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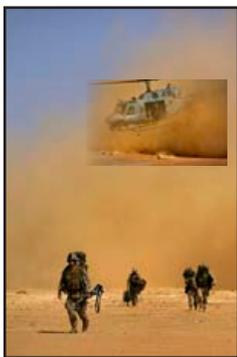
June 2008

Operation Defeat Al - Qaeda in the North



CHICKEN BOOST IN HAWR RAJAB

Working dogs • Hawija reborn • Iraqi children



CH-46 helicopters from HMM-364 land at an assembly area May 1 for Task Force Mech to drop off Marines from 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. Task Force Mech is conducting operations along the northern boundary of Al Anbar Province in support of Operation Defeat Al-Qaeda in the North. (Photo by Marine Cpl. Jason W. Fudge)

THE COALITION CHRONICLE

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Local Iraqi chicken farmers get a boost as U.S. Soldiers deliver more than 13,000 chicks May 6 to poultry farmers in the Hawr Rajab area.



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Coalition forces conduct a medical assistance mission in which they deliver vitamins and do check-ups on area citizens.



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Marines and paratroopers conduct missions in Salah Ad Din as part of Operation Defeat Al - Qaeda in the North.

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CAUTION MILITARY WORKING

DOGS

Story, photos by Army Staff Sgt. Joy Pariente
MNC-1 PAO

Today, more than 2,300 working dogs are employed by the Department of Defense, with hundreds stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan.



Lasso takes a drink from handler Staff Sgt. Joseph Kirkey's water bottle during training at Victory Kennels. Kirkey is a Cocoa, FL native and works out of Camp Victory, Iraq.



Air Force Staff Sgt. Melissa Szczerbiac, handler, Striker Kennels, Camp Striker, Iraq, and her explosives/detection dog, Tim, take a play break during detection training at the kennels. “The dogs have a very big impact,” she said. “They’re key in finding weapons caches and IEDs. They’ll find pretty much anything out there that can go ‘boom!’”

Military working dogs have been integral to the military culture since World War II, when dogs were used as sentries, scouts, messengers and mine detectors. They’ve conducted missions and served with distinction in every major military campaign since the latter World War – and are now playing a pivotal role in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

That role includes holding specialties as patrol/explosives detection dogs, narcotics detection dogs and human remains detection. Other MWD jobs in Iraq include specialized detection, combat tracking and therapy.

PATROL/EXPLOSIVES DETECTION

The most commonly recognized capability of dog teams, which consists of dog and handler, is patrol/explosives detection. They’re the dogs who work with crowd and riot control and the ones who sniff out explosives to make an area safe for Soldiers to move in.

“The dogs go in and clear it before

a human runs into it,” said Sgt. Matthew Davis, an Aurora, Ill. native and kennel master, Slayer Kennels, Camp Slayer, Iraq.

“The dogs have a very big impact,” said Air Force Staff Sgt. Melissa Szczerbiac, handler, Stryker Kennels, Camp Stryker, Iraq. “They are key in finding weapons caches and [improvised explosive devices.] They’ll find pretty much anything out there that can go ‘boom’.”

NARCOTICS

Narcotics detection dogs are used mainly for health and welfare checks on forward operating bases around Iraq, Davis said.

“They keep everyone on base straight,” he said.

HUMAN REMAINS DETECTION

Human Remains Detection dogs like Tess, who lives at Slayer Kennels with handler Al Dodds, a civilian contractor with American K9, are responsible for helping search for missing servicemembers and locating mass grave sites.

COMBAT TRACKING

Combat tracking is a field new to the

Army, said Staff Sgt. Brian Oliver, a Hazard, Ky., native and kennel master, Stryker Kennels.

Combat tracking involves dogs following human scent trails. Dead skin cells leave a trail for the dog to follow.

The Marine Corps has had a successful combat tracking program in Iraq and the Army is hoping its program will produce results also, Oliver said.

THERAPY

At Combat Outposts’ Speicher and Diamondback, there are two dogs whose sole mission is to improve the morale of servicemembers around Iraq. Boe and Budge are therapy dogs and they too have an important mission.

“They bring Soldiers a little taste of home, a little joy,” said Sgt. Duane Sanders, Budge’s handler with the 528th Medical Detachment (Combat Stress).

Budge serves as an “icebreaker” for counselors at Combat Stress.

“He breaks down some barriers and gets Soldiers to come forward that wouldn’t have come forward before,”

Sanders said.

TRAINING

The dogs go through “basic training” at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, but the real skills are learned when they arrive at their first duty station and get assigned to a handlers.

The quality of an MWD is largely determined by the individual handler and how much time and effort they put into training their dogs, said Staff Sgt. Joseph Kirkey, a Cocoa, Fl., native and kennel master, Victory Kennels, Camp Victory, Iraq.

“That’s the difference between a great dog and Army standard,” he said.

Budge’s training was a little different. He started out his career as a guide dog for the blind and was later retrained to be more friendly and playful. Sanders then attended training with the American Vet Dog Association in Smithtown, N.Y., to learn all Budge’s commands.

Just like any other Soldier, dogs all have different personalities and abilities. However, Kirkey explained, “you can’t look in an [Field Manual] or an [Army Regulation] and say this is how it needs to be done.”

While commands and proficiency requirements are the same across the board, handlers determine a different training style depending on their dogs. One thing all training has in common though, is fun.

“Detection has to be a game for the dog,” Oliver said. “Just like any Soldier, he’s going to work better if you make it fun.”

The 101st Airborne Division patch adorns the harness of Tim, an explosives/detection dog, who works out of Stryker Kennels, Camp Stryker, Iraq. Tim’s handler is Air Force Staff Sgt. Melissa Szczerbiac.



Dogs are rewarded for good training with games of fetch and plenty of affection. The affection also serves to build a bond between handler and canine.

BONDING

Kirkey explained that handlers need to build a bond with their dogs to the point where they can read each other’s body language and sense the other’s emotions. He said his dog, Lasso, can sense when Kirkey is nervous, agitated or excited. Lasso often knows his handler is going to make a move before Kirkey does.

“It’s all about teamwork,” Kirkey said. “The dog does his thing, the handler does his thing and it has to mesh.”

Part of that ‘meshing’ comes from time spent together.

“We’re together 24 hours-a-day,” Davis said. “He’s my partner and my best friend.”

At many of the kennels, the dogs stay in the rooms with their handlers and even sleep in their beds.

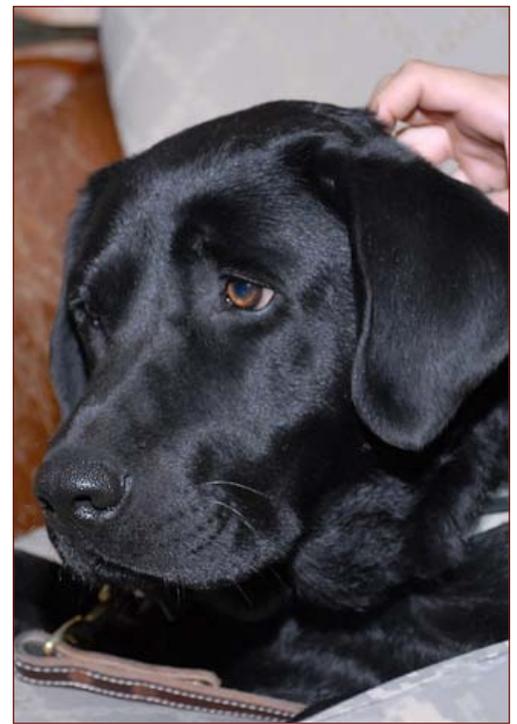
“Tess sleeps with me,” Dodd admitted.

Tess, who Dodd has raised and trained since she was a puppy, lives with him back in the states as well. Dodd’s concern for Tess is two-fold. While he’d be devastated if anything happened to her, he also joked that his wife would kill him if he came home without her.

But whether home or abroad, these dogs are not considered the family pet.

SOLDIERS, NOT PETS

“None of these dogs are pets, they’re



Budge, a therapy dog from Mosul, Iraq, has the mission of making Soldiers feel more comfortable to talk about their problems and to begin getting help.

all Soldiers,” Kirkey said.

As Soldiers, the working dogs are entitled to awards and military funeral services. Kirkey lost his first working dog to cancer before this deployment and said the memorial service was one of the hardest to which he had ever been. A chaplain and military band were present and the dog received full military honors.

The dogs also are given a rank one grade higher than their handlers to instill respect. Kirkey said the handlers absolutely respect the dogs and the jobs they do.

Units throughout Iraq are respecting the work as well.

“We’re starting to educate people on what we can bring to the fight,” Kirkey said.

Dogs are being requested to augment more and more missions. “They know how good they (the dogs) do their jobs,” Davis explained. This job proficiency comes from long days and nights ensuring the dogs are able to perform any mission that comes along.

“This job’s hard, but it’s rewarding,” Kirkey said. “I wouldn’t do anything else.”



Chicken farming gets boost in Hawr Rajab

*Story, photo by Army Sgt.
David Turner*

**2nd Brigade Combat
Team, 3rd Infantry
Division PAO**

Spc Amy Ellenwood, Company A, 415th Civil Affairs Battalion, holds a chick during distribution of more than 13,000 chicks to poultry farmers in Hawr Rajab, May 6. The chicks are part of the Baghdad-7 ePRT's efforts to revive agriculture in the South Baghdad area. Ellenwood, from Hudson, Mich., is attached to the 6-8th Cav. Regt., from Fort Stewart, Ga.



Chicken farmer Walheed Hamaad Jasim (right), and a helper receive a delivery 1,300 chicks to their farm in Hawr Rajab, May 6. The Baghdad-7 embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team purchased the chicks, along with grain and feed, to help restart poultry farms in the South Baghdad area. Jasim used to work for the Ministry of Agriculture during Saddam Hussein's regime.

When Soldiers of the 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment, began inspecting chicken coops in Hawr Rajab last December, they found munitions caches and bomb-making materials instead of poultry.

Al-Qaida in Iraq fighters terrorized the residents of this community south of Baghdad, destroying buildings, stealing feed and killing livestock.

Although peace has largely returned to the area – agriculture, the main source of employment for local residents – is struggling to restore itself to its former state. With help from Soldiers of the 6-8th Cav. Regt. and the U.S. Department of State's Baghdad-7 embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team, farmers here are hopeful that prosperity will return.

Members of the ePRT, along with 6-8th Cav. Regt. Soldiers, distributed more than 13,000 chicks to 10 poultry farmers in the Hawr Rajab area, May 6. This delivery of egg-laying chicks is aimed at providing farmers with a more sustainable income for the largely family-based farms.

Mike Stevens, ePRT agricultural adviser, estimated 40 new jobs were created with the May 6 delivery.

Stevens credits Soldiers with the program's success so far.

"All I had to do was line up a plan to get the chicks out to the farmers. The (Soldiers) risked their lives to recon these chicken coops," Stevens said.

The program to restore Hawr Rajab's poultry industry began with microgrants to help farmers refurbish their damaged coops. Last month, the ePRT distributed 3,000 chicks to area farmers.

Prices for poultry products have been inflated here

recently, with local residents relying on Baghdad markets for meat and eggs. Stevens hopes to see reduced prices for meat and eggs in local markets as a measure of success for the program.

Besides lower prices and higher employment for local residents, the greatest benefit to farmers is a better working relationship with their government, Stevens said.

"This is all part of the membership drive that began with seed and plastic distribution. It's a way of encouraging locals to pay dues to get into the farmers union," he said.

The ePRT helped form local farmers unions as a way of restoring farmers' connections with the government. The ePRT also plans to provide agri-business training to teach farmers how to use their money wisely, giving them greater buying power.

Stevens worked with the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture to get the program work off the ground. The MoA provides vaccinations for the chicks, and in turn looks to the ePRT and Soldiers in the area to help farmers in the short term.

"It is very nice to see farmers (being) focused again in Hawr Rajab," said farmer Kaleed Jasim, one of the area residents who received the chicks.

"He's kind of like me back home," Stevens said of Jasim. "If something happens, I worry about my farmers, and you could tell he's worried about his farmers."

Jasim used to work for the MoA during Saddam Hussein's regime.

"He will be able to employ people with this business and provide employment to the industry he loves: agriculture," Stevens said.

Billie Anderson, functional specialist, Joint Operations Center, Multi-National Corps – Iraq, is seen applying makeup to a young girl at the Radwaniyah Palace Compound April 22. Anderson is a volunteer with the MNC-I chaplain's office which distributes donated supplies to the Iraqi people. Anderson said of her volunteer work. "Even though we don't always understand the culture, we can still make a difference."



'Hearts for Baghdad' reaches out

Story, photos by Army Staff Sgt. Joy Pariente
MNC-I PAO

A day in the life of a deployed servicemember can be hectic and fast paced.

Between working a normal duty day, conducting physical training, going out on missions and missing home, some troops get very little down time.

However, some Camp Victory personnel are using their free time to help the local Iraqi community.

Hearts for Baghdad's mission is to reach out to those in need with their

goal being to provide basic supplies and necessities to those who need it most.

Hearts for Baghdad was started during III Corps tour in Iraq. When XVIII Airborne Corps took over the Multi-National-Corps – Iraq mission, their chaplains decided to continue the program and keep bringing medical and school supplies, clothing, treats and toys to the Iraqi people.

"There are two reasons there is a need for this program," said Lt. Cdr. Marc A. McDowell, program coordinator and Multi-National Corps – Iraq Joint Operations

Center chaplain. "One, it does good for the people of Iraq and two, it does good for the people here to volunteer."

"My desire to volunteer comes from spending time with the people and seeing the children," said Billie Anderson, functional specialist, MNC-I JOC. "I enjoy making them laugh and play and giving them something of the American efforts other than war."

Hearts for Baghdad's primary mission currently is to provide supplies to the Civil- Military Operations Center and the Radwaniyah Palace Complex clinic,

ional Corps – Iraq, creates art with an Iraqi
teer with Hearts for Baghdad, a group from
raqi people. “It is fun and fulfilling,” Ander-
stand each other it is still rewarding.”



Air Force Capt. Michiko Riley, information management officer, Joint Operations Center, Multi-National Corps – Iraq, holds a baby during volunteer work with ‘Hearts for Baghdad’ at the Radwiniyah Palace Compound Clinic April 22. Hearts for Baghdad’s mission is to reach out to those in. The goal is to help provide basic supplies and necessities to those who need it most.

McDowell said.

“[The] Civil-Military Operations Center is a key conduit to receiving and distributing children’s clothing, shoes, sandals, pens, pencils, composition books and more,” said Maj. Peter Buotte, officer in charge, CMO. “We’ve had a great impact through the CMO. Everything we take out there are things that are needed.”

The chaplain’s Hearts of Baghdad program continues to provide usable donations to many families in the rural farming area southwest of Baghdad,” Buotte said. The volunteers deliver donations from individuals, schools, church groups and civic organizations, McDowell

said.

Volunteers also focus on interacting with the children waiting at the clinic. They play games, make art projects and coordinate other activities to keep the children occupied.

“Spending time with the girls keeps me in check,” said Air Force Capt. Michiko Riley, officer-in-charge, C3, JOC, of the young girls she draws pictures with. “It’s a good reminder that happiness doesn’t necessarily come from material items. A crayon and some construction paper can put a smile on anyone’s face.”

During a recent visit to the RPC clinic, Marines, Airmen and a Korean army officer played soccer with Iraqi army soldiers and children waiting at the clinic. Inside, civilian volunteers made binoculars out of toilet paper rolls

and drew pictures with the younger children. Shoes, snacks and stuffed animals were handed out as the patients headed home when the clinic closed.

“This is not an ideal location (present day Iraq), but a simple tickle, laughter and a hug are universal,” Anderson said. “These people are real to me now. They are tired and needing and sometimes scared and yet, respectfully resilient and still truly hopeful. Just like me.”

With the increase in volunteers and donations, Hearts for Baghdad is looking to visit different clinics and schools in the area in the coming year, McDowell said.

Hearts for Baghdad always welcomes donations and volunteers. For more information, contact McDowell at 822-2115 or visit www.heartsforbaghdad.org.

Gunfighter searches bunkers



Lance Cpl. Alec N. Temples, a scout with Company C, 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 5, provides security while fellow scouts search old Iraqi bunkers in western Anbar province, Iraq, May 2. Company C, known as 'Gunfighter,' has supported the border patrol since arriving in Iraq. Whenever a smuggler tries to sneak by the border patrol, the Marines are there to gather what weapons they may have stored.

Story, photo by Marine Cpl. Ryan L. Tomlinson

Regimental Combat Team 5

In the endless deserts of Iraq, the insurgency attempts to hide weapons for future use. Company C, 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 5, is there to find them.

Scouts and light armored vehicle crewman with Company C, nicknamed 'Gunfighter,' searched the deep, dark corners of western Anbar province in one of the key cache areas: the old Iraqi military bunkers at H2 airfield.

"It's a preventative measure to cut off the insurgency from many hiding areas for weapons," said Lance Cpl. Jeremy A. Pratt, a scout with Company C.

"The reconnaissance is an advantage for us to be safe and take out the enemy at the same time."

Gunfighter has supported the border patrol since arriving in western Anbar province. Whenever a smuggler tries to sneak by the border patrol, the Marines are there to gather what weapons they may have stored.

"We look for caches and meeting sites the enemy seeks to accomplish their missions," said Sgt. Marty S. Crisp, 26, a scout squad leader with Company C, from Lenoir, N.C. "It denies their freedom of movement and keeps them from even entering that area simply from our presence."

The Marines foot patrolled in and around the area, ensuring the bunkers and old Iraqi air force fields between Rutbah and Akashat were clear of ordnance or weapons.

During the operation, the Marines logged in a grid to know where each bunker is located for faster responses in that area until they hand the area over to the Iraqi army.

"The Iraqi security forces' taking over the area is our major goal," said Lance Cpl. A. J. Hansen, 21, a scout with Company C, from Bellevue, Neb. "If we all work together, we will get this country to where it needs to be for the Iraqis to conduct the operations."

Coalition troops bring aid to village



Story, photo by Army Sgt. Daniel T. West
214th Fires Brigade PAO

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELTA, Iraq – Coalition forces conducted a medical assistance mission May 2 in Byda Village, near al-Kut, Iraq, in order to provide basic medical assistance to area residents.

The mission is part of an outreach program to provide for outlying villages in Wasit Province that have seen little or no coalition presence, said Lt. Col. Rob Jones, the Wasit Provincial Reconstruction deputy team leader.

American, Salvadoran, Georgian and Lithuanian troops took part in the mission to perform medical and dental checks and distribute food, vitamins and hygiene supplies.

The villagers here need supplies badly, as there is no hospital nearby, said Lt. Fernando Alfaro Iraheta, a doctor with the Salvadoran Cuscatlán Battalion.

“We will give them medicine, whatever’s needed, and any help we can give them,” he said.

The mission also served to improve relationships between coalition forces and civilians in the area, said 1st Lt. Zaza Komladze, a surgeon with the 1st Georgian Infantry Brigade.

“It’s important for peace in this area,” he said. “The people here have a lot of medical problems, mostly because of their poor living conditions.”

The dental services provided for the villagers were limited by the primitive facilities, but Capt. Frederico Gomez, a dentist with the Cuscatlán Battalion, said he does what he can.

“The only treatment we can provide for the pain is to pull the tooth,” he said. “Unfortunately, nearly all who come for treatment need cleaning and I can’t do that here.”

The villagers took full advantage of the help coalition forces brought, standing in line for hours waiting for treatment.

“We respect the coalition forces and appreciate what they are doing here,” said Sheikh Sameer, the village sheikh.

Captain Frederico Gomez, a dentist with the Salvadoran Cuscatlán Battalion, performs a tooth extraction May 2 during a medical assistance mission in Byda village near al-Kut, Iraq. Due to limited resources at the facility, “the only treatment we can provide for the pain is to pull the tooth,” Gomez said.



Soldiers from Battery C, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, prepare to clear a room at a school complex May 9 in Narhwan, Iraq. The complex was suspected of being used as a meeting place by extremists in the area. (Photo by Army Pfc. David J. Marshall)



Iraqi special forces met with Marines from 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion to redistribute supplies May 4 after a successful raid in Salah Ad Din, Iraq. Task Force Mech, Ground Combat Element, Multi National Force - West is conducting operations along the northern boundary of Al Anbar Providence in support of Operation Defeat Al-Qaeda in the North. (Photo by Marine Sgt. Jason W. Fudge)





Marines Lance Cpl. Adam R. Hotchkiss (left), mortarman, and Lance Cpl. Andrew R. Moericke, mortarman, with Company F, 2nd Marine Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, fire a 61-mm mortar April 19 in Habbaniyah, Iraq. The Marines are conducting a mortar training exercise that will help them refresh their combat skills. (Photo by Marine Lance Cpl. Albert F. Hunt)



An Iraqi army soldier posts a wanted poster on a street lamp near a joint security station April 20 in Sadr City. (Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. William Greer)

THE IRAQI CHILD



An Iraqi girl holds a pink elephant doll she received May 15 from U.S. Marines and Navy Corpsmen with Marine Wing Support Squadron 172 and Marine Wing Support Squadron 274 at an elementary school in Hawran, Iraq. (Photo by Marine Lance Cpl. Derek Meitzer)



First Lt. Amy Hawkins, a native of Fort Wayne, Ind., checks an Iraqi boy's breathing during a medical operation April 29 at the Al Arwa Abn Al Ward School in Jaffer village, al-Taji, Iraq. Hawkins is a physician assistant assigned to Company C, 225th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. (Photo by Army Sgt. 1st Class Christina Bhatti)

39
PERCENT OF
IRAQ'S
POPULATION IS
UNDER THE AGE
OF 14,
COMPARED TO
THE UNITED
STATES WHERE
ONLY 20
PERCENT OF
THE
POPULATION
IS IN THE SAME
CATEGORY



Pfc. John Nolan, 511th Military Police Company, Fort Drum, N.Y., walks with an Iraqi child in al-Kut, Iraq, May 10. (Photo by Army Sgt. Daniel T. West)

FREEDOM'S FOCAL POINT



An Iraqi girl finally gathers the courage to greet Pfc. Matthew Ballesteros of 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, in Baghdad, April 19. (Photos by Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class)





quadron, 2nd
(Greg Pierot)

FREEDOM'S FOCAL POINT

HAWIJA ...

... an Iraqi city once plagued by violence is now a model of security and prosperity

Story, photo by Army Staff
Sgt. Margaret C. Nelson

115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

A young man beginning a business to support his new family is not necessarily headline news. However, for Kusai, 24, this dream would be realized in the heart of what was once considered an extremists' stronghold only six months ago - Hawijah, Iraq.

Hawijah, located approximately 60 miles south of Kirkuk City in the Kirkuk province, historically held center stage to the region's worst violence against civilians, Iraq security forces, and coalition forces by extremists. The residents here faced anywhere from 10 to 15 attacks per day, according to military records. Soldiers report that day-time patrols were targeted with small arms fire throughout the city and routinely upon exiting the confines of Forward Operating Base McHenry where Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, are located.

Since the establishment



1st Lt. Brandon Cheney, platoon leader, 1st Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, pays Masmoud Wasif, 17, for the sodas he and his Soldiers purchased. Wasif credits the Sons of Iraq for helping to bring security back to Hawijah.

of Sahwah - meaning "reconciliation" or "awakening" to locals, overall violence in this predominantly Sunni-Arab populated region of northeastern Iraq, has experienced nearly an 80 percent drop in violent activity, according to Lt. Col. Christopher Vanek, commander, 1-87 Inf. Reg.

While isolated incidents do occur, "the crucial element to the ongoing successes here are the concerned citizens of Hawijah who are effectively identifying those responsible ... expeditiously," Vanek said.

The citizens that Vanek refers to are the Sons of

Iraq that number over 7,000 in Hawijah alone.

"Sahwah has made it possible for me to open my shop and provide for my family. There is business. People feel safer. You see the security," Kusai, said, pointing to the five SoIs that have stopped by to investigate and converse with the Soldiers of Bravo Company, 1-87 Regiment. "These men are very good. They are always stopping by to see if everything is okay," he said.

Kusai is not the only merchant who has benefited from the outcome of Sahwah. An ice cream parlor across the street that resembles a

scaled-down version of a fountain shop in the U.S., is stocked with soft drinks, cookies, cakes, and an ice cream machine.

Masmoud Wasif, 17, welcomes the Soldiers as they enter to purchase some canned drinks, handing them out to the children that have gathered there. The shop is owned by Wasif's parents who have operated the store for around three years. "Business is much better since Sahwah," he said. "People are not afraid to come to the marketplace and shop."

He credits the Sons of Iraq for the increased security.

"I am very happy they are here," he said and inquires if they could stay until midnight so that he can earn more money.

In addition to providing overwatch on the city's security, SoI's are seen clearing debris and sweeping the streets during this visit. A day later on a return trip from another mission, Vanek remarked that he had never seen the streets of Hawijah so clean.

"This is incredible," he said upon receiving the news that the SoIs were responsible. "Incredible."

Iraqi girl on road to walking

Story courtesy **Multi-National Security Transition
Command - Iraq**

BAGHDAD - A 12-year-old Iraqi girl received two new prosthetic legs May 9, as part of an Iraqi Ministry of Defence program at the MOD Prosthetics Clinic located in the International Zone.

Shiad Abas Aziz from Baquba Province, along with her mother Wahida Jabar Mohamed, traveled to the IZ with Staff Sgt. Luis Falcon, a squad leader with 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, to get fitted to her new prosthetics.

About six months ago, Shiad was walking home from school with her brother Ali, when an improvised explosive device detonated and severely injured both of them. Ali perished as a result of his injuries from the blast

About a month after the attack, Staff Sgt. Luis Falcon stumbled upon Shiad while doing a dismounted patrol in her neighborhood. Falcon immediately established a bond with Shiad and continued to visit her daily, bringing her toys and food for her family.

When Falcon asked what she wanted him to bring her she replied “all I want is legs to walk to school.”

From that moment on Falcon did everything in his power to find a way to get her new legs. He stumbled upon the MOD prosthetics clinic and set up the visit to the clinic.

During the visit to the clinic Shiad was first measured for a mold and following hours of strenuous labor by the Iraqi Army officers who work in the clinic, they were finally ready to be fitted.

Fitted with two new shoes, Shiad took her first steps toward walking on her own. Assisted by Iraqi Army Capt. Osama, prosthetics technician, and Falcon, she carefully made her way down a set of parallel bars one step at a time.

Shiad has many more appointments with the physical therapist to properly use her new legs, but she is well on her way to being able to walk by herself to school again.



Twelve year-old Shiad Abas Aziz, who lost her legs in an IED attack, awaits her flight to Baghdad to meet with a specialist to fit her for prosthetic legs. Her escort, Staff Sgt. Luis Falcon of 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, walks her to the flight line May 8 at Forward Operating Base Warhorse. (Photo by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Sean Mulligan.)



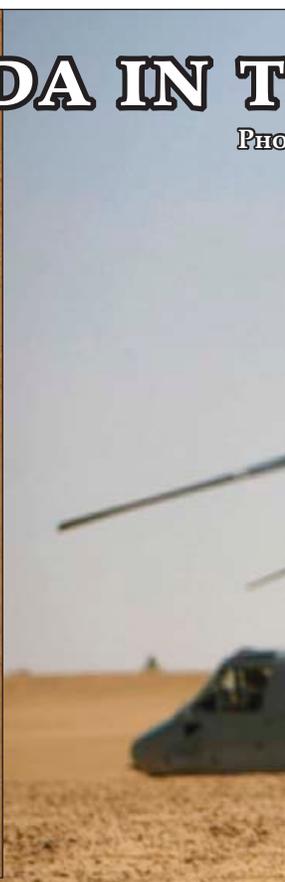
Iraqi army Capt. Osama, prosthetics technician, carefully cuts away pieces of the plastic mold that will fit Shiad Abas Aziz's leg. (Photo by Air Force Airman 1st Class Andrew Davis.)

OPERATION DEFEAT AL - QAEDA IN T

PHO



Marine Sgt. Michael J. Beaver, task force operations chief, 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, Task Force Mech, and Spc. Adam Chenoweth, infantryman, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Task Force Scimitar, breach a room May 14 in Salah Ad Din, Iraq. Coalition Forces are working with Multi-National Force - West Joint Combat Element in Operation Defeat Al - Qaeda in the North.



Hospital Corpsman Gerald Dugger, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Task Force Mameluke, provides aide to an Iraqi child M Salah ad Din, Iraq. Coalition Forces are working with Multi-National Force - West in Operation Defeat Al Qaeda in the North.

THE NORTH

PHOTOS BY MARINE SGT. JASON W. FUDGE



An MV22 Osprey lands at the Multi-National Forces West Ground Combat Element Jump Command Position in Salah Ad Din, Iraq, May 15.



1st Lt. Glenn West, fire support officer, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, and Marine Cpl. Garrett P. Matte, 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, Task Force Scimitar, search the perimeter of a house May 14 in Salah Ad Din, Iraq.

ay 14 in

'Dirt Boyz'

pave way

Story, photo by Air Force Senior Airman Julianne Showalter
332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs Office

BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq - Kettles filled with scalding tar, 300-degree asphalt and concrete chemicals that can burn skin are tools of the trade for heavy equipment operators who labor here under a scorching Iraqi sun.

Airmen assigned to the 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, known as "Dirt Boyz," know their duties can be dangerous, but that hasn't slowed them down.

In less than four months, Balad Air Base Dirt Boyz have placed and finished more than 12,460 feet of concrete and added approximately 90,000 square feet of pavement to the airfield.

"Our job directly impacts the flying mission on Balad - by expanding the concrete ramps and giving the aircraft that are parked in front of the (hardened aircraft shelters) more room, in turn means more space for

more aircraft," said Tech. Sgt. Adam Brothers, a 332nd ECES heavy equipment operator.

Without the extra pavement courtesy of the Dirt Boyz, fewer aircraft would be able to be positioned and maintained at Balad AB. Having fewer aircraft at the base would directly affect the Air Force's ability to place surveillance assets in the air and to drop munitions on targets, Brothers said.

The ongoing flightline projects at Balad AB consist of concrete pad extensions that will provide occupation surfaces for multiple aircraft of various types.

"Knowing that we have worked on the airfield, which allows the planes and (unmanned aerial vehicles) to fly their sorties and ultimately save some innocent American or coalition force servicemember's life is truly the most rewarding feeling of all," said Master Sgt. Brian Nolan, heavy repair NCO in charge, 332nd.

Since January, the Dirt Boyz have also completed projects to benefit the quality of life for the servicemembers deployed to Balad AB, including laying sidewalks and spreading more than 9,840 feet



Tech. Sgt. Adam Brothers edges a new pad May 13 at Balad Air Base, Iraq. Brothers is a 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron heavy equipment operator deployed from Patrick Air Force Base, Fla. "Our job directly impacts the flying mission on Balad," Brothers said. He and fellow Airmen in the unit lay concrete for airfields, sidewalks and also put down tons of gravel.

of gravel to reduce mud-related problems during Iraq's rainy season.

"When people walk or drive on the concrete or asphalt I laid down, or through a field we graded, they don't think about it, but if the road or sidewalk weren't there and they had to walk through mud, they would wonder why no one had placed one for them," Brothers said.

Though the hours are long and the work is hard, the Dirt Boyz know the fruits of their labors are worth their efforts -- and under the feet and wheels of Balad AB people and vehicles every day.

"Seeing an aircraft launch from the runway, watching a truck roll down the taxiway, or simply seeing someone walk into their building on a sidewalk that we constructed are some of my simple pleasures in this job." Nolan said.

**IN FOUR MONTHS, THE
CONSTRUCTION CREW
'DIRT BOYZ' HAS
DONE THE FOLLOWING:**

**12,460 FEET CONCRETE
LAID AT AIRFIELD**

**90,000 SQUARE FEET
ADDED TO RUNWAY**

**9,480 FEET OF GRAVEL
LAID TO REDUCE MUD**

IN MEMORIAM

NAMES OF COALITION SERVICE MEMBERS WHO DIED BETWEEN APRIL 14 AND MAY 15, 2008 WHILE SERVING IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS: THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.

JOHN 15:13

April 14

*Spc. Arturo Huerta-Cruz, 23.
Sgt. Joseph A. Richard III, 27.
Cpl. Richard J. Nelson, 23.
Lance Cpl. Dean D. Opicka, 29.*

April 17

Staff Sgt. Jason L. Brown, 29.

April 18

*Spc. Benjamin K. Brosh, 22.
Spc. Lance O. Eakes, 25.*

April 20

Petty Officer 1st Class Cherie L. Morton, 40.

April 21

*Airman Apprentice Adrian M. Campos, 22.
1st Lt. Matthew R. Vandergrift, 28.
Spc. Steven J. Christofferson, 20.
Sgt. Adam J. Kohlhaas, 26.*

April 22

*Pvt. Ronald R. Harrison, 25
Lance Cpl. Jordan C. Haerter, 19.
Cpl. Jonathan T. Yale, 21.*

April 23

*Sgt. Guadalupe Cervantes Ramirez, 26.
Pfc. John T. Bishop, 22.
1st Lt. Timothy W. Cunningham, 22.
Staff Sgt. Ronald C. Blystone, 22.*

April 24

Staff Sgt. Shaun J. Whitehead, 24.

April 27

Pfc. William T. Dix, 32.

April 28

*Spc. David P. McCormick, 26.
Pfc. Adam L. Marion, 26.*

*Sgt. Marcus C. Mathes, 26.
Sgt. Mark A. Stone, 22.*

April 29

*Staff Sgt. Clay A. Craig, 22.
Staff Sgt. Bryan E. Bolander, 26.*

April 30

*Staff Sgt. Chad A. Caldwell, 24.
Captain Andrew R. Pearson, 32.
Spc. Ronald J. Tucker, 21.
Sgt. 1st Class Lawrence D. Ezell, 30.*

May 1

*Lance Cpl Casey L. Casanova, 22.
Cpl Miguel A. Guzman, 21.
Lance Cpl. James F. Kimple, 21.
Sgt. Glen E. Martinez, 31.
Spc. Jeffrey F. Nichols, 21.*

May 2

*Pvt. Corey L. Hicks, 22.
Georgian Lt. Giorgi Margiev
Georgian Cpl. Zura Gvenetadze*

May 6

*Pfc. Aaron J. Ward, 19.
Spc. Alex D. Gonzalez, 21.*

May 9

Spc. Mary J. Jaenichen, 20.

May 10

Spc. Joseph A. Ford, 23.

May 11

Cpl. Jessica A. Ellis, 24.

May 14

Sgt. Victor M. Cota, 33.

May 15

Sgt. John K. Daggett, 21.

Staff Sgt. Jeffery L. Hartley, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division is memorialized at Forward Operating Base Hammer, Iraq, on April 16. Hartley was killed in action by an explosively formed penetrator during convoy operations April 8. (Photo by Army Pfc. David J. Marshall.)

