkem (center), a squad leader with STONE Platoon, talks with platoon leader Capt. Sergei Gushelnikov (right), and their interpreter during a joint patrol with U.S. troops.**

attacks in the area.

"Having STONE is a huge asset," said Capt. Johnny M. Casiano, commander, Co. A, 1st Bn., 141st Infantry Regiment, based at Fort Riley, Kan. "They are very professional and when we need help, they are always there."

Casiano and his Soldiers complement the armor power of the tank battalion, and the two American units welcome having another pla-

toon of soldiers.

"They give us extra combat power," Casiano said. "They are quiet professionals, and it's been a great experience to be able to have them with us."

Estonian Sgt. 1st Class Jarmo Johkem, a 24-year-old squad leader with STONE Platoon, said the opportunity to fight alongside the Americans in the War on Terror has been an experience he won't forget.

"This has been a chance of a lifetime," Johkem said. "We train, train, train, and now after five years in the military, I have this great opportunity to utilize the training."

"It is great to work with the Americans and see them in action," he said. "We have a very small military, and to see such a large army at work, we can learn a lot."

Gaining war-time experience hasn't come without costs. The unit has lost two soldiers in combat with several wounded since operations in Iraq began in 2003.

Aside from the casualties, the Estonians

play a necessary role in the Coalition forces alongside the Americans, said Capt. Ulo Isberg, Estonian media relations officer with Multi-National Corps – Iraq.

"It's important that we are here and continue to do our mission," Isberg said. "The battalion has a long tradition of excellence dating back to 1919, and this opportunity shows that we are full partners with the U.S., and we will back them as a member of NATO."

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***"They give us extra combat power. They are quiet professionals, and it's been a great experience to be able to have them with us."***

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Capt. Johnny M. Casiano

As a member of the Estonian Scout's Battalion, STONE Platoon was recently visited by the unit's commander, Lt. Col. Indrek Sirel, on a trip to Camp Taji from Estonia. Sirel was there to see his hard-working Estonian soldiers in action and to honor the American troops they have worked with.

"I didn't even really know about

the awards ceremony," said Wolf, who was surprised with the Distinguished Service Decoration of the Estonian Defense Forces.

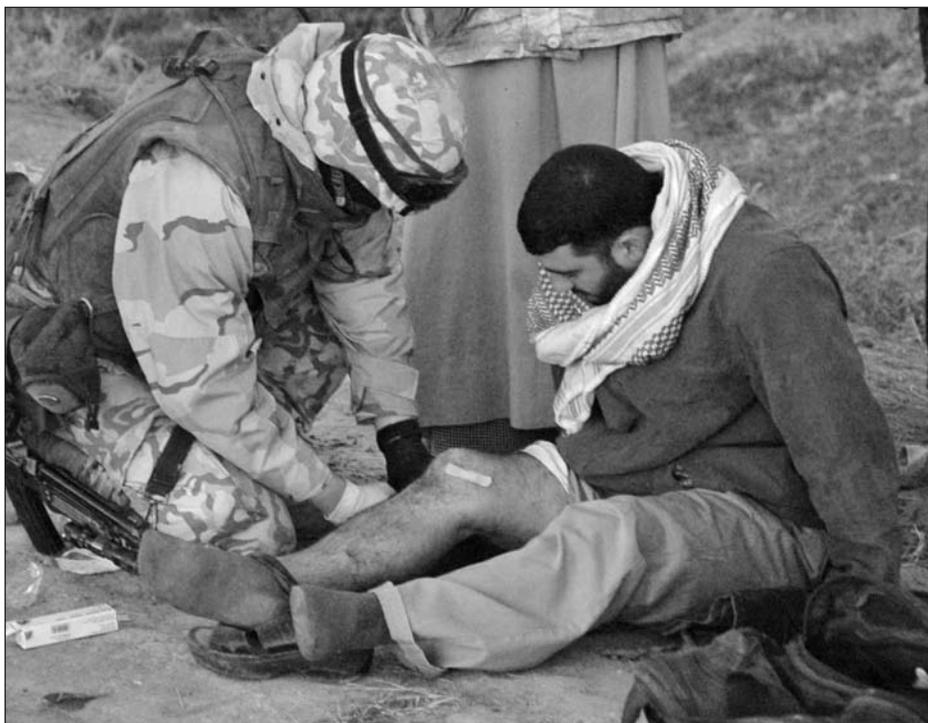
"I thought that was really cool," Wolf said. "I'm really honored that they felt enough to give this to me."

Nine other American Soldiers, including Sgt. Brian McDonald, the other Estonian liaison that works with STONE Platoon, were awarded medals from Sirel during the brief evening ceremony.

Just a few hours after the awards presentations, McDonald and a handful of Estonian soldiers were braving the midnight chill. The unit rolled out long before dawn to conduct a two-day mission searching a volatile area of Baghdad for weapons and insurgents.

Whether something is found, or it's just a quiet day for the STONE Platoon, their presence is undeniable. It may be an air assault mission or eight armed Estonians piling out of the back of their armored vehicles; the Iraqi citizens know them and have come respect them, Wolf said.

"The Estonians feel like chosen ones from their country to support this effort," said Wolf. "They are very proud of their country and what it has achieved, and they continue to want to be apart of this Coalition."



**An Estonian soldier with STONE Platoon performs first-aid on an Iraqi citizen while the unit patrols the Shiha district of Baghdad.**

# Security Forces train Iraqis

## Airmen teach search techniques

Story and photos by  
Master Sgt. Randy L. Mitchell  
447th Air Expeditionary Group  
Public Affairs

**BAGHDAD** — Security Forces pride themselves on their professionalism and now they are instilling that same trait in Iraqi airmen.

Three U.S. Air Force security forces members are responsible for training the Iraqi protection force that will ultimately inherit security operations for New Al Muthana Air Base here.

The Airmen have been training Iraqi Air Force personnel for two months, according to Tech. Sgt. Jared P. Skinner, noncommissioned officer-in-charge of security operations at New Al Muthana.

“We have been primarily training the Iraqi enlisted members in an effort to develop the mid-level NCO’s to perform flight sergeant and shift supervisor duties,” Skinner said. “Using the train-the-trainer philosophy these NCO’s will be responsible for training new security recruits assigned to the base.”

According to Skinner, the training is necessary since the Iraqis have no experience in static base defense or providing security for base resources such as aircraft.

“The Iraqi’s are very eager to learn,” he said. “Our tactics, techniques, and procedures have encouraged a completely different way of approaching security.”

The security forces training being com-

pleted here is just one part of training taking place that covers a full spectrum of base support, according to Skinner.

“We have security forces, vehicle operations, civil engineering, communications, as well as a medical technician training their counterparts,” said Skinner.

Skinner was selected for the assignment based on his background. He served as a heavy weapons trainer for security forces, before taking his assignment as an action officer for headquarters Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

Two other Air Force defenders make up the three-man team in charge of getting the Iraqi protection force up to speed.

Tech. Sgt. Michael Marzec, is the base defense unit training advisor; while Capt. Greg Holmgren is the senior base defense unit advisor.

Marzec, deployed from the 30th Security Forces Squadron at Vandenberg AFB, Calif., said he sees their mission as an opportunity to teach the best Air Force security forces practices to the Iraqi military.

“I see our efforts paying off as Iraqi officers and NCO’s learn how and why the U.S. Air Force operates within the framework of our core values,” said Holmgren, the operations officer for the 374th Security Forces Squadron at Yokota Air Base, Japan. “That is never more evident than when these two outstanding NCOs are teaching their skills to the Iraqi forces.”

“I have been an instructor for most of my Air Force life,” said Skinner. “You really have to



**Tech. Sgt. Jared P. Skinner instructs Iraqi protection force trainees on search techniques.**

capture the Iraqi trainees’ attention at times, so having that experience has definitely made this more of a manageable task.”

The 10-year Air Force veteran was thrilled to be given an opportunity to help develop the new Iraqi Air Force’s security force.

“I knew somebody would have to provide the training,” he said. “I just never thought I would be working this closely with them. However, the progress we have made here is something to be proud of.”

The security forces team arrived in September, while the base was still just a construction site.

“We spent the first month or so conducting vulnerability assessments and executing force protection improvements in order to provide a secure environment in which to train,” Skinner said.

There have been several challenges along the way, according to Skinner. One was learning to communicate effectively with the trainees.

“The NCOs use an interpreter during training,” he said. “However, we make a conscience effort to engage in language training with the Iraqi’s. Their English is coming along much better than my Arabic.

The largest hurdle has been developing self-confidence in the enlisted ranks, according to Skinner. During Saddam’s reign, the gap between enlisted men and officers was tremendous — there wasn’t any respect for the enlisted soldiers.

“The biggest challenge though has been preparing the enlisted for the responsibility they are about to accept,” he added.

“Enabling them to accept delegation has been tough.

“In the new Air Force, that gap is beginning to close,” Skinner said.

“The Iraqis here see the responsibility our enlisted Airmen possess and they mimic that behavior. It’s very encouraging.”

The senior U.S. Air Force advisor to the base believes it is imperative that they do not fail in their mission at New Al Muthana.

“The future of Iraq depends on it building back its airpower,” said Lt. Col. Michael J. Mawson, senior military advisor to New Al Muthana. “To do this they need to have strong and efficient security forces guarding

their bases. The security trainers are doing an outstanding job in shaping the future Iraqi security forces.

“There are no other Iraqi Air Force base defense units. This is their first and Skinner and Marzec, along with Holmgren, are setting the standard for how future Iraqi security forces will perform their mission,” said the New Hampshire

Air National Guardsman.

“What we are trying to do here is build a successful and sustainable model for the Iraqi Air Force,” Skinner said.

“Hopefully, all of the training, mentoring, and advising will help create a capable and independent force for the country of Iraq, long after we’re gone.”



**Air Force Tech Sgt. Jared P. Skinner goes over key points while teaching Iraqi security forces security fundamentals. Skinner was chosen as an instructor because of his weapons and security background.**

# Hawaii students send cheer to Iraq

**Cpl. Heidi E. Loredo**

2nd Marine Expeditionary Force

**SAQLAWIYAH** - In this season of giving, a number of students from Kailua Intermediate School, in Kailua, Hawaii, are reaching out to help the children of Iraq.

The students and teachers have been hard at work for the past two months, sending toys overseas to Marines stationed in Iraq for the country's needy children.

The idea originated out of Boulder, Colo., from a family who arranged to deliver the stuffed animals and soccer balls to an Army staff sergeant in Baghdad.

"My son started Operation Teddy Bear with his two teenage daughters and wife," said state Rep. Cynthia Thielen, assistant minority floor leader, Hawaii House of Representatives. "I was visiting [him] in Boulder during the project and was very impressed."

During a visit to the school's 7th and 8th grade class, Thielen proposed the same idea to the students.

"When I went to teacher Kathleen Nullet's 7th and 8th grade classes to talk about the legislature, I proposed to the students that they conduct an Operation Teddy Bear too," said Thielen. "I felt that Hawaii's students would like to reach out with aloha to the students in Fallujah, Iraq. The students were very excited about the idea, and they really expanded upon it."

Nullet said the students were excited to take on the task and Thielen was extremely helpful and influential getting the project off the ground and running.

"I was looking for a service learning project for my 8th grade students to participate in," said Nullet. "Many of my students have parents who are from [Marine Corps Base Hawaii]. Both local and military students wanted to reach out to the Iraqi children in an attempt to spread aloha."

Nullet and Thielen hope that, as future community leaders, the students will spearhead ideas that will help others, especially after seeing the results of their efforts.

Approximately \$1,600 was raised for the toys from the local community who responded well to the students request for soccer balls, stuffed animals and money to cover shipping costs. The students had money left over and are buying more soccer balls to ship.

Thielen also wrote to the founder of Build-a-Bear, asking her to donate 50 Build-a-Bears dressed in doctors' green scrubs for the Marines in Fallujah to deliver to children in the local hospitals.

"I volunteered to cover the ship-



Lieutenant Col. Robert A. Sammel, Detachment 4 commander, 6th Civil Affairs Group, 2nd Marine Division, hands an Iraqi child a soccer ball, donated by Hawaiian students, during a patrol in Fallujah on the day of the election.



An Iraqi child waves her Iraqi flag while holding on to her new teddy bear during a recent visit from Team 4, Detachment 4, 6th Civil Affairs Group, 2nd Marine Division.

ping costs," said Thielen. "I just received word that Build-a-Bear will donate the 50 bears, all in doctors' scrubs and little face masks. The bears will be shipped after Christmas."

The items donated were distributed to schools by Team 4, Detachment 4, 6th Civil Affairs Group, 2nd Marine Division, in Saqlawiyah, as they continued their efforts to distribute numerous supplies to the children of

Iraq.

"Donating toys is one little small factor, but it puts a big humanitarian face on what we do," said Chief Warrant Officer Gregory Melotte, team commander. "It's great to see little kids out here. We bring them things they haven't had in a long time or never had, like school supplies or toys. The children of the country are the future. Those are the people we need to help."



Twenty-two-year-old Lance Cpl. Robert Hancock, a gunner, Team 4, Detachment 4, 6th Civil Affairs Group, 2nd Marine Division, is crowded by Iraqi children in Saqlawiyah.