

IRON STRONG DAILY



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IP Stations set to open across Salah ad Din

**Story and photos by
Sgt. Rick Rzepka
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Iraqi security in the Salah ad Din province got a shot in the arm as the first in a series of local police stations opened its doors to join the fight to secure Iraq's streets.

Dozens gathered in the midst of a dust storm, an IP station validation ceremony marked the opening of the al Answar Police Station in the town of al Secour, part of the Tikrit police district.

The al Answar station is the first in a flurry of police stations set to open in the expansive northern province in the next several months. Thirteen more stations in the province are scheduled to be validated by Coalition Forces, said Capt. James Bloom, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division provost marshal.

A station that meets the validation criteria means they no longer require Coalition support in the areas of training, logistics and basic police skills, said Bloom.

The Answar station rated high marks from its police transition team mentors, who assessed the station's readiness on a scale of one to four.

A station that requires a great deal of logistical and training support from their Coalition partners is rated as a four, while stations that demonstrate a high level of competency in logistics and community policing are given a rating of one, said Bloom. "The guidelines are very clear," he said. "They either meet them or they don't."

While the readiness assessment takes into account logistical factors, such as availability of weapons and body armor, it also weighs the policemen's capacity to conduct rudimentary policing skills.

Being able to respond in a timely manner to a call or to conduct a low level investigation is critical not just to the station's rating, but to the people it serves.

"Overall the Iraqi public believes that the Iraqi police are a force that can and will protect them," said Bloom, who attributes the decline in violent attacks in Salah ad Din to a more confident, proactive police force.

The focus on community level policing is a major factor in the turnaround here, said Bloom.



An Iraqi Policeman stands guard near the new al Answar Police Station in al Secour, Iraq. The station is the first in a series to be validated by the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division.

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Iraqi Police take care of business

**Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Kyle J. Richardson
11th Public Affairs Detachment**

One... two... three—the signal is given; with a fierce kick, the door crashes open. Before the door makes contact with the adjacent wall, the Emergency Response Battalion 4 flood into the living room of a house in a small village in the eastern region of Mosul, Iraq.

The ER 4 is one of several special tactics units within the Iraqi National Police force. ER 4 is comprised of approximately 100 Iraqi Police.

ER 4 applied the training provided to them by the War-machines, Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment during a clearing operation.

We've trained units on



A member of the Emergency Response Team 4 patrols the streets of Quds during a clearing operation in eastern Mosul, Iraq. The ER 4 team detained five individuals who were listed on their high-valued individual list.

vehicle searches, marksmanship, dismounted patrolling and detainee procedures, said Capt. Tony Massari from upstate N.Y., the commander for Company B, 1-8 Inf. Regt. "I'm confident in the ability of the ISF. They are taking initiative; they're getting out there, planning missions and ordering clearances. Every now and again we'll get word that the IP just conducted a clearance operation.

Soldiers with the War-machines helped to clear several homes, however, their main mission was to provide guidance and over-watch security while the IP cordoned-off the neighborhood and searched homes door-to-door.

"Today was hands off for us," said 1st Lt. Douglas Bogdanowitz, Ft. Worth, Texas native, a platoon leader for the 1-8 Inf. Regt. war-machines. We're here to provide security while the IP conduct business as usual.

Coalition Forces are stepping back to allow the IP to step-up and regain control of their neighborhoods.

The Iraqi



Sgt. Eric Dupuy a team leader with Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, and 1st Lt. Zachery Brown, a platoon leader with Company B, 1-8 Inf. Regt., approach several Iraq Police officers who are attached to the Emergency Response Team 4, in the eastern part of Mosul, Iraq. ER 4 is comprised of more than 100 IP.

people respond better when they see one of their own trying to restore the order and peace in their village, said Spc. Eric Allen, a native of Elizabethtown, Ky., radio operator for Company B, 1-8 Inf. Regt. during clearing operations.

"The Iraqi citizens like to have the presence of the police around; it makes them feel a little more secure," said 1st Lt. Zachery Brown, a platoon leader with Company B, 1-8 Inf. Regt.

Although no munitions or weapons caches were found, the ER 4 detained five individuals listed on their high-valued individual list.

Today was the beginning of a solution, said Massari. "The IP are starting to take control of their streets. Today was a good day, and the IP continue to work for a better future."

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The main bridge over the Tigris River connecting Mosul and Baiji near Qayyarah suffered heavy damage after insurgents used a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device to damage a section of the crossing last year. The bridge is currently being reconstructed by an Iraqi contractor who is funded by the Government of Iraq.

Bridging the way to a better infrastructure

**Story and photo by
Pfc. Adam Carl Blazak
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After the main bridge over the Tigris River connecting Mosul and Baiji suffered damage from a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in November of last year, the U.S. Army jumped in to the rescue.

The immediate reaction was to put in an armored vehicle launch bridge so U.S. security forces could continue to logistically resupply Troops, said East Lansing, Mich. native Capt. Andrew M. Chegwiddden, assistant S3 for 1st Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment.

But the crossing was too important for the local population to limit it to military convoys.

"This is used as a main trading route," Chegwiddden said.

Again, the U.S. Army stepped in to help by placing an assault float bridge 100 meters south of the crossing. The main roads were rerouted to the AFB, which caters to both civilian and military vehicles. However, this is not a permanent fix.

The Government of Iraq set

out to help its people. A local contractor was hired to repair the damaged 65 meters of the 300 meter bridge after excavating the concrete, which had fallen into the river.

"This is putting an Iraqi face on improving their infrastructure," said Colorado Springs, Colo. native Master Sgt. Alfred R. Ronneburg, operations non-commissioned officer for 1-3 ACR.

But in order to even start the construction a land jetty or a temporary pier was positioned in the river so heavy equipment could get to the center of the bridge, Chegwiddden said.

Now, almost a year later, the bridge is well on its way to completion.

"It's expected to finish in April of next year," Chegwiddden said.

This is another example of how the Iraqi Security Forces are taking the lead in their own country, Ronneburg said.

This shows Iraq's ability to repair damaged infrastructure, Chegwiddden said.

"They paid for it, they planned it and now they are executing it," he said. "They are reestablishing essential services to their people."

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The province has more than 15,000 active policemen walking the beat and approximately 117 police stations that have been mentored by the 1st BCT's Police Transition Teams during the past year.

The transition teams, which are similar to Military Transition Teams, are made up of highly trained Soldiers who pass on experience and expertise in the area of security and policing to their Iraqi counterparts.

They focus and assist on the basics of police administration to increase efficiency and enhance the management of the IP stations," said Maj. Richard Dixon, 1st Brigade Combat Team police transition team chief.

The teams have been mentoring Iraqi policemen in Salah ad Din for the past 12 months and have had a dramatic effect on their confidence, proficiency and competency in community policing, said Dixon.



An Iraqi Policeman stands silhouetted against the sun at the new al Answar Police Station in al Secour, Iraq.

WASHINGTON

(AP) President Bush says the White House is ready to work with Congress to quickly enact legislation to allow the government to purchase hundreds of billions of dollars worth of bad debt and bail out a troubled financial system that's on the brink of sinking and taking the U.S. economy down with it.

Congressional aides and administration officials were working through the weekend to fill in the details of the proposal. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson was scheduled to appear on the Sunday talk shows to begin selling the \$700 billion rescue, the largest since the Great Depression, to lawmakers and the American people.

The Bush proposal that would dole out huge sums of money to Wall Street firms and bankers is a mere three pages in length and fails to specify which institutions would qualify or say what — if anything — taxpayers would get in return.

"It's a rather brief bill with a lot of money," said Sen. Chris Dodd, D-Conn., the Banking Committee chairman. "We understand the importance of the anticipation in the markets, but we also know that what we're doing is going to have consequences for decades to come. There's not a second act to this — we've got to get this right."

Democrats, who say they will work with the administration to pass a plan, are demanding it include relief for homeowners struggling with mounting debt, not just for Wall Street.

The proposal would raise the statutory limit on the national debt from \$10.6 trillion to \$11.3 trillion to make room for the massive rescue.



ARKANSAS

(AP) Federal authorities conducting a child-porn investigation raided the headquarters Saturday of a ministry run by a convicted tax evader once labeled by prosecutors as a polygamist who preys on girls and women.

Social workers interviewed children who live at the Tony Alamo Christian Ministries complex, which critics call a cult, to find out whether they were abused. The two-year investigation involves a law that prohibits the transportation of children across state lines for criminal activity, said Tom Browne, who runs the FBI office in Little Rock.

"Children living at the facility may have been sexually and physically abused," Browne said.

The raid, conducted by state and federal authorities, started an hour before sunset at the complex in tiny Fouke, in southwestern Arkansas. Armed guards regularly patrol the headquarters, but there was no resistance as agents moved in, state police said.

No one was arrested, but U.S. Attorney Bob Balfe said before the raid that he expected an arrest warrant for Alamo to be issued later. The federal investigation centered on the production of child pornography, while state police were looking into allegations of other child abuse, he said.

In a phone call to The Associated Press from a friend's house in the Los Angeles area, Tony Alamo — who was also once accused of child abuse — denied involvement in pornography.

"We don't go into pornography; nobody in the church is into that," said Alamo, 73. "Where do these allegations stem from? The anti-Christ government. The Catholics don't like me because I have cut their congregation in half. They hate true Christianity."

About 100 state and federal law officers raided the 15-acre compound housing the ministry, which the Southern Poverty Law Center describes as a cult that opposes homosexuality, Catholicism and the government. The law center monitors the activities of extremist groups in the U.S.

The ministry's Web site says it is "dedicated to spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the winning of souls worldwide."

John Selig, head of the Arkansas Department of Human Services, said state workers were talking to children.

A passenger van with about 12 people inside left the compound heading for Texarkana with a police escort shortly after 8 p.m. It appeared some of those inside were children, but Selig said he didn't know whether any children would be taken into state custody.



Police said the Alamo church complex would be allowed to open for Sunday services, although officers did not indicate when the search would end.

Alamo's church is in a single-story building that used to be a convenience store. A white cross stands atop the structure, with a small steeple to the right side.

Alamo and his wife Susan were street preachers along Hollywood's Sunset Strip in 1966 before forming a commune near Saugus, Calif. Susan Alamo died of cancer in 1982 and Alamo claimed she would be resurrected and kept her body on display for six months while their followers prayed.

In 1988, following a raid near Santa Ana, Calif., three boys whose mothers were Alamo followers were placed in the custody of their fathers. Justin Miller, then 11, told police that Alamo directed four men to strike him 140 times with a wooden paddle as punishment for minor offenses. Alamo was later charged with child abuse but prosecutors dropped the charge, citing a lack of evidence.

Alamo was convicted of tax-related charges in 1994 after the IRS said he owed the government \$7.9 million. He served four years in prison.

Prosecutors in the tax case argued prior to sentencing that Alamo was a flight risk and a polygamist who preyed on married women and girls in his congregation.

Alamo told the AP that he believed Saturday's raid was part of a push by the federal government to make same-sex marriage legal while outlawing polygamy.

Alamo said he thought polygamy was allowed in the Bible but said he did not practice it himself. He also said that "consent is puberty" when it comes to sex.

There had been complaints about the ministry since Alamo arrived in Fouke in the late 1990s, said Terry Purvis, mayor of the town of about 850 residents. He has gotten calls from former ministry members with allegations of child abuse, polygamy and underage marriage, he said.

Purvis said he turned over all the complaints to the FBI.

FOOTBALL

(AP) Star running back Adrian Peterson returned to practice Friday with the Minnesota Vikings, but he was limited in his work and remained questionable for Sunday's game because of a hamstring injury.

Coach Brad Childress said he would wait until shortly before the game against Carolina to decide whether Peterson, who leads the NFL with 263 yards rushing, will participate. He'll be treating the muscle extensively over the next two days.

If Peterson can't go, Chester Taylor — a 1,200-yard rusher in 2006 — will take his place in the backfield. Either way, Taylor could assume a larger role against the Panthers. He has been returning kickoffs, too, and is sixth in the league with a 28.5-yard average.

Minnesota's 0-2 start has created

some urgency to this week, and benching quarterback Tarvaris Jackson for veteran Gus Frerotte had some desperate overtones. Childress, though, has to be even more careful about pushing Peterson too hard for the sake of a quick fix.

Peterson, who missed 2 1/2 games due to a sprained knee in 2007, said he plans to play but must convince the trainers and coaches he's not risking aggravation — and developing a problem that lingers for weeks — by not being at full strength.

"Sometimes you have to protect the player from himself and err on the side of caution, and sometimes you feel good about what you've seen," the coach said of last season's Offensive Rookie of the Year.

Childress said the Vikings are in a "good frame of mind" despite the uncertainty surrounding Peterson's status and the change



in quarterback this week. He suggested lineup changes can yield an atmosphere of rallying around a player, rather than erode the rest of the team's confidence.

Wide receiver Sidney Rice was also limited in Friday's practice and is questionable for Sunday. He sprained his right knee last week.

BASEBALL

(AP) Manny Ramirez hit two homers and drove in five runs, Angel Berroa drew a two-out, bases-loaded walk in the seventh to force in the go-ahead run, and the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the San Francisco Giants 10-7 Saturday night to lower their magic number for winning the NL West to five.

By winning for the 16th time in 20 games, the Dodgers remained 3 1/2 games ahead of second-place Arizona with seven remaining. Any combination of five Los Angeles wins or losses by the Diamondbacks will give the Dodgers their first division title since 2004 and just their fifth playoff berth in the last 20 years.

Ramirez hit a three-run homer

off Brad Hennessey in the third and a two-run shot off Geno Espineli in the eighth for the 53rd multihomer game of his career. Ramirez, who has 526 lifetime homers to rank 17th on baseball's career list, has 16 along with 50 RBIs in 47 games with the Dodgers, and 36 homers and 118 RBIs in 147 games overall this year.

The game was tied at 5 when Ramirez walked and James Loney singled to start the seventh against Tyler Walker (4-8). After Casey Blake and Matt Kemp hit into forceouts, pinch-hitter Nomar Garciaparra drew a walk against Jack Taschner to load the bases, and Berroa walked on four pitches to put the Dodgers ahead. Pinch-hitter Delwyn Young then drew another walk to cap an 11-pitch at-bat against Taschner, making it 7-5.

After Ramirez's homer in the eighth, the Dodgers added another run on Berroa's infield out.

Takashi Saito (4-3), pitching for the third time since coming off the disabled list, worked a hitless inning to earn the win. He was sidelined for two months with a sprained ligament in his pitching elbow.

The Giants took a 1-0 lead against Hiroki Kuroda in the first, but they could have scored more. The first three San Francisco batters singled to load the bases before Bengie Molina struck out, but Kuroda walked Travis Ishikawa to force in a run. Aaron Rowand then grounded into an inning-ending double play.

Ishikawa drove in another run in the third, this time when second baseman Blake DeWitt failed to come up with his one-out grounder for an error. Nate Schierholtz scored from third on the play, making it 2-0.

Ramirez's first homer and a two-run shot by Kemp, his 17th, gave the Dodgers a 5-2 lead.

The Giants chased Kuroda and tied the game 5-all in the fifth. Chan Ho Park relieved after a leadoff double by Molina, and failed to retire a batter, allowing one hit and two walks, the second to Eugenio Velez with the bases loaded to force in a run. Joe Beimel threw a wild pitch to allow another run to score before the tying run came home on pinch-hitter Scott McClain's infield out.

Pinch-hitter Pablo Sandoval hit a two-out, two-run double off Jonathan Broxton in the ninth to complete the scoring.

Hennessey, making just his third start this season, was lifted for a pinch hitter after giving up five runs and five hits in three innings. Kuroda allowed eight hits and three runs in four-plus innings with one walk and five strikeouts.



RUSSIA

(AP) A Russian archaeologist says he has found the lost capital of the Khazars, a powerful nation that adopted Judaism as its official religion more than 1,000 years ago, only to disappear leaving little trace of its culture.

Dmitry Vasilyev, a professor at Astrakhan State University, said his nine-year excavation near the Caspian Sea has finally unearthed the foundations of a triangular fortress of flamed brick, along with modest yurt-shaped dwellings, and he believes these are part of what was once Itil, the Khazar capital.

By law Khazars could use flamed bricks only in the capital, Vasilyev said. The general location of the city on the Silk Road was confirmed in medieval chronicles by Arab, Jewish and European authors.

"The discovery of the capital of Eastern Europe's first feudal state is of great significance," he told The Associated Press. "We should view it as part of Russian history."

Kevin Brook, the American author of "The Jews of Khazaria," e-mailed Wednesday that he has followed the Itil dig over the years, and even though it has yielded no Jewish artifacts, "Now I'm as confident as the archaeological team is that they've truly found the long-lost city,

The Khazars were a Turkic tribe that roamed the steppes from Northern China to the Black Sea. Between the 7th and 10th centuries they conquered huge swaths of what is now southern Russia and Ukraine, the Caucasus Mountains and Central Asia as far as the Aral Sea.

Itil, about 800 miles south of Moscow, had a population of up to 60,000 and occupied 0.8 square miles of marshy plains southwest of the Russian Caspian Sea port of Astrakhan, Vasilyev said.

It lay at a major junction of the Silk Road, the trade route between Europe and China, which "helped Khazars amass giant profits," he said.

The Khazar empire was once a regional superpower, and Vasilyev said his team has found "luxurious collections" of well-preserved ceramics that help identify cultural ties of the Khazar state with Europe, the Byzantine Empire and even Northern Africa. They also found armor, wooden kitchenware, glass lamps and cups, jewelry and vessels for transporting precious balms dating back to the eighth and ninth centuries, he said.

But a scholar in Israel, while calling the excavations interesting, said the challenge was to find Khazar inscriptions.

"If they found a few buildings, or remains of buildings, that's interesting but does

not make a big difference," said Dr. Simon Kraiz, an expert on Eastern European Jewry at Haifa University. "If they found Khazar writings, that would be very important."

Vasilyev says no Jewish artifacts have been found at the site, and in general, most of what is known about the Khazars comes from chroniclers from other, sometimes competing cultures and empires.

"We know a lot about them, and yet we know almost nothing: Jews wrote about them, and so did Russians, Georgians, and Armenians, to name a few," said Kraiz. "But from the Khazars themselves we have nearly nothing."

The Khazars' ruling dynasty and nobility converted to Judaism sometime in the 8th or 9th centuries. Vasilyev said the limited number of Jewish religious artifacts such as mezuzas and Stars of David found at other Khazar sites prove that ordinary Khazars preferred traditional beliefs such as shamanism, or newly introduced religions including Islam.

Yevgeny Satanovsky, director of the Middle Eastern Institute in Moscow, said he believes the Khazar elite chose Judaism out of political expediency — to remain independent of neighboring Muslim and Christian states. "They embraced Judaism because they wanted to remain neutral, like Switzerland these days," he said.

In particular, he said, the Khazars opposed the Arab advance into the Caucasus Mountains and were instrumental in containing

a Muslim push toward eastern Europe. He compared their role in eastern Europe to that of the French knights who defeated Arab forces at the Battle of Tours in France in 732.

The Khazars succeeded in holding off the Arabs, but a young, expanding Russian state vanquished the Khazar empire in the late 10th century. Medieval Russian epic poems mention Russian warriors fighting the "Jewish Giant."

"In many ways, Russia is a successor of the Khazar state," Vasilyev said.

He said his dig revealed traces of a large fire that was probably caused by the Russian conquest. He said Itil was rebuilt following the fall of the Khazar empire, when ethnic Khazars were slowly assimilated by Turkic-speaking tribes, Tatars and Mongols, who inhabited the city until it was flooded by the rising Caspian Sea around the 14th century.

The study of the Khazar empire was discouraged in the Soviet Union. The dictator Josef Stalin, in particular, detested the idea that a Jewish empire had come before Russia's own. He ordered references to Khazar history removed from textbooks because they "disproved his theory of Russian statehood," Satanovsky said.

Only now are Russian scholars free to explore Khazar culture. The Itil excavations have been sponsored by the Russian-Jewish Congress, a nonprofit organization that supports cultural projects in Russia.

"Khazar studies are just beginning," Satanovsky said.

