

Rakkasan Review

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Rakkasan Review

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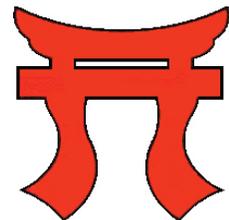
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We welcome the submission of news items, articles and photographs. Submissions should be made to the 3rd BCT Public Affairs Office via e-mail at: rakkasanspao@yahoo.com.



Capt. Allison Flannigan

Mohel Abdella Mohammed, a local veterinarian, prepares a vaccine for a baby sheep during a veterinary visit in Yusufiyah Feb. 5. Iraqi and American Soldiers facilitated the visit to promote growth for the area's farming industry. See the full story on page 7.

On the cover:

Sgt. William Gironda, team leader for 3rd Platoon, Company C, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, military transition team, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), pulls security from a roof Jan. 27 in the Said Abdullah Corridor during Operation Iron Boston. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback)



Pvt. Christopher McKenna

The Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Richard Cody speaks to Soldiers of Company A, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), during his visit to Patrol Base Kemple Feb. 11.

Cody spends time with Rakkasans

By Pvt. Christopher McKenna
3rd BCT Public Affairs

The Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Richard Cody visited Rakkasans at Patrol Base Kemple Feb. 11.

Cody took time to talk with Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) before conducting mass reenlistment of more than 200 Task

Force Marne Soldiers at Al Faw Palace on Camp Victory.

The vice chief of staff handed out several personal coins and spoke to leaders about equipment, development and progress seen in the area by those who have deployed to Iraq multiple times.

Cody spoke of today's Army as "the most disciplined Army we have ever put on the battlefield." He told the

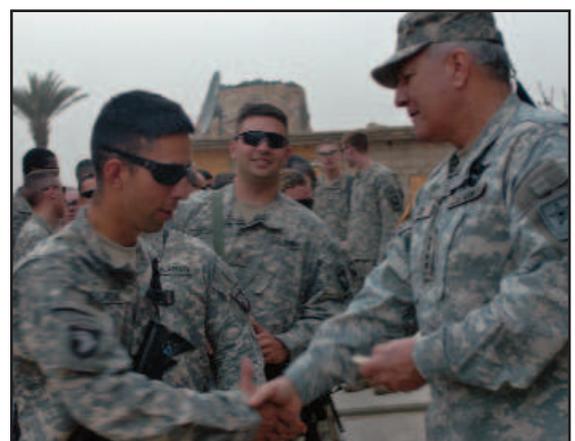
Soldiers that he exists to take care of the fighting force and ensure troops on the ground are adequately equipped.

"If you need something, let me know," Cody said. "I'm making sure everyone is receiving what they need."

"When it is all said and done, the Soldiers serving here today will be able to look back in life and say, 'I defended my country with the greatest division in Army,'" Cody said.



(Left) Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Richard Cody and Multi-National Division - Center Commander Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch are greeted by Col. Dominic J. Caraccilo, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) commander, and Lt. Col. Andrew Rohling, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment commander, during a visit to Patrol Base Kemple Feb. 11. (Right) Cody hands out coins to Soldiers from Company A, 3-187th Inf.



B Btry., 3-320th provides medical care in Lutifiyah

By Pvt. Christopher McKenna
3rd BCT Public Affairs

More than 300 Iraqis sought medical care from Iraqi and American doctors during a coordinated medical engagement in the Lutifiyah region Feb. 15.

“We are amongst the first to bring a Coalition presence to this area in a long time,” said 2nd Lt. Bronson Hayes, a medical service officer with 626th Brigade Support Battalion, attached to 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). “It is great knowing that we are out here helping people and gaining their trust.”

A total of 365 patients were seen by the doctors through the day.

“That number is much higher than anticipated, as the area ... is both small and rural,” said 2nd Lt. Josh Wade, the 3rd Platoon leader, Battery B, 3-320th FA.

“The CMEs are great, but can be difficult to supply, but (they’re) well worth it,” Hayes said. “(People coming) shows that they are gaining trust in us and know that we are working hand in hand with the Iraqi Army to

help make this area better for all.”

The CME was used as a means to educate the local citizens on health issues, as well as provide treatment and care.

“We always come out to the CMEs and conduct some type of medical educational program, and the Iraqis always help with that,” Hayes said.

He added that one of the main objectives for CMEs is to put an Iraqi face on medical care. In this instance, the Iraqi face was that of Dr. Mohamed Mousa, an Iraqi Army physician who treated the majority of the male patients.

“Everyone seemed happy and very welcoming of the help that we were bringing to them,” Wade said. This was the third medical engagement held in February, and more are on the horizon.

Children in the area who are ages 3 to 7 are accustomed to Coalition Forces’ presence in their communities. Hayes said CMEs and other humanitarian efforts show the Iraqis that they are making a positive impact.

“They see that we are doing better things for them than the Al Qaida and other criminals,” Wade said.

Dr. Mohamed Mousa, doctor with the Iraqi Army, examines a patient during a coordinated medical engagement in the Lutifiyah region Feb. 15. Mousa and U.S. Army medical personnel saw a total of 365 patients during the CME.



Pvt. Christopher McKenna

Red Knights capture insurgent

By Pvt. Christopher McKenna
3rd BCT Public Affairs

An early morning air assault in the Greater Lutifiyah area netted a wanted terrorist Feb. 17.

Iraqi Army troops partnered with Soldiers from Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), to conduct a raid, leading to the successful capture of Rasou Dari Shakir, part of an insurgency cell.

Shakir fled on foot before the mission began, but was tracked down by close-air support assets.

“The aviation element was able to talk us onto our second target,” said 1st Lt. Ronald Bates, 1st Platoon leader, Btry. B, 3-320th FA, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT). He noted that the presence of helicopters often cause insurgents to run, but the attack helicopters are instrumental in pinpointing the location of objectives.

Integration of IA and aviation assets results in additional planning but Bates said the addition of the aircraft enhance the unit’s capabilities when the process is properly executed.

Bates said the support of the Iraqi Army during the mission was a key asset. “They are a developing (military) and do not have a lot of the doctrine we have, but this is their country, they can engage with the populous in ways that wouldn’t even make sense to us.”

“I was really pleased with the tactical portion of the mission, we have been making good strides as a platoon,” Bates said. “Given the terrain, everything was handled the way it needed to be, so it was a tactical success.”



Mahmudiyah businesses display wares at expo

By Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback
3rd BCT Public Affairs

Iraqi businesses put their capabilities on display at the Al Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad Feb. 15-17 for a three-day exposition.

The first-ever Baghdad Business to Business Expo enabled business owners and managers to show other companies what they have to offer.

“This is the first time in Iraq’s history they’ve actually had to market their wares and get people to look at it,” said Maj. Robert Bertrand, civil affairs planner for 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). “Getting out, marketing and selling something rather than being directed to produce is a big change for them.”

Two Mahmudiyah-based companies in particular are now adapting to a free-market economy.

The Ready Made Clothes Company and the National Metallic and Bicycle Company are privately and state-owned companies that previously only produced goods for the government. With help from the State Depart-

ment’s embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team in Mahmudiyah and the Rakkasan Soldiers, the businesses have expanded their lines of products and are trying to increase their clientele. The expo gave both companies an opportunity to do just that.

“If there’s a restaurant and the restaurant needs uniforms, (they) have the Ready Made Clothing factory that operates in Mahmudiyah,” Bertrand said. “They now know they can go there and have their shirts made. Or, if they need a table made, (they) have the National Metallic Bicycle factory that fabricates metal products.”

John Stafford, a business expert with the ePRT in Mahmudiyah, is helping companies learn how to push products and other aspects of a free-market business. By maintaining close contact with the businesses, pushing them to broaden their horizons and working as their marketing officer, Stafford has given the clothing and metal-working companies a real chance for success, said Louis Lantner, ePRT team leader.

“Most companies (at the expo) and

most companies in Iraq don’t understand the concept or the need of a marketing officer,” Lantner said.

Lantner said marketing is key to the success of even America’s best-known brands. Though the brands may already be household names, those companies continue to spend enormous sums on marketing, something Iraqi companies had not yet grasped.

Allowing the companies to market their goods at the expo was a marker of success for the ePRT and Rakkasans who have worked hard to get the companies going. Not only was it proof that lessons of how to operate a company in a free market were working, it was also a triumph to have those businesses producing again and employing locals.

Area businesses’ doors had been closed due to a lack of security in the Mahmudiyah qada, but now security has improved. With attacks down significantly, people are returning to work. As jobs are restored and businesses expand, the hope is for the Iraqis to achieve economic stability in the qada.

IA, Rakkasans uncover caches, spider hole

By Capt. Allison Flannigan
3rd BCT PAO

Iraqi Army and Iron Rakkasan Soldiers discovered four weapon caches in Yusufiyah, Iraq, Feb. 18.

Troops from 4th Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division and Company C, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) acted on a tip from a local citizen questioned by the IA. The man admitted to being a member of al-Qaeda in Iraq and told IA Soldiers the location of the caches.

The four caches were located within a square quarter-mile area. After each cache was revealed, the man told the Soldiers the location of the next until all four were discovered.

Each cache had several large plastic tubes, between two- and four-feet long, buried vertically in the ground and loaded with munitions.

Collectively, the caches yielded approximately 400 60 mm mortar rounds, 300 82 mm mortar rounds, 50 120 mm mortar rounds, a complete 60 mm mortar system, seven ski masks, hundreds of mortar parts, 100 pounds of unknown bulk explosives and instruction manuals.

After collecting the munitions, the

Soldiers talked with people who live near the cache sites. One citizen stepped forward and said he had something to show the Soldiers.

“I had heard that there might have been spider holes in the area and I mentioned that to the people we were talking to,” said 1st Lt. Casey Zimmerman, 3rd Platoon leader, Co. C, 3-187th Inf. Regt.

“Sure enough, one of the farmers told me there was a spider hole on his farm.”

The Soldiers originally thought it was a small hole, barely large enough to hide two adults. Once they started digging, however, they found a room that was 10 feet by 12 feet, complete with an aluminum ceiling.

With the help of the local populace, Iron Rakkasans of Co. C, 3-187th Inf. Regt. and their IA partners have found

seven caches in the last three weeks.

“Counterinsurgency operations are fundamentally driven by the relationship between the IA and Coalition Forces Soldiers and the local citizens,” Zimmerman said. “Everyone is working together for the security and future development of the community.”

More caches found

3rd BCT PAO

Iraqi Army Soldiers and Rakkasans unearthed a large cache in Qarghuli Feb. 12.

Soldiers from Company D, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and their 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division counterparts discovered the second large cache in the area in less than two weeks.

The cache contained more than 825 pounds of homemade explosives, several rocket fuselages, 120 mm rounds, 720 shotgun shells and a variety of other munitions.

“These caches are quite a find,” said Spc. Matthew Hopson from Carbondale, Ill., intelligence analyst, Co. D., 3-187th Inf. Regt. “We’ve removed a large amount of munitions to keep Qarghuli Village safe and secure.”

Information was provided by the same an Iraqi who gave the tip leading to massive weapon cache finds Jan. 30 in Qarghuli and Shubayshen.

“It has taken a while to build that trust and confidence with the locals,” said 1st Lt. Keenan Ellison from Newport Tenn., 3rd Platoon leader, Co. D., 3-187th Inf. Regt. “We have locals coming to us with good intelligence on the locations of caches now.”

Qarghuli Village, settled along the banks of the Euphrates River, has been relatively quiet since the Sons of Iraq started manning checkpoints in the area. Soldiers from Company D and the 3/4/6 IA are living among the population, getting to know the community.

“This is what counterinsurgency is all about; the population is the key terrain around here,” said Capt. Frank Castro from Brookfield, Wis., commander of Co. D., 3-187th Inf. Regt. “Once you have them on your side, al-Qaeda and other insurgent elements don’t have a chance.”



Courtesy photo

Iraqi Army soldiers uncover munitions from large caches discovered Feb. 18 in Yusufiyah.

Cache find disrupts IED, indirect fire cells

By Pvt. Christopher McKenna
3rd BCT Public Affairs

A significant weapon cache was discovered after a group effort between Iraqi Army and Red Knight Rakkasan Soldiers Feb. 19 north of Lutifiyah.

Led to the site by a tip from a local citizen, members of 1st Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division and 4th Platoon, Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air As-

sault), found a mass of weapons and homemade explosives.

The cache contained various improvised explosive device-making materials, multiple explosive rounds, firearms and documentation.

“The source of intelligence for the cache was with us the whole way,” said Capt. Charlie Lewis, executive officer for Btry. B, 3-320th FA. “He led us to the location and told us the cache was located between two specific houses;

from there we started our search.”

The IA came upon the cache before the U.S. forces did.

“The Iraqis know the area better than us and can tell more when ground in an area has been disturbed,” said Sgt. Jeremiah Hash, fire support noncommissioned officer, 4th Plt., Btry. B, 3-320th FA.

This was the largest find for the battery since arriving into country last October.

“The find is extremely significant, we thought it

was going to just be a regular cache,” Lewis said. “Instead we found a fair amount of IED-making materials, disrupting an IED cell in the area.”

Six men thought to be tied to the cache were detained and brought in for questioning.

Hash said he has seen a lot of IEDs and is confident this find will result in less attacks in the area. He said mortar rounds and multiple direct-fire weapon systems found indicate an indirect fire cell was also disrupted.

Iraqi Army, Rakkasans organize veterinary visit in Yusufiyah

By Capt. Allison Flannigan
3rd BCT PAO

Rakkasans worked with Iraqi Army troops to conduct a veterinary operation in Yusufiyah Feb. 5.

Soldiers from 3rd Platoon, Company C, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and their IA counterparts arranged a veterinarian visit at a local sheik's house.

Mohel Abdella Mohammed, a local female veterinarian, treated more than 120 cows and sheep with the Soldiers' help. Mohel vaccinated the animals for Clostridium chauvoei, commonly known as Blackleg, a fatal bacterial infection common in cows and sheep.

Mohel completed her degree at Baghdad University in 1988 and has practiced veterinary medicine for more than 20 years. She

said she was excited about working with Soldiers to vaccinate animals in her town and hopes to conduct more of these visits to offer medical treatment to other farming communities.

Sheik Khudaur, who hosted the vet visit, talked with Mohel about the health of his tribe's animals and said he was pleased to hear that they were all generally healthy.

“We try to tailor our missions to the needs of the tribe. The Abu Alush tribe depends on agriculture and farming,” said 1st Lt. Casey Zimmerman, from Santa Barbara, Calif., platoon leader for 3rd Platoon. Keeping animals healthy boosts their production value and enhances the farming industry's role in tribal economics.

Pittsburgh, Penn., native Capt. Michael Starz, commander of Company C, said

the vet visit was particularly beneficial because they were able to employ a local professional. The event also had a positive impact on the economy because the vaccinations were locally purchased.

Pfc. Andrew Finney, from Philadelphia, Company C, said events like this vet visit are very useful because they strengthen bonds between the local populace and Coalition Forces.

Following the vaccinations, the Soldiers joined Sheik Khudaur at his home. Finney said the sheik is a good leader who cares about the well-being of his tribe and is always helpful and hospitable to Soldiers.

“This, just sitting here, is the most bene-

ficial thing we do. Just sitting and talking breeds a mutual respect,” Finney said. “The more we learn about their culture, the more we respect them and the more they respect us for learning about them.”



Capt. Allison Flannigan
A Yusufiyah man prepares his cow for vaccination during a veterinary visit in Yusufiyah Feb. 5.

Iraqi committee aims to transition ‘Sons of Iraq’ to other employment

By Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy
3rd BCT PAO NCOIC

Representatives from the Iraqi National Police, Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces met with the Iraqi prime minister’s director of reconciliation Feb. 2 at the Ministry of Defense complex.

Dr. Bassima Lu’ay Hasun al-Jaidri was appointed by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in August as head of Iraq’s Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation.

She met with Iraqi and Coalition Force brigade commanders and National Police officers to discuss the way forward in transitioning the Sons of Iraq, formerly known as Concerned Local Citizens, into other jobs.

Twenty percent of the Sons of Iraq will shift into positions with the police or Iraqi Army forces. An attempt will be made to put the other 80 percent into general services jobs, such as electricians, teachers and doctors.

Employment priority will go to the SoI and other applicants may be hired in later phases of the process.

The hope, al-Jaidri said, is that IFCNR committees, in partnership with the Iraqi security forces and CF, will stop any corruption or infiltration by al-Qaeda.

“So far we have a verbal directive from the prime minister to try and take in all the Sons of these areas ... into these general services jobs as it is available,” al-Jaidra said. “Now we

need to clarify how we will tackle this operation here together.”

Al-Jaidra outlined the plan for the changeover and employment of the thousands of men serving as SoI. “We need to identify all the names (associated with) all the different kinds of services, whether it’s rebuilding, health, schools...” she said. “For the ones who don’t have education, we might be able to send them to training schools... so we can try to help them out.”

Applicants will be separated by profession and each will be transferred to the ministry that corresponds with that specialty; electricians will go to the Ministry of Electricity, etc.

“Right now we have the ministries, we have the mechanisms as to how we’re going to distribute these people, all we have left is the commitment from the ministries,” al-Jaidra said. “Our role is to help support all the ministries.”

She said she sees this effort coming together and everyone working together hand-in-hand.

So far, the IFCNR has looked at



Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy
Dr. Bassima Lu’ay Hasun al-Jaidri, head of Iraq’s Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation, speaks to representatives from the Iraqi National Police, Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces Feb. 2 at the Ministry of Defense complex.

10,000 of 13,000 SoI names for ISF jobs.

“The best part about today was that the Iraqis took charge of transitioning the Sons of Iraq into other opportunities for employment,” said Col. Dominic J. Caraccilo, commander of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). “They’re serious about providing a future for these former disenfranchised individuals.”

**OPSEC:
IT’S EVERYONE’S RESPONSIBILITY.
DO YOUR PART.**

A light in the midst of darkness

Mortuary affairs NCO bestows honor on fallen servicemembers

**By Capt Demetria Sutton
626th Brigade Support Battalion**

For most Soldiers deployed in a theater of operations, receiving word that one of their comrades has fallen in battle invokes feelings of sadness, lament or even anger.

For Staff Sgt. Timothy Davis of Wynnewood, Okla., a Soldier's death signifies a call to duty. He is the mortuary affairs noncommissioned officer in charge and is assigned to 626th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

Whatever his personal feelings are regarding death are pushed aside in order to accomplish the mission set before him. He collects his equipment and sets out to perform his sobering role in preliminarily identifying and processing personal effects, then returning the remains of fellow Soldiers to the United States for a proper burial.

Davis has been in the Army for going on 13 years, both as an infantry mortarman, and for the last two years as a MA NCOIC. He has deployed three times in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, serving in each of these capacities. With every deployment he has been exposed to his share of casualties but his current title allows him to see them from a different point of view.

The transition from participating in firefights to dealing with the ensuing casualties came for Davis after a repeat knee injury requiring surgery and forced a reclassification. He had to give up his dream job for one that was just as interesting, but less physically taxing.

His primary job repeatedly exposes him to one of the least desirable, yet most honorable outcomes of war – death in the fight for a nation's freedom.

When asked how he deals with the stress and gravity of such a poignant job, he says, "It's all in your mindset" and that he has to emotionally detach himself from the situation. He also notes a serendipitous, additional duty that helps him to release the emotional build-up. Davis fills up his free time, which has been thankfully abundant, when no MA assistance is needed, by serving as the 626th BSB's Repair and Utilities NCO.

As the head of R&U Davis has completed various improvement and repair projects around the battalion to include upgrading the tactical operations center floors, building a storage cabinet and making the battalion tree topper for Christmas. He even took time out to spread holiday cheer as Santa at the battalion Christmas party. He has always been "good at a lot of stuff," adding that he has been building things, since about the age of 8. One of the first projects he completed during this deployment was the shed out of which he works, which took only four days to construct from start to finish.

That talent has made him somewhat of a local celebrity; his skill spreading throughout the brigade by word-of-mouth. He has been called upon by several other units to work his free-hand wonders in their areas of need. In fact, arrangements have been



Capt. Demetria Sutton
Staff Sgt. Timothy Davis, the mortuary affairs noncommissioned officer in charge for the 626th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), measures the height of a memorial shadow box he created.

made for him to build an office for Company A, 626th BSB.

"He's a very skilled carpenter; he takes pride in his work," said Capt. Thomas Boland of Clinton, S.C., Co. A, 626th BSB commander.

Davis does so much for 626th BSB and 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), to ensure Soldiers are cared for – be it during the fight or after. Perhaps, the most striking of his gifts is his humility. His work speaks volumes on his behalf, so he doesn't have to, and he doesn't. He attends to the remains of the fallen and creates a more comfortable workspace in an austere environment, almost undetected.

"Knowing that I'm a part of that is very gratifying," Davis said.

Professional Iraqi women discuss issues

By Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy
3rd BCT PAO NCOIC

Several Iraqi female professionals sat down with U.S. female Soldiers to talk about the future of women in Iraq Feb. 12 at the Radwaniyah Palace Complex Civil Military Operations Center.

As part of a Task Force Marne initiative, Rakkasans of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) are taking steps to establish a dialogue with Iraqi women and learn what can be done to improve their overall condition. A primary goal is to better understand the women of Iraq and generate ideas to help them achieve personal and professional goals.

There are obvious needs that affect both genders and all economic classes

– shortages of potable water, electricity, teachers and medical care. The group of professional women had one suggestion to remedy some of those problems.

“Our culture should provide these women with school or training to help them have a good life in the future,” said Samera Al-Ali, head of Iraqi Women’s Organization. She said by learning a vocational or technical skill, women would become more confident.

A point raised during the meeting was that needs of women differ based on whether they live in a city or in a village in a more rural area. One argument was that women in cities have more time on their hands to work than those who live in rural areas.

“We need to focus on helping the women who live in the cities,” Al-Ali said. “The women who live in the villages, in rural areas, already have jobs – they cook, clean, tend to the land and cows and take care of their homes and families.”

Al-Ali wants to start a vocational-technical center to teach women trades where they can earn money to help care for their families. “We can support these women by (making them) dependent on themselves and make contributions to the so-

ciety,” she said.

Perceived security in any area will play a role in whether or not women participate in training outside the home.

All the attendees at the meeting agreed that men must play an integral role in achieving change.

What will make a difference in this male-dominated society is for sheiks to lead by example by allowing their wives to participate in programs that are initiated, said Spc. Eman Palaez, an Arabic interpreter who works for 3rd BCT 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT). There are plans to host a forum for sheiks and tribal leaders of the community to explain the initiatives for Iraqi women and attempt to gain their support.

The Soldiers left the meeting armed with insight to use in future engagements with Iraqi women.

“It was a positive experience interacting with established bilingual, bicultural advisors in hopes of gaining knowledge and understanding to assist other Iraqi women with social and economic needs,” said Capt. Martrell Gamble, the officer in charge of the women’s outreach project for 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT).

Female servicemembers plan to meet with Iraqi women in Mahmudiyah and Lutifiyah within the next week.

“We would like the opportunity to solicit and better (meet) the needs of the local Iraqi women in the Mahmudiyah Qada,” Gamble said.



Capt. Allison Flannigan

Dr. Ahlam Turki, an obstetrician/gynecologist, speaks to a group of women as Dr. Suzan, a pediatrician, and Fawzia, a registered nurse, listen. The three women are bilingual, bicultural advisors with 360th Civil Affairs Brigade who interact frequently with Iraqi women from the Mahmudiyah Qada.

Mahmudiyah women voice ideas on advancement

By Sgt. 1st Class
Kerensa Hardy
3rd BCT PAO NCOIC

Rakkasan Soldiers hosted a meeting with Iraqi women to evaluate their needs and talk about topics of interest to them Feb. 16

at the Mahmudiyah Civil Military Operations Center.

The project is part of a Task Force Marne initiative to reach Iraqi females. The event was the second in a series of meetings headed by 3rd Brigade Combat

Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), where female Soldiers talk to Iraqi women to gain knowledge about their current conditions and what they want or need.

Eleven women attended

the meeting, comprising a sampling of females who live in Mahmudiyah.

Although the women receive government assistance in the form of coupons for food items such as milk and

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Women

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wheat, the subsidy is not sufficient to care for their families and the items are sometimes substandard. They said money is the answer.

“We’d like to work, but we don’t have the money to start businesses,” one woman said at the start of the meeting.

That one comment segued into a whirlwind discussion about their fears, hopes and dreams.

“We understand that to start your businesses, it requires money,” said Capt. Martrell Gamble, from Landover, Md., officer in charge of the women’s outreach project for 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT). “We need you to tell us what you need ... to help you take care of your families.”

Acknowledging that women in Iraq face certain cultural obstacles, Gamble posed the question, “If you could work what would you do?”

To this, the ladies answered that they would like to sew, bake, can fruit or make pickled vegetables, style hair

or teach other women to do all of the above.

They spoke enthusiastically about things they would like to do if they had the means.

One woman has a business of sorts with her husband where they make and package pickles to sell at the market. However, it’s not something they are able to do on a steady basis due to a lack of funds to purchase supplies.

A mother of nine said she would like to have a mini-market inside her home. “My husband doesn’t work and I need money for food,” she said.

The women agreed that many of their husbands are unemployed for fear of being targets for extremist groups.

In-home businesses seemed to be a common desire for these women who, in spite of increased security, sometimes fear going out on a regular basis. That would satisfy the need and desire to make money, as well as providing a feeling of relative security since they could work from home instead of commuting every day.

The women departed as animatedly as they arrived, expressing hope that things will look up for them in the near future and seemingly happy to be given a voice and forum where they could talk about those hopes.

“I studied and worked in women’s studies in college, particularly focused on women and development in third-world countries,” said 1st Lt. Heather Wilson, from Lusby, Md., 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, who attended both meetings sponsored by 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT). “(Women are) a demographic that is unfortunately overlooked because of cultural differences; I am glad we are addressing it and can help.”

An interpreter who also attended both meetings said she has never seen Arab women so excited about women’s prospects.

“They are very brave women who are risking themselves to do this project, but they know it will mean a better future for them and their children and, thus, Iraq,” Wilson said.

Why is it important to celebrate women's history?



“It’s important because it shows the steps women have taken to get the rights we have today.”

Sgt. Jessica Fuchs
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
626th Brigade Support Battalion

“You have some extraordinary women who have accomplished so much against all odds. They kept going and accomplished their goals, so it’s important to remember them.”

Sgt. Quiannette Crowder
Forward Support Company,
1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment



“It’s important to celebrate and remember everything that women in our country have done.”

Capt. Kashe Brooks
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
3rd Brigade Combat Team



“Women work hard everywhere, it’s important to celebrate their accomplishments. It also gives a chance for women to have more of a voice.”

Pfc. Jasmin Skelton
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
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