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Special Issue:
**Iraq's Increasingly
Self-Reliant Air Force**

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Commanding General

Lt. Gen. Michael D. Barbero, USA

Public Affairs Officer

Lt. Col. Martin Downie, USA

Public Affairs Staff

Maj. Glenn Burks, USA

Master Sgt. Michael Colucci, USA

Chief Michael Kennedy, USN

Senior Airman A.J. Hyatt USAF

Maj. Robert Owen, USA

Sgt 1st Class Patricia Ruth, USA

Lt. Ryan Schumacher, USN

Translator

Dan Al Taraji

Advisor Editor

Maj. Patrick Swan

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Direct questions and comments to:

pao@iraq.centcom.mil

MNSTC-I PAO

APO AE 09348

DSN: 318-852-1434

www.mnstci.iraq.centcom.mil



Dignitaries unveiled a plaque Oct. 10 commemorating five years of partnership between NATO Training Mission—Iraq and the Government of Iraq. NTM-I held the brief ceremony at its new headquarters at Forward Operating Base Union III in the International Zone. NTM-I has trained more than 4,500 Iraqi security and police forces personnel. Pictured here from left to right are: Italian Army Maj. Gen. Giuseppe Spinelli, NTM-I deputy commanding general; Martin Howard, NATO assistant secretary general for operations; Abdul-Qader Obeidi, Iraqi minister of Defense; and U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Michael D. Barbero, NTM-I commanding general. (U.S. Air Force photos by Senior Airman A.J. Hyatt)

Special Issue

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NOVEMBER COVER

By taking control of the C-130 air mission, Iraqi airmen can transport troops around the country at will.

Photo courtesy MNF-Iraq



U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Michael D. Barbero addresses dignitaries after assuming command of MNSTC-I and NTM-I at Phoenix Base, International Zone Oct. 7. (U.S. Air Force photos by Senior Airman A.J. Hyatt)

Barbero Takes Charge at MNSTC-I, NTM-I

CG 'Honored and Humbled' to Command Again in Iraq

BAHGDAD—U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Michael D. Barbero assumed command Oct. 7 of the Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Training Mission- Iraq. Barbero succeeds U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Frank G. Helmick.

In remarks to the assembled crowd of senior Iraqi and U.S. military leaders, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Christopher Hill, and other Iraqi political and civilian leaders, Barbero said he was proud to be joining a team of talented and committed professionals.

"I am greatly honored and tremendously humbled to have the opportunity to command these two world-class organizations," Barbero said. "I pledge to do everything in my power to continue the great work of these selfless professionals (from MNSTC-I and NTM-I) as we partner and assist our Iraqi brothers to build professional and self-sufficient security ministries and forces.

"To all of the respected and courageous leaders of Iraq, especially our friends who are with us today," Barbero said, turning to his Iraqi colleagues in attendance, "I am truly honored to be back in your country, with the opportunity to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you once again.

"You never really leave Iraq," Barbero added. "Your thoughts continuously

return to the mission and to your friends serving here. I am so honored to return to contribute to our noble mission and the future of this great nation of Iraq."

Directing his comments to the personnel from MNSTC-I and NTM-I, Barbero complimented his charges.

"What you do every day in building and supporting Iraqi capabilities is vital to our mission here and to Iraq's future," said Barbero. "Our equipping, training, mentoring and advising roles remain essential in building capacity and support the Iraqi security forces – now and in the future. MNSTC-I and NTM-I continue to play a vital role in this historic mission.

"Much hard work remains and our path ahead contains challenges, uncertainty and opportunities. But I believe that with all of our efforts...we can meet the challenges and seize the opportunities to continue to build the enduring and self-sustaining security that the people of Iraq so richly deserve," Barbero said.

Barbero was commissioned in the infantry upon graduation from the U.S. Military Academy in 1976. He is also a graduate of the Command and General Staff Course, the Advance Military Studies Program and the National War College.

As an infantry officer, Barbero has served in a variety of tactical assignments in mechanized, light and air assault infantry units. He has served in the 1st

Cavalry Division, 2d Infantry Division, two tours in the 101st Airborne Division, 7th Infantry Division, 10th Mountain Division and 4th Infantry Division.

Barbero has extensive experience as an operations officer, serving as such for two separate infantry battalions and as for an infantry brigade. He has also served as the chief of current operations at division level, as the deputy director for regional operations in J3 on the Joint Staff, and as the CJ3 of Multi National Forces – Iraq.

He has commanded at the battalion, brigade and division level, as well as the the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, La. Prior to assuming command of MNSTC-I and NTM-I, Barbero commanded the U.S. Army Infantry Center and Fort Benning, Ga., from Nov. 2008 until June 2009.

Other staff assignments include service as the executive assistant to the commander of Joint Forces Command/ Supreme Commander Atlantic and the III Corps chief of staff.

He participated in Operation JUST CAUSE, and has served two prior tours in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM as the assistant division commander of the 4th Infantry Division and as the MNF-I CJ3.

Barbero received guests in a formal receiving line and hosted a luncheon for dignitaries and invited guests.

Solo Flights Exhibit Iraqi Students' New Piloting Skills

By Staff Sgt. Daniel Martinez
506 Air Expeditionary Group Public Affairs
KIRKUK REGIONAL AIR BASE,

Iraq – An Iraqi student pilot in a Cessna 172 idles on the runway here waiting for the air traffic control tower to approve his ascent into the sky. A U.S. Air Force pilot instructor, who just stepped out of the aircraft, anxiously anticipates watching his protégé take a huge leap in his training by flying the plane on his own.

“There are a lot of mixed emotions that go on in a solo flight,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Robert Coleman, 521st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron, instructor pilot, deployed here from Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. “It’s the longest walk (away from the aircraft) in the world because you’re watching him take off and you’re hoping you made the right decision and gave him all the right tools, mentally and physically, to be able to handle the situation.”

Coleman elaborated on what the moment was like as he stepped away.

“You shake his hand, you close the door and you let him go. He’s got to take that step; it’s a big step for any pilot to be able to fly the airplane alone,” the instructor said.

The wait was finally over when the officer from Iraqi air force Squadron 1 accelerated down the runway in his aircraft for a successful takeoff here Oct. 8. After roughly 30 minutes of flight time that took him up to altitudes of approximately 2,000 feet, the pilot landed and taxied the aircraft into its parking space where he was greeted with applause by his fellow comrades. He now joins the ranks of his Iraqi pilot predecessors who awaited his return and who have all flown solo as they continue to advance as military pilots.

Coleman said preparing the students to take that first flight alone requires



Lt. Col. Robert Coleman, 521st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron, instructor pilot, exits a Cessna 172 to allow his Iraqi air force student pilot to take his first solo flight here Oct. 8. The student pilot successfully flew and landed the plane. Coleman is deployed here from Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Martinez)

different blocks of instruction including basic control, flight patterns, and landing. After advancing academically, the instructors shadow the students throughout their entire pre and post-flight safety checks, evaluate their piloting skills and ultimately decide if and when they’re ready to fly alone. The students average 15 flights with an instructor before a decision is made to let them fly solo.

“It’s a huge leap for them to break down their flight training process to this basic level and build it back up much the same way that the U.S. trains,” he said.

Students who successfully perform their solo flights go on to other flight training programs including either rotary-wing training or fixed-wing training on larger aircraft. As they progress they’ll move on to different airframes and a more sophisticated flight curriculum including instruments and visual navigation.

“For the students that stay with us, they graduate from the 172 to the Caravan 208 and learn more complex instruments, learn to fly an aircraft with a more complicated engine, and a more powerful constant speed propeller,” said Coleman.

Col. Nabeel Ahmed, Iraqi air force, instructor pilot, had some advice to help the future generation of Iraqi student pilots. He said that it’s important they relax, pay attention to the instruments in the cockpit, and listen for the air traffic

control tower.

Emphasizing the importance of the course material, he had one more particular piece of advice for the students.

“First thing, I give them my advice to study,” he said.

The Iraqi students have taken many steps advancing to the next level of training and building up the new Iraqi air force. Iraqi airmen taking their first solo flight is viewed as a rite of passage for the pilots and serves as one example of how the U.S. and Iraqi military are working together to transition power back to the Iraqis.

The Iraqi colonel added, “The first solo is very important to any pilot to get more experience for him ... that means he’s starting to be a pilot.”

Approximately 100 students have gotten that experience since October 2007. The most recent class, which started May 2009, had 22 students fly solo. Coleman shared his view on what this means for the Iraqi.

“They will have a much more capable military force, they will have better educated and capable pilots, and they will be a force multiplier within the area,” Coleman said. “As allies of the United States, hopefully down the road we will be able to make the world a better place as far as this local region, and overall for the rest of the region as well.”

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Future Iraqi Pilots Learn English Language Skills

By Senior Airman Alyssa C. Miles
U.S. Air Forces Central Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq -- Before Iraqi air force lieutenants can begin pilot training at Kirkuk Air Base, they must first prove they have achieved one of their air force's core values -- learning to comprehend and speak English.

U.S. Airmen have helped Iraqi officers achieve this goal by serving as English class instructors and advisors at the Iraqi air force training school here.

U.S. Air Force Capt. Brian Ravak, chief of English language training, said they need this as a foundation because pilots, gunners, flight engineers and crew chiefs are all required to learn English since it is the worldwide language of aviation.

A typical day in the classroom for an Iraqi lieutenant is about six hours long, with five hours of classroom time and one hour of lab. Students arrive at 8 a.m. and review grammar, study vocabulary, read, write and complete dialogue exercises inside a workbook. There are more than 20 books in the curriculum and each book takes seven to 10 days to complete.

This training is stop two on the road to undergraduate pilot training. Before arriving here, students must have graduated from Rustamiyah where the lieutenants are introduced to the English language during their initial officer training course.

"We take them from where they're at on the American Language Comprehensive Placement Test," said Rajak. "Once they get to (a score of) 60-65, they are moved to Kirkuk Air Base to finish language training, and move on to pilot training immediately upon finishing English language training."

Just as important as the training is the fact the Iraqis are now teaching their classes. In the eight months Rajak has been here, there have been many transitions -- most importantly the Iraqis running the program independently -- teaching their students and maintaining student records and transcripts via electronic data management.

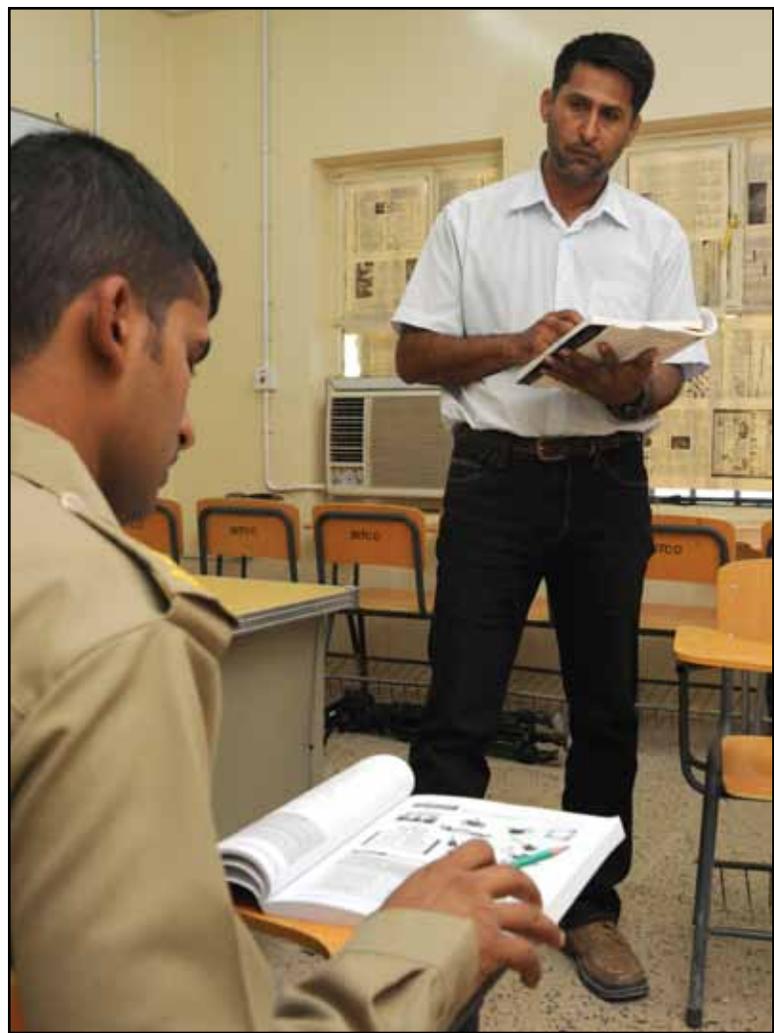
Emad was an electrician in Iraq before becoming an English instructor. Having learned English at an early age, he said he sees teaching the lieutenants as a way to pay it forward to his fellow Iraqis.

"If you have some good things in your heart, you try to show it to everyone," said Emad. "I want to teach them. English is a wonderful language. I follow what they need and try not to push them to learn my way. I want them to learn their way -- whatever is convenient for them I will do it."

"Speaking English helps them speak with people, see the way other people live," he continued. "So when they speak they can communicate with other people, they can know their culture, tradition, etc. It's basically another leg to use to walk towards unknown places."

The Iraqi lieutenants know what possibilities await for them once they complete this training.

"I think for the most part, 90-95 percent of Iraqi air force



Emad, an Iraqi instructor with the 821st Expeditionary Training Squadron, teaches English to Iraqi air force officers Oct. 3. Below: Iraqi air force officers prepare to begin their monthly English evaluation. (U.S. Air Force photos by Tech. Sgt. Johnny L. Saldivar)

lieutenants are really excited about learning English," Ravak said. "They realize it's an important opportunity for them, not just in their air force career, but once they leave the Iraqi military, it will help them succeed in life. For the most part, training is well received.

"Back in March, one lieutenant graduated and the response you saw from his peers -- it was like he just won the lottery," Ravak recalled. "They knew he had the opportunity to go receive pilot training."

The students aren't the only ones who understand what learning this language means for the future of Iraq.

"These people are just blossoms -- small flowers," Emad said. "In the future, they're going to grow up and make another flower, and maybe one day we will have a big garden. They are the basics so when they learn English, maybe they will teach a lot of people behind us and help us to protect our country and become the foundation for our home."





Pilots of the Iraqi Air Force in southern Iraq conduct pre-flight checks before aerial training with the FLIR systems 8500 EO/IR cameras attached to their plane during training at COB Basra, Iraq Sept. 5. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Eric Ebner)

Iraqi Air Force Completes First Phase Training for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance

By Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Mullett
34th Infantry Division Public Affairs Office
CONTINGENCY OPERATING

BASE BASRA, Iraq – The Iraqi security forces' 70th Air Reconnaissance Squadron completed its first phase of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance training with 34th Red Bull Infantry Division's intelligence section in September here.

The training allows the Iraqi pilots to use their own aerial reconnaissance capabilities to protect Iraq's sovereignty.

Iraqi fighter pilots who have combat experience from the Iran-Iraq war, some with as many as 800 hours of combat flight time, worked with Soldiers from the 34th Inf. Div. intelligence section to

become familiar with remote control surveillance cameras attached to their Sama CH200 and SBL-360 Seeker aircraft. The aircraft are fitted with the FLIR Systems 8500 Electro-Optics/Infra Red camera system.

"We've completed phase one. These guys are used to the old fixed cameras. You just turn them on and fly over," said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Eric Ebner, operations analyst with 34th Inf. Div. "The biggest problem they had was coordinating the camera with the movement of the plane."

The pilots, who flew the Russian MiG 21, 23 and 25; the Sukov 24 and French Mirage fighters, were able to become familiar with the camera systems

operation and capabilities during ground training. The instructors ran each of the pilots through the systems in a hands-on course before they took to the sky to actually work with the systems, targeting items on the ground.

"They have to learn to talk to the ground commander, to provide a play-by-play from the air," said Ebner.

The next phase of instruction focuses on technical capabilities of the FLIR 8500 system and allow the pilots to coordinate their efforts with the Iraqi army. The pilots will assist the army with efficient placement and use of Iraqi resources throughout their areas of operation.

Iraqi Air Force Brings ISR Capabilities Online

by Staff Sgt. Stacia Zachary
USAFCENT Combat Camera News Team

NEW AL MUTHANA AIR BASE, Iraq -- Intelligence collection has become a valuable capability for the Iraqi Air Force in its push to provide security and stability. Unique to the IqAF, the King Air Squadron 87 here boasts the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities necessary for detecting and deterring insurgent activity.

For one advisor assigned to the Iraq Training and Advisory Mission - Air Force, this year-long deployment has presented the challenges of language and cultural barriers, as well as overcoming learning curves using certain technology.

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Joshua Roden is a chief evaluator for the King Air ISR training team. He advises on the employment of the sensor payload, or mission sensor equipment, associated with Iraq's new King Air 350.

Squadron 87 is the Iraqi organization Roden has been helping to set up and become a self-sufficient and capable ISR unit. Its airplanes are retrofitted with ISR technology in the underbelly of the plane. During flying missions, a mission sensor operator uses ISR equipment to photograph the terrain and detect questionable activity. With qualified MSOs already on board, the squadron will be certifying one of their own as an instructor.

"MSOs can capture real-time imagery of potential enemy forces moving into a specific region," Roden said. "That information can be relayed to the ground forces to detect and deter perceived threats."

The ITAM-AF team created a regimen for the pilots with intense English language training and computer skills.

"We will do two-weeks' worth of academics by going over all the systems in the aircraft including the ground equipment, such as the Spider laptops, and familiarization with the Fixed Ground Station," Roden said. "After that, we give them a test and see where their competency levels are and how much they have retained."

Once the candidates have passed all the tests and are accepted into the program, they are given an orientation to the



The front view of a King Air 350 used by Iraq for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Shawn Weismiller)

aircraft and the MSO equipment. They are then trained on a 19-ride syllabus followed by a flight evaluation to ensure they are fully capable of performing the functions of an MSO.

"The people we are training and advising are very intelligent, but this technology is completely new to them and our goal is to make the transition as easy as possible for the Iraqis," Roden said. "So, we developed a program that can take a person who has never seen a computer before and develop in them the ability to quickly learn the dynamics of a computer as well as the technology behind why the mission sensor equipment works."

One of the main goals of this mission is to help the Iraqis to a point where they take control of the operations so they can establish their own presence ensuring the security of their country. For those ITAM-AF Airmen here, helping the Iraqis liberate themselves from the control of those who would harm that growth is a very satisfying feeling.

Being involved in such an inaugural project has left an impression on Roden, who arrived at the air base on Independence Day.

"The entire reason I am here helping out with the ITAM - AF program is to help the Iraqis to liberate themselves and take control of their own country," he said. "I am hoping to teach

them and help the Iraqi people to protect themselves from the insurgency within their country, as well as the threats that may be looking to prey on them from the outside, similar to our charge to protect Americans from enemies both foreign and domestic."

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Joshua Roden, Mission Sensor Operations instructor, advises his Iraqi counterpart aboard an RC-12 assigned to the Iraqi air force's King Air Squadron 87. The airplane features ISR capabilities to detect and deter insurgent activity. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Shawn Weismiller)





First Lt. Waad Shuhatha writes down flight information while communicating with an aircraft at the air traffic control tower. Shuhatha is the first post-war Iraqi servicemember to earn a certification in air traffic control. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua Breckon)

“He started his training here by just listening to the traffic, then eventually plugging in (a radio headset) to actually control the traffic,” said Master Sgt. Rond Sampson, 506th Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron senior air traffic advisor and Iraqi Training and Advisory Mission-Air Force team member. “Air traffic control is the wave of the future for these guys.”

Certifying the lieutenant involved an International Civil Aviation Organization training plan, approved by the Iraq Civil Aviation Authority. The ICAO differs from the Federal Aviation Administration in that it oversees all aspects of international air navigation, while the FAA is the standard for the United States.

“Not only was I here to have him certified, but also to make sure he was able to do everything in accordance with ICAO,” said Steven Ostermann, Washington Consultant Group, and ITAM-Air Force team member. “I came up here and would watch him for about five to six hours a day until I determined that he was good to operate the system independently and could accomplish all the tasks without major assistance or any intervention from me, and now he’s certified.”

The certification ensures Shuhatha meets all standards in accordance with the ICAO and is another step to transitioning airspace control to the Iraqi air force.

Shuhatha shared his experience with other Iraqi trainees to help them understand and work through the language barriers, something with which he is familiar.

“The most challenging thing for me was the language, because we take the English word and put it in Arabic in our mind, and then from Arabic translate to English ... but now we work pretty well in English,” the lieutenant said.

Despite the challenges the Iraqi officer faced, he’s now ready to serve as an example for his fellow Iraqi servicemembers.

“It’s a great feeling, we feel like we are taking control from the U.S. air traffic control and Iraqi air traffic control is very proud,” he said.

Iraqi Air Force Officer Takes Control of the Skies

By Staff Sgt. Daniel Martinez
506th Air Expeditionary Group
Public Affairs

KIRKUK REGIONAL AIR BASE, Iraq – An Iraqi air force officer here recently became the first post-war Iraqi servicemember to earn a certification in air traffic control, continuing the transition of military training and assets to the Iraqi armed services.

First Lt. Waad Shuhatha is the first to lead the way for other Iraqis who are

currently training to become air traffic controllers.

Starting in March 2006, the lieutenant began the arduous task of learning his trade in Baghdad by taking a course in English, the language required for all controllers. He then moved on to learn basic air traffic control, airfield operations, and the rules that govern the occupation. In July 2007, he was assigned here and began on-the-job training with U.S. Air Force controllers.

Iraqi Air Force Breaks Ground for Ops Center

By Senior Airman Alyssa C. Miles and Ronald A. Reeves

HAWK BASE, Iraq – More than 75 American and Iraqi airmen proudly stood at attention during colors ceremonies Sept. 30 during the groundbreaking ceremony for the Air Operations Center here.

The multi-million dollar facility will support 85 personnel with an operations floor, multiple support offices and living quarters for Iraqi airmen. The project will be overseen by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers personnel from Gulf Region District and the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq.

Construction is estimated to take eight months on the new center. The current Iraqi Air Operations Center is located on Camp Victory, Iraq, and is the work place of Iraqi airmen and their American advisors in several different career fields, including weather, intelligence and logistics.

Iraqi air force commander Lt. Gen. Anwar Hamad Amen Ahmed spoke to the gathering saying that the Iraqi Air Force was proud of the relationship with the United States and the support given to the Iraqi air force.

Anwar said the day's groundbreaking represented a dream come true for the Iraqi air force and they appreciate the support from the U.S. Government and Air Force.

"We wouldn't have gotten to this point if it weren't for you," he said. "The Iraqi air force will never forget you – what has happened will always stay in our memories."

Anwar's American counterpart, Maj. Gen. Robert Kane, 321st Air Expeditionary Wing commander, and the director of Iraq Training and Advisory Mission-Air Force, also spoke at the ceremony.

"In today's world of instant information and time sensitive operations, an effective air operations center is essential for taking full advantage of airpower's capabilities," Kane said. "This new Iraqi air operations center at Hawk Base – the site of the new Iraqi air force headquarters – will play a central role in the growth and future

success of the Iraqi air force and will be a key to maintaining a secure, stable and sovereign Iraq."

Kane also said the AOC groundbreaking represents a crucial step forward in the development of the Iraqi air force.

"We are extremely proud of the friendship we have with our Iraqi air force brothers and the partnership we have in this important project," he said. "I look forward to seeing this AOC, the building and its people become the nerve-center of the Iraqi air force."

As part of the official groundbreaking, a gold-plated time capsule was placed in the ground with the words "Iraqi air force operations center with support of the United States Air Force, September 2009" engraved on its side.



U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Todd Pennington, air operations center chief, Iraqi Training and Advisory Mission - Air Force, and Staff Brig. Gen. Wamidh, Iraqi air force director of operations, bury a time capsule during the Iraqi AOC ground breaking ceremony here Sept. 30. The time capsule contains candid photographs of Iraqi and U.S. AOC personnel and will be buried under the foundation of the new Iraqi AOC. The facility will play a vital role in the growth and future success of the Iraqi air force and maintaining a secure, stable, and sovereign Iraq. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Johnny L. Saldivar)



The Iraqi Air Force owns and operates three C-130 cargo planes. (U.S. Air Force Photo by Tech Sgt. Michael R. Holzworth)

Smooth Landing as Iraqi Air Force So Assumes Independent C-130 Air Ope

New Barracks Also Open Providing Needed Billets for Squadron's Airmen

By Senior Airman Alyssa C. Miles and
Ronald A. Reeves

NEW AL-MUTHANA AIR BASE, Iraq – The Iraqi Air Force officially began fully independent C-130 air operations Sept. 29 in a ceremony marking the end of the C-130 air advisory mission here.

This was formalized through the deactivation of the U.S. Air Force's 321st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron and the assumption of C-130 operations,

maintenance and training by Iraqi air force Squadron 23.

The 23rd Squadron moved from Ali Air Base in Tallil to New Al Muthana Air Base adjacent to Baghdad International Airport in February 2006. A new housing facility under construction here for squadron airmen is now complete and will provide quality living conditions for assigned personnel.

The housing facility consists of two barracks buildings with 64 rooms on two floors. The \$4.7 million structures provide billeting for 384 Iraqi airmen with three men to a room. It is a joint project of Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq and the U.S. Army Corps

of Engineers' Gulf Region Division.

"We know how important support facilities like this are to the mission," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Charles Y. Murnieks, MNSTC-I J7. "These dorms provide a tremendous boost to the operational capability of the Iraqi Air Force."

The 23rd Iraqi Air Force Transport Squadron flies three C-130E aircraft provided by the United States. The squadron flew its first all-Iraqi crew outside the country Feb. 2, 2006 when it transported the Iraqi Minister of Interior and his staff to Tunisia for an Arab League-sponsored summit. The squadron also flies Iraqi flight medics to transport personnel to medical facilities.



Squadron 23 Operations

Presiding over the event were U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Robert C. Kane, commander of the 321st Air Expeditionary Wing and director of the Iraq Training and Advisory Mission-Air Force; Staff Lt. Gen. Anwar Hamad Amen Ahmed, Iraqi Air Force Commander; Brig. Gen. Kareem Ali Abud, commander of the Iraqi Air Force's New Al-Muthana Air Base; and Col. Christopher Pehrson, commander of the U.S. Air Force's 321st Air Expeditionary Advisory Group.

"We can't forget the support you gave in the training of pilots, craft engineers, logistics, security forces and English classes," Kareem said. "We don't like to say goodbye -- see you again with better situations in Iraq."

With the deactivation of the squadron comes another step closer to the Iraqi air force's independence.

Squadron 23 is the largest C-130 squadron in the Iraqi air force and its mission includes delivering troops and cargo, providing distinguished visitor support and conducting medical evacuation. The squadron began after the United States gave three C-130E aircraft to the Iraqis through the Excess Defense Articles Program. This paved the way for the first aircrew members to receive flight training at Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark. After being assigned to Ali Air Base since 2005, the squadron moved to NAMAB March 7, 2006.

In his remarks, Kane declared the C-130 flying training effort "mission complete."

"The Iraqi pilots, navigators, flight engineers, loadmasters, and maintainers have clearly demonstrated that they are ready to perform their missions and, most importantly, to do it well," Kane said. "American advisors have also done what we've asked them to do—to stand side-by-side with their Iraqi partners and provide them the training required to operate the C-130 safely. This is a big deal, something the people of Iraq and even the world will take note of — the Iraqi Air Force is on its way to independent operations."

Kane recounted his time as the wing commander at Ramstein Air Base, Germany in late 2004 when the wing received those three C-130s from Pope Air Force Base, N.C.

"We had the honor of painting the tail flashes to reflect them as Iraqi Air Force C-130s," Kane recalled. "I was out on the ramp when we launched the aircraft and I said to the first set of instructors, "This is going to be a great mission; you are going to rebuild the Iraqi Air Force."

The Iraqi Air Force C-130 airlift mission was born with the arrival in January 2005 of those same three jets at Ali Air Base.

"Today's ceremony is possible because the United States Air Force and the Iraqi Air Force were successful in their partnership to develop credible, professional and enduring airlift capability in the Iraqi C-130 fleet," Pehrson said in his comments. "It's an important step in the realization of a fully independent Iraqi Air Force that will one day defend and protect the people of Iraq."

"From today forward, Squadron 23 will fly independently over the skies of Iraq without direct support from a U.S. air advisory squadron," he added. "One day soon, other squadrons throughout

the Iraqi Air Force will also operate independent of American advisor support. This change and the evolution of the air advisory mission is good because it means that we are moving together beyond foundational training and towards air power capabilities that are credible and enduring."

Air advisory training for the airmen includes a focus on initial training for pilots, navigators, flight engineers, loadmasters, crew chiefs, and maintenance specialists in engines, sheet metal, avionics, and hydraulics.

As for the housing the Iraqi airmen will soon occupy, Roy Brase, a construction representative for GRD said, the Iraqi air force leaders have been pleased with the Corps of Engineers' oversight of the contractors to ensure construction standards were enforced and no details slipped through the cracks.

"Providing the necessary infrastructure to support Iraqi Airmen is a critical effort in building operational capability in this country," said Murnieks.

"The Squadron 23 dorms provide a tremendous boost to the operational capability of the Iraqi air force by significantly modernizing the living conditions of Iraqi Airmen stationed here. They increase both the amount of living space available as well as improve the quality-of-life for all Airmen who will be assigned to this unit. By providing large dormitories, MNSTC-I hopes to allow the Iraqis to increase cohesion among their units by allowing Iraqi airmen who work together, to live together as well."

"It's rewarding to see the Iraqi air force achieve a higher standard of living through seemingly small acts," said GRD's Don Mills, a construction representative.

In addition to the new barracks, the corps is constructing a communications facility that will house a secure transmission network. Repairs are underway at a C-130 ramp and hangar that the squadron will use. These repairs total an additional \$4.5 million and are nearly complete.

GRD works in conjunction with the MNSTC-I to construct facilities that serve the Iraqi Security Forces throughout Iraq. The overall \$9.2 million infrastructure upgrade here is a joint effort between MNSTC-I and GRD. These facilities will help Iraq transition to an independent military force by providing billeting, warehouses and other structures of military significance.

Iraqi, U.S. Air Force Work Hand in Hand to Support Forces Drawdown

By 1st Lt Korry W. Leverett
407th Air Expeditionary Group
Public Affairs

ALI BASE, Iraq – As the U.S. Air Force continues to support the responsible draw down of forces in the country of Iraq it is also working to prepare the Iraqi Air Force to support and maintain its own flying operations on airfields across Iraq.

Because of this, the Iraqi air force commander and the director, Iraqi Training and Advisory Mission – Air Force, visited the 407th Air Expeditionary Group Sept. 24 here to conduct a site survey of the airfield and facilities, and to speak with members of the media from the local city of An Nasiriyah about the future of the base.

This was the first joint visit by Staff Lt. Gen. Anwar Hamad Amen Ahmed, Iraqi air force commander, and U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Robert Kane, ITAM - AF director. It marked a significant step in providing the Iraqi air force with a better understanding of what assets will be available to support them here during the transition and draw down of forces.

Though the exact mission set at Ali Base for Iraq and the United States after the transition is undecided, Anwar said the effort wouldn't take place single-handedly.

"We are working together to ensure the base is transferred smoothly to the Iraqi air force according to the security agreement," he said. "We have tremendous support from the prime minister, the minister of defence, and the U.S. Air Force."

The responsibility for advising and supporting the Iraqi air force during this pivotal transition is the mission of the ITAM-AF.

"Our job is to develop the foundational capability of a credible and enduring air force for the Iraqi people," said Kane. "It really is the whole spectrum of air force capabilities ... we provide our expertise to the Iraqi air force as they try to implement their plans in building the air force they



U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Robert Kane, director, Iraqi Training and Advisory Mission – Air Force, and Staff Brig. Gen. Wamidh, Iraqi air force operations commander, discuss the on-going construction of the new air traffic control tower here, Sept. 24. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Tony R. Ritter)

want."

The ITAM-AF includes Airmen from a variety of career fields who work hand in hand with members of the Iraqi air force on flightlines, in back shops and in classrooms to advise their counterparts on air operations.

Additionally, the generals were provided an overview of local airfield operations and given the opportunity to see first-hand many of the ongoing construction projects across the base.

The first of several stops on the tour was at a new air traffic control tower facility being constructed adjacent to the old tower. When completed, the new tower will be roughly eight stories high and boast improved technology, which will enhance the safety and operability of the airfield. The project is estimated to be completed in January 2010 and will be the

tallest structure in the surrounding Dhi Qar province.

Other major stops during the visit included a series of ramp expansion projects, which allow for the cover of a variety of airframes on the airfield, and a walk around of preexisting hardened aircraft shelters, which were constructed prior to 1985.

During news interviews, Anwar praised the U.S. Air Force for its efforts to upgrade and maintain the airfield. He especially thanked Kane and Col. Glen Apgar, 407th AEG commander, for the opportunity to see the facilities and construction projects on the base.

"I had visited the base before but today we saw many new construction projects," said Anwar. "I want to send my thanks to the U.S. Air Force for their support."

Promotion Ceremony Delayed So General Can Share Honor with Iraqi AF Counterpart

HAWK BASE, Iraq – U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Robert C. Kane, director, Iraq Training and Advisory Mission – Air Force, was promoted to major general Sept. 30 after delaying his promotion ceremony for 42 days in order to share the occasion with his counterpart Iraqi air force Commander, Staff Lt. Gen. Anwar at the new Iraqi air force headquarters here.

Anwar and U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Frank G. Helmick, then-commanding general, Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq, pinned on Kane's second stars while Kane's wife, Katy, watched the event via a video teleconference from MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.

Kane and Anwar are working closely to build a strong air force for Iraq. In his remarks, the general highlighted the tremendous progress being made by the Iraqi air force, including the opening of the headquarters facility. He said he was proud of the incredible efforts by both the MNSTC-I ITAM-AF and Iraqi air force teams in rebuilding the Iraqi security force. He said he felt it was fitting to delay his promotion ceremony until both the U.S. and Iraqi commanders were available for the pin-on.

The promotion was attended by MNSTC-I personnel and general officers representing each directorate of the Iraqi air force. After the ceremony, the Iraqi air force hosted a traditional Iraqi meal to celebrate the promotion.



Staff Lt. Gen. Anwar Hamad Amen Ahmed, Iraqi air force commander, presents newly promoted U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Robert C. Kane with a gift to commemorate Kane's promotion. Kane delayed his ceremony for 42 days so that Anwar could pin on his second general officer star. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman A.J. Hyatt)



Staff Lt. Gen. Anwar Hamad Amen Ahmed, Iraqi air force commander, shares a laugh with U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Robert Kane, director, ITAM-Air Force, and aides during their joint visit to Ali Air Base Sept. 24. The two generals surveyed an aircraft hanger in need of repair and other assorted construction projects on the base. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Tony R. Ritter)



Iraqi air force student Kareem Karwan and flight instructor Steve Cawthon, perform a standard landing during a training exercise flight in a UH-58D Bell helicopter on Forward Operating Base Warrior, near Kirkuk, Iraq, Sept. 13. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Canaan Radcliffe)

Iraqi army Gen. Babakir Baderkhan Shawkat Zibari, chief of staff, Iraqi Joint Forces, and Maj. Gen. Robert C. Kane, director, Iraqi Training and Advisory Mission – Air Force, presented the new pilots with their wings and spoke to a crowd of more than 300 U.S. and Iraqi service members, Iraqi government officials, civilian contractors and media. “Today marks a significant milestone in the rebuilding of the Iraqi air force,” General Kane said. “The pinning of these young officers’ wings could not happen at a more important time in the history of the Iraqi air force and the country of Iraq. These new airmen will arrive at their units at a time of rapid growth as the Iraqi air force increases operations across the country in support of all Iraqi security forces who are taking full responsibility for the protection of the Iraqi people.”

The new rotary wing pilots were trained to fly the Bell 206 Jet Rangers and OH-58 AC helicopters. The training included initial flight screenings, primary training consisting of approximately 33 sorties, general and emergency handling of the aircraft, basic and advanced instruments, and tactics. The U.S. Army Security Assistance Training Management Organization and Westar Aerospace and Defense Group provided all the training the students pilots needed to qualify.

“Logistically, this is really something they can sink their teeth into,” said U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 Alton Campbell, government flight representative, USSATCOM. “The role of the helicopter is very diverse depending on the air frame (the aircrafts mechanical structure), but it gives the Iraqi government and the Iraqi air force short and medium range cargo capability, lift capability and eventually a tactical capability once those air frames are in place and acquired ... The ability to move people and parts, to put it simply, by air is tantamount to them regaining independence.”

The chief added that they are the first Iraqi military rotary wing pilots to graduate in 12 to 15 years and the new pilots are excited about their future in the air force.

Certified Rotary-Wing Pilots Join Iraqi Air Force Fleet in Kirkuk

Iraqi General Previews Camp Taji U.S. Helicopter Operations, Partnership

By Sgt. Alun Thomas
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs and U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt.
Daniel Martinez
506 Air Expeditionary Group Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI and KIRKUK REGIONAL AIR BASE, Iraq – U.S. aviation units during Operation Iraqi Freedom have been crucial in preventing attacks on U.S. military forces as well as the Iraqi army and civilians.

As the U.S. gradually winds down its role fulfilling the U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement, the Iraqi air force must pick up where units like the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, leave off and forge their own identity in maintaining control of the skies and the ground.

The newly emerging Iraqi air force celebrated a significant advancement in military capability Sept. 27 when 23 Iraqi air force airmen were presented their pilot’s wings during a graduation ceremony at Kirkuk Regional Air Base. Eleven Iraqi officers became the first class of student pilots to earn their rotary-aircraft pilot wings and 12 Iraqi airmen earned their fixed-wing pilot wings.



Newly certified and graduated Iraq Air Force pilots show relief after receiving their wings at a Kirkuk Air Base Ceremony. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua Beckon)

Second Lt. Ali Jamal Ali, an Iraqi air force helicopter pilot, said he and his family are very proud and knows that it comes with extra responsibility.

"I hope they will feel very proud because ... all of the student pilots just want to serve this country, just want to protect them," he said.

Ali spoke passionately about serving his country and setting an example.

"I hope that because we are so few and we need more pilots, more power for this country to save it and protect it" he added. "I hope that they can learn something from us to come here and serve their country."

As more Iraqi airmen join the 11 newly certified rotary-winged aviators, their partnership will grow stronger with the teams who maintain and fly U.S. rotary-wing aircraft.

To that end, Iraqi Gen. Abud Qanbar Hashim al-Maliki, commanding general, Baghdad Operations Command, visited 1st Air Cavalry Brigade and Iraq air force headquarters in mid-September to view the progress of airmen and aircraft used to protect Soldiers from both nations.

Abud, accompanied on his visit by U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Daniel Bolger, commanding general, 1st Cav. Div. and MND – B, said he wanted to see the 1st ACB and Iraqi air force operations.

"On this visit I also wanted to see the level of cooperation between the Iraqi air force and the U.S. Air Force," Abud said. "What I saw shows vital coordination between both."

The amount of effort from the Iraqi air force and the 1st ACB to support Baghdad and the surrounding areas has also been impressive, Abud said.

"The partnership between both is important and I wanted to confirm that it is strong on this visit," Abud said. "The partnership indicates the level of the Iraqi air force and their performance on the joint missions with the Air Cav."

Abud said it is crucial for both sides to continue working alongside each other in order for the Iraqi air force to successfully continue the mission in the future.

"It was visible the coordination and help given to us from the American side today," Abud said. "To conduct the missions critical to BOC they have been helpful in building and supporting the Iraqi air force."

Abud toured a static display of both U.S. and Iraqi aircraft, including an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter with which he said he was impressed.

"What I saw was excellent," Abud



U.S. Army Col. Douglas Gabram, commander of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, discusses the strong relationship between the 1st ACB and the Iraqi air force with Gen. Abud Qanbar Hashim al-Maliki, commanding general, Baghdad Operations Command. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Alun Thomas)

said in reference to the Apache. "I want to thank the crews and technicians who work on these choppers."

Bolger said the visit was important so Abud could learn more about the 1st ACB and their aerial assets, but also the Iraqi air force and their development.

"The goal for Gen. Abud is to learn what helicopter aviation can do for the fight in Baghdad and what he can do to better encourage the partnership in this operation," Bolger said.

Partnership is a key word at this stage of the war, Bolger said, which makes visits like this important.

"What we really want to know is what each side brings to the fight and what can each side do to help the other guys

improve," Bolger said. "What we have here is a great hand in hand partnership. It's not just American-Iraqi, but American Air Force and Army working together."

"The ultimate goal is to get the Iraqi military as capable as possible with all their forces," he added.

Bolger said he is impressed with the progress being made by the Iraqi air force.

"It takes a long time to train air crew and ground aviation capabilities," Bolger said. "Yet look at them now, they're flying alongside us and got their own aircraft and strengths."

"You can see as they work with our Apache's that their future will represent more and more capabilities at each point."



Iraqi air force students Kareem Karwan and Hameed Ali prepare their flight suit equipment before a training exercise flight in a UH-58D Bell helicopter. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Canaan Radcliffe)

U.S. Transfers Control of Zurbatiyah Cargo Trans-load Area to Iraq

By U.S. Army Pfc. Bethany L. Little

ZURBATIYAH, Iraq-Iran Border –Iraq assumed formal control Sept. 26 of the newly opened Zurbatiyah Point of Entry Cargo Trans-Load Area, or CTLA, which is designed to improve commerce and security in Iraq.

The hand over was part of a ceremony marking the completion of the \$5.4 million facility, which straddles the Iraq-Iran border, that was funded by Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq. Iraqi contractors built the facility under the supervision of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region South.

The project is a combined effort by Border Transition Team 4351, Task Force Drifter, Point of Entry team, Iraq Ministry of Finance, Civil Customs, Army Corps of Engineers

and Iraqi Security Forces. The area allows for commerce and safe trading between Iraq and Iran.

“Once the Iranian wall is removed, the 50-bay trans-load area will significantly enhance commercial throughput at Iraq’s busiest land port of entry,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Gary W. Dettling, chief of borders & ports, MNSTC-I.

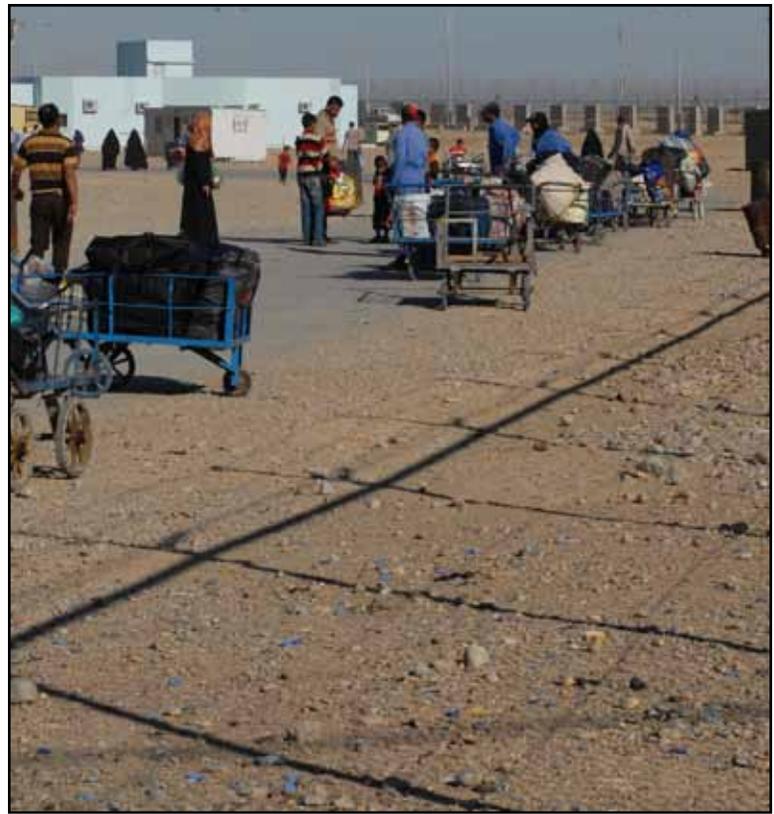
Key U.S. military leaders, such as Army Maj. Gen. Richard J. Rowe, director of Iraq Training and Advisory Mission, Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq, and Army Brig. Gen. Gerald Lang, deputy commanding general for support, Multi-National Division – South, attended the ceremony and toured the facility.

“Guarding the ports of entry between Iran and Iraq is a critical function of security, not just for Iraq, but regionally for the entire Middle East,” Rowe said. “It is extremely rewarding to help rebuild the Iraqi infrastructure and help Iraq resume its independent and sovereign border functions.”

The CTLA enables inspection of all cargo entering Iraq; currently cargo trans-loading occurs in Iran. It consists of computerized scales, marshaling areas, 50-bays of trans-load docks, a control facility and four security towers.



Between 200 and 500 cargo trucks are expected to pass through the CTLA daily.



People wait in line to go through customs inspection and cross into Iraq from Iran at the Cargo Transload Area at the Zurbatiyah point of entry. (U.S. Army Photo by Pfc. Bethany L. Little)

The CTLA is fully operational except for the trans-load dock, which requires removal of a wall currently blocking vehicle movement to the Iranian side of the docking area.

“I am very thankful for all of the help Coalition forces have provided for us to create this area,” said Iraqi Maj. Gen. Isam Salih Yaseen, the Zurbatiyah port director, Department of Border Enforcement. “We now have the ability to be more proficient and provide better security between Iraq and Iran.”

The CTLA process starts at the border between Iraq and Iran. Trucks are weighed and backed up to the 50-lane transload area, where goods are inspected by customs police. The goods are then transferred into Iraqi trucks and taken to the final inspection area in Iraq.

Inspection includes searching for products or produce unfit for consumption and contraband.

Between 200-500 cargo trucks pass through the CTLA daily and approximately 5,000 people are processed through the point of entry.

“This project provides an opportunity for customs police to see what is transferred through the two countries and provide security for both countries,” said Maj. David

W. Gordon, Zebatiya POE team chief, BTT 4351, Task Force Drifter.

The POE is equipped with a dining area, office workspace, an armory, living quarters, bathrooms and showers for the personnel manning the facility.

The CTLA cost \$5.3 million to construct, but through taxes, tariffs and fees the CTLA brings in approximately \$40,000 or 40-50 million Iraqi Dinar per day.

“This project shows how the trade between Iraq and Iran will continue to grow and commercialize in a good way,” said Yaseen. “It is a major responsibility to take on this area, but it will help us better our security and strengthen our economy.”

School of the Advisor Graduates 500th Student

BAGHDAD – The 500th student graduated Sept. 27 from the School of the Advisor Course at the Ministry of Defense’s Ministerial Training and Development Center.

U.S. Air Force Maj. George Woodworth, an advisor to the Iraqi director general of armaments and supply, accepted the honor from the commanding general of Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq. Over the course of a 14-year Air Force career, Woodworth has honed his skill in the acquisition field as a program manager with an eye to planning and research and development.

The Advisor School was established to provide a unique training opportunity for newly-arrived and existing MNSTC-I advisors to hone their knowledge about Iraq’s customs, culture, history, and language before they begin advisory activities with their counter-parts from the government of Iraq.

The two-day Advisor Course focuses on society, culture, and how best to approach the advising mission across the

Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, Counter Terrorism Services, and Iraqi Security Force Headquarters to meet the needs of Iraqi partners.

The Advisor Course arose from the recognition that there was a critical gap in advisor training in preparation for their mission in Iraq. The Advisor Course prepares students for a mission unique in theater. Senior U.S. advisors and their Iraqi counterparts provide for the development of security ministries’ capacity and institutional force capabilities.

The MTDC held its first Advisor Course in December 2008. This is its 23rd iteration. Including Woodworth, 500 students from MNSTC-I, Multi-National Forces-Iraq and NATO Training Mission-Iraq have graduated.

The success of the School of the Advisor led MTDC to establish the Partner School to assist senior Iraqi officials in the development of their understanding of U.S. forces’ values and culture. The Partner School mirrors

the philosophy from the School of the Advisor by encouraging long-lasting relationships with western counterparts.

Instruction at the Partner School is by senior-level MNSTC-I leaders, mid-level advisors with day-to-day contact with Iraqi government officials, and professional educators from the MTDC.

Specifically, the Partner School provides practical knowledge on capability planning and resources allocation, government and governance and rule of law, western thinking and values, ethics and professionalism, management of information and western managerial norms.

The Course provides an opportunity to raise the understanding of senior Iraqi colleagues, for them to know what shapes and drives their western advisors. The MTDC Partners School curriculum is designed to stimulate conversations the future of Iraq. Sometime in November, the MTDC expects to graduate its 100th student from the Partner School.



U.S. Air Force Maj. George Woodworth, the 500th student to graduate from the School of the Advisor, discusses his work with the Iraqi director general for armaments and supply. (Ministry of Interior photo by Noah Miller)

Saddam's Spoils

Iraq Accepts Return of Deposed Regime's Ill-Gotten Golden Weapons, Luxury Items

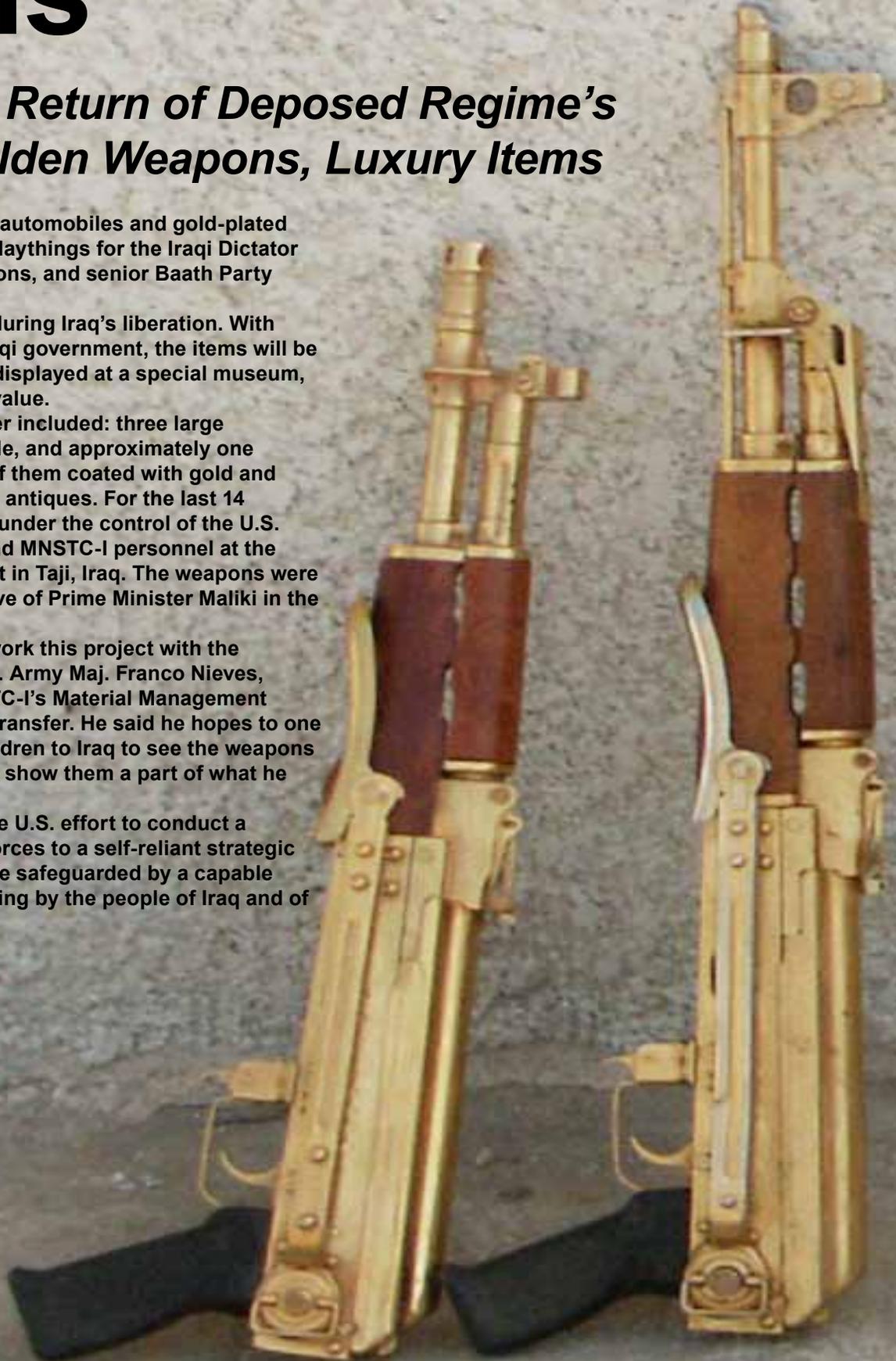
BAGHDAD – The vintage automobiles and gold-plated weapons were the private playthings for the Iraqi Dictator Saddam Hussein, his two sons, and senior Baath Party officials.

U.S. forces siezed them during Iraq's liberation. With September turn in to the Iraqi government, the items will be catalogued and eventually displayed at a special museum, because of their historical value.

The weapons handed over included: three large artillery pieces, a motorcycle, and approximately one hundred handguns, some of them coated with gold and platinum, while others were antiques. For the last 14 months, the weapons were under the control of the U.S. Army Material Command and MNSTC-I personnel at the National Maintenance Depot in Taji, Iraq. The weapons were presented to a representative of Prime Minister Maliki in the International Zone.

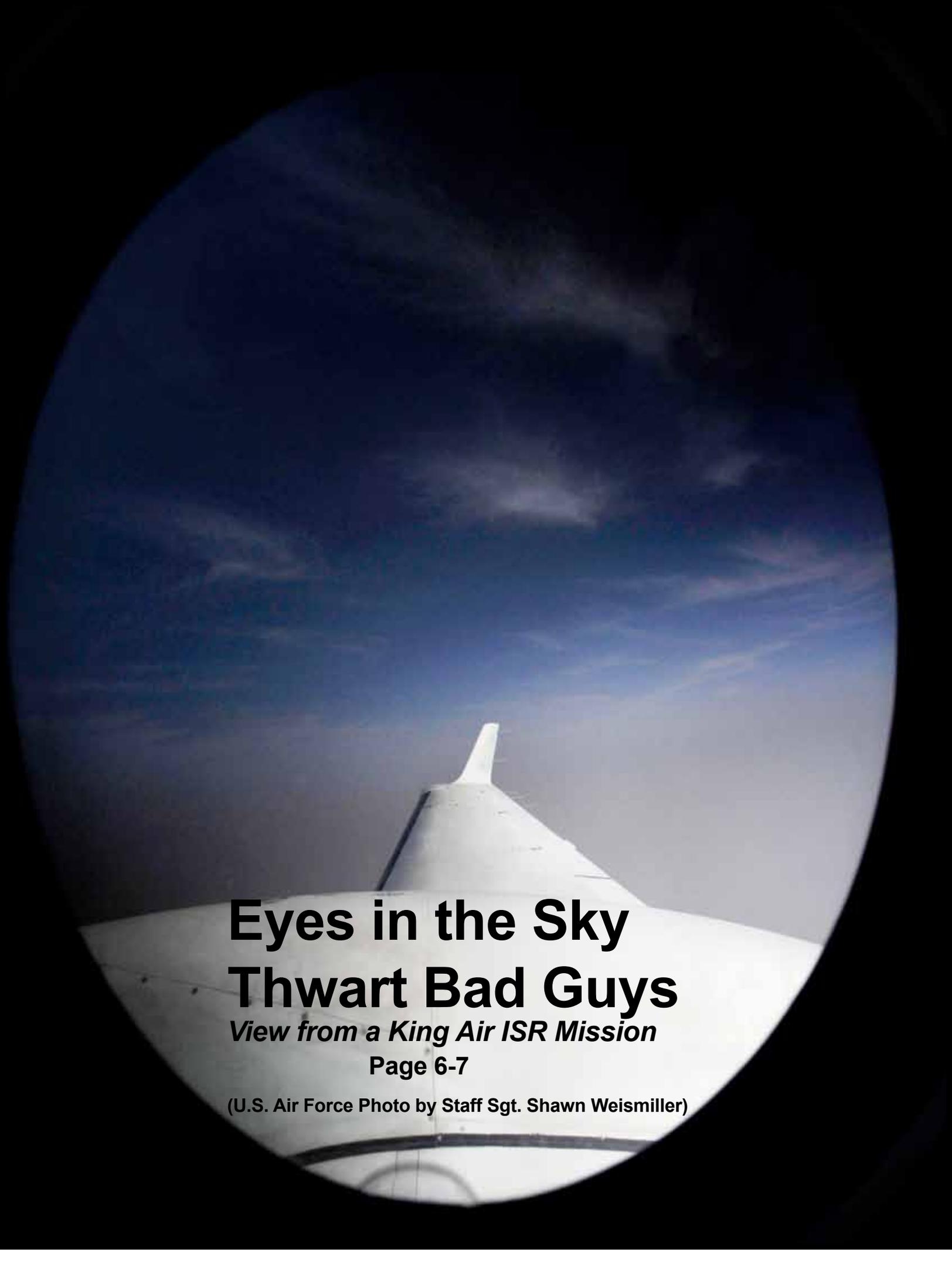
"It's been a pleasure to work this project with the Iraqi government," said U.S. Army Maj. Franco Nieves, operations officer for MNSTC-I's Material Management Division, who oversaw the transfer. He said he hopes to one day be able to bring his children to Iraq to see the weapons displayed in the museum to show them a part of what he did while serving in Iraq.

The turnover is part of the U.S. effort to conduct a responsible drawdown of forces to a self-reliant strategic partner. The weapons will be safeguarded by a capable Iraqi security force for viewing by the people of Iraq and of the world.





These vintage automobiles and gold-plated weapons were the private playthings for the Iraqi Dictator Saddam Hussein, his two sons, and senior Baath Party officials. U.S. forces seized them during Iraq's liberation and have now returned them to the democratically elected government of Iraq. (U.S. Army photos by Maj. Franco Nieves)



Eyes in the Sky Thwart Bad Guys

View from a King Air ISR Mission

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(U.S. Air Force Photo by Staff Sgt. Shawn Weismiller)