



Rakkasan Report

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IA Assumes Larger Role in Tikrit Security



*By Maj. Tom Bryant
3 BCT Public Affairs*

TIKRIT, Iraq (February 5) – In a symbolic ceremony conducted at a former palace of the Saddam Hussein regime, the Iraqi Army’s 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Division assumed an increased role in securing the people of the greater Tikrit area.

“[Today’s ceremony] marks an historic milestone,” said Lt. Col. Richard Root, commander of 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment. “It symbolizes the growth of the Iraqi Army’s capability and credibility.”

The 3-320th Red Knight Rakkasans, from Ft. Campbell, Kentucky’s 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, are partnered with the Iraqi battalion.

The event began with the formation of troops in the parade area near the 1/1/4 headquarters at the Birthday Palace. Remarks were delivered by Gen. Abdul Jabar, commander of the 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Division, Col. Dakhia, the 1st Battalion Commander, and Lt. Col. Root.

The ceremony was attended by a number of provincial and local leaders, including Salah Ad Din Governor Hamad Humood Al-Shakt and the Director of the Provincial Joint Coordination Center, General Easa Mahmood.

According to Brig. General Abdul Jabar, this day has been long in the making for his soldiers and leaders.

“When our Army was started 3 years ago, this is the day the soldiers and officers looked forward to – when they would be doing their duty, *- See Ceremony Page 2*

Photo By Spc Matt Wrzesinski
Soldiers from 1st Bn., 1st Bde., 4th Iraqi Army Div. pass in review during a ceremony at one of Saddam Hussein’s former palaces Feb. 5.

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF DISASTER

*By Staff Sgt. Jesse C Riffin
3 BCT Public Affairs*

SAMARRA, Iraq (February 26) - Samarra lies approximately one hundred and seventy five kilometers north of Baghdad. It was once the heart of Mesopotamia and the capital of the Muslim world. Since the days of the Saddam Hussein regime, Samarra has been a city torn by tribal conflicts and government corruption.

The city holds two of the most renowned Muslim monuments in the world; the Askiri Mosque and the mosque’s spiral minaret, both of which have been attacked by terrorists.

Most recently the mosque’s golden dome was destroyed by an attack in the early morning hours of 22 Feb. The explosion in the mosque echoed through the streets and was heard in Forward Operating Base Brassfield-Mora nearly 10 kilometers away. The message it sent reached Muslims- *See Golden Mosque Page 3*



Photo By Staff Sgt. Jesse Riffin
The Askiri Mosuqe stands overlooking the city of Samarra 17 Feb. Just days before it’s golden dome was destroyed by terrorists on 22 Feb.

Editors Notes

The 133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment is currently attached to the 3rd BCT Public Affairs Office to help us cover all units in the Rakkasan area of operations.

Look for video and prints stories on the Rakkasans at www.dvidshub.net.

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CEREMONY



providing security,” said Abdul Jabar.

Following the leaders' remarks, the formation of troops executed a series of drill movements and conducted a pass and review for the assembled guests of honor.

For Maj. Christopher Engen, Operations Officer for the 4th Infantry Division's 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment and MiTT (Military Transition Team) team leader in Tikrit, today's ceremony caps a busy training period since his team arrived in December 2005.

“Today formalizes that the battalion has achieved a certain level of combat readiness and is ready to assume security for the greater Tikrit area,” Engen said.

Engen was quick to note that the training and partnership do not end with today's ceremony.

“[Our goal now is to] get the

battalion staff better at planning and synchronizing effects, improving their ability to conduct independent operations,” said Engen.

The 1st Battalion's lineage, though short, is nonetheless impressive. Validated as a combat ready unit by the 101st Airborne Division in January 2006 – less than two years after being formed – the battalion has companies based in Tikrit, Bayji, and Ad Dawr.

The battalion's primary duties are focused on defeating insurgent forces in the Salah Ad Din province. Their mission set has also included providing special security for polling sites during elections, securing fuel convoys delivering products to the local citizens, and providing assistance to local schools and hospitals.

As Iraqi Army units build more operational capability, coalition forces will assume a less visible role in the fight against the insurgency.

That reduced role should not be construed as a lessening of commitment by the coalition. According to Lt. Col. Root, “These warriors are our brothers in arms. They are risking their lives every day for the safety of their fellow citizens.” ☧

Rak 6 Sends

Rakkasan Troopers - I want every one of you to know I appreciate the job you're doing, the risks you are willingly taking, and the difference you are making here in Iraq. Stay plugged in, and expect the next contact to be around the next corner. I need every trooper's help as we progress in this fight, this time in partnering with the Iraqi Army. Men, that is the only way this fight will be won in the long run, by Iraqis stepping up and taking the fight to the insurgents. NCO's, I need you to do what you do best - train soldiers - and to get the Iraqis ready to assume this fight alone. Instill in them the discipline to prepare - the will to fight is just as important, or more important, as the skill to fight. For the extended Rakkasan family, I want to reiterate to every one of you how vital your continued commitment is for the troops over here. As we enter the second half of this fight, your support becomes even more important - and I want to thank you again for all that you do. Finally, as we reach the six-month mark in this fight, I want to tell every Rakkasan Soldier one more time how proud I am to be your commander. RAKKASAN!

Golden Mosque

throughout Iraq.

The mosque dates back nearly twelve hundred years. It held the tombs of the tenth and eleventh Shi'a Imams and was the birth place of the twelfth. Imams are clerical leaders in the Muslim faith.

The mosque is Shi'a in origin, but it is treasured by both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims worldwide. It was not an attack on Sunni or Shi'a. It was an attack on Iraq and the Muslim world according to the Governor of Salah ad Din Province, Hamad Hamood Shugti. He spoke to journalists 23 Feb. calling the people of Iraq to rise above the attack and unite as one.

"For all of Iraq and all of Salah ad Din [province], you witnessed the devastation of the holy place," said Hamad. "Be wise and patient. Do not be led by the ones who want to separate our country."

This event has caused civil unrest in Samarra and many parts of the country. Demonstrators took to the streets. The majority of these demonstrations were peaceful, but some led to violence and bloodshed.

Bringing the country and the security forces together is a monumental task, but an essential element in subduing the turmoil Iraq is facing.

"The future is rebuilding our country without discrimination between Arabic, Kurds and Turkmen," said Hamad, "a country that will not discriminate between Shi'a and Sunni."

There are many aspects to fighting the insurgency.



Photo By Maj Tom Bryant

Photo extracted from video taken from the Governor of Salah ad Din's helicopter survey of the damage done to the Golden Mosque on 22 Feb.

One way is for US forces to partner with citizens and ISF. Getting them to take ownership of their neighborhoods and of the security in these areas is the key to peace in Iraq, according to Maj. John Calahan, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, Executive Officer.

The Rakkasans of Company B, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, experienced the mosque bombing first hand. They have been working with a group of Iraqi commandos in the city since December.

The goal is of the Rakkasans and the Commandos is to create a secure environment and help the Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army develop a foundation to base future security plans.

"We want to put an Iraqi face on security," said Calahan. "We want them to have faith in their security forces and work with the local government."

The question remains: what will it take to secure a peaceful future in Iraq? There is no simple answer. The problems Iraq is facing are complex and have roots running back thousands of years. The bombing of the Askiri Mosque has complicated matters even more. Despite talk of civil war in the western media, there is hope that the event will bring the country closer and strengthen their convictions to peace and stability.

"The Sons of Salah ad Din have been through many hard times, and it has made us stronger," said Hamad. "Be stronger than the attackers and keep your eyes on the future of our country, so our children may live in peace." ❌



Photo By Staff Sgt. Jesse Riggins

Sgt. Nicholas Mosca of Plano, IL, a team leader in Company B, 3-187 In, overwatches Iraqi Commandos as they enter and search homes in Samarra during a joint operation conducted 20 Feb.

Rakkasans Train and Support Iraqis on Infrastructure Security

By Capt. Amy A. Bishop
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime, the primary mission in the war in Iraq has been to establish security for the country, wipe out insurgents, establish a democratic government and make Iraq a safer place for its citizens to live.

The rebuilding of key infrastructure systems such as electrical plants, power lines, water facilities, chemical plants, roads, dams and oil pipelines had taken a backseat to the more pressing issue of establishing law and order and stamping out insurgents. Now, with more and more Iraqi Army units coming online to assist coalition forces against insurgents, getting the country's infrastructure systems up and running has become a primary goal.

There are, however, security concerns about new infrastructure projects becoming targets for Anti-Iraqi Forces. While the Iraqi Army is focused on overall security of an area, Strategic Infrastructure Battalions are tasked with the security of specific infrastructure systems in their area.

Strategic Infrastructure Battalions are not new. They originally fell under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior. Recently, many of these specialized battalions have realigned under the Iraqi Army, allowing for the proper training and the acquisition of new equipment and personnel to make them more effective.

The 7th SIB, working in the northern area of the Salah Ad Din Province, has two missions.



Photo By Capt. Amy A. Bishop

A 7th SIB Soldier provides security for U.S. 1/33rd Cavalry Soldiers from an up armored Chevrolet pickup as they procure concrete barriers in the city of Mahattat Tululal Baqq.

It provides security for a network of power lines that run from the Bayji power station and for an oil pipeline that originates at the Bayji oil refinery and runs north into Turkey.

The 7th SIB is working side by side with the War Rakkasans from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team's 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment to secure several key intersections north of Bayji.

Highway One, the most heavily traveled north to south highway in Iraq, has seen many instances of insurgent activity over the past few years. One particular intersection was considered such a high risk to the pipeline construction and the power line network that the headquarters of a 7th SIB Company is located there.

With the help of Coalition Forces, phase one is underway to construct a manned checkpoint to provide the needed control of the intersection.

"By controlling this intersection we are doing two things, one we are controlling the traffic that flows north and south, doing spot checks for weapons, for munitions that might be coming in and for terrorists that might be coming in from out of the country" said Maj. David E. Norton, Squadron Executive Officer of 1-33 Cav. "It also provides better security for the pipeline road because in order to move down the pipeline they are going to have to get past this checkpoint."

According to Norton, the importance of protecting these two assets is clear. The power lines that run out of the Bayji power plant provide about 60 percent or more of Baghdad's power and the completion of the pipeline will



Photo By Capt. Amy A. Bishop

Lt. Col. Radif Lafi Al Shemari, Commander of the 7th Strategic Infrastructure Battalion (left) and Maj. David E. Norton, Executive Officer for the 1/33rd Cav (right) discuss specifics of the checkpoint construction that will be manned by the 7th SIB after construction and training are complete.

greatly improve the economic situation of the people here, once oil begins to flow again.

The 1-33 Cavalry is assisting with the acquisition and placement of concrete barriers, the first phase of the checkpoint project, designed to channel traffic and stop insurgents from bypassing the checkpoint.

Future phases will include the construction of guard towers, a guard shack, and placement of moveable barriers that will allow for traffic flow management. Lighting and mirrors will be provided to assist them in searching potentially hazardous vehicles. Iraqi SIB soldiers will also be trained in proper checkpoint procedures and maintaining 24-hour checkpoint operations.

Soldiers from 1-33 Cav. will partner with SIB soldiers to oversee operations at the checkpoint and to provide services such as bomb detection dogs until construction and training are complete.

Norton believes that the training and assistance they are providing the 7th SIB brings Iraq closer to independence and Soldiers closer to home. "It is a pretty important job because we know if we keep the oil flowing and the power flowing, keys to the economy and keys to making Iraq safe and secure,...[Iraq] can stand on its own feet."

Leader Rakkasan Awarded Purple Heart

By *Spc. William Jones*
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAYJI, Iraq (February 13, 2006) – A brush with death has not curbed the enthusiasm of one young Soldier deployed to Iraq.

Pvt. 1st Class Daniel Wilson is an infantryman in Company C, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment in Fort Campbell's 3rd Brigade Combat Team. The unit is currently deployed to the northern Iraqi city of Bayji. Today he is working in the unit's tactical operations center as a radio operator, but he didn't start out there.

Wilson started out as a driver and gunner doing patrols with his fellow Rakkasans through the city outside of Forward Operating Base Summerall. Prior to the December election, all of his missions had taken place without incident.

Wilson and his platoon were traveling off of the main road on Election Day when his up-armored humvee hit a landmine buried on top of a propane tank.

"We were in the second vehicle driving back to the FOB," said Wilson. "I remember laughing at something... and then I felt my body moving through the air. The next thing

I knew I was lying on the ground about fifteen feet away from the truck."

Spc. Tim Ramirez was in the lead vehicle and saw the explosion. "There was a flash... the truck lifted up off of the ground. I got out of my truck and I saw Wilson lying on the ground. I thought he was dead."

Dazed for a moment, Wilson stood up and ran back to the humvee to check on his buddies. "There was no one in there. I heard Sgt. Black, my NCOIC, yelling. He had hurt his legs and I helped carry him to the medics."

Wilson was flown to an Army hospital in Tikrit for five days because of an unusual cut on his right elbow. The incident in December has not curbed his motivation or enthusiasm. He still looks forward to each mission that takes him "outside the wire" and into the city.

General Richard A. Cody, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, awarded Wilson the Purple Heart on February 13, 2006 during a visit to Forward Operating Base Summerall.

Wilson turned 21 during his mid-tour leave and has been in the Army since he graduated Cherokee High School, in Canton, Georgia in



Photo By Spc William Jones
General Richard A. Cody, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, awards Pfc. Daniel Wilson the Purple Heart for injuries sustained from an improvised explosive device in December 2005.

2004. He will be promoted to specialist in March.

He plans to return to his hometown of Canton when he is discharged from active duty to attend college in hopes of becoming a police officer.

Georgia may have to wait a few years before this decorated young Soldier enters its police force. He will have a lot of stories to tell when he gets there, but right now he continues on with his duties, proud to be an American Soldier.

Rakkasans Make Commanders Mission Easier Outside FOB

By *Spc. Waine Haley*
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

TIKRIT, Iraq (January 31, 2006) – In the fight for stability in the ever-changing battlefield of Iraq, many men and women find themselves training for and taking on new and previously unfamiliar jobs.

Personal Security Detail is a task that protects a person or persons from the time they leave a secure area to the time they return.

At this point of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the battlefield for Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 3rd Battalion 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, has a more diplomatic overtone.

Commanders and senior personnel need

a hands-on approach to the locals in a still semi-hostile environment. This is where PSD Soldiers spend the majority of their time.

Staff Sgt. Eugene R. Montoya, Chief Field Artillery Surveyor, said there are many specialized jobs in the Army including artillery that, upon deployment into a combat zone, are not really needed.

"The only way we would have to work our [jobs] here and now is if we were to occupy an area that has not been occupied till this point." Montoya said.

Montoya, a Prineville, Ore. native, and his troops have been tasked with the duty of providing the Personal Security Detail for the commander of 3/320th FA Reg., and the base's VIPs.

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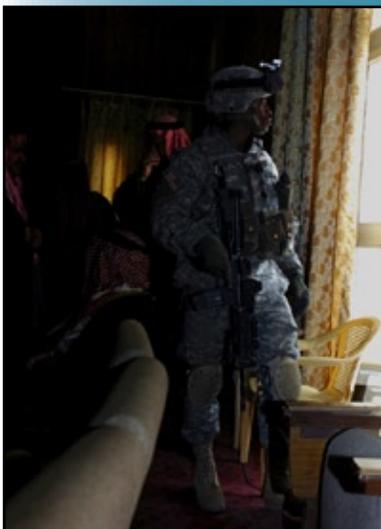


Photo By Spc Waine Haley
Sgt. Errol Bozel, HHB, 3/320th FA, provides security during a PSD mission in Tikrit.

Rakkasans Put Control of Iraq Back in Hands of Iraqis

By Staff Sgt. Jesse C Riggins
3 BCT Public Affairs

Over the past four months the Rakkasans and their Iraqi Army partners have been taking the fight to the enemy. Numerous caches have been uncovered to include one that held thousands of pounds of explosives. They have captured, detained and killed terrorists who planted and were using these caches. They have trained the Iraqi Army and turned over control of battle space to their commanders. What does all this mean?

The Rakkasan's battle space is roughly the size of Vermont. It stretches from Samarra in the South up to Tikrit and Bayji in the North, and the situation is different in every area.

Samarra, once considered a "failed city," according to Lt. Col Craig Collier, 3rd Brigade Combat Team Deputy Commander, is now secured by the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment and the Iraqi Special Police (Commandos).

3-187 Infantry is seeing the early stages of a process that is taking place throughout the Rakkasans' battle space. The Iraqi Police are trained to provide security in the cities and the Iraqi Army secures an inner and outer ring around the cities. As the Iraqi Security Forces show they are capable of securing an area, the Rakkasans scale down operations.

"We begin to move further and further away," said Collier. "We go from tactical overwatch, to operational overwatch, to strategic overwatch where eventually we just go in when needed."

This does not happen over-night and in some cases, like Samarra, it may be some time before this end state is reached; however, progress is evident throughout the country.

Operations in and around Ad Dujayl and Forward Operating Base O'Ryan were turned over from 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment to the Iraqi Army in December. The Hunters from 2nd Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment and the Leader Rakkasans are conducting joint operations with Iraqi Army units regularly. Most recently 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade 4th Iraqi Army Division assumed control of operations in a portion of Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's home-town.

These are all significant steps toward the end state of Iraqi Security Forces in control of a self governing, democratic Iraq. But there is still a lot of work to be done, and the Rakkasans play a large role in disrupting terrorist activities.

Since the Rakkasans began conducting combat missions over one hundred suspected terrorist have been detained and processed and numerous caches have been found containing weapons and munitions. One of the most significant finds came in December.

Company B, 1st Battalion 187th Infantry Regiment, discovered a cache on 20 December that led to over 30 additional caches north of Bayji. Thousands of rockets, land mines and artillery rounds along with hundreds of pounds of high explosives were uncovered and then destroyed.

The find didn't eliminate the threat of



Photo By Staff Sgt. Jesse Riggins

Citizens watch as Soldiers from Company B, 3-187 In, and Iraqi Commandos conduct a cordon and search mission in a neighborhood in Samarra.

attacks but it did deal a serious blow to the insurgent's recourses for carrying out attacks.

"That was a big find and based on what we found, the insurgents were using it," said Collier. "We eliminated that from their pool of recourses. It doesn't stop what they're doing but it does make it more difficult for them to operate."

The War on Terror in Iraq is ever-changing and the battlefield presents new challenges for commanders and Soldier's every day, but progress is being made. A common goal and partnership is being established between the Rakkasans and the Iraqi Army.

"There are always Iraqi's out there who are willing to fight against us and fight against the government," said Collier, "but there are plenty of Iraqis who are willing to receive the future of democracy. There are a lot of them out there and they don't get the press that the insurgents often get, but they're out there and they're making a difference."

at first, because the Soldiers had no experience functioning as a PSD as their primary job was as a gun battery.

In more than 100 missions, the team has only had one incident -- an IED detonation involving a convoy transporting the battalion commander.

The Rakkasans continue to adjust to different demands of the OIF mission. Montoya said the different challenges Soldiers face on the battlefield can be overcome with the right training and positive attitudes.

PSD

The training started in Kuwait and included drills such as building clearance, vehicle roll over, reaction to contact and reaction to Improvised Explosive Devices. Training continued in Iraq with outgoing troops that had already been doing these tasks.

"We were able to get additional training from the 2nd Battalion, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 101st Aviation Brigade," said Sgt. Errol Bozel, Chief Field Artillery



Surveyor, "They gave us a run through of the dos and don'ts, and what to expect here in Iraq."

Bozel, a St. Thomas, Virgin Islands native, said the mission was a challenge

Chaplain's Corner

TROUBLED? WELL R.A.T.S!

TROUBLED TIMES COME AND SOMETIMES THERE IS LITTLE WE CAN DO ABOUT IT. YOU MAY NOT EVEN BE ABLE TO TELL A FRIEND ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE EXPERIENCING. OTHERS MAY JUST NOT UNDERSTAND. SO YOU MIGHT WONDER WHAT TO DO. MAY I SUGGEST WHAT A FRIEND OFFERED TO ME. IT IS SUMMARIZED IN THE ACRONYM R. A. T. S: RELEASE, ADMIT, THANK, AND STEP.

-RELEASE IT TO GOD. ASK GOD TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OVER THIS PROBLEM. (HE IS WILLING TO.)

-ADMIT TO OTHERS, THAT YOU DO NEED HELP AND ACCEPT HELP FROM OTHERS.

-THANK GOD FOR THE SMALL THINGS HE DOES IN OUR WORLD.

-STEP FORWARD KNOWING THAT GOD IS AT WORK.

CH (CPT) RALPH L. BIEGANEK
1-33 CAV "WAR RAKKASANS"

Rakkasans and IA Assault Samarra



Photo By Spc Matt Wrzesinski

Rakkasans from Company C, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, partnered up with Soldiers from 2nd Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army division on an air assault mission on the village of Al Tuth Feb. 17. With the Rakkasans and the IA working together, the mission confirmed the HVT's activity in the area and led to information that will further help the Rakkasans track down the objective. This mission was another step in the transitioning of security responsibilities from coalition forces to the Iraqi Security Forces. US Army Noncommissioned officers have taken a leading role in training Iraq's army.

RAKKASAN PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

The Rakkasan Report is an official publication of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). It is an electronic publication posted bimonthly and can be viewed at www.dvidshub.net under Military Publications. The contents are not necessarily the official views or endorsed by the US Government, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army or the 101st Airborne Division.

We welcome submissions and story ideas of any kind. Submissions should be made through Staff Sgt. Jesse C. Riggin at jesse.charles.riggin@us.army.mil

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TASK FORCE RAKKASAN

IN MEMORY OF

GREATER LOVE HAS NO ONE THAN THIS,
THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS
JOHN 15:13



CPL ANDREW KEMPLE

A 3-187 INF

2 APR 1982 - 12 FEB 2006

TILL WE FORM AGAIN...