

The Daily Roar

VOL. 1, NO. 8

MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION -- BAGHDAD

DECEMBER 26, 2007

Let there be light

By Staff Sgt. Mike Pryor

2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. PAO

BAGHDAD – Up until recently, the Rabi Fish Market – a thoroughfare crowded with little shops and stands in Northeast Baghdad – cleared out when the sun went down. But these days, things are different. Thanks to the illumination provided by rows of new, solar-powered streetlights, vendors can continue to ply their wares and shoppers can keep browsing the shops for hours after night has fallen.

The new lights were supplied by the 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment – the U.S. unit responsible for security in Rabi - as part of an ongoing effort to revitalize the market area. Since early December, 40 of the 18-foot-high lights have been installed throughout the marketplace.

The new lights will allow businesses to remain open longer and make the market safer and more enticing for customers, with the end result being a boost to the local economy, said Madison, N.C. native Capt. Josh Richardson, who commands Battery B.

Richardson said people in Rabi had long expressed a desire to keep the market open at night, but the city power grid simply wasn't reliable enough. With solar technology, however, power shortages are never a problem.

The solar lights now installed in the fish market utilize fairly simple solar technology: each light has a solar panel



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Local men play cards and debate life at the fish market in the Graya'at neighborhood of Northeast Baghdad Dec. 18.

which soaks up energy during the day. That energy is then used to power the bulbs all night. The lights turn on automatically, and require little maintenance after being installed, Richardson said.

"We give the batteries an initial charge and then let the sun do the rest," he said.

Richardson paid a visit to the fish market on a recent night to see what kind of reaction the lights were getting. It was after 8 p.m. when he and his paratroopers patrolled through the market, but the streets were still crowded. Beneath the orange glow of the street lights, young married couples pushed strollers past vegetable stands made of bound brushwood and neon-lit storefronts advertising cell phones and wireless internet. Groups of old men sat out on the sidewalks playing cards and debating life. Little children hurried for-

ward on urgent business to pick up one or two last items for dinner.

For Richardson, the ordinariness of it all was a pleasant sight.

"I don't think you can overstate the importance of feeling like things are back to normal and you can go out and enjoy time out in public with friends and family," he said.

Several shop owners told the paratroopers the lights were having a positive effect.

"Business is better now," said Abbas Mohammed, the owner of a cosmetics shop. "People can shop longer. It is good for the community."

"Of course it is a good thing because we have a little less fear to go out," said Mustafa Moied, a college student whose family runs a convenience store in the market. "At this time (be-

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photo by Sgt. Brandon Little, Task Force XII PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Capt. Regina Bradeen, commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company Task Force XII, and a native of Falmouth, Mass. helps unload mail from the back of a truck Dec. 20. According to Soldiers in the Task Force XII mail room, package mail has nearly tripled during the month of December as friends and Families of Soldiers stationed in Iraq send cookies and gifts for Christmas.

Baghdad Three Day Weather Forecast

Wednesday
Partly Cloudy
HI: 59F/15C
LO: 39F/4C



Thursday
Sunny
HI: 59F/15C
LO: 37F/3C



Friday
Partly Cloudy
HI: 59F/15C
LO: 37F/3C




The Daily Roar

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Task Force XII Soldiers keep an eye on aircraft

By Sgt. Brandon Little

Task Force XII PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Imagine a municipal airport in the middle of a combat zone. At any given time, several American and Iraqi helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles are preparing for takeoff. As the crews get ready for a complex mission, they have to worry about everything from passenger safety to enemy attacks.

As long as that crew is flying in Camp Taji's airspace, one group of Soldiers is responsible for ensuring the last thing this crew needs to worry about is colliding with another aircraft.

The Soldiers of Company F, 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, from Fort Campbell, Ky., monitor the flight patterns and activities of every aircraft in the area from the air traffic control tower here.

It takes a long time to learn how to direct air traffic, and these Soldiers have done an outstanding job in keep the aircraft of Task Force XII, and other coalition forces, out of harm's way, said Task Force XII Command Sgt. Maj. H. Lee Kennedy.

"Not only do we monitor the helicopters from Task Force XII, but we also monitor Iraqi aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV)," said Capt. Nicole Dean, an OH-58 pilot and the commander of Company F. "The airspace we are responsible for monitoring extends as far north as Balad Air Base and as far south as Baghdad International Airport."

Monitoring airspace this large can be difficult especially when visibility decreases and air traffic increases, said Sgt. Matthew Lett, an air traffic controller in Company F.

"During the day it's usually easy for an aircraft to see things around them, but at night they rely a lot on our radar to guide them," said Lett, a native of Asheville, Ala. "Through the use of the technology we have, we can ensure aircraft are the correct distance away from each other."



by Sgt. Brandon Little, Task Force XII PAO

Spc. Kristen Leicht, an air traffic controller and log maintainer in Company F, 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, maintains communication with an inbound helicopter with a radio in the air traffic control tower.

This air traffic control tower also keeps a detailed log of aircraft in the area; including their location, how long they've been there and where they are headed.

"We try to keep as much information as possible about the (aircraft in our airspace) just in case something happens," said Spc. Kristen Leicht, an air traffic controller and log maintainer from Hollister, Calif. "We also keep in contact with the pilots to let them know about things such as bad weather, ranges firing and controlled detonations."

Since Camp Taji's airfield is also used for emergency landings when visibility drops quickly, the Soldiers in this tower have the capability to help guide pilots to the airfield, Staff Sgt. Richard Lowe, a ground control approach radar chief.

"We help pilots with low visibility, and/or bad weather, orient their aircraft with the airfield because they can't see the ground," said Lowe, a native of Woodward, Okla. "When a pilot calls for assistance, we tell them which way to turn and give them altitude assessments to funnel them toward the airfield.

In some cases we have guided them all the way to touch down."

The Soldiers in the control tower can monitor and direct air traffic 24/7 just like a control tower at any major airport but they're much more mobile, said Dean, a native of Buffalo, N.Y.

"We have the ability to pick up and move anywhere to establish an area safe enough for aircraft to fly," she said. "We had less than 60 days from the time we found out about the deployment to go through training, pack up our equipment and come to Iraq."

Many of the Soldiers in Co., 7th Bn. 101st Aviation Regiment have been deployed multiple times and they know helicopter flight crews need to worry about passengers and enemy fire; not hitting another aircraft.

"We are one of the most deployed air traffic control companies in the Army, and we have proven we can fulfill any task give to us," said Dean. "We have a lot of dedicated Soldiers and noncommissioned officers who have as much knowledge and experience as any other air traffic controller. I have never seen a more professional group of Soldiers."

The new lights allow businesses to remain open longer

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fore there were any streetlights), we were all in our homes,” Moied said.

Moied said that a few days earlier the community had organized a big soccer game on one of the fish market’s main streets after dark. He and his friends argued about when the last time such a thing had happened.

“Twenty years ago!”

“No, 50 years ago!”

Regardless, Moied said all people in the community appreciated all the work the paratroopers had done to make the market and the neighborhood better.

After all the hard work, the 2nd Bn. 319th Abn. FA has done to improve the area throughout the past year, it was good to hear people being so appreciative, Richardson said.

“My guys have put in a lot of time, energy, effort, blood, sweat and tears into helping this community, so to have people thank us back for that, it goes a long way,” he said.



by Staff Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. PAO

Brevard, N.C. native Sgt. Jade Redmond of B Battery, chats with some shoppers outside an electronics shop in the Graya’at neighborhood in Northeast Baghdad. Redmond’s unit recently helped install solar lights in the market which increase security.



photo by Maj. Kirk Luedeke, 41BCT, 11D

O Come All Ye Faithful

BAGHDAD – An altar boy eagerly rings a bell to celebrate Christmas at the conclusion of mass held at the St. John’s Chaldean Church in Doura. After receiving the sacrament, the congregation’s children were treated to a visit by Santa Claus.