

IRON STRONG DAILY



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Iraqi Army receive weapons training by Taskmasters



Sergeant Alex Abbate, a Scottsdale, Ariz. Native, Alpha Company, 426th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, shows a 4th Iraqi Army Division Soldier how to aim and use the sights of the M16 rifle. Abbate and other Soldiers from the "Taskmaster" Battalion recently conducted a two-week training course on the M16 rifle.

Story and Photos BY Multi-National Division - North PAO

For more than 50 years, the M-16 has been the United States Army's weapon of choice.

From Saigon to Salah ad Din, the M-16 rifle family has become the symbol of the Infantry and is used by 15 NATO countries.

The rifle is a lightweight, .223 caliber, air-cooled, gas-operated, magazine-fed assault rifle, which is lighter in weight, more accurate, and more ergonomic than the AK-47.

Recently, Iraq has purchased more than 50,000 M-16 assault rifles from the United States to replace their primary rifle, the AK-47.

During recent two-week training course, 4th Iraqi Army Division Soldiers have received M-16 weapons training from 426th Brigade Support Battalion Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Dagger.

The hands-on training, detailed the various aspects of the M-16 rifle.

The initial portion, Iraqi Soldiers learned how to assemble, disassemble and clean the rifle.

"They were very attentive while

we were instructing them on how to assemble the M-16," said Don Nottingham, Bravo Company. "They were also very interested on how the M-16 functioned." Steady position, aiming, breath control, and trigger squeeze: these four fundamentals of marksmanship were also instilled in the minds of the Iraqi Soldiers.

"Most of them had the basic fundamentals of shooting using their assigned AK-47," said Nottingham. "They learned quickly in the classroom portion about the M-16."

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3rd ACR tests new Army program for redeploying equipment



Tanks and Bradleys sit in rows awaiting redeployment back to the U.S. The 3d ACR began redeploying some of its equipment back to the U.S. for repair and reset under a new Army pilot program. The program's goal is to speed up the redeployment process so units can get their equipment back sooner and as a complete system.

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Tim Volkert 3rd ACR Public Affairs

The 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment's first step toward redeployment is also the test for an Army pilot program. Beginning in late September, 3d ACR units at Forward Operating Base Q West and FOB Marez started the Early Retrograde Equipment, or ERE process, and moved some of its tanks, Bradleys and other assorted vehicles to staging areas for shipment back to the United States.

The ERE process is a new program designed to speed up how the Army redeploys and resets its combat power platforms, its tanks and Bradleys, to get the equipment back to units so they can begin training faster than the current redeployment methods allow.

What makes the program different is that the 3d ACR is turning in this equipment as complete systems, which means all of the assorted computers, subsystems and other components are turned in together, said Chief Warrant Officer Nicole E. Woodyard, regimental reset manager, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, Regimental Support Squadron, 3d

ACR.

"No one has ever turned in their equipment in theater as a complete system before. We are the pilot unit to see how it works," Woodyard said. Currently, units have to strip down the equipment and computer systems before the vehicles heads back overseas, she said. By sending the equipment into reset as a complete system, everything is upgraded and repaired together, and when it's returned to the unit, they can begin training immediately.

ACR.

"It will come back in the most current Army configuration, to include

ACR.

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Taskmaster instructors brought the Iraqi Soldiers to the range to practice firing their new rifles to enable them to put their knowledge to practical use.

“The range itself was the biggest success,” said Sgt. Andrew Chard, Bravo Company. “It allowed the other instructors and me to see how the information we imparted to them was received and utilized,” he said. “They performed magnificently through the zero and qualification phase.”

Chard said the progress throughout the course was outstanding.

He and fellow Taskmaster Soldiers had to improvise and become creative to communicate with their Iraqi partners.

“The language barrier was a difficult portion to overcome, said Nottingham. However, “their enthusiasm to learn overcame the problem with Iraqi Soldiers trying to interpret one of

three languages that we found to be in the class,” said Nottingham.

The Iraqi Army Soldiers were able to successfully move through the course, learn the basic fundamentals of the M-16 rifle, and possibly become a more proficient fighting force.

“This was beneficial to the IA Soldiers,” said Sgt. Daniel Walker, Bravo Company. “They got firsthand instruction on how to operate, breakdown, and fire the M-16 rifle by American Soldiers that have experience.”



Sergeant Alex Abbate, a Scottsdale, Ariz. Native, Alpha Company, 426th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, shows a 4th Iraqi Army Division Soldier where the rounds he fired from his M16 rifle impacted his target.

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all upgrades,” Woodyard said.

Another benefit is this process will reduce the risk of loss and damage that can occur, said Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Learn, the Transportation and Logistics section noncommissioned officer in charge for 1st Squadron, 3d ACR.

“I predict a whole lot less property loss investigations with the system coming back as a complete unit,” he said. “Commanders will receive their equipment ready for mission rather than piecing it back together.

“It will also be beneficial to the commanders to sign one document rather than several for each individual component,” Learn added.

While the current deployment process and the pilot program’s schedule for redeploying equipment is basically the same, the new process is much

quicker. The end result is that units get their systems back sooner, Learn said.

“This process will allow us to get the combat power systems back about 120 days earlier than in previous deployments,” Woodyard said.

That provides major benefits for the unit when it returns to home station.

“Training with borrowed equipment is not the same as your assigned equipment ... a crew will know the strengths and limitations of equipment they are familiar with,” said Learn.

Once this program is complete and the process adjusted based on feedback, the Soldiers of the 3d ACR predict that it will be a great change for how Army units redeploy.

“This will be a great benefit once all the bugs are worked out, saving the Soldiers and the Army both time and assets,” Learn said.



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ELECTIONS

Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin misrepresented to a campaign audience Thursday what her Democratic counterpart Joe Biden has said about Barack Obama's ability to handle a foreign crisis.

"Sen. Obama's own running mate, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has informed us that a serious international crisis is certain if Obama is elected and that he is not ready to deal with it," Palin told thousands of supporters at a rally in this western Ohio city.

That is not what Biden told fundraisers last weekend.

Biden did say, "Watch, we're gonna have an international crisis, a generated crisis, to test the mettle of this guy." And he

asked his audience to be ready to display public support for Obama during such a crisis. But noting that President John Kennedy faced similar early foreign tests, Biden predicted Obama would fare well because he's "got steel in his spine."

Responding to Palin's remark, Obama spokesman Isaac Baker noted that Colin Powell, a Republican and President Bush's former secretary of state,

has endorsed Obama.

"Colin Powell is one of the nation's foremost experts on national security, and the fact that he's crossing party lines to support Obama says a lot more than any of the false attacks launched by Gov. Palin today," Baker said.

Palin told several thousand people at Hobart Arena, "We need John McCain."

"What I want is a president who has spent 22 years in uniform defending our country," she said. "I want a president who isn't afraid to use the word victory when he talks about the wars we are fighting. I want a president who knows how to win the war and wants to win the war."

Outside the arena, about 20 workers from a variety of labor unions rallied in support of Obama carrying empty six-packs of beer to show they consider themselves Joe Six-Packs, or the everyday working people Palin often refers to in her speeches



Entertainment

Four days after actors called for bringing in a federal mediator to resolve stalled contract negotiations, the studios finally delivered a response: OK, but don't expect much.

The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, which bargains on behalf of the studios, said in a statement Thursday that "we are, of course, willing to meet with a federal mediator in the hopes of achieving our fifth guild agreement this year."

But the alliance also downplayed expectations of a breakthrough, warning that it would be "difficult to reach an agreement if SAG continues to insist unreasonably that it deserves a better deal" than the other contracts negotiated "during far better times."

Screen Actors Guild National Executive Director Doug Allen issued a brief response, saying the union looked forward to all the parties convening "as soon as possible."

The producers' group is expected to meet with federal mediator Juan Carlos Gonzalez on Thursday. Gonzalez was involved last year in a mediation between studios and the Writers

Guild of America. That effort, however, was unsuccessful and failed to prevent a 100-day strike that ended in February. The mediator's recommendations are not binding.

It's not clear whether Gonzalez, a Hollywood outsider, will have any more success in the current dispute, given how deeply entrenched each side is in its position.

SAG is seeking jurisdiction over all shows created for the Web, regardless of budget, but studios have called the demand a non-starter that would undermine agreements they've reached with three other unions.

Moreover, Allen and other SAG leaders initially dismissed the idea of tapping a federal mediator when it was first suggested by New York board members in August. SAG leaders have been pressing for the union to seek an immediate strike authorization vote from members to boost their

leverage in contract talks.

But newly elected moderates on the national board pushed for mediation before taking the more drastic measure of seeking a strike vote.

The studios' decision Thursday was not unexpected given that they would have risked a backlash had they rejected the offer, possibly pushing moderates in SAG to join hard-liners.

Actors have been working without a contract since June 30



Basketball

Arizona had planned to name associate head coach Mike Dunlap as Lute Olson's interim replacement Thursday. But Dunlap asked for more time before accepting the position.

Dunlap was offered the interim position Thursday after Olson resigned but wanted to sleep on it, ESPN.com has learned.

Dunlap arrived in Tucson last spring after spending the last two seasons as an assistant with the Denver Nuggets. Dunlap was the head coach at Metro State in Denver, Colo., for nine years prior, winning two Division II national championships.

Dunlap was a professional coach in the Australia national basketball league prior to Metro State. He has been mentioned for a number of head coaching jobs of late, including his alma mater, Loyola Marymount.

If Dunlap decides he doesn't want the job, Arizona athletic director Jim Livengood will have to decide whether to name new assistant Russ Pennell interim coach, find a temporary coach for the season or bring in a permanent coach. San Francisco got Eddie Sutton on loan midway through last season after abruptly firing Jessie Evans.

The Wildcats also have a third new assistant, former Arizona player Reggie Geary.

Another possibility could be in-house. Jim Rosborough, longtime Olson assistant, moved into the administration when Olson hired Kevin O'Neill in the spring of 2007 as an interim coach.

O'Neill, who coached the Wildcats last season while Olson took a leave of absence, was named Olson's successor at a December news conference. But after the season, Olson returned and O'Neill decided he didn't want to be an assistant.

Reached late Thursday, O'Neill said he didn't take a settlement from Arizona. He said he walked away without a contract stating he's the next coach. O'Neill said he had great respect for Olson and was grateful of the opportunity he



received at Arizona. However, O'Neill said he is now committed as an assistant with the Memphis Grizzlies.

Former assistant Miles Simon was relieved of his duties and former assistant Josh Pastner took a top assistant job at the University of Memphis.

Pastner could be an option if Dunlap turns down the job. On Monday, Olson told ESPN: "Josh wants to come back here eventually as a head coach. But there was strong feeling that there was no way that could happen unless he had something else on his resume."

"Josh has been like a son to me for years and years and I think he feels the same way about me as I feel about him," Olson said. "It was a very difficult situation with Josh [to see him leave]."

If a national search takes place in the spring many high-profile names -- like Gonzaga's Mark Few -- would be bandied about. But it would be difficult to pry Few away from a job that he has made one of the premier posts in the country. The Wildcats might have a hard time pulling any established coaches to follow Olson.

During that same interview Monday, Olson said this about Arizona basketball:

"It's a great basketball program whether I'm here or somebody else is here

and the traditions need to be continued. It's just like the job Ben Howland has done at UCLA. It's always difficult for the guy that follows coach Wooden, for example. It was really difficult. I'm not saying it's going to be as difficult as it was there because that would not be a truthful statement. But it will be a challenge anytime someone has been here as long as I've been here."

During Monday's practice, Dunlap was the dominant coaching voice. ESPN.com was at the McKale Center and while Olson was on the court during practice, Dunlap appeared to be running most of the drills. Arizona took Tuesday off from practice. Olson wasn't at practice Wednesday because of illness. Dunlap ran practice Wednesday and Thursday.

As soon as an interim coach is named, the Wildcats will turn their attention to retaining three committed players: Abdul Gaddy (Tacoma, Wash.), Solomon Hill (Los Angeles) and Mike Moser (Portland, Ore.). The weeklong early signing period begins Nov. 12. If Arizona loses the recruits the effects of Olson leaving could be felt into 2010-11.

The Wildcats could also lose juniors Chase Budinger and Jordan Hill to the NBA draft, making the 2009-10 team even more depleted.

Somalia

Somali forces raided one of the many ships hijacked off the country's coast Sunday as a deadline loomed in a standoff aboard another, arms-laden vessel, officials said.

Troops in northern Somalia's semiautonomous Puntland region unsuccessfully tried to take back a ship that was hijacked by pirates on Thursday, said Ali Abdi Aware, Puntland's foreign minister. He said two pirates were killed.

The vessel, which carrying cement, is believed to have Syrian and Somali crew on board.

"Our forces are chasing the ship and we hope to rescue it," Aware said in a telephone interview from Puntland, a hotbed of piracy.

Meanwhile, pirates on the Ukrainian MV Faina, which is carrying 33 tanks and other heavy weapons, continued to demand ransom money before releasing the ship and its 20 crew.

The pirates have threatened to destroy the vessel Monday night or early Tuesday unless the shipowners pay a ransom of up to US\$20 million. They

have held the ship for more than two weeks.

Sugule Ali, a spokesman for the pirates, said by satellite telephone that negotiations with the shipping company were continuing. Regarding the ransom, he said: "It is before Tuesday or never."

Pirates have seized more than two dozen ships this year off the Horn of Africa, but the Faina has drawn the most international attention because of its dangerous cargo. Many fear the weapons on board could end up in the hands of Islamic militants in Somalia.

The ship's operator, Tomex Corp. in Odessa, has not commented on negotiations.

The threat by the pirates on the Faina was unusual. Pirates operating off Somalia rarely

harm their hostages, instead holding out for a ransom that often exceeds \$1 million.

But international pressure on the pirates is growing. NATO said Thursday it would send seven ships to the treacherous waters where pirates are negotiating the release of the Faina. U.S. warships are surrounding the ship, and a Russian vessel is on the way as well.

There are 20 Ukrainian, Latvian and Russian crew members on board.

The ship's Russian captain died of a heart condition soon after the hijacking nearly two weeks ago, officials in Moscow say.

Lt. Stephanie Murdock, a spokeswoman for the 5th Fleet, which is based in Bahrain and helps monitor Somalia's coast, said there were no significant developments Sunday.

A nation of around 8 million people, Somalia has not had a functioning government since 1991. A quarter of Somali children die before age 5 and nearly every public institution has collapsed. In the capital, Mogadishu, thousands of civilians have died over the past 18 months in a ferocious, Iraq-style insurgency.



India

India is due to make its debut at the highest level at an Asia-Europe meeting where the global economic crisis is expected to dominate the discussions.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has arrived in Beijing to join leaders of 44 countries at the weekend for the seventh Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

Mr Singh will meet a number of world leaders on the sidelines of the summit.

Climate change, trade, energy and food security are also expected to be on the summit agenda.

Mr Singh arrived in Beijing after a three-day official visit to Japan.

It is still unclear whether Mr Singh would formally meet Pakistani PM Yousuf Raza Gilani, who is also attending the summit.

Mr Singh told reporters in Tokyo that the global financial crisis had revealed the vulnerability of global finance.

"The crisis has choked credit flows and predictably spilled over to the stock market. We have to prevent the liquidity crisis from becoming a crisis of confidence in the international monetary and financial system," he said.

'Timely'

The EU Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso has said the bloc must achieve "unprecedented" co-operation with Asia to resolve the economic crisis.

"The present gathering could not be more timely," Mr Barroso told reporters in Beijing. "We face challenges which don't respect any borders."

"No-one in Europe or Asia can seriously pretend to be immune. We are living in unprecedented times, and we need unprecedented levels of global co-ordination."

Mr Barroso said the world needed Asia - particularly China, India and Japan - to "be on board".

"It's very simple: we sink together or we swim together."

Mr Barroso also said the situation was

"a great opportunity for China to show a sense of responsibility".

