Lionclaw Academy prepares IA for route clearance

FOB KALSU – Iraqi Army Soldiers are participating in the first Vanguard Brigade route clearance course in an effort to improve security in Babil Province.

Soldiers from the 31st Brigade, 8th IA Division, began classes on Forward Operating Base Kalsu July 20.

The Lionclaw Academy is a four-phase course that covers route clearance basics and how to properly maintain route clearance equipment.

“The importance of the academy is to increase security capabilities and give the Iraqi citizens a safe and secure place to live,” said Lt. Col. Darryl McDowell, commander of 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division.

“We had been talking about doing some kind of Iraqi route clearance capability for a while,” said Capt. Andrew Sanders, commander of Company E. “(This is) a great opportunity to work with our Iraqi counterpart and improve their capability as an Army with (training) they didn’t have previously.”

Eventually, the Soldiers of Company E, 3rd Battalion, 7th Inf. Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Inf. Div. took on the challenge of creating the program.

“We spent a lot of time developing the course of instruction and what it was going to look like as far as our partnership with the IA,” said Sanders, a native of Orange County, Calif. “We developed a multi-staged training program designed to teach the basics to Iraqi Soldiers.”

The exact curriculum and teaching techniques were finalized during the planning of Phase I of the academy.

“Phase I was to get the IA familiar with the equipment and the basic improvised explosive device fundamentals, and to get training with the explosive ordnance disposal team,” said Frost. “They (were taught) about IED indicators, battle drills and how to conduct IED interrogations with the equipment.”

Phase I taught the basic principles of patrolling and mission briefings, which prepared them for Phase II, said 1st Lt. Glen Frost, Company E.

“That way, when they came to us
Advancements in Iraqi legal system improve security

SPC. JOHNS LE CappeLain
MND-C PAO

CAMP VICTORY – “The people’s good is the highest law,” said Marcus Tullius Cicero, famous Roman orator.

The Constitution of Iraq offered a welcome change for Iraqi citizens long oppressed during the tyrannical reign of Saddam Hussein. Instead of a dictatorship, the people would now have, as stated in the Iraqi Constitution, a “democratic, federal, representative republic” and a “multiethnic, multi-religious and multi-sect country.”

Since its inception Oct. 15, 2005, the constitution has created a new uniformity. No longer do Iraqis have to worry about different rules for different citizens. The constitution established an environment of equality: the people’s good.

“It is functioning now,” said Cpt. Tyler Heimann, Multi-National Division – Center rule of law attorney. “Judges in our area are hearing cases. We need to have judges, lawyers, policemen – the whole judicial system – doing what they can to put the guilty into jail.”

For the rule of law in Iraq to continue strengthening, the separate branches of the Iraqi government need to remain proficient, stable and vigilant in enforcement of rules.

“Judges did not have a whole lot of power (during Hussein’s reign),” said Heimann. “There was not an independent, functioning judiciary that could implement justice.”

The judicial branch of the Iraqi government has seen many recent successes in continuing modernization and increased efficiency.

One such success throughout the MND-C area of operation is the distribution of laptops to judges, along with CD-ROMS filled with the entire Iraqi legal code, stretching back to 1917, a program began in the summer of 2007 as a joint venture by the United Nations, U.S. State Department and MND-C.

These tools, along with additional training, helped judges begin to work through the country’s backlog of criminal cases. Prior to the distribution of these computers, judges had to search through thick books and arduously track down important facts needed – a chore that made accessing relevant information difficult and sometimes impossible.

Following distribution of the laptops, classes were also provided to the judges to teach them how to maximize efficiency using the CD-ROMs.

“We’ve pretty much gotten a laptop to every judge in our area,” added Heimann.

Handing out laptops and making judges’ workloads easier is but a small portion of the work by MND-C to rebuild the Iraqi Judicial System.

In 2005, judges fled Salman Pak, as al-Qaeda in Iraq rampantly threatened the safety and stability of the area. One judge, Judge Hassan, required life-saving surgery and numerous reconstructive procedures after an assassination attempt.

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for the partnership, they were ready to develop (missions) with our guys and were ready to begin preparing for joint patrols,” Frost added.

“First, (IA Soldiers) would come on the FOB and conduct rehearsals, and then, they would conduct combined patrols with the U.S. Soldiers in the lead,” Sanders said.

Phase III will focus on the IA leading operations and Coalition forces performing an advising role.

Once completed, IA Soldiers will start Phase IV, consisting of route clearance operations in the local area by the IA Soldiers.

“I think that is the one area that the Iraqi Security Forces haven’t really taken over,” Frost said.

Iraqi Soldiers are currently attending Phase II of the course.

IA Soldiers in the southern Baghdad area are also conducting route clearance training with Soldiers of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). IA capabilities continue to expand throughout the Multi-National Division – Center area of operations.

“ cls: Course to help improve security in Babil

“From page 1

“They are capable of raids and cordon and search all on their own, but the biggest threat is IEDs and (explosively formed penetrators). For them to be able to have their own route clearance element focused solely on finding and destroying IEDs in the area will create maneuverability for other ISF and will help them protect the local population from IEDs,” he said.

Soldiers from the 31st Bde., 8th IA Div., climb onto a RG-31 MK V in preparation for a simulated route clearance exercise during Phase II of the Lionclaw Academy on FOB Kalsu Aug. 8. The Lionclaw Academy teaches IA Soldiers basic route clearance skills and allows them to go through classroom and hands-on training.

Photo by Spc. Amanda McBride

Opet’s Odyssey

Welcome to combatives training mountain style!

Uh Oh!

WSSSTEVE OPET CAMI VICTORY

Photo by Spc. Amanda McBride
Iraqis in the area had to travel 70 miles round-trip to go the nearest operating courthouse, located in Karada in downtown Baghdad. For many, this trip was difficult to make, given the instability in the region.

The combined efforts of the Iraqi Security Forces, local citizens and Coalition forces forced AQI out of the Mada’in. Soon, their efforts established a new government center in the area. The once volatile region now has a dedicated facility that houses the courthouse, police, fire and emergency medical services.

“I’ve seen a big difference on the streets,” said Judge Razak, the investigative judge for the Mada’in Qada. “There are lots of people moving around on the streets. It looks better. Consider the judges back.”

Judge Hassan, still needing additional surgeries, returned to the area in March – his first trip back since the attack. “I won’t ever back down to the terrorists who did this to me,” he said. “I remain a judge and ready to assist with Salman Pak’s renaissance.”

The stories of success repeat throughout MND-C’s area of operation. In Iskandariyah, the previous courthouse was damaged by an electric fire in January. While the court continued, a new building became an urgent need to the area.

Workers broke ground on a new courthouse in late May, a step toward promoting law and order, as well as democracy in the area, according to Chief Justice Medhat al-Mahmoud, chief justice of the Higher Judicial Council.

The nahia council initiated the project, which was co-developed by local and national Iraqi government. The entire courthouse project is financed with Iraqi dinars; Coalition forces are contributing $30,000 of Commander’s Emergency Response Program funds for furnishings and supplies for the new court, which will sit at the center of the North Babil Province.

“We are building new courthouses in southern provinces,” said Heimann, a native of O’Fallon, Ill. “We are there to support the execution of these projects. (But our goal is for) Iraqis to take the reins and start running their judicial system, without any help from us.”

2009 marks the 19th year of Stand-up comedy for Scott Kennedy. He takes his unique stand up comedy around the world. Kennedy travels to Iraq every month for 12 days to perform for the troops. Kennedy invites two different comedians to travel with him to perform for troops in Iraq.

Proposed Itinerary

Aug. 21
FOB Hammer

Aug. 22
PB Dezil
PB Kelsey
COP Carver

Ashe County 2008 Armed Forces Tribute

Soldiers from North Carolina are invited to participate in a live interview during the Ashe County Armed Forces Tribute Aug. 23.

Those interested please contact Sgt. 1st Class Jennifer-Rebeccah Williams at jennifer1.williams@iraq.centcom.mil.

Times will be announced Aug. 22.
Headline Round-up

U.S. News:
As Tropical Storm Fay heads towards the Florida Keys local officials asked that non-Florida residents evacuate, and if anyone is planning on making a trip, to put it on hold until the storm passes. Fay is expected to increase to hurricane strength as it gets closer to Florida.

World News:
Pakistan’s President Pervez Musharraf handed in his resignation Monday to avoid an impeachment. In a televised speech, he said he was avoiding an impeachment battle that would harm the nation’s interests and that he leaves office knowing whatever he has done “was for the people and for the country.” It is not immediately known whether he will leave the country.

Olympic News:
Olympic Swimmer Michael Phelps earned his place in the record books by winning his 8th gold medal at the Beijing Games. Phelps and his three teammates—Jason Lezak, Aaron Perisol and Brand Hansen—broke another world record by winning the 400-meter medley relay with a time of 3 minutes, 29.34 seconds. Phelps’ goal was to win 8 gold medals and beat Mark Spitz’s seven-gold performance at the 1972 Munich Games. “Everything was accomplished,” he said. “I will have the medals forever. Without the help of my teammates this isn’t possible, I was able to be a part of three relays; and we were able to put up a solid team effort; and we came together as one unit.”

Entertainment:
There is a new face to the “Tomb Raider” video game franchise. Alison Carroll, 23, a British golf club receptionist, is the new Lara Croft. Carroll will now undergo strict physical training to prepare for her gig as Croft. The video games have sold more than 32 million copies since 1996 and gave rise to two hit movies, starring Angelina Jolie as Croft.

Quote of the Day
“The toughest thing about success is that you’ve got to keep on being a success.” – Irving Berlin

What is Your Favorite Holiday?

“Everyday is my favorite holiday. Just to be alive, knowing that I can wake up and take a breath in the morning makes everyday a holiday,” said Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Coplin, of Panama City, Fla., G-3 Air, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 10th Mountain Division.

“What is your favorite holiday?”

Solution to yesterday’s puzzle:

ARABIC WORD OF THE DAY
South jih-noob