

THE EAGLE & CRESCENT

WITH THE MARINES IN IRAQ

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Iraqi army division takes helm at Blue Diamond

Cpl. Lynn Murillo
I Marine Expeditionary Force

RAMADI, Iraq - The Iraqi army's 7th Infantry Division officially opened its doors with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Camp Blue Diamond May 9.

Once used by U.S. Army and Marine Corps units as a forward operating base, the camp will be home to 1,500 Iraqi troops within the next 12 months.

The division-level Military Transition Team 3 and staff from the Iraqi army's 7th Infantry Division moved from Camp Fallujah to Blue Diamond in March to clean, repair and update a palace once used by Sadaam Hussein and his extended family.

British Maj. Gen. Peter Everson, deputy commanding general of Multi-National Corps Iraq, and Maj. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer, commanding general of Multi-National Force West, both offered short comments during the ceremony, touting the tireless work toward this milestone by Iraqi and U.S. service members. The 7th Infantry Division's commanding general, Maj. Gen. Murthi Mishin Rafa Faraha, also expressed appreciation and pride for his soldiers.

The division was formed in 2005 and is now being tasked with securing the area in the northwestern part of Al Anbar Province. Battalions and brigades are to train in urban combat, cordon and search missions, and check points in order to better protect the infrastructure of the cities in its battle space.

The Marines of MiTT 3 are responsible for working alongside the staff to ensure every area of staff development is covered to support the three brigades that fall under it. They also assisted the division staff with organizing workspaces inside the Rotunda Building, a palace that sits on the banks of the Euphrates River northeast of Ramadi.



Cpl. Lynn Murillo

Maj. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer, commanding general of Multi-National Force West, helps cut the ribbon to the new headquarters building for the 7th Iraqi Army Division at Camp Blue Diamond May 9.

The 15-man team with expertise in operations, intelligence, logistics and communications has been working with its Iraqi counterparts since February. Although the progress was slow at first, things are starting to come together now that they have a place to call home, said Col. Steven M. Zotti, commanding officer of MiTT 3.

"Now that we are beginning to grow as a staff, we can start functioning as a staff," said Zotti, adding that it has been a steep learning curve for the soldiers, who are now briefing generals on the development of the division and its troops. "They know we refuse to let them fail," he said.

"We are trying to build a security force the people can rely on," said Zotti. "Our goal is to have them be able to control and support two

of their brigades within the next year, with less support from the U.S. soldiers and Marines.

"Most of the seeds we are planting today we will see in the next generation," said Zotti. "In the next five or 10 years, we will see the fruit of our efforts."

In the meantime, the Iraqi soldiers gain more responsibility as Marines and soldiers lessen their footprint on Blue Diamond, which will eventually become exclusively an Iraqi army camp.

Cpl. Lynn Murillo is a combat correspondent with I Marine Expeditionary Force serving in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail her at Lynn.Murillo@cemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.

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5-DAY FORECAST



Sergeant Major's Message to Families

Dear family and friends,

As we creep up on our three-month mark, the temperatures are creeping above 100 degrees. Despite the tendency for rising temperatures to slow things down, the Marines, soldiers, sailors and airmen continue to work at their typical motivated pace. The operational tempo is moving along at a fast clip, and the progress is moving right along with it. Every day, there are positive signs of success, including the capture of insurgents, discovery of weapons caches, and use of equipment that keeps service members safe while increasing the pressure on the terrorists.

Last week, Camp Blue Diamond, former deployed home of the 1st Marine Division, reopened as a fully functioning Iraqi army camp after months of preparation by our service members and their Iraqi partners. This new base will allow the newly trained Iraqi army division to execute its mission of securing the northwestern part of the Al Anbar Province.

A couple of improvements are coming



Sgt. Maj. Thomas H. Howard
Sergeant Major
Multi National Forces-West

to Camp Fallujah, the headquarters camp of I MEF (Forward). We have recently begun the Freedom Calls program, which allows service members to speak with their loved ones via video teleconferencing. This opportunity will be spread equally among the units over the course of the deployment. Families will be notified by their Family Readiness point of contact in the rear when their service members are scheduled to be a part of the program. Please be patient as we continue to improve this program. Also, our internet café will be closing temporarily while we upgrade the capability and add more computers and telephones. While these improvements will help keep us in better touch with you, the impact of your support cannot be overstated. Please continue all of your outstanding support - it is critical to keeping motivation high!

Please check back after June 1 to hear the news about your warriors doing a fine job out here in Al Anbar Province. Until then, take care on the home front and Semper Fidelis.

MNF-W

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

SPEED LIMITS ARE
NOT MADE
TO BE BROKEN

DRIVE RESPONSIBLY,
DRIVE SAFELY



BRIEFS

I MEF (Forward) Web Site

The I MEF (Forward) homepage is a great way for you and your family to know what is happening in Al Anbar. The site contains information on family readiness, Tricare, Motomail, Navy relief, Red Cross, the Injured Marine Fund and USO care packages. The site also has links to many units within I MEF (Forward). Please visit the site at www.imef-fwd.usmc.mil for all this and the latest news from Iraq.

Synthetic clothing not authorized outside wire

Synthetic clothing items are not authorized for wear outside forward operating bases and combat outposts. Marines, sailors, soldiers and airmen working in environments with a high risk of fire, exposure to open flames, or exposure to hot equipment are also prohibited from wearing synthetic clothing. Prohibited items include synthetic T-shirts, PT shorts, and men's and women's undergarments.

Camp Fallujah

MWR events

Open jam/ music night	Mon.	at 2000
Chess tournament	Tue.	at 2030
Jump rope contest	Wed.	at 2000
PS2 tournament	Thurs.	at 2000
Jazz night	Fri.	at 2000
6-on-6 soccer tournament	Sat.	at 1500

*Movie Night: MWR facility daily at 2000.
For more information, contact
crystal.nadeau@halliburton.com.

A Message to our readers

The Eagle & Crescent is a publication produced for Multi National Forces - West service members and their families and friends. We appreciate your interest, prayers and patriotic support.

Semper Fidelis, MNF-W PAO

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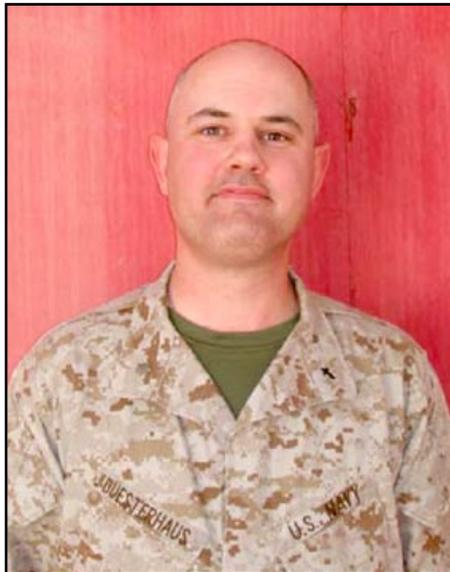
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Chapel of Hope Service Schedule

Friday - Jewish Sabbath Service (1st & 3rd Friday)	1830
Saturday - Catholic Confessions Catholic Vigil Mass	1700 1800
Sunday - Catholic Mass Protestant Communion Service Protestant Contemporary Service Gospel Service Lutheran Services	0800 0915 1030 1300 1830
Monday - Friday Catholic Confessions Catholic Daily Mass (Blessed Sacrament Chapel)	1700 1800

THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER Reflections on Ministry in Iraq



Chaplain (LCDR, USN) Michael R. Duesterhaus
1st Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group

I returned to Iraq in November, just 56 days after I came home with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit. I began my work with 2nd Marine Division and have continued with I Marine Headquarters Group.

It is hard to encapsulate my work over here, but let me give you a snapshot of ministry in Iraq: You know the type of person that never misses Sunday Mass? Or the daily Mass crowd? Or the guy who always stands in the back of church and does not like to sing, but enjoys the choir? Or the athlete who often comes late to church, but still makes the effort to get there, even in a dirty uniform? Or the guys and gals that the Church did such a poor job in providing solid catecheses? Or the quiet kid who served Mass all the way through high school, and then shocked everyone by enlisting in the Marines? Or the guy in your carpool who has drilled with the reserves for years, never has deployed, and has a great wife and a bunch of kids? This is a snapshot of my parish.

A crowd of guys about three years out of

high school. A sergeant first class finishing his 38th year in uniform and finishing his fourth war (Vietnam and Beirut as a Marine, first Gulf War and global war on terrorism with the Army National Guard). A private businessman who the Marine Corps will have to throw out of the Reserve Forces. The father and son who serve in the same unit. The doctor who hopes that his surgical skills won't be needed, but knows they will. This is a snapshot of my parish.

A handful of Marines, early in the morning, after their patrol. Civilian workers from the chow hall from India and the Philippines. Contractors with Kellogg, Brown and Root. Tough guys in plain khaki from OGAs (Other Government Agencies). This is a snapshot of my parish.

Green vestments made of cammie material. An alb with a permanent ring of brown at the bottom from the sand and mud. "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" sung without the benefit of instruments, but with hearts full of faith. The chalice given to me by my grandparents, or, at times on the move, a chalice not much bigger than a Dixie cup. Altar linens being washed in the same bucket I use to shave. No pews. No children. Gunfire sporadically in the distance. This is a snapshot of my parish.

Waking up tired. Losing track of how many have died this month. Confessions heard in the back of a truck. Passing out prayer books and rosary books. Sand. Mud. Glow sticks. The smell of cordite. Teaching catechism, one sailor, one Marine, one soldier at a time. Praying in the office by flashlight. This is a snapshot of my parish.

This is not a complete picture, but it is the best picture I can show of what is being done for those who serve a great nation, a great cause.

I ask you to pray for the soldiers, guardsmen, airmen, sailors and Marines who serve so well so that our nation may be safe and the people of Iraq know true freedom.

Iraqi army division visits, briefs MNF-W staff



Cpl. Jon Guibord

U.S. and Iraqi leaders discuss future and current operations of the Iraqi army at Camp Fallujah May 13. From left to right, Col. Juan G. Ayala, senior advisor to the 1st Iraqi Army military transition team; Gen. Baha Hussein, 1st Iraqi Army Division deputy commanding general; Maj. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer, commanding general MNF-W; and Brig. Gen. Robert B. Neller, deputy commanding general of MNF-W.

VMU-2 mechs maintain unmanned aircraft



Lance Cpl. James B. Hoke

Sgt. Daniel J. Bowman lifts the nose cover of an RQ-2B Pioneer unmanned aerial vehicle at Al Taqaddum, Iraq, May 2. Bowman is a UAV mechanic with 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

Lance Cpl. James B. Hoke
3rd Marine Aircraft Wing

AL TAQADDUM, Iraq - Echoes of wrenches turning and metal scraping together sound throughout the hangar bay as the mechanics pull the engine off of an RQ-2B Pioneer unmanned aerial vehicle at Al Taqaddum, Iraq, May 2.

The mechanics with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 2, Marine Air Control Group 38 (Reinforced), 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing are responsible for keeping their squadron's UAVs in first-class condition so the Pioneer can complete its own mission.

"Our main mission is to get the birds in the air and keep them flying so that the ground units have live coverage and know what is in front of them," said Sgt. Daniel J. Bowman, unmanned aerial vehicle mechanic, VMU-2. "We work on all of the exterior parts of the aircraft and some of the interior. We do all of the work on the engine, the main landing gear, the tires, and everything that you can see from the outside of the aircraft."

According to Cpl. Justin M. Fisher, unmanned aerial vehicle mechanic, VMU-2, the Pioneer is maintained after each flight.

"Every time it comes back, it has an (inspection)," the 21-year-old Gaylord, Mich., native said. "We recover it, fuel it and check everything

on it. Sometimes it can have spark plugs that are only good for 15 hours, or fuel and air filters that are good for 30 hours. There's a lot of stuff to do to it."

Although its size differs a great deal from regular manned aircraft, the maintenance for the UAV follows the same guidelines of what needs to be checked and how often it needs to be maintained.

"It has the same procedures of maintenance as regular aircraft," said Bowman, a 26-year-old native of Joppa, Md. "It follows the same programs. All of the procedures, (inspections), and phase inspections are the same on the Pioneer."

However, the benefit to having a smaller aircraft for many of the maintenance Marines with VMU-2 is that it requires less time to perform tasks identical to those carried out on the Pioneer's bigger brothers.

"They require less man hours than regular aircraft," said Bowman, a Fallston High School graduate. "Personally, I don't have the experience of working on a manned aircraft, but I know there are a lot more moving parts on a regular aircraft than the Pioneer, and that creates more man hours."

For Bowman, working on the aircraft has its ups and downs, but it is something other than what he expected coming into the field.

"It's unlike anything I've ever done before," he said. "Sometimes working on these aircraft has its days just like anything else, but it is definitely different."

According to Staff Sgt. Ronald L. Wolfe, internal operator, VMU-2, the maintainers are what sets the squadron apart from all of the rest.

"We have guys who work their rear ends off to get these aircraft ready to fly," the 27-year-old Carlisle, Pa., native said. "If something goes wrong with one, they are preparing the next one to get it rolled up right behind it. Without the maintainers and some of the other people in this unit, VMU-2 wouldn't be able to do anything that we do."

"I definitely have to hand it to those guys," the Carlisle Area High School graduate said. "They are what got us going (two years ago) and what has kept us going ever since."

Lance Cpl. James B. Hoke is a combat correspondent serving with the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at James.Hoke@acemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.



Lance Cpl. James B. Hoke

Lance Cpl. Derek A. Williams (left) and Lance Cpl. Philip Buttians remove the engine of an RQ-2B Pioneer unmanned aerial vehicle at Al Taqaddum, Iraq, May 2.

Marine takes headshot, walks away

Cpl. Brian Reimers
1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment

FALLUJAH, Iraq - If anyone is proud to be labeled hard-headed, it's Pfc. Fred M. Linck. The 19-year-old from Westbrook, Conn., took an enemy shot to the head and walked away with little more than a sore noggin and a white bandage.

Linck, of 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 5, was struck by a single enemy bullet May 5.

"It seemed like just another day in the city of Fallujah," said Linck, an infantryman assigned to C Company. "But everything changed for me that day."

The young Marine just got off of a security post and was tasked to be part of a reaction force. The force was gearing up to respond to a call for help in the city.

"We got some intelligence stating that there was a possible improvised explosive device on the corner of the main street in Fallujah," Linck said. "My team of Marines reacted to the call and showed up to the site. We immediately dismounted our vehicles and set up a cordon of the area."

Some of the other men in the team didn't want to believe that it was a normal mission for them. In fact, they had planned on it being much more than that.

"Something told me that this was going to be a setup, a pretty usual tactic for the insurgents to use against us," said Lance Cpl. Randon O. Hogen, a fellow infantryman and member of Linck's fire team.

Hogen's gut instincts were right. Somewhere in the shadows of the concrete buildings, an insurgent was waiting for the Marines to come into his view.



Cpl. Brian Reimers

Linck's issued helmet stopped the majority of the round from penetrating. A small piece of fragmentation pierced through the headband, causing a small laceration on his forehead.

"I was running back across the street after we had confirmed that the IED we responded to was in fact not one, when I heard the shot," said Lance Cpl. Kelvin J. Grisales, fire team leader and friend of Linck.

A single shot cracked through the air. Everyone jolted, and not even Linck, who was hit, knew what happened.

"After the shot rang out, I remember hearing someone screaming, 'Man down! Man down!'" Linck said. "I realized a second later that man was me - I was on the ground."

It took a couple seconds for everything to appear clear to Linck. The sounds of Marines calling for help weren't for anyone but him, but he was ready to get up and fight.

"I was pretty scared when I realized that I had just taken a round to the head, but the scariest part was that I was thinking about it and I felt fine," said Linck, who has only served with the battalion for a few months. "It felt as if I had fallen and hit my head, that's it."

The rest of his team did not know his status. They didn't take chances and followed their training, evacuating him out of the area.

"When we picked him up, he grabbed my hand and told me that he was pretty nervous," said 22-year-old Grisales, from Hartford, Conn. "All I could do was to try to reassure him that he would be alright. At the same time I was trying to do the same for myself."

Linck was transferred directly from the battlefield to the nearest hospital, where he was treated and released without even a stitch in his head.

The issued helmet he wore stopped the majority of the round from penetrating. A small piece of fragmentation from the round pierced through the headband inside of the helmet, causing a small laceration on his forehead.

"It was such a relief for us when we pulled up to the hospital and we found out that he was OK," Grisales said.



Cpl. Brian Reimers

Pfc. Fred M. Linck, infantryman, C Company, 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 5, was shot in the head and walked away from the incident. The enemy round was stopped by his Kevlar helmet.

"I thank God that it happened the way that it did," Hogen added.

Linck doesn't discount divine intervention or luck, but trusts his gear more now than ever.

"I know for sure that if it wasn't for that helmet, I wouldn't be standing here right now," Linck said. "It pays to wear all the gear the way it is supposed to be worn."

"It is one thing to hear about what our gear is capable of, but this just makes it a reality," Hogen said. "It did exactly what it was supposed to do."

Linck has since returned to duty with a new outlook on life.

"It is kind of like a second lease on life," he said. "I want to make sure I do everything right."

Cpl. Brian Reimers is a combat correspondent serving with 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at ReimersBJ@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.

SEMPER PARATI

IT'S MILLER TIME!

Cpl. Jensen J. Miller **Metalsmith**



Photo by Cpl. Jonathan K. Teslevici

RANK/NAME: Cpl. Jensen J. Miller
AGE: 22
HOMETOWN: Onawa, Iowa
MARITAL STATUS: Happily married
KIDS: Two, Abraham, 3, Jensen Michael, 1 month
COLLEGE STUDIES: Yeah, right.
UNIT/DUTY STATION: MALS-11, MCAS, Miramar
MOS/JOB: 6092/6043 I-Level Airframes (Metalsmith, welder, painter)
FIRST STEPPED ON YELLOW FOOTPRINTS: Dec. 10, 2002
HOW MANY DEPLOYMENTS: One.
FAVORITE HANGOUT: My house, the smoke pit, and the weld shop.
HOBBIES: My wife and two kids, cars, guns, and anything with an engine.
LAST SONG OR MOVIE DOWNLOADED: Rambo First Blood ... great movie!
LAST BOOK YOU READ: Marine Corps Institute 8000 series.
FAVORITE MRE: Pork chop.
FAVORITE PIECE OF GEAR WITH YOU: K-BAR...KILL!
WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED DURING DEPLOYMENT: If war goes on too long, garrison breaks out.

WHAT YOU'LL REMEMBER MOST: My son Jensen Michael being born while I was gone.
WHERE YOU ARE GOING ON VACATION WHEN YOU REDEPLOY: Home!
WORST PART ABOUT DEPLOYMENT: Sand. It tastes horrible.
WHAT YOUR FAMILY THINKS ABOUT YOUR DEPLOYMENT: My family is happy I am here doing my job. They just want me to come home alive.
BEST MEMORY OF MARINE CORPS: The day that I picked up corporal in October 2004.
FAVORITE COMEDIAN: Ron White
FAVORITE DUTY STATION: Only been to one, Miramar, Calif.
FAVORITE QUOTE: "Go For It!"
WHAT YOU WILL BE DOING IN 5 YEARS: I have no clue. If I stay in, I will be on the drill field. If I am out of the Corps, I will be welding back in Iowa somewhere.
ADVICE FOR OTHERS HERE: Do what you're told, do it as quickly as possible, mission first, and be nice to your wife ... she has all your money while you're gone.



Cpl. Daniel J. Redding

The Iraqi Bomb Disposal Company was at Camp Taqaddum May 6 to assist its American counterpart in a controlled demolition of damaged ammunition and other ordnance. The Americans are developing the Iraqi Bomb Disposal Company, based out of Camp Habbiniyah.

Iraqi bomb disposal soldiers work with Coalition

Cpl. Daniel Redding
1st Marine Logistics Group

CAMP HABBINIYAH, Iraq -While most service members do their best to avoid road-side bombs or walk in the opposite direction of a known landmine field, a small community of American troops seek such threats head on, and they're now training their Iraqi counterparts to do the same.

American explosive ordnance disposal technicians are overseeing the development of an EOD company in the Iraqi Army's 1st Division, which is based out of Camp Habbiniyah.

The area surrounding Habbiniyah, where many military commanders believe insurgents transit or stage for attacks in Ramadi and Fallujah, has been a beehive of activity for improvised explosive devices, which keep the EOD personnel steadily employed.

The 1st Marine Logistics Group's EOD Company here stays busy responding to 15 - 25 calls daily.

"Jeremy," a Navy EOD officer with the joint-service unit, is one of a handful of technicians who, in addition to their primary mission, have been tasked with training Iraqi bomb disposal soldiers.

The Americans are helping the Iraqis refine the skills they need to negate the threat after Coalition forces leave, said Jeremy, who asked to remain anonymous as EOD personnel are considered high value targets.

The Iraqi Bomb Disposal Company is currently working with the Americans to clean up an ammunition supply point last used by Saddam Hussein's regime. Mortars, rockets, and various other munitions were strewn about when the bunkers were bombed in the initial invasion. Acres of twisted, rusty metal peppered with live munitions are all that remain.

The ordnance must be cleared from the area to make the ASP safe again for future use.

The American advisors are using a hands-off approach in their training and observation - a sign of the burgeoning ability of the Iraqis to act and operate independently.

For Jeremy, it was a pleasant surprise to find out just how knowledgeable his Iraqi counterparts are.

"These guys are really close to coming on line and taking over their battle space," said Jeremy as he cleaned a piece of ordnance for later training.

The Iraqis had already received three months of training from American contractors

who taught them basic unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war reduction, cache disposal, and minefield operations. The training gave the soldiers a solid foundation for Jeremy's team to build on.

In the past several weeks, the Americans have been teaching the Iraqis daily while observing their abilities and knowledge.

So far, the results have been positive, Jeremy said. No military unit is perfect and can learn something new from foreign counterparts, which is where the American training is critical to the Iraqi effort in this fight against the insurgency.

"We want to be able to do it on our own and rid the terrorists of their ability (to use explosives)," said Maj. Adnan, the executive officer of the Iraqi company, whose full name is also withheld.

"They have a basic level of training that they execute very well," Jeremy said.

All across Iraq, American infantry units and military police are teaching their Iraqi equivalents, Jeremy said, and "getting their (bomb disposal) personnel trained up is equally as important."

The Iraqis agree with Jeremy that the

————— See Disposal Page 9

Iraqi soldiers keep criminals out of former smugglers' town

Cpl. Graham Paulsgrove
3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion

RUTBAH, Iraq - In this urban city located in the center of miles of open desert in western Al Anbar Province, Iraqi soldiers are taking the lead in operations to keep criminals and insurgents out of the region.

The Iraqi soldiers are doing the majority of the work here – checking IDs, searching cars and people at the city's various checkpoints – while Coalition forces assist.

"It's more us helping the Iraqis than the other way around," said Cpl. Victor M. Moreno, one of the Marine battalion's scout team leaders. "They've been doing fantastic."

In recent months, U.S. Marines here say Iraqi soldiers have continually progressed toward operating independently, evidenced by their security operations here.

Rutbah is the most populated city (about 25,000 people) in Anbar's southwestern region – a mostly barren desert stretching from the Jordan/Iraq border to 120 miles east.

Once known as a smugglers' town, Rutbah is the first major city along the supply routes from Jordan and Syria eventually leading to the Al Anbar Province's known hotspots - Ramadi, Fallujah and Baghdad, said Col. Stephen W. Davis during a Pentagon press briefing several months ago. Davis was the commander of Marine forces in western Al Anbar Province in 2005.

"This town had the unfortunate occurrence of being strategically placed there -- very convenient for smugglers, terrorists, insurgents to operate in and out of there," said Davis.

Coalition forces and Iraqi soldiers continue to work together to root out the insurgents. An 8-foot tall berm, which was built in January, surrounds the city to prevent insurgents from entering Rutbah, requiring all traffic entering and exiting the city to pass through the checkpoints



Cpl. Graham Paulsgrove

Boulder, Colo., native Lance Cpl. Jeremy M. Deboard, one of the battalion's scouts, searches a vehicle at a checkpoint just outside of the city May 1.

manned by the Iraqi soldiers.

So far, Iraqi soldiers have caught 64 insurgents since the Coalition and Iraqi military forces beefed up security measures here five months ago.

The Marines who work here daily say the city used to be a base of operations for insurgents - from planning attacks to storing weapons.

"We assess that many criminal and insurgent activities are planned and financed from Rutbah," said Maj. Ken Kassner, executive officer for the Twentynine Palms, Calif.-based 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, which arrived here nearly two months ago - about a year after the unit's last deployment to this very area in Al Anbar Province.

"By maintaining the security of Rutbah, we significantly affect the ability of the insurgents to operate," said Kassner.

And the plan is working - a full gamut of terrorists have been caught by the Marines and Iraqi soldiers in and around Rutbah, from those who plant roadside

bombs to high-level officials in the insurgency, according to Moreno.

"Insurgents have been fleeing (the city) and we have been catching them (at the checkpoints)," he said.

"(The berm and checkpoints have) been getting rave reviews from the population down there, because for the first time in years now the insurgents can't freely travel in and out of that city - one more step in making western Al Anbar a prohibitive environment for the insurgents and terrorists to operate in," said Davis during the press briefing.

The smuggling trade through Al Anbar contributes to the insurgency by financing criminal operations and supplying weapons and munitions, according to Kassner.

But with Iraqi soldiers taking more of the operational workload to secure the city, Coalition and Iraqi forces have been able to curb insurgent activity here and ultimately block insurgents' oncedirect route from other countries to the heart of Al Anbar Province.

"The Iraqi soldiers are the key

to our success," Kassner said. "Ultimately, they will be the ones to fully determine the outcome of this war."

The Marines who operate in this region have taken the role of supervisors by teaching the Iraqi soldiers in the functions of their duties - directing traffic, searching cars and personnel - so they gain confidence and maintain a presence in the local community, according to Moreno, of Modesto, Calif.

While the Iraqi soldiers are making progress in their abilities to operate without the support of the Marines here, there is still work to be done before the uniformed Iraqis are 100-percent ready to operate independently, according to Sgt. Dale Fenner, a 27-year-old from Indianapolis and one of the battalion's squad leaders.

"We don't want to prematurely leave before they're ready," said Fenner, who spends his days supervising the Iraqis and verifying the validity of the IDs of the men passing through the checkpoints and ensuring they are not known terrorists. "This is a work in progress - they are pretty good, but have a long way to go."

While the Marines are pleased with the progress of their Iraqi counterparts, the soldiers need more time, training and experience before they will be given the rubber stamp of approval by Coalition forces as capable of operating independently.

"It took years of training for me as a Marine to get to where I am now, and it will take years for them as well," said Fenner.

The Marines fully understand that the transition will not take place overnight.

Cpl. Graham Paulsgrove is a combat correspondent serving with the 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance battalion in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at PaulsgroveGA@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.

Disposal from Page 7

training has benefited them and is also helping bridge the cultural rift.

"Everybody is learning from each other in this war," said Capt. Aqeel, 2nd Platoon commander of the Iraqi unit.

Aqeel is working side by side with Jeremy as they guide the jundi - junior enlisted Iraqi soldiers - through operations. Every day, he says, he and his men are "taking knowledge from the Americans."

The two officers have quickly become close friends, often laughing like old buddies unhindered by the language barrier and sharing a penchant for having a hands-on approach as they work alongside their enlisted men.

"The Marines have taken me in like a friend, like a brother," said Aqeel.

"They are soldiers like the rest of us," said Jeremy, as he and Aqeel watched over the jundis.

Both Aqeel and Jeremy are excited about an extensive IED course being developed by the civilian contracting company that initially trained the Iraqis, they said.

The jundis have high hopes they will soon receive this training, they said, which will allow them to conquer IEDs, which are responsible for the majority of casualties in Iraq.

Aqeel stood back for a moment and watched his men as they worked industriously under the hot sun for several hours.

The season for high temperatures and sand-infused winds is steadily arriving here, and the captain ensures the jundis are taken care of just as the soldiers take care of him.

"I have no fear of going out with my soldiers," said an unwavering and proud Aqeel. "I have confidence in their abilities."

While many would expect an underlying fear in a task such as handling explosive ordnance, the Iraqis see only the insurgency.

"Right now, there are a lot of dangerous cities out there. A lot of Americans have died and a lot of Iraqis have died, but the blood is all the same," said Aqeel. "There is not a lot of fear. I do (this job) for the kids of Fallujah and Ramadi and all the other dangerous cities."

Although the motivation and patriotism of the jundis is sometimes questioned, the Iraqi soldiers are disdainful of the insurgents.

"We joined the army to kill the terrorists," said Ramdhan, a jundi, as he sifted through a pile of twisted, rusted metal to look for unexploded ordnance. "We're not scared of them, and we want them to know that."

Cpl. Daniel Redding is a combat correspondent serving with 1st Marine Logistics Group in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at Daniel.Redding@cssemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.

Marines work overtime for their food

Cpl. Joseph DiGirolamo
3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment

AR RAMADI, Iraq - A tall young Marine wielding a shovel in one hand and an empty burlap bag in the other casts an ominous shadow over a massive pile of sand separating him from a hot meal.

Underneath the hot desert sun, he quietly fills the bag, one scoop of sand after the other. He knows if he wants something to eat, he's going to have to work for it.

The 21-year-old corporal is deployed with 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, currently operating in Ramadi, the Al Anbar provincial capital, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is adhering to the battalion's new policy - one sandbag equals one meal.

"I have no problem doing it," said Cpl. Brandon J. Kelley, an infantryman working in the combat operations center for the battalion. "I'm doing my part like everyone else."

This new rule only affects the Marines working out of Hurricane Point. The surrounding bases such as Camp Ramadi and Camp Blue Diamond only require service members to wash their hands before entering the chow hall.

This new sandbag program is all part of an effort to help aid the reconstruction and fortification of various Marine observation sites in and around western Ramadi.

The high demand for sandbags is partially due to recent damages to posts caused by attacks. Insurgents have damaged multiple outposts but have failed to cause any serious injuries, in large part due to the force protection measures that were in place and the fierce



Cpl. Joseph DiGirolamo

Cpl. Adam W. Jensen, an infantryman and mail clerk with Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, helps Cpl. Trentis Marvel, an administration clerk, fill a sandbag before dinner May 9.

fighting spirit of the men.

Cpl. Matthew B. Cree, a 22-year-old infantryman from New Kent, Va., knows how important sandbags can be.

"I will never complain about making sandbags," said Cree. "One sandbag before chow is awesome. ... It's saving lives."

Combat engineers and other Marines with the battalion continually work around the clock on improving the damaged posts, and they all agree the new program is definitely speeding up the process.

The program gives every Marine, sailor, soldier and civilian working on base another opportunity to directly contribute to the war effort. They are all doing their part to pitch in,

or in this case, dig in.

Simply filling a single sandbag before a meal adds up. The Hurricane Point mess hall estimates 450 meals are served to personnel three times a day. This amounts to approximately 1,350 sandbags daily.

"It's a whole lot better than filling up all those sandbags at once in the hot sun," said Pfc. Sam H. Morris, an 18-year-old motor transport operator, Headquarters and Service Company. "It cuts down on the workload Marines have to do during working parties. ... It gives them more free time."

The Marines then deliver the sandbags to

See Sandbag Page 11

Iraqis line up to join Iraqi army in latest recruiting drive

Cpl. Mark Sixbey

3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment

FERRIS, Iraq - Dozens of Iraqi men waited outside an Iraqi Police station here at the break of dawn to enlist and serve their country May 8.

Marines from I Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 5 provided logistical and security support during an Iraqi army recruiting drive. Overseen by Iraqi policemen, it was part of a recruiting drive to bring Iraqis from the outskirts of Fallujah to the Iraqi army. A similar drive held nearly two months ago inside Fallujah brought in more than 800 men.

Lance Cpl. Michael Betancourt, an infantryman with I Company, watched from the observation tower as the recruits lined up outside.

“The turnout looks pretty decent,” said 21-year-old Betancourt, from Chicago. “There are quite a few recruits out there.”

Marines remained on the fringes, for the most part. This was an Iraqi-led effort between Iraqi Army recruiting teams and Iraqi police assisting in screening.



Cpl. Graham Paulsgrove

Staff Sgt. David Joseph Morisset Jr., from Princeton, Minn., a platoon sergeant for Company I, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, watches over a group of Iraqi Army recruits at Ferris, Iraq, May 8.



Cpl. Mark Sixbey

Iraqi army recruits wait in line in Ferris, Iraq, May 8. A three-hour recruiting drive at the Iraqi Police station in Ferris, south of Fallujah, attracted 95 Iraqi men, who Marines transported to the Iraqi army training facility.

“Our role pretty much is to provide security for the IPs as they do the screening, then provide transportation for the IA recruits,” said 2nd Lt. Chuck Miller, 1st Platoon commander, I Company.

The 29-year-old from McKinney, Texas, oversaw the event as the new recruits lined up in groups of 20 before boarding 7-ton trucks dispatched by the battalion’s headquarters.

“We’re close to 70 right now, and should be close to a hundred by close of business this morning,” Miller said after an hour of watching the recruits file into the compound one by one.

The Marines transported 95 Iraqi army recruits to the nearby training facility, where they were sworn in to defend their country.

Betancourt said the turnout was a good sign for the future of Iraq’s army.

“It’s a good turnaround for the city,” he said. “When we leave, they’ll have enough to keep this place secure.”

Marines took heart in the willingness of Iraqi men to step forward and protect their neighbors.

“I’m pretty excited to see all these young Iraqi men join the Iraqi army so

they can improve their country,” said Staff Sgt. David Joseph Morisset Jr., platoon sergeant for 1st Platoon. “I’m proud of them.”

The 28-year-old from Princeton, Minn., said the recruits were ready to follow orders without question as he ushered them toward their future.

“They stand in line, then I tell them to follow me and get in the vehicles. Then once they get in there, I have water for them so they can stay hydrated,” he said. “We’re pretty much taking care of them so I can show them the Americans are helping them out. It’s a good group of civilians that are joining.”

When asked why they are joining, two Iraqi recruits gave the same response. It was similar to answers Marines themselves might give if asked about their decision to join the military. They explained they wanted to serve their country in hopes of building a peaceful Iraq.

“It’s a good idea,” said Lance Cpl. Willie Burpl, a 22-year-old infantryman from Birmingham, Ala. “It gets the people involved as far as doing something for their government and doing something for their country.”

The recruiting drive is taking place at several locations across Al Anbar Province.

Cpl. Mark Sixbey is a combat correspondent serving with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at SixbeyMA@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.

Warriors' Words

What is the funniest thing you've seen since you've been here?

"People running around in the sand storm."



Cpl. Forest J. Pettit
9th Communications Bn.
I Marine Expeditionary Force
Headquarters Group

"I never expected to see an old-school Chevrolet out here."



Pfc. Jaqueline J. Mejia
I Marine Expeditionary Force
Headquarters Group

"A family of geese walking down the street in the middle of a combat zone."



Lance Cpl. Paul C.G. Thompson
9th Communications Bn.
I Marine Expeditionary Force
Headquarters Group

"I saw an Iraqi sergeant major eat a goat testicle."



Capt. Arthur Rizer
1/4/1 Military Transition Team
Operations Officer

"It is unexpected to see a family of geese living in a war zone."



HMCS John M. Lugue
I Marine Expeditionary Force

Sandbag from Page 9

areas where insurgent activity is high, such as the Government Center.

"The program produces two times the amount of sandbags a working party can do in a day," added Morris, a native of New Port Richey, Fla.

Before entering the mess hall, hungry military personnel are greeted by two dirt piles stacked as high as 10 feet. Also, signs are posted completely around the immediate area, reminding Marines to do their part.

The signs read, "One meal equals one filled sandbag – Thanks, from the Marine or Sailor saved by your sandbag."

Even the battalion commander and sergeant major dig.

"This allows everyone to do their share," said Kelley, a native of Lee, N.H. "It doesn't matter if you're a colonel or a private, everyone helps out."

Lance Cpl. Daveanand Durga, a 21-year-old administration clerk from New Brunswick, N.J., describes the program as more a blessing than a burden.

"Who knows whether the sandbag I filled for a meal might be the one that stops that piece of shrapnel from injuring or killing someone," he said.

Cpl. Joseph DiGirolamo is a combat correspondent serving with the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at DiGirolamoJL@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.

Hot enough to fry an egg ... or your brain

Scott Martin
MNF-W Director of Safety



Bet you never thought you'd say to someone, "Man, am I glad it's only 110 degrees today, because yesterday was hot!" Yes folks, we have officially reached triple digits for heat in the sand box, and it's going to get a lot warmer. We all know when it gets hot we have to keep a watchful eye on the people around us so we can avoid playing "Heat Stroke Lottery." So what are the signs that may lead you to believe your buddy isn't sandbagging or trying out for a role on "Survivor?" Glad you asked.

Heat cramps show themselves as painful cramping of the larger muscle groups and are due to excessive loss of salt through heavy sweating combined with sustained exertion. If you think you or someone else is suffering from heat cramps, get them to a shaded area, massage arms and legs to increase circulation, and provide them with a salt solution of a ½ teaspoon of salt to one quart of water, or a sports drink.

A person with heat exhaustion will be pale, cool and clammy. It involves heavy sweating, headache, feeling light-headed, nausea/vomiting, and possibly tingling sensations. Heat exhaustion is caused by dehydration plus excessive salt depletion. Get them into the shade and loosen their clothing. Give them the water and salt solution or a sports drink, about 1-2 liters over two to four hours. Contact medical as soon as possible.

Heat stroke will cause the individual to appear red, hot and dry. Their temperature is elevated, and they will stop sweating. They may appear disoriented or delusional and may be combative. Heat stroke can lead to brain

damage, kidney failure, liver failure, and other critical problems as your body begins to shut down on you. If someone is suspected of suffering from heat stroke, you'll have to get them out of sun, out of their gear, and cool them with cold water and fanning. Put ice packs on the groin and armpits. Seek medical help immediately.

Pay attention to the flag conditions. The actual temperature is not an indicator of the actual heat condition; remember, they use a combination of temperature and humidity level to determine the actual heat index. Stay hydrated. You are sweating out water and salt, so replace the water and include salt in your meals. Avoid excessive amounts of coffee and sodas or other diuretics. Drink about 8-12 quarts of water a day depending upon your activities. If you are new on the block, acclimatize before you try to get back into your full workout routine. It takes about one to two weeks for most people to fully acclimatize to new conditions. If you use fitness supplements, read the warning labels or ask medical. Many of them can lead to serious health problems when combined with dehydration.

Remember to stay hydrated so you don't fry.

Snap Shots

From the Front



Cpl. Brian Reimers



Gunnery Sgt. Mark Oliva

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq - Cpl. Jeffrey D. Sullivan, 22, of Annapolis, Md., plays "Amazing Grace" on his bagpipes for Cpl. Stephen R. Bixler, who was killed in action May 4. Bixler, assigned to 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 5, was memorialized at the Chapel of Hope May 12.

CAMP BAHARIA, Iraq - Pfc. Carlos H. Noyola, with Headquarters and Support Company, 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 5, mourns the loss of Sgt. Matthew J. Fenton.



Gunnery Sgt. Mark Oliva

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq - Lance Cpl. Dustin C. Jarnagin, a 20-year-old from Jefferson City, Tenn., kneels before memorials to Sgt. Elisha R. Parker and Lance Cpl. Robert E. Moscillo, both assigned to B Company, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 5. Both Marines were killed in action in early May.



Cpl. Brian Reimers



Cpl. Joseph DiGirolamo

HURRICANE POINT, Iraq - Lance Cpl. Paul A. Treadway, a 21-year-old infantryman from Webster, W. Va., with Company K, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, mourns before the memorial of Lance Cpl. Richard Z. James May 17. James was killed while conducting operations in Ramadi.

CAMP BAHARIA, Iraq - Lance Cpl. Christopher G. Clement, with Headquarters and Support Company, 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 5, pays his last respects to Sgt. Matthew J. Fenton.

We Will Never Forget

In Memoriam

Army Sgt. Joshua V. Youmans - Army Spc. Christopher S. Merchant, - Marine Lance Cpl. Matthew A. Snyder - Marine Cpl. Adam O. Zanutto - Marine Gunnery Sgt. Justin R. Martone - Marine Gunnery Sgt. John D. Fry - Marine Lance Cpl. Bunny Long - Marine Lance Cpl. Kristen K. (Figuerca) Marino - Marine Lance Cpl. Nicholas R. Anderson - Army Staff Sgt. Marco A. Silva - Army Sgt. Corey A. Dan - Army Staff Sgt. Ricardo Barraza - Army Sgt. Dale G. Brehm - Army Staff Sgt. Brock A. Beery - Army Sgt. 1st Class Randy D. McCaulley - Army Spc. Frederick A. Carlson - Army Staff Sgt. Robert Hernandez - Marine Lance Cpl. Jacob W. Beisel - Marine Lance Cpl. Eric A. Palmisano - Marine Lance Cpl. Kun Y. Kim - Marine Staff Sgt. Eric A. McIntosh - Marine Cpl. Scott J. Procopio - Marine Cpl. Andres Aguilar Jr - Marine Cpl. David A. Bass - Marine Lance Cpl. Patrick J. Gallagher - Marine Lance Cpl. Felipe D. Sandoval - Marine Cpl. Brian R. St. Germain - Marine Staff Sgt. Abraham G. Twitchell - Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Marques J. Nettles - Navy Hospitalman Geovani Padillaaleman - Marine Lance Cpl. Bryan N. Taylor - Marine Pfc. Chase A. Edwards - Marine Cpl. Richard P. Waller - Marine Lance Cpl. Philip J. Martini - Marine Lance Cpl. Juana Navarro-Arellano - Army Sgt. 1st Class Gregory S. Rogers - Army Spc. David S. Collins - Army Sgt. 1st Class Randall L. Lamberson - Marine Lance Cpl. Marcus S. Glimpse - Marine Cpl. Salem Bachar - Marine Lance Cpl. Stephen J. Perez - Marine Lance Cpl. Darin T. Settle - Marine Lance Cpl. Derrick J. Cothran - Marine Cpl. Pablo V. Mayorga - Marine Lance Cpl. Justin D. Sims - Marine Pfc. Ryan G. Winslow - Army Spc. Mark W. Melcher - Marine Staff Sgt. Jason C. Ramseyer - Marine Cpl. Eric R. Lucken - Marine Lance Cpl. Aaron W. Simons - Marine Lance Cpl. Michael L. Ford - Army Sgt. Matthew A. Webber - Marine Cpl. Brandon M. Hardy - Marine Sgt. Lea R. Mills - Marine Sgt. Edward G. Davis J.I.F - Marine Lance Cpl. Robert L. Mosillo - Marine Capt. Brian S. Letendre - Marine Sgt. Elisha R. Parker - Marine Cpl. Stephen R. Bixler - Marine Cpl. Cory L. Palmer - Marine Sgt. Matthew J. Fenton - Marine Lance Cpl. Leon B. Deraps - Marine Sgt. Alessandro Carbonaro - Marine Lance Cpl. Jason K. Burnett - Marine Lance Cpl. David J. Grames Sanchez - Marine 2nd Lt. Michael L. Licatzi - Marine Cpl. Steve Vahaviolos - Marine Lance Cpl. Adam C. Conboy - Marine Lance Cpl. Richard G. James - Marine Lance Cpl. Jose S. Marin Dominguez Jr. - Marine Lance Cpl. Hatak Yuka Keyu M. Yearby - Marine Cpl. William B. Fulks

Semper Fidelis