

Rakkasan Review

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Rakkasan Review

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Command Sgt. Maj.
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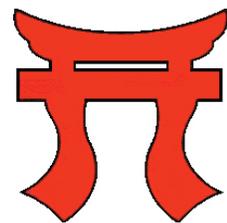
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An Albu Issa IP patrolman provides security at the landing zone during Operation Pell's Point, a combined air assault designed to establish IP presence in the area, Sept. 17. See story on page 6.

On the cover:

General Ray Odierno, MNF-I commander, points out changes he's noticed in the Mahmudiyah Market to Lesley Stahl of *60 Minutes* as Staff Maj. Gen. Ali Jassim Muhammad Hassen Al Frejee, 17th IA Div. commander, and Col. Dominic Caraccilo, commander of 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), look on Sept. 17. See story on page 5. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy)

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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.

Rakkasan 7 Notes

Rakkasans,

As our OIF 07-09 rotation draws to a close I want to thank you all for the wonderful accomplishments over the last 12 months. The Rakkasan battlespace, formerly known as the "Triangle of Death" is now a safe and prospering area, much to the day-to-day and relentless efforts of you all. I will never be able to thank you enough for your extraordinary efforts and accomplishments as well as your sacrifices!

As we begin preparations for re-deployment, now is the time when accidents and injuries are more likely to occur. As we start packing and retrograding equipment out of Iraq, Soldiers undoubtedly will take unnecessary risks. Do not let that be you.

Every Soldier is a safety officer and it is important that you remain focused on all safety aspects of re-deployment. To lose a troop to enemy contact is a terrible thing; to lose someone due to an unsafe act is unforgivable tragedy. Think safety!

I want you all to remember those key points that were discussed during your Deployment Cycle Support re-deployment briefs. As you reunite

with family, please remember that you, and they, have changed over the past year. Take it slow and ease back into your home-station ways. Your spouse has run the household for a long time now and may not like you coming in and trying taking charge. Ease back into being part of the family (and relationship).

Other key points I want to touch on are driving, alcohol consumption and drug use. It is a proven fact that Soldiers returning from deployment are at an increased risk for vehicular accidents. This includes motorcycles. Do not let yourself become a statistic. Obey the speed limits, never drink and drive, and pull over when you are feeling tired.

Enjoy your well deserved leave without putting others and yourself at risk. It goes without saying, drug use will not be tolerated so do not do it.

The 3rd Brigade Combat Team will see a lot of change over the next few months. We will conduct a



Command Sgt. Maj.
Gregory Patton

brigade change of command in January, five battalion changes of command in February, many company and platoon leadership changes as well as the turnover of approximately 1,300 Soldiers as a result of PCS, ETS, and retirement.

This will require a lot of you to step up to assume higher positions of responsibility. Just as you did in Iraq, I know that you will perform with great distinction.

Last but not least, I'd like to thank our rear detachment cadre, families and the Golden Rakkasan Association for all of their gracious support. The outpouring support in the form of packages, letters and cards has greatly helped all of our deployed Soldiers.

You have had a direct and profound impact on the morale of all deployed Rakkasans!



Security intact through patrol base transitions

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

After the transition of six patrol bases to the Iraqi Army throughout the Mahmudiyah Qada, security gains have not faltered – a sure sign of progress in the area.

"If anything, there seems to be a feeling of increased security as the Iraqi Army has stepped forward to pro-

vide the same level of security as before," said Staff Maj. Gen. Ali Jassim Muhammad Hassen Al Frejee, 17th IA Division commander.

"While we transition patrol bases and areas of operation associated with patrol bases, we have set the conditions so that the Iraqi Army with an integrated police and Sons of Iraq footprint allow for a stable level of security," said Col. Do-

minic Caraccilo, commander of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)

Attacks in the area once part of the former "Triangle of Death" have reduced by 90 percent.

"A year ago, the average weekly attacks were 35, and now we're at two," said Capt. Rachel Sarles, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT) intelligence officer.

"Because there are so many security forces in the area – Sons of Iraq, IA, Coalition ... threat groups of any flavor can't really mass attacks," said Sarles, who is from Akron, Ohio. "Security hasn't degraded because the enemy has been neutralized," said Lt. Col. David Jones, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT). He explained that a series of aggressive, continual

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Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy

Soldiers from Co. B, 1st Bn. 35th Armor Regiment and 2/23/17 IA Division salute as the national anthems for the United States and Iraq play during a transition ceremony at Patrol Base Lion's Den Sep 6. PB Lion's Den is the sixth patrol base the Rakkasans have handed over to the Iraqi Army since Aug. 5.

Patrol Base Lion's Den transferred to Iraqi Army

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

The Iraqi Army now occupies another patrol base previously under Coalition forces' control after a transition ceremony near Radwaniyah Sept. 6.

Company B, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment transferred Patrol Base Lion's Den, approximately 15 kilometers southwest of Baghdad, to 2nd Battalion, 23rd Brigade, 17th IA Division.

"It is an honor for us to receive the patrol base (and) ... to be trusted so we can accomplish our mission," said Lt. Col Adnon, 2/23/17th IA executive officer.

"Today's ceremony marks several years of successful partnership," said Capt. Eric Morton, commander of Co. B, 1st Bn., 35th Armor Regt. "Just last year, this area was a hotbed for al-Qaeda in Iraq and other insurgent organizations. With the joint efforts of the Iraqi Army, Sons of

Iraq and the U.S. Army, al-Qaeda no longer has a support base here to conduct their operations."

Morton, a native of Midlothian, Va., went on to praise 2/23/17th IA, as well as the IA units before them, for their partnership efforts with Coalition forces in maintaining the peace in the Radwaniyah area.

"We have worked hard to secure this area, enabling the people to once again go about their daily lives," he

said. "The transition of Patrol Base Lion's Den today not only signifies our success working together as ... partners, but is also symbolic of the growing strength of the Iraqi Army."

PB Lion's Den is the sixth patrol base in the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) operations area that has transitioned to the IA since Aug. 5. By November, 14 patrol bases within Rakkasan battle space will transition to the IA as the

ISF takes a greater lead in the securing the area.

Prior to the war, the patrol base was home to an Iraqi government building, veterinarian clinic and a school. The Soldiers of Co. B, 1st Bn., 35th Armor Regt. have been at PB Lion's Den since May 10, when they took over from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment. Both units were attached to 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT).



First Sergeant William O'Connor and Capt. Eric Morton, first sergeant and commander of Co. B, 1st Bn., 35th Armor Regt., case the unit's colors during a transition ceremony where the IA took over Patrol Base Lion's Den from Coalition forces Sept. 6.

Odierno tours Mahmudiyah Market, sees progress

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

On the heels of assuming command of the Multi-National Force–Iraq, Gen. Ray Odierno visited the Rakkasans’ area of operations Sept. 17.

With *60 Minutes* correspondent Lesley Stahl and production crew in tow, Gen. Petraeus’ successor walked through the Mahmudiyah Market with Mahmudiyah Qada Mayor Jabbar Farraj Mullah al-Chalabi, Staff Maj. Gen. Ali Jassim Muhammad Hassen Al Frejee, 17th Iraqi Army Division commander, and Col. Dominic Caraccilo, commander of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

While walking, Odierno cited the remarkable changes in the area since his last visit. Asked if the surge was responsible for the security gains, he said it helped.

“The surge allowed us to spread our presence to areas where we didn’t have people before,” Odierno said. “What that allowed is more of a change in our tactics, techniques and procedures. We got out of our large bases and went to very small bases and allowed us to spread out even further and ... work with the Iraqis in many of these areas.

“We lived with the people, worked with the people, they saw us every day – that built their confidence ... in us,” he said.

The confidence of the Iraqi people in Coalition forces was evident in that the vendors and locals at the market were seemingly unfazed by the group of U.S. Soldiers who accompanied IA troops on the streets of their city. Children and adults alike waved and greeted the Soldiers with smiles and other friendly gestures.

Later, Odierno sat down with

Maj. Gen. Ali and Caraccilo to discuss the future of the 17th IA Div. as it progressively takes on an even greater security role as the Rakkasans prepare to depart the area.

“I seriously think the Iraqi government should consider the Sons of Iraq to be part of our security forces, especially in South Baghdad,” Maj. Gen. Ali said, adding that efforts are currently underway to make that happen. “The south sector of Baghdad has managed to defeat extremism... We managed to eliminate the threat... We have been able to accomplish a lot.”

Performing concurrent missions, Maj. Gen. Ali said his Soldiers face some challenges. His organization is making the transition from being a brigade to a division, building a division staff while training new personnel on new equipment and taking over areas of responsibility from Coalition forces.

“I’m really happy they formed the 17th IA Div. because one of my wor-

ries when I left here was that we didn’t have (enough) security forces in the area to assume the responsibility (from) Coalition forces ... allowing us to reduce our presence,” Odierno said.

“We can do it because the conditions are set ... the enemy has been neutralized, we understand the population,” Caraccilo said. “The Iraqi Army is taking hold of and putting themselves among the populace, understanding all the facets of the counterinsurgency fight and ... they’ve already taken six of our patrol bases and there’s been no downturn in security in those areas.”

Odierno is encouraged by what is taking place in the Mahmudiyah Qada and sees it as a sign of what could happen in other areas.

“This is an example of what we’re trying to do as we reduce our presence,” Odierno said. “This is what we’re looking to do in the future and you’re one of the first ones that are doing it... I’m very pleased.”



Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy

General Ray Odierno, MNF-I commander, talks to Lesley Stahl of *60 Minutes* as they walk through the Mahmudiyah Market with Mahmudiyah Qada Mayor Jabbar Farraj Mullah al-Chalabi, Staff Maj. Gen. Ali Jassim Muhammad Hassen Al Frejee, 17th IA Div. commander, and Col. Dominic Caraccilo, commander of 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), Sept. 17.

Operation Pell's Point establishes Iraqi Police presence in Albu Issa

By Pfc. Christopher McKenna
3rd BCT Public Affairs

Iraqi Police and Coalition forces conducted Operation Pell's Point, a combined air assault to establish IP presence, in Albu Issa Sept. 17.

"The purpose of the mission was to facilitate IP, (Sons of Iraq) and sheikh engagements so that when the (area of operations) is transitioned to the IPs, they have seen, met and established relationships with everybody in Albu Issa," said Capt. Nathan Raymond, commander of Company A, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

"We have been well trained and are ready to assume responsibility of Albu Issa," said Muhamed Abd Khader, Albu Issa IP patrolman. "The people have faith in our ability to continue providing stable security to the area."

This was the first time the IP from Albu Issa conducted an air assault mission.

"The biggest planning factor was getting an IP station

established in Albu Issa, which happened about two weeks ago. We had been working on it for about six months," said Raymond, a native of Clarksville, Tenn. "When they were finally able to generate enough combat power to establish their station, we began talking to them about this operation."

A total of 22 IP joined 66 Coalition Soldiers for the mission.

"The mere fact that they are able to show up with 22 men and control that large of an element shows that this group of IPs has leaders that are both capable and motivated," Raymond said.

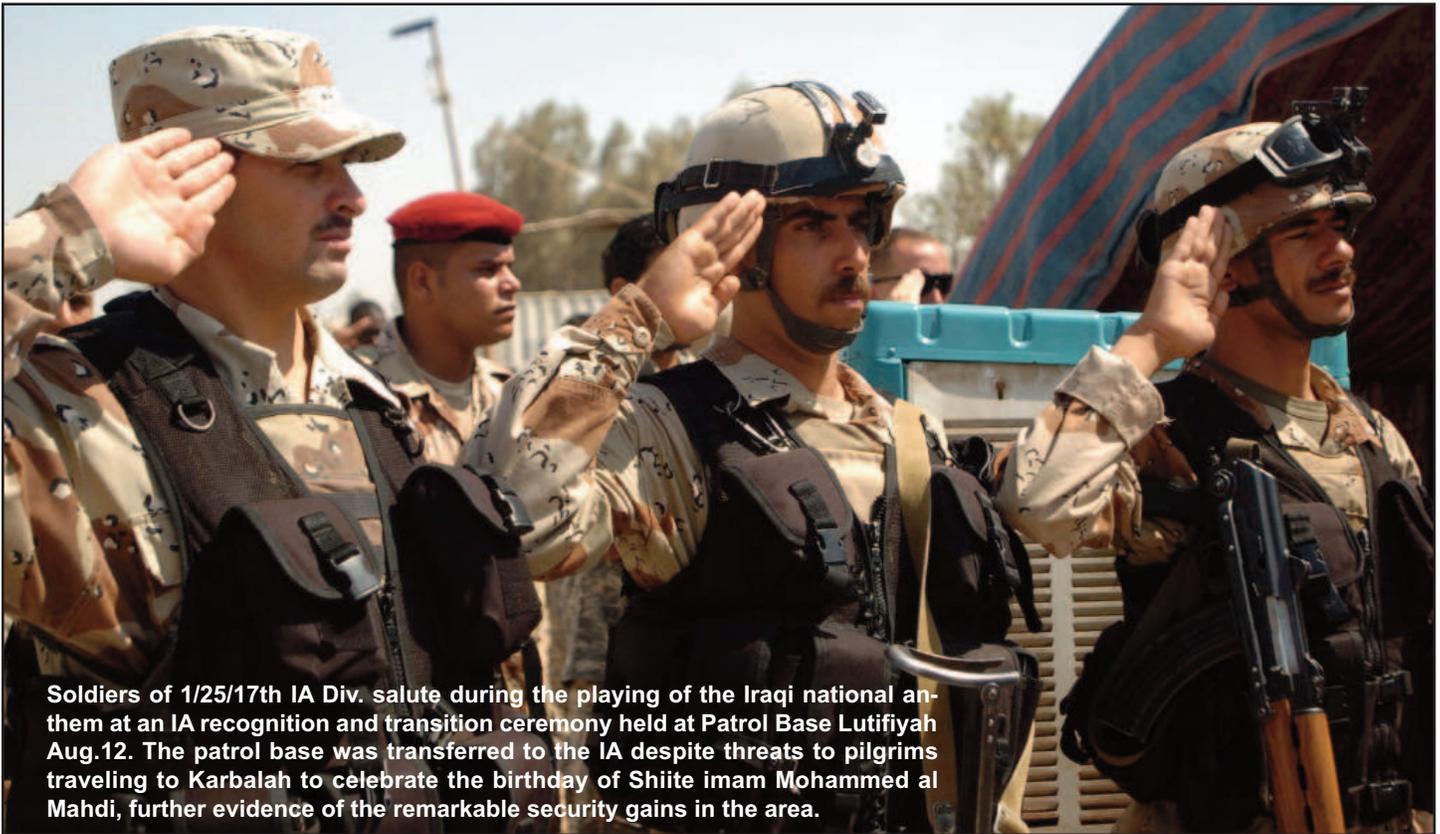
Rakkasan Soldiers said the police are prepared to lead and secure their areas of responsibility.

"They have been doing excellent," said Sgt. Tomas Montoya, from Albuquerque, N.M., Co. A., 3-187th Inf. Regt., mortars base gun gunner. "Every time I have seen them or worked with them, they have done the right thing."

"I have all the confidence in the world for these guys," Montoya said. "They'll complete the mission, just as we have for the past year."







Soldiers of 1/25/17th IA Div. salute during the playing of the Iraqi national anthem at an IA recognition and transition ceremony held at Patrol Base Lutifiyah Aug.12. The patrol base was transferred to the IA despite threats to pilgrims traveling to Karbala to celebrate the birthday of Shiite imam Mohammed al Mahdi, further evidence of the remarkable security gains in the area.

Pfc. Christopher McKenna

Security

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operations drove criminal factions out of the Mahmudiyah Qada.

“Mahmudiyah is safe. The people feel safe. People want security. Local Iraqis are tired of the violence,” said Jones, a native of South Berwick, Maine.

Caraccilo often says “the population is the prize.” It appears in the case of the citizens of Mahmudiyah Qada, the ISF have won the prize.

“I believe the population has chosen peace over violence and wants to proceed with the establishment of normalcy where the Government of Iraq will provide essential services, to include employment, to its people,” said Caraccilo, a native of Seneca Falls, N.Y. “This attitude, coupled with a professional and capable ISF, allows for a secure situation.”

Al Frejee echoed Caraccilo’s sentiment, and said his Soldiers are now confident in their abilities for a number of reasons. Among them, the Sol-

diers “know the population because they live among them and get good intelligence from the local populace,” he said.

“I believe the increase in intelligence and cooperation from the locals are due to a desire to end the fighting and build a future,” Caraccilo added.

In late March, when violence and hostility flared in Basra, the then-25th Brigade commanded by Al Frejee took control of the city of Mahmudiyah to prevent a violent uprising in their area.

The IA’s actions were “a tell-tale sign they were ready to take the reigns of security in Mahmudiyah themselves,” Jones said.

Two days before the Shabaniyah pilgrimage began, a festival held in Karbala to celebrate the birthday of Shiite imam Mohammed al Mahdi, Coalition forces transitioned a patrol base in the area to the ISF.

“There were numerous threats against pilgrims ... (but) we still transitioned the patrol base despite those threats,” Sarles said. The way the 17th

IA Div. handled the Arba’een pilgrimage in February was an indication of what could be expected of them. Sarles said the 17th IA was very effective in securing routes.

The ongoing progress and security are evident but not the result of one single action.

“SoIs were a huge step, the professionalization of the IA is another huge step,” Sarles said. “The population would rather choose to work with the IA and SoI than choose to even passively allow ... extremist groups to operate.”

As the Rakkasans continue to transition their battle space, the ISF will continue to hone its skills.

“(We will) continue to focus on preventing a resurgence of violence by those who would disrupt what has been built and to treat the local population with respect and dignity by assisting where needed, ... putting an Iraqi face on the responsibility for security and ensuring that everyone is treated equally,” Al Frejee said.

Combatives tourney boosts morale

STB's birthday event brings back defending champs as well as beginners

By Pfc. Christopher McKenna
3rd BCT Public Affairs

The 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) hosted a combatives tournament Sept. 13 in honor of the battalion's fourth birthday.

"We host combatives tournaments every three to four months, basically whenever we get the chance," said Staff Sgt. Steven Quick, native of Albany, N.Y., Company A, 3rd STB, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), combat engineer squad leader. "The tournament is run off of mixed martial arts rules, minus striking."

The tournament consisted of four weight classes and a class for women. The weight classes were lightweight, middleweight, heavyweight and super heavyweight. Each match consisted of one six-minute round, excluding the championship bouts.

The championship bouts consisted of three five-minute rounds.

"We had two defending champs returning to fight, as well as four new competitors to the tournament," Quick said.

Quick acted as the host and referee of the tournament, creating all of the brackets and making sure all rules were followed during each match.

"I've been training for a long time and know the rules," Quick said. "I've been in the moves, and I am able to tell when something is about to break."

The cage used for the event was built by the Soldiers during their free time. The matting consists of stacked fuel blivets with a cage surrounding nearly 80 percent of the ring, excluding the point of entry.

"This tournament is a morale call for the Soldiers and is something that is attempted for all major holidays," said Sgt. Garrett Wildermuth, from Havelock, N.C., Co. B, 3rd STB, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), common ground station noncommissioned officer in charge.

Wildermuth was the winner of the middleweight

division and attributes his success to his training regimen back home.

"I've been through many courses back in the States. I go to one of the local dojos off post in Clarksville," Wildermuth said. "I train in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and Muay Thai; I've been training for four years."

During time off, Wildermuth said many of the Soldiers involved in the tournament practice their mixed martial arts skills.

"In a way it relieves stress and it gives everyone around a show," Wildermuth said. "It is not only good conditioning, but it helps keep morale high; everyone wants to see fights."

While many of the competitors were used to practicing, one of the eventual

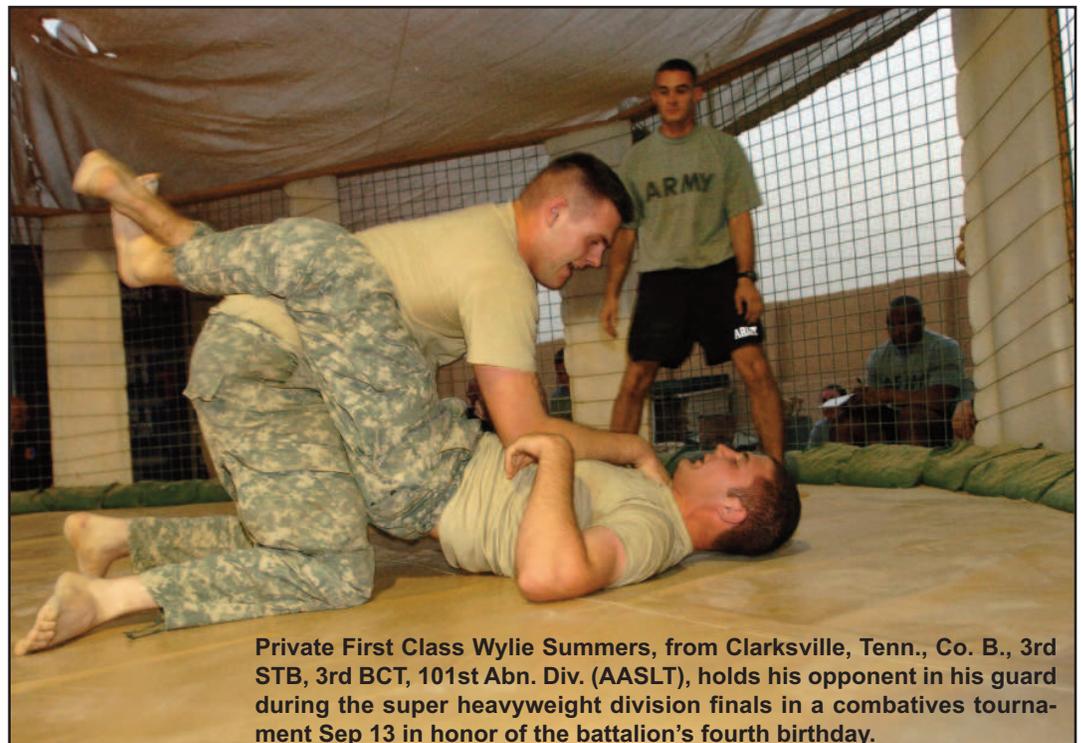
champions had little knowledge of mixed martial arts.

"I found out I was fighting in the tournament about three hours before it happened," said Pfc. Wylie Summers, from Clarksville, Tenn., Co. B., 3rd STB, interrogator. "This was the first combatives tournament I've ever done, and I won the super heavyweight division."

While Wildermuth is trained extensively in the arts, Summers said his only formal training came in the form of Army combatives.

"I didn't want to let my first sergeant or platoon sergeant down, they had faith in me, and I held to it," Summers said of his division victory.

The winners received a battalion commander's coin after the tournament.



Private First Class Wylie Summers, from Clarksville, Tenn., Co. B., 3rd STB, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div. (AASLT), holds his opponent in his guard during the super heavyweight division finals in a combatives tournament Sep 13 in honor of the battalion's fourth birthday.

Mullen outlines future for Iraq, Afghanistan

By Staff Sgt. Michael J. Carden
American Forces Press Service

U.S. military focus in the Middle East has not receded, despite improved security and stability in Iraq and the completion of troop withdrawals there, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said Sept. 23.

“(The Middle East) is the most unstable part of the world,” Navy Adm. Mike Mullen said, “and it’s a part of the world that continues to create great uncertainty and great unpredictability.”

Mullen spoke to more than 200 people at the Marine Memorial Club in San Francisco as part of former Secretary of State George P. Schultz’s lecture series to the World Affairs Council of Northern California.

About the time notable success in Iraq was being made, violence in Afghanistan erupted, Mullen noted. Security in Iraq has improved, the economy is getting better and political reconciliation is in progress, he said.

Improvements Mullen and Defense Department didn’t think were possible as recently as 18 months ago are well underway, including the withdrawal of more than 8,000 troops by February. But there’s still a long way to go, the admiral said.

“We talk about (Iraq) as still being fragile and still being reversible,” he said. “But there is a durability about (Iraq) now that just wasn’t there a few months ago. So much blood has been shed to make this possible. Not many of us thought, even two summers ago, that there was much hope.”

The focus has since shifted to Afghanistan, which is an endeavor that Mullen anticipates will be even longer than Iraq in terms of progress.

Afghanistan is among the poorest countries in the world, so the development there, in the long run is going to be significant, he said.

Along with Afghanistan’s weak economy, the rule of law needs to be established, and there needs to be a growth in Afghan security forces, both army and police, he continued.

The fast pace and regularity of deployments will remain the same as military requirements in Afghanistan persist, Mullen said. Commanders on the ground have been requesting more troops for months. Ideally, an additional 15,000 would be sent there, but no more than 7,000 are on orders to deploy, he added.

The additional troops are needed to suppress the growing insurgency in Afghanistan. Al-Qaida and extremists “are on the run” in Iraq, Mullen said, but as they retreat from Iraq, they are finding safe havens in Pakistan.

Violence is up in Afghanistan, Mullen said. At least 30 troops in each of the past four months have been killed there. In the previous 54 months, dating back the January 2001, there has only been three months where 30 or more coalition troops were killed, according to www.icasualties.org, a Web site which tallies the number of those killed and wounded in combat.

Mullen explained the growing insurgency in Afghanistan is empowered by the safe havens along Pakistan’s border, in which the local tribes there harbor foreign fighters and facilitate their training.

“There’s a real problem (in Pakistan),” the chairman said, adding that the issues are evident in the rising attack levels in Afghanistan and the recent hotel bombing in Pakistan’s capital, Islamabad, which left more than 50 people killed and hun-

dreds injured.

Mullen has spent a great deal of time meeting with Pakistan’s military leaders, expressing U.S. concerns for increased pressure along their Afghan border. His fifth and most recent trip was last week where he met with Army Chief of Staff Ashfaq Kayani. During that trip, Mullen said he’s encouraged by what Pakistan’s army has been willing to do in the border regions, and that they recognize the threat they face.

“I think Pakistan focusing clearly on the border and the Fatah (region) is important, but I also think it’s important to focus on a comprehensive relationship with (Pakistan),” he said. “I’ve worked hard, many of our military has worked hard on a military-to-military relationship (with Pakistan). Having a long-term, dependable and predictable relationship with Pakistan as well as the other countries in that part of the world is important.”

Mullen also expressed his growing concern to the council about Iran and its quest to acquire nuclear weapons. Iran is a network state that has the ability to reach out to terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamaz in the Gaza Strip, he said.

Iran’s pursuit of nuclear capabilities will destabilize the Middle East, and “will undoubtedly generate other countries in the area to feel they will need nuclear weapons to maintain balance,” Mullen said.

“It’s a very complex part of the world, and it’s going to take constant and continuous engagements by every level of government, not just the military,” he said. “We’re living in a global world, and any instability [in the Middle East] will certainly impact and create instability elsewhere.”

Al Mustafa Expedient Local Police Station opens

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

A ceremony marked the grand opening of the Al Mustafa Expedient Local Police Station Sept. 25.

“(Without) cooperation between the tribes, residents, Iraqi Police, 17th Iraqi Army Division under the leadership of Staff Maj. Gen. Ali ... we would not be able to open the Al Mustafa Iraqi Police Station,” said Brig. Gen. Abed Muhammed Allwan, Mahmudiyah Police District commander, said to the sheikhs and others who came to commemorate the event.

The station will allow an increased police presence in the area and show the residents that despite a decreased number of Coalition forces “there isn’t necessarily a security gap,” said Capt. Jessica E. Donckers, 65th Military Police Company (Airborne) commander. “It’s one more step toward improving the security structure in Iraq.”

Al Mustafa IPs can now work their own cases and conduct daily police business self-sufficiently, whereas before they worked from Al Rasheed, about five kilometers southeast of the new station.

The force has 173 IP assigned, with approximately 40 officers on duty per shift.

“With the demand of the locals and support of Maj. Gen. Khadim (Baghdad provincial director of police), we

resolved to open this situation and we pledged to the people to take out the insurgents,” Allwan said. “This area between the rivers used to be the ‘Triangle of Death,’ now it is the ‘Triangle of Life.’”



Capt. Jessica E. Donckers
Major General Khadim Hamed Sharhn al-Muhamadani, Baghdad provincial director of police, cuts the ribbon at the grand opening of the Al Mustafa Expedient Local Police Station as other look on Sept. 25.

What has impacted you most during this deployment?



“Being able to have all my guys stay safe.”

Sgt. Christopher Stokes
Battery B,
3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment

“All the helping the local population we’ve done for so much of the deployment, its amazing.”

Spc. Adam Omlor
Company D,
1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment



“Being away from my daughter for over a year.”

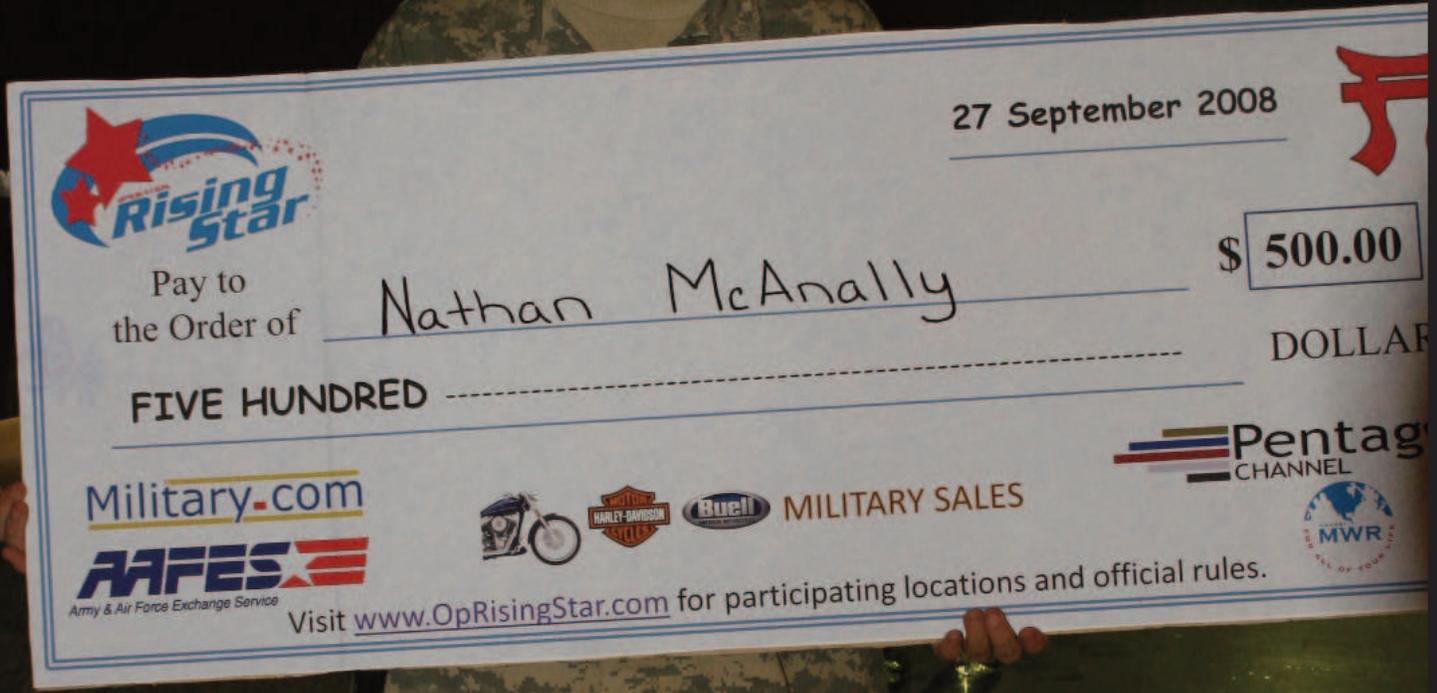
Spc. Spencer Hilliard
Company C,
3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment



“Having passed the one year anniversary since I bought my house and realizing I’ve only lived in it for three months.”

Sgt. Jeremiah Miron
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
3rd Brigade Combat Team

Specialist Nathan McAnally, Company D, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), holds his prize for winning 1st place in the Rising Star competition at Camp Striker Sept. 27. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy)



Captain April McDonald, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), performs in the second round of the Rising Star competition at Camp Striker Sept. 27. McDonald won 2nd place in the competition. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kerensa Hardy)

