

The Adviser



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**600 Iraqi Army soldiers graduate from Warfighter training
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U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente

Soldiers representing different 8th IA Div. units stand together prior to the transfer of authority ceremony at Combat Outpost 4 on Mar. 3

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>> ON THE COVER

Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Rodney Foliente

An Iraqi Soldier drapes his national flag over his uniform as he prepares to raise it at the entrance to COP 4 after the transfer of authority ceremony Mar. 3.

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Hundreds Graduate From Iraqi Warfighter Training Course

by Van N. Williams, MNSCT-I PAO

KIRKUK, Iraq – More than 600 Iraqi Army soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 15th Brigade, 12th Division graduated from an intense month long Battalion Collective Training, or Warfighter training at the K1 Regional Training Center here March 12.

According to Iraqi Army Staff Lt. Gen. Husayn Jasim Dohi, deputy chief of staff for training, the soldiers received small and intermediate weapons training, IED awareness and prevention training and check point procedures training. The battalion also practiced patrolling in a MOUT (Military Operations on Urban Terrain), that simulated a village with homes and a hospital. The soldiers also had ethics training. “Good training without values is not good. You become an army of criminals and the people don’t respect you,” Husayn told his officers.

The Warfighter training course will be taught to Iraq’s soldiers in a process that will bring a single standard of professionalism to the army, according to U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Steven Salazar, deputy commanding general, Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq Joint Headquarters Army Advisory Training Team. Speaking during a briefing with senior Iraqi and Coalition officers, Salazar reminded the group that, “The training is hard. It’s supposed to be hard; you are supposed to get dirty. We’re not here to make it easy.



USAF Photo by Capt. Thomas Avilucea

Iraqi Army Staff Lt. Gen. Husayn Jasim Dohi, deputy chief of staff for training, speaks to the media after reviewing more than 600 soldiers during a graduation ceremony at the K 1 Regional Training Center in Kirkuk. The Warfighter training course is designed to set a single professional standard for the Iraqi Army.

“We’re here to train soldiers.” Husayn agreed and quoted an old Iraqi saying, “Follow the man who makes you cry, not the man who makes you laugh and you will be stronger for it.”

This training has become part of the continuous rebuilding effort of the Iraqi Army to professionalize itself through use of realistic events. Warfighter training is one more vital step towards ensuring Iraq’s self-sufficiency during the critical transition from Coalition to Iraqi-led operations in support of the Security Agreement between Iraq and the United States.



USAF Photo by Capt. Thomas Avilucea

More than 600 Iraqi soldiers graduate from a month long Warfighter training course. The soldiers were trained in checkpoint procedures, IED awareness and prevention and weapons training.

8th IA Div. assumes responsibility of COP 4

Multi-National Division – Center PAO

CAMP ECHO, Iraq – The 8th Iraqi Army Division received responsibility for Combat Outpost 4 from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Warhorse Brigade during a transfer of authority ceremony at the outpost Mar. 3.

The ceremony marked the 8th IA Div.'s increasing ability to maintain security in the Diwaniya Province without Coalition assistance, as shown recently during safe and successful provincial elections Jan. 31.

"The transition of Combat Outpost 4 is a very important event to Iraqis, showing that America and Iraq are following the terms of the Security Agreement, which was signed on Jan. 1," said Lt. Gen. Ali Salih Farhood Oothman, 8th IA Div. commander.

The combat outpost is very crucial to maintaining security and ensuring the insurgency, which destabilized the area in the past, is kept from doing the same again, said Oothman.

"The 8th Division personnel are very proud and happy to receive this site and consider it as a great achievement," said Oothman. "Our priority is to continue to improve the safety of the city as we move further into the reconstruction phase."

Oothman praised the efforts of

U.S. and Coalition Forces "to help stabilize the area and train the Iraqi Army."

"Coalition forces have worked closely with the Iraqi Army. We have seen a dramatic improvement in the skill, effectiveness and professionalism of this unit. The people of this great province and country should be proud of the Iraqi Army and the fine Soldiers it has produced," said Lt. Col. Doug Cardinale, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment commander.

Cardinale's battalion operated out of COP 4, working with the ISF since September.

"I am confident that the 8th Iraqi Army Division, under the guidance of Lt. Gen. Oothman, can use this combat outpost as another effective tool in keeping Diwaniya as one of the safest provinces in all of Iraq," Cardinale said. "You cannot build a strong country without ensuring it has a strong army. Iraq is building for the future and its proud Army is leading the way."

Transitions from CF to Iraqi control have been occurring throughout Iraq and will continue, because Iraqi Security Forces are taking the lead in securing Iraq, said Cardinale.

"The 8th Iraqi Army has been



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente
Col. Butch Kievenaar, 2nd BCT commander, and Lt. Gen. Ali Salih Farhood Oothman, 8th IA Div. commander, sign the transfer of authority of COP 4 from the Warhorse Brigade to the 8th IA Div. during a ceremony at the combat outpost

operating independently for more than three years and was the first to provide a safe and secure environment to the Iraqi people," said Col. Butch Kievenaar, 2nd BCT commander. "It's been our privilege to partner with you and to continue to help in that development as you continue to move forward in securing Iraq."

"When Soldiers perform in battle together, they are bonded by something more than blood. And this brigade, with the 8th Iraqi Army – not only during this rotation but on previous rotations – have served together and formed a brotherhood. Rest assured, our brotherhood will remain strong, and we will continue to always be there to support. While I don't think you will need it, we will always answer the call if you require us to be there," said Kievenaar.

"This is not an end; this is a continuation of our mission and a continuation of our partnership as we continue to move forward in securing Iraq," said Kievenaar.

He expressed his confidence in the ISF to continue providing security for the Iraqi people, helping to lead them towards a brighter future.

"I believe you will see a lot of ceremonies like this turning over locations as (Iraqi) security forces continue to expand and take further control of the security situation across all of Iraq," Kievenaar said.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente

Col. Butch Kievenaar, 2nd BCT commander, and Lt. Gen. Ali Salih Farhood Oothman, 8th IA Div. commander, shake hands as Kievenaar hands over the key to COP 4 during a transfer of authority ceremony at the combat outpost.

First Iraqi Army Officer Graduates Forward Operating Base Dolby Course

Story by U.S. Army Spc. Kevin Holden

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division—Baghdad Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division continued their mission of training the Soldiers of the Iraqi army. In support of the Security Agreement implementation, ‘Iron Brigade’ Soldiers have shifted their focus from combat operations to advising, training and mentoring the IA.

Iraqi army 2nd Lt. Ghazwan Wafeaq Majed, a member of the 2nd Battalion, 25th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division became the first Iraqi army officer to graduate from Task Force 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment’s Iraqi Junior Leader Development Course at Forward Operating Base Dolby, March 16.

The goal of the training is to continue the improvement of the IA and prepare them to assume an ever increasing role in providing for the defense of Iraq. The security situation in Iraq has

dramatically improved and now the mission is to sustain the improved security environment when coalition forces are required to redeploy from Iraq in 2011.

Majed embedded with the MND-B unit for the 14- day course and received training in counseling soldiers, property accountability, patrolling, maintenance checks, mission planning, patrol briefs, rehearsals, pre-combat checks, and pre-combat inspections. These are responsibilities MND-B Soldiers take for granted, but are not part of the culture of the Iraqi army.

“In the beginning of the course I observed American officers, learned the non-commissioned officers and Soldiers role, and the responsibility of a second lieutenant in an operational unit,” said Majed.

There are similar programs being used by other units in the MND-B operating area to train the IA officers, NCO’s, and soldiers. The IA and MND-B commanders work together

to provide training, interaction, and experience to junior leaders in the IA.

“The junior leader course is the most important operation we do, and working with junior officers before accruing time service with the IA is the ultimate goal. Providing training for young officers who will be high ranking leaders in the IA is the coalition forces priority”, said Lt. Col. Michael Mammay, of Merrimack NH, commander, TF 4-27 FA.

The graduation is another step toward the future for the Iraqi army and Iraq. Since Jan. 1, the IA and MND-B have officially partnered in planning, preparing and executing missions. As more and more of the IA soldiers graduate from leadership courses and operate independently, it communicates to Iraqi citizens and the world Iraq is a sovereign country.



Photo by Spc. Kevin Holden

2nd Lt. Ghazwan Wafeaq Majed (center), proudly holds his diploma he received after graduating from the Iraqi Junior Leader Development Course at Forward Operating Base Dolby.



Photo by Spc. Kevin Holden

Capt. Allan Carroll, of Kailua, Hawaii, and commander of Company B, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, Task Force 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi- National Division—Baghdad, presents 2nd Lt. Ghazwan Wafeaq Majed, of 2nd Battalion, 25th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division, a diploma for completing the Iraqi Junior Leader Development Course.

Iraqi security forces take helm of JSS 2 in Diwaniya

Multi-National Division – Center PAO

CAMP ECHO, Iraq – Iraqi Security Forces and the local government assumed full responsibility for manning and operating the Joint Security Station 2 in Diwaniya during a ceremony March 14.

The 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, transferred full authority to the ISF, offering the symbolic JSS 2 key to Col. Abed al Jalil Abdul Amir, chief of staff for the Diwaniya Provincial Department of Police.

“The Iraqi Security Forces are willing, ready and capable to conduct operations. This has been evident with the recent holidays, as well as the (provincial) elections,” said Maj. William Sachse, executive officer for 2nd Combined Arms Bn., 8th Inf. Regt.

During those events, the ISF provided the majority of the security, keeping the citizens safe and maintaining the peace. The security the people of Diwaniya are experiencing is largely due to the

outstanding leadership and efforts of the ISF, said Sachse.

He also applauded the work of the Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Combined Arms Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., who worked and lived with the Iraqi Army Soldiers and Iraqi Police at JSS 2.

“Today marks an important day for the Iraqi people of Diwaniya. The transfer of JSS 2 highlights the irreversible momentum toward a free and prosperous Iraq. Although U.S. forces are leaving JSS 2, our relationship will not change. I look forward to our continued partnership,” said Sachse in a speech during the ceremony.

“The Iraqi Security Forces are ready and capable to take over the responsibility and operations of this station,” said Amir, through an interpreter. “The training we received from Coalition forces has improved our capabilities and we’re now able to defend our country and protect our province.”



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente

Col. Abed al Jalil Abdul Amir, chief of staff for the Diwaniya Provincial Department of Police, signs a transfer of authority document during a ceremony turning over the JSS 2 to ISF control in Diwaniya.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente

Maj. William Sachse, executive officer for 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, offers the symbolic key of JSS 2 to Col. Abed al Jalil Abdul Amir, chief of staff for the Diwaniya Provincial Department of Police, during a ceremony turning over the JSS 2 to ISF control in Diwaniya.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente

Maj. William Sachse, executive officer for 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, and Col. Abed al Jalil Abdul Amir, chief of staff for the Diwaniya Provincial Department of Police, cut a cake after a ceremony turning over the JSS 2 to ISF control in Diwaniya.

Humanitarian Aid coming to Iraqi Detainment Facilities

by Van N. Williams,
MNSTC-I PAO

BAGHDAD – The Iraqi Ministry of Defense Human Rights Directorate, in coordination with Coalition Forces are taking steps to improve conditions at the country’s detention facilities.

In September 2007, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki issued executive order #207 that incorporates international human rights standards when dealing with detainees.

In response to the order, Ministry of Defense, Director of Human Rights, Iman Naji Taha initiated a humanitarian relief measure directed at reducing human suffering in the MOD’s 30 facilities. “Coordination of the Humanitarian Assistance Initiative began in December 2008, and we started distributing items in mid-

February 2009,” Iman said. Eight of the MOD’s largest facilities have received assistance through the program. “The humanitarian efforts of providing these much needed supplies will improve the health and living conditions for approximately 1,700 MOD detainees,” Iman added.

Coordinating with the Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq, Multi-National Forces – Iraq, and the Joint Contracting Command – Iraq, Iman was able to provide detainees with hygiene kits with toothbrush, toothpaste, towels and soap. The detainees also received sandals, blankets and mattresses.

The program will also notify the detainee’s family to their location and providing scheduled opportunities for visits.

U.S. Army Col. David Demps, MNSTC-I, Ministry of Defense Advisor Team, noted that progress is being made. “While the procedural due process aspects related to broad-based application of executive order #207 have yet to be fully realized, these improvements combined with the humanitarian initiative has had a positive impact on the physical and psychological well being of the detainee population,” Demps said.

“It shows an increased concern for human rights by the MOD and the Iraqi Army Commanders of the detention facilities who completed this distribution to help detainees. The support of MNSTC-I in obtaining these humanitarian supplies is greatly appreciated by the MOD.”



Courtesy Photo

Mattresses and other humanitarian supplies are delivered to Iraqi detainees at the Harithiyah Detention Facility in Baghdad. The Humanitarian Assistance Initiative was coordinated with the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq, Multi-National Forces – Iraq and the Joint Contracting Command – Iraq.

Taji National Maintenance Depot takes giant leap forward

by MNSTC-I J4
Defense Logistics Agency

TAJI, Iraq - The Iraqi Army continues to set the conditions for increased stability throughout the country by improving its strategic logistics base in Taji, Iraq. March 4 marked a significant milestone in the establishment of the Taji National Maintenance Depot when the first M1114 Humvee to be totally rebuilt rolled-out of the 12,000 sq. ft. Main Wheel Assembly & Disassembly facility, also known as the Wheel Depot, at Camp Taji.

U. S. Air Force Lt. Col. William Donovan, Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq’s Program Manager for the Taji National Maintenance Depot, said, “This first rebuilt vehicle, nicknamed ‘Project One’ was completely rebuilt by Iraqi Army mechanics in their third month of a six-month, supervised On-the-Job-Training program at the Maintenance Depot. Today, the Wheel Depot displayed its capability to rebuild, to depot-level standards, an M1114 Humvee that will eventually patrol the highways of Iraq, thus placing the country under a blanket of security. The M1114 rebuild capability has finally reached fruition.”

Vince Sabatino, Program Manager for contractor AGS/AECOM, added, “‘Project One’ is the first vehicle to run through the Wheel Depot’s processes from the staging yard through disassembly, reassembly, inspection, test drive, and return to the staging yard, ready to be reissued back to the Iraqi Army.” Sabatino explained how ‘Project One’ began its journey through the

rebuilding process on Dec. 13, 2008 and was completed, except for inspection, on Feb. 27, 2009.

The engine was completely rebuilt with new parts and tested as zero-hours and zero-miles on the state-of-the-art electronic dynamometers in the facility. The transmission is a zero-hour, zero-mile transmission.

Iraq Army Brig. Gen. Shalal, Taji National Maintenance Depot commander, spoke at the ceremony commemorating the rollout of ‘Project One’. He said, “Today we have proven that the Iraqi Army will be able to sustain its growing fleet of Humvees once the Depot is completed and Coalition forces depart. I am very proud of all the work that went into making ‘Project One’ successful.”

The Taji National Maintenance Depot is scheduled to be completed and transitioned to full Iraqi control on Jan. 01, 2010. The



U.S. Army Photo by Maj. Jimmie Swims

Iraqi Army mechanic performs engine maintenance on a humvee. The soldiers are part of the Taji National Maintenance Depot’s On-the-Job training program.



U.S. Army Photo by Maj. Jimmie Swims

Iraqi Army mechanics reassemble the steering/suspension assembly on a M1114 Humvee being totally rebuilt at the 12,000 sq. ft. Main Wheel Assembly & Disassembly facility at Camp Taji, March 4. The vehicle is being rebuilt by Iraqi Army Soldiers going through the Taji National Maintenance Depot’s On-the-Job training program.

depot development process began in June 2006 with key personnel from Red River and Anniston Army Depots collaborating at the request

of MNSTC-I leadership. Army Materiel Command personnel began the process of developing an Iraqi National Maintenance Depot capability by providing survey and planning teams. The AMC-led teams surveyed the depot site and prepared plans for developing the depot facility building-by-building.

AMC technicians are working hand-in-hand with MNSTC-I personnel and multiple contractors during the entire development process. ‘Project One’ was the result of a combined effort between the Iraqi Army, AGS/AECOM contractors, Army Materiel Command and MNSTC-I personnel.

MNSTC-I J4’s efforts in supporting the Iraqi Army and the Taji National Maintenance Depot represent a vital step towards ensuring Iraq’s self-sufficiency for the future.

Iraqi Civil Defense Recognized on International Civil Defense Day for Progress and Growth

by Ron Holbrook
Ministry of Interior Training Team

BAGHDAD – Iraqi firefighters, who have battled raging oil refinery fires in the middle of the night and rescued children from apartment fires in the last year, were recognized Saturday, March 7 for their dedication and professionalism during a celebration in honor of International Civil Defense Day.

“We are so proud of our Iraqi firefighters. They are here to protect all the people of Iraq,” said Senior Deputy Ministry Adnan Al Asadi of the Ministry of Interior.

“Their hard training, high skill levels and dedication make them an important part of the Interior Ministry and the fight against terrorism and disorder,” Al Asadi said.

Iraqi Maj. Gen. Abdul Rasool, commander of the

Civil Defense Directorate, told the more than 400 gathered for the ceremony at the Ministry of Interior that “your suffering and hard work serves all the people. You are there to protect all the people who need your help. You are an important part of the Baghdad Security Plan and for your hard work you have been recognized with international acclaim.”

Rasool said firefighters are often the first to arrive on the scene of a fire or accident. He noted that since 2003, Iraqi Civil Defense firefighters have extinguished 120,418 fires throughout the country, rescued 2,050 persons, and located and neutralized 148,984 IEDs and other explosive devices, savings thousands of lives.

Baghdad Fire Chief Brig. Gen. Laith Abbas said in the past two years the Iraqi Civil Defense has improved its

professionalism and capabilities tremendously with new equipment and training. He said Iraqi firefighters received training in Bahrain, Oman and even in Japan. He added that there are now more than 450 major pieces of firefighting equipment in Baghdad’s 39 fire stations.

There are more than 11,000 firefighters in Iraq and 16,041 personnel in the entire Iraqi Civil Defense Directorate. A total of 121 firefighters have died in the line of duty since 2003.

“We did our jobs even in times of war,” said Abbas. “We never stopped, because we need to care for all Iraqis, regardless of religion or nationality.”

Col. Arthur Austin, director of Support Forces for Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, said the Coalition “continues to support the Iraqis in expanding their training and in gaining international accreditation.” He said another goal is to expand the Baghdad Fire Training Academy and develop a course in hazardous material handling.

“The Iraqis are moving aggressively to further their training and equipment needs. Being involved in all this and helping the Iraqis progress is very rewarding,” said Austin.

Six years ago, the Iraqi fire departments had mostly outdated equipment. Now all of that has changed thanks to the Coalition and the help of other governments who have both trained and supported the Iraqi firefighters.

Recently, the Iraqi Civil Defense received a new multi-hose river patrol fire boat from the U.S. and 78 new fire trucks from the government of Japan. Since 2003, the U.S. has provided \$235 million worth of new fire trucks and other equipment for Iraq. The U.S. Army Corps

of Engineers’ Gulf Region Division also built the fire training academy in Baghdad. The Army Corps of Engineers also purchased 20 boats for the Iraqis, including 16 Zodiac fire patrol boats and four large fire boats.

Maj. Dave Melendez, a New York City firefighter who is now serving in Baghdad as Director of Public Safety for the Joint Area Support Group in the International Zone, said he was impressed with the progress made by the Iraqi Civil Defense.

“These guys are really dedicated,” Melendez said of the Iraqi firefighters. “During the war and during the insurgency, they continued working. They did not stop working whether they got paid or not.”

“There’s a brotherhood that extends worldwide among firefighters. When I got here, it was like I had never left the firehouse back home.”

Melendez also started the National Fire Training Academy here with two Air Force firefighters from Taji. He plans additional training courses to continue to advance the training of the Iraqi Civil Defense firefighting force.

Two years ago, there was a huge fire on a U.S. Army base, Camp Callahan, which the Iraqis responded to quickly to keep it from spreading.

“If there is a fire and someone is being hurt, it is our job to go and put it out. It doesn’t matter to us if it is Iraqi or U.S. For us, every fire is the same,” said Iraqi firefighter Esam Darwesh.



Photo by Dave Karwoski
Ministry of Interior Training Team

Iraqi firefighters from one of Baghdad’s 39 fire stations train in rescue techniques. Iraqi Civil Defense firefighters were recognized Saturday, March 7 for their dedication and professionalism during a celebration in honor of International Civil Defense Day.

Clean water for a new Iraq

Below, Capt. Eric Currence, commander, Civil Affairs Team 641 shakes hands with Jameel Bashar, the village sheikh's brother, after the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the new water filtration facility in Kalamat Village.

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson

Kalamat Village



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Joe Thompson

Above, a local resident fills a plastic container with purified water at the new water filtration facility in Kalamat Village.

"We want to thank Coalition forces and the Iraqi company that provided the filtration system," said Jameel Bashar, a Kalamat resident. "Now we can drink really good, clean drinking water."

Right, Men from around Dhi Qar province attend a workshop on the operation of a water purifier at camp Dhi Qar, Nasiriyah, Iraq. This machine is provided by the Italian government and is capable of providing several months worth of clean drinking water to a village.

Nasiriyah



U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Brendan Stephens

Tunis



U.S. Navy Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Wendy Wyman

Above, Suhayl Al Rida Hamid Bidan, Babil Provincial Council representative, cuts the ribbon on the renovation of a water treatment facility as Ahmed Kadlim, Iraqi police chief of Tunis, and sheik Mugeer Nasir watch during the dedication ceremony in Tunis, Iraq.

"It is important to help the Iraqi people have sources of clean water. It is also beneficial for the relationship we're trying to build, because it is a sign of trust to them," said 1st Lt. Henry Brewster, scout platoon leader, Company A, 1-63 CAB and a native of Youngstown, Ohio.



Joint Base Balad

U.S. Army Photo by Spc. Brian Barbour

Employees at the Oasis International Waters water purification and bottling plant test for bottle-cap tightness on the production line at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, March 7. The Army saves approximately \$900,000 a month using the six water bottling plants in theater.

Below, Nadhel, an Iraqi engineer, places a tube into a water canal to bring water into a solar powered water purifier during a ceremony attended by local sheiks, villagers and Soldiers of the 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Multi-National Division - Baghdad in Lutifiyah, Feb 28. The water purifier will bring clean potable water to nearly 200 people in the village which is part of the Mahmudiyah Qada.

Photo by Jamie Vernon



Lutifiyah

"This is a great day in Iraq," said Naeem Abaob al-Kaabi, deputy mayor of Baghdad. "The main purpose is to serve the citizens of this country."

First rounds Downrange for Iraqi M1A1 Tank Program

by U.S. Army Maj. Pete Berres and Maj. Adrian Henegan MNSTC-I JHAATT

BESMAYA, Iraq — The Iraqi M1A1 Abrams tank training program recently conducted its first live fire exercise at the Besmaya Combat Training Center.

At 2:45 pm on March 21, 2009, Iraqi Army Sgt. Ashraf Hamid Jasim, a noncommissioned officer from 5th Battalion, 36th Regiment (9th IA Division) fired the first armor-piercing Sabot round from his tank's 120mm main gun. He scored a center of mass direct hit on a moving target at 2,000 meters. "Moving targets are difficult to hit in the T-72 tank. This was a piece of cake because the GPS made the target seem very close. I lazed, got my aiming point and shot," Ashraf said.

Students fired six main gun engagements at both stationary and moving targets on Range 2. Target engagements ranged from 1,100 meters to 2,200 meters. Under the watchful eye of their instructors and Master Gunners from Fort Knox, Ky., the students safely conducted the live fire exercise under both day and night conditions. Additionally as part of the exercise, the students engaged simulated troop targets downrange with the 7.62mm machine gun.

The 42 day course is the initial phase of a program designed to train Iraqi soldiers on the M1A1 tank. Students are from the current Iraqi Armor School and the 9th IA Division. Most of these initial

28 student-instructors will become the cadre assisting in the training of future Iraqi M1A1 tank crews. The Iraqi Army is scheduled to receive the first set of M1A1's in 2010.

Student morale has been high and the soldiers are excited about being part of such an historic event.

The training program includes a comprehensive overview of the M1A1's capabilities, to include bore sighting the main gun, methods of target engagement,

fire commands, and tactics. In addition, the students are taught maintenance procedures and conduct driver's training. "There is no comparison between the T-72 and M1A1" said driver Abbas Abdulmir, when he was asked to compare the driving of the two tanks.

The students completed the live fire gunnery phase of the course on Saturday, March 28 and a graduation ceremony took place on Monday, March 30, 2009.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st. Class Michael Colucci, MNSTC-I PAO

Iraqi soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 34th Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized), lower into their tank to move onto the Bessimayah range, Iraq



U.S. Army Photo by Pfc. Evan Loyd

An American M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank and a crew of Soldiers in the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, and Iraqi army crewmen of a T-72 tank perform checks in preparation for a live fire demonstration

Mol introduced to a bird's eye view

by U. S. Air Force Maj. Kim Layne, MNSTC-I PAO

BAGHDAD – Local Iraqi patrolmen are preparing to enter a house to serve an arrest warrant. They are armed with all the necessary equipment—weapons, body armor, helmets, radios. But what they are missing could mean the difference between life and death, and Ministry of Interior officials were recently briefed on the new capability that will undoubtedly help to save lives.

The senior intelligence advisor to the Iraqi Air Force Air Operations Center, Air Force Capt. Scot Washburn, briefed MoI officials on King Air capabilities at the National Command Center on Mar. 11. While the Ministry of Defense has long utilized this technology, this was the first demonstration to the Ministry of Interior.

“The King Air is the newest and most sophisticated Iraqi Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance platform” and “This platform is coupled with ground stations to allow ground commanders a bird's eye view of the battlespace,” said Capt. Washburn.

Iraq has five aircraft and eight ground stations-- four fixed and four portable.

The mission lengths are between four and six hours. King Air has a five to eight-kilometer range, and the aircraft flies in orbits to ensure the signal to the target is not lost. While there are no weapons onboard the aircraft, the true benefit is the imagery the technology generates.

This capability is effective both day and night. Images can be either infrared or electro-optical. This technology can be used for operations as well as training

scenarios. These real-time relays can later be downloaded to DVD to ensure training situations are not lost.

“This capability can be beneficial to the Minister of Interior Police Operations,” said U.S. Army Col. Benjamin Lukefahr, senior advisor to the National Information and Investigative Agency. “This technology can enhance law enforcement operations by allowing senior leaders and operational centers to communicate directly with the aircraft operators. These imagery systems have the flexibility to respond to requirements and can immediately alter the coverage to ensure they are receiving as much information as possible—to provide direct support to police operations on the ground.”

Since the aircraft and ground stations are owned by the MoD, request for coverage must be made three days prior to the desired coverage date. However, if more time-critical coverage is needed, the MoD can provide coverage in as little as 24 hours.

“This process provides an exceptional example of the interoperability between the MoD and MoI,” said Col. Lukefahr. “By sharing this intelligence technology with MOI, support to Police Operations can be greatly improved.”

The specialized training and new capabilities of the Ministry of Interior with the cooperation of the MOD, enhances the ability of Iraq to implement the Security Agreement that will allow the Iraqi Security Forces to continue to be self-sufficient in exercising security operations throughout Iraq.



U.S. Air Force photo by Maj. Kim Layne, MNSTC-I PAO

Mol officials discuss capabilities offered by the King Air during a live demonstration at the National Command Center

Iraqi Counter-Insurgency Program

by U.S. Army MAJ Glenn Burks, MNSTC-I PAO

TAJI, Iraq – The Iraqi Army, in coordination with Coalition Forces are taking steps to improve the quality of life and conditions in the country by defeating terrorism and gaining populace support.

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Patrick Christian, Senior Advisor Iraqi Counter-Insurgency Academy and the Military Transition Team Chief and his team of U.S. Army advisors, teach members of the Iraqi Army the fundamentals of counter-insurgency. MiTT team members are specialists in areas that range from public administration, engineering of public infrastructure and services; Army special forces, Ranger and Intelligence professions. The team works with the Iraqi Army on matters such as sewer-services, water, electricity, academics, trash, medical services and security, all of which are essential in turning the tide on insurgent activities. SWEAT-MS is a non-lethal means of eradicating terrorism and insurgent activities. Christian and his team have been in advisor roles in various locations to include South and Central America, the Horn of Africa, and the Sudan. “We bring many lessons learned from other missions around the world” said Christian.

The Iraqi Counter-Insurgency program is lead by U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Rex Thurman, Team NCOIC and Operations Sergeant said, “We are doing extraordinary things here at the school.” He recalls a class where a student asked him, “Why aren't we constantly combating the terrorist by stamping them out wherever they hide,” demonstrating the mindset of the students as they begin the training. Thurman continues to say, “It takes most of our students a few weeks to fully understand that defeating the insurgency is continuous, must have lethal capabilities, but more importantly, the key elements are non-lethal such as services and security, and “There is a strong correlation between the number of Iraqi Soldiers trained in civil military operations and the overall drop in violence.”

The drop in violence has been a key element in establishing stability in Iraq and the Security Agreement between the two governments. MiTT's role in training the Iraqi army is critical to MNSTC-I's overall training commitment between the governments of the United States and Iraq in improving the capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces during the critical transition from Coalition to Iraqi-led operations.

Iraqi kids receive new wheelchairs

Multi-National Division – Baghdad PAO

BAGHDAD – Eighty-two Iraqi kids found a new reason to smile, thanks to efforts from Iraqi National Police officers and U.S. Paratroopers in the Rusafa district of Baghdad March 23.

Dubbed Operation Enhanced Mobility, officers from 2nd NP Division and Soldiers from 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division presented the new wheelchairs to disabled children during a humanitarian effort in the northeast section of the city.

The wheelchairs, donated by Wheelchairs for Iraqi Kids, are adjustable and designed for growing children. Officials said that unlike low quality wheelchairs, which often do not fit a person correctly, these wheelchairs will adjust with the child's growth, thus allowing the chairs to be used for several years.

Brad Blausner, founder of Wheelchairs for Iraqi Kids, said individuals and organizations in the United States donated the funding that made the delivery of pediatric wheelchairs possible.

More than half of the wheelchairs donated during the day were funded by 10-year-old Ben Werdegar, of Woodside Calif. Ben heard about the program online in February 2008 and decided he wanted to help the children of Iraq. "Ben decided he would play his guitar and raise money for the Iraqi children on the streets of San Francisco," said Blausner. "Since that time, Ben has played most weekends for more than 52 weeks; raising over \$13,000 to help the children of Iraq. He deserves a huge amount of recognition for his commitment and dedication in helping disabled Iraqi kids."

Blausner founded the organization in 2005 at the request of military officials in the city of Mosul after Soldiers observed children dragging themselves on the ground due to birth defects such as cerebral palsy and spina bifida, and has since given away over 800 wheelchairs all over Iraq.

The wheelchairs, designed by ROC Wheels in Bozeman, Mont., are designed for rough terrain. Each wheelchair is valued at \$3,500 and funded entirely through donations. The U.S. government

ships the wheelchairs to Blausner overseas for free.

"This was an excellent opportunity to show the population how the government of Iraq and the Iraqi Security Forces are working together to provide for the people they represent and protect," said Capt. Jesse Stewart, the commander for Troop C, 5th Battalion, 73rd Cavalry Regiment. Blausner hopes he can start to manufacture the wheelchairs in Iraq in order to help more disabled children and help the local economy. Blausner said that making the chairs locally is important because shipping them from the United States and getting them on the ground in Iraq can take around four to six months.

"I can only distribute a few hundred wheelchairs per year because of limited manufacturing capacity," said the Dallas native. "This is why it's so important to get manufacturing going locally if I'm really going to make significant progress in Iraq in helping disabled kids get the wheelchairs they need."

Blausner added his goal is to produce 50,000 wheelchairs over the next five years to give to needy children in the Baghdad area. The long-term goal is to have every disabled child in Iraq provided with a free pediatric wheelchair, regardless of their ability to pay.

The combined forces plan to donate additional wheelchairs to needy children in the weeks to come.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Isaac Wendt
Capt. Jesse Stewart, commander of Troop C, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, carries a disabled Iraqi girl in the Rusafa District of eastern Baghdad. The girl's mother carried her daughter for two miles before almost collapsing near the wheelchair distribution site.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Isaac Wendt

National Police officers assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 8th NP Brigade, 2nd NP Division unload new wheelchairs so they could be donated to disabled Iraqi children in the Rusafa District of eastern Baghdad.

Opening Ceremony of the Tactical Commanders Course

by U.S. Army Maj. Glenn E. Burks,
MNSTC-I PAO

TAJI, Iraq— On March 22, the Iraqi Army held the opening ceremony for the new Battalion and Brigade Command Level Training Course. The course is designed to provide commanders and prospective commanders with a “toolkit” for success that addresses unit operations, staff functions, administrative suspenses, and training all of which will be compulsory for newly designated battalion and brigade commanders in the Iraqi Army.

U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Steven Salazar, deputy commanding general, Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq, Joint Headquarters Army Advisory Training Team addressed a group of commanders set to begin the Iraqi Army’s version of the Battalion/Brigade level pre-command course. Salazar stated, “understanding, visualizing, describing,

and directing are the commander’s key components in conducting full spectrum operations”;

The Iraqi Army, Staff Maj. Gen. Sameer, Commandant of Schools, told the group of nominees, “you will participate in this course of the commanders, you will conduct formations, hold staff meetings, coordinate your under commanders.” He maintained that it is important to grasp the materials from the course and use the skills for all areas. Sameer highlighted areas in operations, administration, logistics and training, “We must update our proficiency in tactical affairs and operational affairs in the field of fighting the insurgency and securing our country”.

The school in Taji is the primary training center for the Iraqi Army. The school trains Soldiers in the Iraqi Army in Logistics, Maintenance, Administration, the Iraqi Counter-Insurgency Program,



U.S. Air Force Photo by Capt Tommy Avilucea,
MNSTC-I PAO

Iraqi commanders attend the opening ceremony of the Tactical Commanders Course

and Leadership courses on various levels.

Trauma training prepares Iraqis for medical service

by U.S. Army Maj. Bob Owen, MNSTC-I PAO

BAGHDAD – Fourteen members of the Iraqi Army under the Ministry of Defense graduated from the Ibn Sina Trauma Training Class sponsored by the 10th Combat Support Hospital and the MoD Surgeon General of Iraq here on Monday, March 30, 2009.

Speaking to the new graduates first in Arabic and then in English, Iraqi Army Maj. Gen. Samir, the MoD surgeon general of Iraq, thanked everyone for their efforts in the course and stressed the importance of taking care of and respecting all patients regardless of ethnicity and nationality.

“I have told my soldiers and civilians who are practicing medicine that Arabic and American cultures are different in many ways. Americans take care of all wounded and sick soldiers who have traveled a long way from their families to protect and defend Iraq. These soldiers deserve our respect and dignity. I want Iraqi soldiers who have this new trauma training to incorporate this idea into the way they do their jobs,” said Samir.

The Trauma Training Program is eight weeks long and consists of didactic and hands-on instruction, written exams, mass casualty exercises and clinical rotations, according to U.S. Army Col.

Rafael DeJesus, 10th Combat Support Hospital commander, “Topics range from patient assessment, anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, trauma management to patient recovery;” he added.

“I’m confident that when the time arises, each of these new graduates of the Trauma Training Program will apply the lessons they have learned here”, said DeJesus. “No greater call is there than those that take care of a fellow human being.”

Also speaking to the graduates and visitors attending was one of the graduates, Iraqi Army 2nd Lt. Feras Hameed.

“We have learned a lot of things that will help us in our daily lives, we learned how to deal with serious injuries, bleeding, trauma and circulation as well as head, chest, abdomen and other injuries and how to assess the seriousness of the injury. Thank you to the trainers and fellow colleagues at the hospital. We are ready to work with you,” Hameed said.

This training will help to set a single standard and professionalize the medical personnel within the Iraqi Army. This is an important part of the Security Agreement between the United States and Iraq.



Army Maj. Gen. Samir, the MoD Surgeon General of Iraq, addresses the new graduates of the Trauma Training Program sponsored by the 10th Combat Support Hospital and the Iraqi MoD Surgeon General’s office at IBN SINA hospital

U.S. Army Photo by Maj. Bob Owen, MNSTC-I PAO

Iraqi Special Operations Forces Soldiers Perfect Convoy Skills

by U.S. Army Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma

BAGHDAD – Iraqi special operations forces are entrusted with skills of effectively protecting convoys after graduating from the convoy security course, March 7.

The ceremony held at a local firing range graduated 37 ISOF soldiers, who are now trained to protect and defend all manner of convoys operated by the elite unit.

This is the 14th group of graduates to go through the Iraqi-led convoy security course. According to a corporal with the 3rd Battalion, the training required both physical and mental discipline throughout.

“Being fit is important to be able to carry out our physically demanding missions,” said the 3rd Battalion medic. “Because most of our training is executed with live rounds, we also had to be mindful, careful [and] precise at all times.”

The ISOF support battalion conducted the month-long course and focused on two phases of training: convoy and personnel security.

With oversight from the ISOF

instructors, the month of training was filled with shooting, conducting security and reacting to wounded soldiers.

The soldiers also polished their marksmanship fundamentals and mastered firing their weapons from a variety of shooting positions. They perfected firing their weapons from the knee, standing and from a moving vehicle.

The soldiers’ training was also aimed at making them more proficient in the maintenance and handling of an assortment of weapons.

In addition, each soldier familiarized themselves with the roles and responsibilities of each man in the humvee. This enables every soldier to fill in at a moment’s notice any position in the vehicle whenever the situation dictates.

The 20-year-old medic in the class said he was “100 percent” confident in his ability to take on the many dangerous situations that Iraqi soldiers in tactical convoys may find themselves

on the streets of Baghdad.

“The pride you get from being in uniform stems from knowing you are protecting your family [and] yourself by fighting for your country,” said another graduate. “It’s a beautiful feeling.”

Others in the audience agreed.

“There is no doubt that this class has proven it is capable of getting the mission done,” said a coalition forces senior enlisted advisor.



U.S. Army Photo by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma

An Iraqi special operations forces soldier carries his fellow soldier during a simulated “down-soldier” drill during an ISOF convoy security course graduation, March 7. During the demonstration, they displayed their expertise by firing from their knee, standing and even from a moving vehicle.



U.S. Army Photo by Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma

A group of Iraqi special operations forces soldiers celebrate after an ISOF convoy security course graduation in Baghdad, Iraq, March 7.

MoD officers graduate from Public Affairs Course

by Noah Miller, Ministry of Defense PAO

BAGHDAD - The Government of Iraq continues to make investments in human capital in order to increase the capabilities of ministerial staff and build effective government institutions. The Ministerial Training Development Center (MTDC) is at the forefront of the endeavor to raise professional standards of ministerial staff and nurture a new generation of skilled administrators and leaders. "Education, such as that provided to Iraqi officials at the MTDC, is a force multiplier in the capacity building of the Government of Iraq" according to U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Frank Helmick, Commanding General of MNSTC-I. The MTDC currently offers 64 different professional development courses and seven different levels of promotion qualification courses taught to civilian and military personnel in Arabic.

The MTDC has grown rapidly since it began operations with eight Iraqi instructors in October 2007. Since then, over 4,000 Iraqi government officials have benefited from the MTDC's professional development and civil service reform initiatives.

The MTDC's modern and innovative professional training program is organized in five departments which offer courses in Management, Program Management, International Security, Communications

and Rule of Law. "MNSTC-I's embedded instructor mentoring program is a critical key in alleviating the effects of 35 years of Iraqi isolation from the international community," according to Dr. Cassidy Craft of the Ministry of Defense Advisory Team.

The brisk training pace continues in 2009, with the MTDC setting new organizational records for number of training events held and number of officials attending training session conducted in the first quarter of the year. According to Mr. Wa'el Abbas, the MTDC director, "our goal is to provide professional development opportunities to 2,800 officials, and provide courses for over 1,000 others in accordance with the Ministry of Defense's promotion policy in 2009."

In addition to the Ministry of Defense (MoD), ten security-related government institutions have enrolled staff at the MTDC in 2009, with the Iraqi National Intelligence Service becoming the latest entity to send students. All types of ministries, however, are encouraged to utilize the MTDC and officials from the Ministry of Finance have attended finance and budgeting courses.

To cope with the persistently high demand for professional education, the number of Iraqi instructors has increased to 20 in 2009. Although they are aided by six coalition instructors, Iraqi MTDC instructors have taught or co-taught 70% of the 1,143 government officials participating in training events at the MTDC so far

this year. "The MTDC provides modern training that orients us towards the future of Iraq, rather than the past," explains a Staff Major General from the Ministry of Defense.

The MTDC also serves as the home of international training via the MNSTC-I "School of the Advisor," which has already trained 229 advisors, with the majority assigned to MNSTC-I MoD-AT, MoI-TT, JHQ-AT, INTEL-TT, INCTF-TT and CAATT. This training initiative prepares incoming advisors to adjust quickly to their role as the coalition's interlocutor with high level officials in the Government of Iraq. Attendees of the recently held seventh Advisor course rated all 18 course sections as either 'Useful' or 'Very Useful'. Sections focusing on Iraqi society and culture, language, and daily concerns as well as leadership forums continue to receive the highest marks. The International Committee of the Red Cross and the US Department of Energy's Cooperative Border Security Program also use the MTDC for outreach activities to the Iraqi government's security ministries. Finally, the MoD has instituted a series of "experience exchanges," where coalition advisors teach Iraqi officials about their own governments, civil service and military experiences, and ways of conducting business. 22 Iraqi MoD officials have attended this program at the MTDC.

National police train to protect Iraq's people, resources

by Multi-National Division South East PAO

BASRA, Iraq – The 2nd National Police Battalion, Basra Brigade patrols the roads and pipelines that move Iraq's oil resources daily, and on March 11 at their Rumaylah headquarters, they trained to improve their police officer skills.

Their day started with running as part of their physical conditioning program prior to getting into the day's training, which included effective search of detainees and evidence collection.

Searching detainees and collecting evidence at the scene can be essential for safety and for establishing culpability of those who would steal or disrupt the peace in the NP's area of responsibility.

The mission of the 2nd NP Battalion is to protect the Iraqi oil infrastructure

and secure the highways in their sector, which spreads to as far north as the Euphrates river and southwest of the city of Al Zubayr. This includes protecting oil for in-country use and oil for export that converges at Ramaylah and goes on to Al Faw for international exportation.

"We were the Fourth Region Commandos for the Department of Border Enforcement, but were reflagged last April after the Basrah Operation (Operation Charge of the Knights)," said Col. Abdu Al Kareem, the commanding officer of the 2nd NP's.

He said that the 2nd NPs have stopped vehicles from stealing oil from the Iraqi national oil company and are preventing oil pipeline sabotage.

Kareem said that his 2nd NPs, referred to as "Shurta" in Arabic,

also ensure to the safety of people on highways through checkpoints.

Most of the 2nd NP's are from Basrah, and have a vested interest in protecting the region in which they live.

"They run the gambit of everyday operations to mission specific operations as well as performing civil military operations," said U.S. Army Capt. Michael Langan, the primary U.S. National Police Transition Team instructor for the detainee search class. "Once they are done here they will send them out to their check points and then apply what they have learned," said Langan.

During training, the 2nd NP's march and sing a cadence "ahl-u-ldaar, hadeed wa Naar," which means the national police are strong and able to defend their country.

Commemorative Items returned to GoI

BAGHDAD – Members of the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq J4 Logistics conducted a joint inventory and returned commemorative items back to the Government of Iraq on March 27.

Commemorative items have been in coalition custody since 2003 for safeguard. They were stored at the Taji National Depot and recently shipped to Abu Ghraib Warehouse complex. Items were inventoried, catalogued, and cleaned to make ready for the transfer. It was decided it was the right time to transfer the custody of these historical weapons to the people of Iraq.

U.S. Army Lt. Col. William Willis, Deputy Director Material Management Division, Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq said, "We will conduct a joint inventory with the GoI and these items will be returned to them to place in museums."

U.S. Army Maj. Franco Nieves, Operation Officer Material Management Division, Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq commented, "The final goal is for these weapons to be displayed in a special museum with Saddam Hussein's artifacts. These weapons will be displayed for all the people of Iraq, future generations and visitors from of all over the world to admire. The history of these weapons will be heard years and years after Coalition forces departs from Iraq. "

The items were collected during operations conducted throughout the country over the last several years. The items returned consisted of commemorative weapons, paintings, furniture, statues, and miscellaneous items held by the previous regime. Turning over these commemorative items signifies the improvement of the security of Iraq. Being able to display the artifacts in its own museums directly relates to the improvements the Coalition and Iraqis have made.

Cleaning Kirkuk, one street at a time

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq - Once thought to be one of the most beautiful, cleanest cities in Iraq, Kirkuk is another step closer to regaining that reputation each week.

Iraqi policemen, firefighters and members of the Kirkuk city council participated in a new program aimed at cleaning up one street each week in downtown Kirkuk, March 8.

"Kirkuk once won awards for being the cleanest, most beautiful city in Iraq," said Maj. David Chiarenza, the operations officers for 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

This program will help return the city to its former beauty and improve living conditions, said Chiarenza.

The volunteers took to the streets and showed the residents of Kirkuk they were there for the benefit of the city.

"Volunteers were downtown showing the citizens they are there to help them in multiple ways," said 1st Sgt. Derrick Webb, 1st Sgt. for Battery B, 3rd Bn., 82nd FA Regt. "The pickup day was important because it demonstrates they can take pride in their country and their communities."

Soldiers from 3rd 82nd FA Regt., who operate in Kirkuk city, also assisted with the trash pickup.

"We brought trash bags, brooms, shovels and Soldiers to help them out," said Webb.

Cleaner streets improve the living conditions by creating a better environment and making it more difficult for insurgents to operate.

"Trash on the street poses a health hazard and provides a hiding place but for bombs," Chiarenza said. "Initiated by the Ministry of the Interior, the trash pickup days will take place Thursday or Friday of each week."

Cooperation between civil service personnel and Coalition forces help beautify the city as volunteers continue to try bringing their city back to its former beauty, Chiarenza continued.

Samarra's improving electrical grid brightening lives

FORWARD OPERATING BASE BRASSFIELD-MORA, SAMARRA, Iraq – Iraqi Security Forces met with U.S. Army Soldiers and members of the Provincial Reconstruction Team recently to assess the current state of electric utility service throughout Samarra.

Director General of Electricity for Samarra, Mr. Hameed, escorted ISF, members of the Salah ad-Din PRT

and Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, on a tour of various power substations in the city. Hameed and his team have made continual progress in upgrading Samarra's power grid over the last several months.

"Though there have been some setbacks in progress," said Hameed, "the overall outlook for completion of several electrical projects in Samarra is very positive." Next to clean drinking water, the people of Samarra mark access to electricity as their most important concern.

Working closely with Hameed, an Iraqi contractor named Basam and key leaders of the PRT have developed a large-scale, long-term plan for providing power to nearly all of Samarra's citizens. Basam estimates it would take more than 200 megawatts of electricity to power the entire city. Current output levels reside just below half that number.

"An electrical project can be something as simple as installing new transformers and running new power lines, or as complex as upgrading or developing entire power substations, said Mr. Mike Craft, Salah ad-Din PRT leader. "No matter what the size of the project," he continued, "every small step helps." Hundreds of meters of electrical cable have been run to neighborhoods all around the city in recent months to improve access to electricity.

In addition to localized construction, work is underway to connect several of Samarra's power substations to a nearly completed mega station known as the Jalasiya Power Plant. The total power output from Jalasiya, once generating at full capacity, is estimated to be 340 megawatts. A substantial portion of that power will be allotted to the city of Samarra. Testing has already begun at the power plant, and Jalasiya should be fully operational by mid-summer.

Basra farmers receive tractors, generators

BASRA Iraq – Basra farmers associations received 40 tractors and four generators in Ad Dayr at Camp Sa'ad during a ceremony March 7.

The ceremony, which benefitted the Al Qurna, Al Medina, Shatt Al Arab and Abu Al Khaseeb farmers associations, represents one of 10 projects funded by

U.S. commander's emergency response program money for the Basra province agricultural program. The total cost for the projects is \$10 million.

"It used to cost us 75,000 dinars per day for one of these tractors, but after today it should only cost us for the fuel and the driver. I would like to thank (Multi-National Force) for that," said Abd Al Rahman Khalid, a Basra farmer, through an interpreter.

Other agricultural projects that are part of this program reach as far south as Safwan and as far north as Al Qurna and include green houses, irrigation systems and other necessary equipment to support the agricultural redevelopment in Basra.

Sheik Abu Qasay, the head of Basrah Province farmers association, Sayad Galy Muttar, Basrah Provincial Reconstruction Council Chairman and British Maj. Gen. Andy Salmon, the General Officer in Command of Multi-National Division Southeast all spoke at the ceremony.

"This is a wonderful example of a truly joint project where we work together as partners, listen to peoples needs and come together for the people of Iraq and your agricultural associations," said Salmon.

Farming is a traditional industry for southern Iraq and at one time employed up to 50 percent of Basra province residents. Many of the area's farmers currently rely on hand tools due to a shortage of agricultural machinery and power.

This investment in tractors and generators is expected to improve efficiency and the yield of local farmers, who are not presently able to compete with imported agricultural goods from neighboring countries.

The farmers have had little support over the last 25 years but, in the past, Basra was a very productive farming area that produced up to 70 percent of Iraq's farm products said British Royal Navy Lt. Alan Paton, a Civil Military Operations project officer with Multi-National Division Southeast.

"The idea was if we can help improve their efficiency by providing greenhouses, tractors, irrigation systems then we might be able to make them a little more productive, perhaps potentially stop the flow of farmers away from an industry that has been in southern Iraq for many years," Paton said.

General Transportation Regiment demonstrates capabilities delivering Repair Parts.

TAJI, Iraq – The Iraqi Army achieved a crucial milestone on their path toward self-sufficiency on March 2, when the General Transportation Regiment conducted its most complex mission so far, delivery to six Location Command Level III Maintenance shops in one day. Three Junior Officers carried out the missions that went to Kirkush in the north, Haabiniyah and Al Asad, as well as Rustamiyah, Numiniyah and Talil in the South.

The General Transportation Regiment (GTR) is based in Camp Taji and is the only one of its kind in the Iraqi Army to date. The GTR is made up of 625 Soldiers organized into seven companies. Four of these companies are truck companies capable of carrying everything from Soldiers to armored vehicles. The GTR has its own maintenance company to provide support and its own security company to provide gun truck escort for any mission, any time.

This important first step is a positive move toward a constant, continuous mission flow for the GTR, which should average at least 35 to 40 missions per month. As the capabilities of the GTR continue to grow, the need for civilian contracts to move equipment and supplies will shrink. The mission conducted in March saved the American taxpayer approximately \$120,000 USD in civilian contractor fees.

Umm Qasr security improves through training

UMM QSAR, Iraq – The international traveler hall at the port of Umm Qasr became a safer place with the graduation of thirty three members of its security force from a building security course March 5.

"We are working to make our security team as good as any other security team in ports of entry throughout the world," said Mr. Affaq Fouzi Jameel, the travel hall manager at Umm Qasr's port of entry traveler hall through an interpreter.

The training focused on developing effective and professional person and baggage searching techniques with the travel halls security guards, who are the first people to be seen by travelers at the port of Umm Qasr.

The training was requested by Jameel, as one of his identified areas for overall improvement. The techniques taught in the course were chosen to meet the training needs of the travel hall personnel and are a product of trial and error by U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The course was led by Christopher McBride, a Supervisory Customs and Border Protection Officer at the Area Port of Jacksonville, Florida, who instructed the participants through the techniques that have served him through his career.

The class teaches them to look for any kind of contraband with the goal of building security. He added an example that occurred a few days prior when the travel hall security force prevented unauthorized birds from being brought into Iraq.

He emphasized what to look for and the importance of knowing human behavior in their jobs, so that they can effectively decide which people to conduct a full search of before entering the traveler hall.

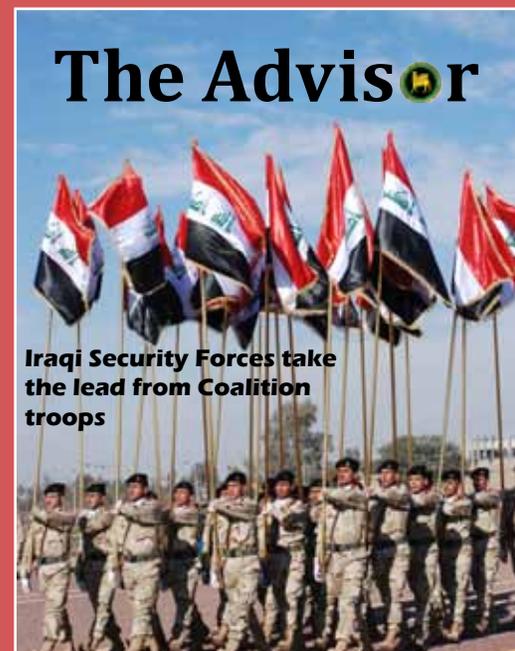
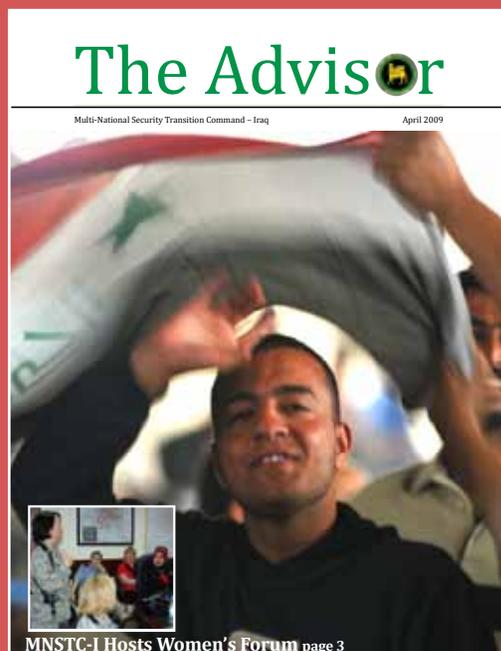
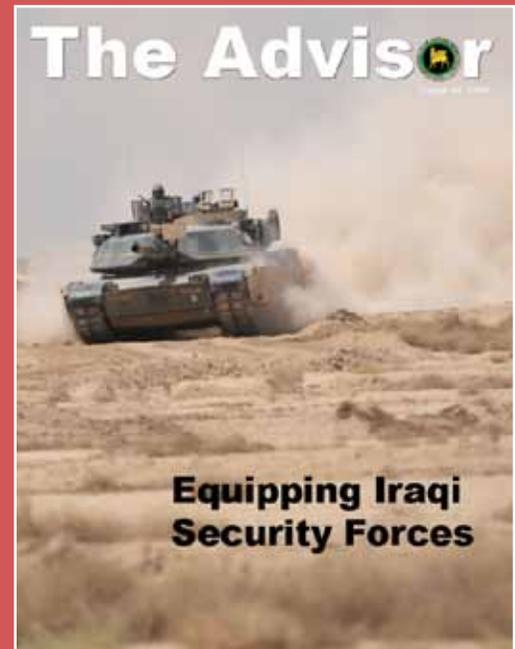
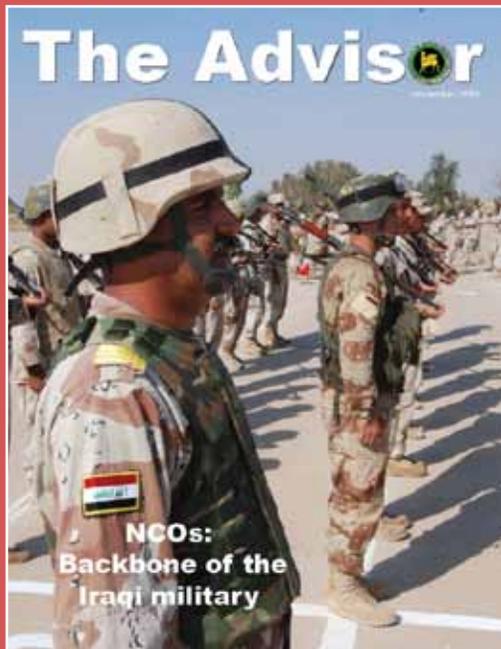
"It is encouraging to be back in this region after having been gone for two years and to see the advancement, the changes for the better that have come," McBride said. "As a taxpayer, as a civilian back home, it's encouraging to see that we are making a difference and that the Iraqi's are taking charge of their future and pretty soon we will have a strong democratic ally in this region."

U.S. Army Maj. Timothy Sean Tyson, Commander of the port of entrée transition team, who are augmented by McBride and Richard Rodriguez, a contract instructor and retired U.S. Customs officer, said that the class graduation is the completion of the first phase for the joint travel hall security plan with Jameel.

The second phase is for training implementation at each of the entrée points to the travel hall. This will include diligent follow through with the training techniques provided during the building security course.

The end state will be a combination of using contemporary security technology with additional training added to this week's course for a proficient and professional travel hall security team.

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