



DANGER FORWARD



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Karbala agricultural buzz:

Beekeeping class and other initiatives create economic independence for locals

By Spc. Samuel Soza
367th MPAD, USD-S PAO

HUSSINYAH – A class that teaches local Iraqis how to raise and care for honey bees graduated its first students in Hussinyah, March 1.

Members of the U.S. State Department’s Karbala Provincial Reconstruction Team, who had collaborated on the beekeeping course, were there for the graduation.

“Our [Karbala PRT] mission is to assist the Iraqis with capacity building,” said Sgt. Fatimah Muhammad, from Chicago, Ill., the 308th Civil Affairs Battalion rule-of-law noncommissioned officer in charge.

Part of that mission includes teaching women job skills that will help them participate in society and be economically independent, she said. Muhammad is embedded with the Karbala PRT as the women’s initiatives coordinator.

The graduating class of 20 students was primarily comprised of widows, said Muhammad.

The class taught practical skills, such as how to harvest honey, as well as theories about beekeeping, known as apiculture.



Photo by Spc. Samuel Soza

Beehives are lined up for the graduation ceremony of the first class to graduate from the beekeeping course at the local Agricultural Extension of the Agricultural Community College in Hussinyah, Mar 1. The graduates were given five beehives and the equipment needed to harvest honey. About 80 percent of the class members were widows.

The goal was to teach skills that would benefit more than just the class members, Muhammad said.

“It’s a skill set they can teach others,” she said, “They can take it to their communities and empower other women and help them earn an income off of it.”

There are plans to extend the course to three other areas in the Karbala Province and expand the classes to as many as 30 students.

At the graduation, the women were given a certificate of completion, five

hives – known as apiaries – with bees, and equipment to harvest the honey, including protective masks and gloves.

“It’s a low-cost program that will be appreciated,” said John Kincannon, of Chaska, Minn., the Karbala PRT team leader.

Muhammad also addressed the graduates and asked them how the class went and what other classes they would like to see conducted.

They suggested classes in poultry farm-

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Iraqis run Ops center, p. 5



Efficient irrigation, p. 8



Air cell runs the show, p.13

Danger Six sends

Positive changes are evident across Iraq's nine southern provinces, and these changes are signs of a stronger Iraq. The recently completed elections are the clearest example of what Iraq can be and what the Iraqi people are willing to do to attain the goal. Congratulations to all of you, and to our Iraqi partners, on this great achievement.

This is the effect we desire, but there's still much work to be done and the gains we've made in recent years can still be lost.

You are here in Iraq fulfilling an important duty, and we cannot afford to lose perspective. Lack of perspective can lead to complacency – and complacency is deadly. If you find yourself asking the question, "Why am I still here?"; consider these five reasons:

1. The signed Security Agreement between the U.S. and GoI directs us to be here for the mutual benefit of both countries – both countries want us here;
2. We support the PRTs who are working to enable an improved Iraqi government;
3. Assistance is still needed to support the security effort, both internally and externally;
4. Iraq's economy is starting to improve – our help is needed to continue stimulation;
5. We're actively and responsibly reducing our presence – and that takes time.

Maintain your focus and discipline as we continue our transition over the coming months. We need each individual to give his or her very best in a team effort to depart Iraq with success and honor. From general to private, it is everyone's mission to guard against a contented mindset that could open the door, unguarded, to the many hazards that will still be with us.

Someone once said that as leaders we must be the flame that burns the frayed edges of an issue. If we don't, eventually the issue becomes unraveled. I agree with this analogy, and submit to you that this is really EVERY Soldier's responsibility. Stay focused, do the mission. Take care of your teammates and yourself. We need you and we are counting on you.

DUTY FIRST!



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Major General, U.S. Army
Commanding



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DANGER FORWARD

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- 17th FIB
- 4th BCT, 1st Armd. Div.
- 12th CAB
- 3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div.
- 367th MPAD



Personal safety: Don't be a soft target



By Gus Walker

USD-S Safety and Occupational Health Manager

It is imperative that you protect yourself at all times. You are “not in Kansas anymore,” but at war, and must be watchful of your surroundings. Don't get a false sense of security; maintain situational awareness at all times, because your life depends on it. I've listed some safety tips using the Composite Risk Management process that will help you to mitigate and manage risks.

Identify the hazard:

- What can hurt you? Stay alert and stay alive!

Assess the hazard:

- How severe will it hurt you? If you think it's unsafe don't risk it.

Develop controls:

- Keep your room/CHU door locked at all times.
- Secure your weapon while in the dining facility and gym. Remember that any weapon left unprotected can be the one used against us.
- Travel, even when running for PT, in groups or pairs. You are less likely to be a target if you have someone with you, so use the buddy system.
- Travel in well-lit areas at night. Dark and isolated areas provide cover and concealment for the enemy.
- Travel on well-traveled routes. If you're off the beaten path and realize you're alone, you are in a potentially dangerous situation.
- Know your surroundings. Keep your head on the swivel and your eyes open. Look for suspicious activity and always know where you can find safety (bunker, cover, exit door, etc...)
- Report suspicious activity to your chain of command or G2. By piecing together small pieces of information, we can uncover plots against us.
- Alternate your daily routine and route of travel. Don't become predictable in your daily activities; you never know whose watching. Make yourself a difficult target.
- Vary your habits frequently and don't establish a pattern.
- Carry a flashlight at night. If lighting is inadequate in your direction of travel, regardless of distance, use a flashlight.

Implement controls:

- Be disciplined in your action, vigilant by maintaining situational awareness, and discuss the control measures routinely with peers.

Supervise and evaluate:

- You are in control of your situation. Don't hesitate to make on-the-spot corrections and ask yourself routinely, are these controls working. Make adjustments if necessary or develop additional control measures to ensure your SAFETY at all times.

Remember, Duty First – Safety Always

This and other great information to help with risk mitigation can be found at: <http://1idportal.1id.army.smil.mil/SpecialStaff/DivisionSafety/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Have a suggestion to make *Danger Forward* better? Send a SIPR email to our suggestion box: 1IDPAO SUGGESTIONBOX@1id.army.smil.mil

This week in Army history

This week in the Big Red One's history

March 18, 1969: The Big Red One joined with the 25th Infantry Division and 1st Cavalry Division in a joint operation northwest of Lai Khe, Vietnam called Atlas Wedge.

This week in OIF history

March 20, 2003: At 5:34 AM Baghdad time (9:34 p.m., March 19 EST), the military invasion of Iraq began.

This week in 3rd Infantry Division history

March 15, 1945: The 3rd Infantry Division struck against Siegfried Line positions south of Zweibrücken, Germany. The Division smashed through the defenses and crossed the Rhine, March 26, 1945

Iraqi canine unit helps secure national elections

By Sgt. Ben Hutto
3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf Div PAO

COS ENDEAVOR – As his U.S. counterparts walked toward him, the commander of the Iraqi canine unit broke into a smile and held out his hand.

After a few introductory handshakes, 2nd Lt. Akeel, from the Iraqi National Police in the city of Najaf, ushered his guests from 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, into his office.

“We have food for you,” Akeel said. “While we wait, we can discuss business. You are safe here. Relax and enjoy yourselves.”

Not wanting to turn down the commander’s hospitality, the three U.S. Soldiers, led by 1st Lt. Will Whitfield, a platoon leader in Company C, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, sat down and removed their helmets.

They began to ask Akeel about his security plan for the upcoming elections.

With the only Iraqi canine unit in the province, Akeel’s team would play an important part in keeping voters safe from insurgent bombs.

As plates full of bread, lamb and vegetables came in, the Soldiers groaned with grins on their faces.

“It’s too much,” said Staff Sgt. Danielle Talton, a military police officer assigned to the 543rd Military Police Battalion. “You don’t need to do all this for us.”

Undeterred, Akeel insisted they eat and relax.

Finally, as the group enjoyed the hospitality of their host, they began to talk about business.

Talton and Whitfield asked specific questions about how the dogs would be used, but indicated that Akeel’s plan appeared solid.

“We have more dogs coming for the elections,” said Akeel. “We will be focusing on several areas, but we can cover all the polling sites now.”

Whitfield asked Akeel what his platoon could do to assist.

“Election day will be a very busy day for



Photo by Sgt. Ben Hutto

Annie, an Iraqi bomb-sniffing dog, plays with her toy after finding explosives during a demonstration at an INP base in Najaf, Feb. 27. Soldiers from Co. C, 1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt., 3rd HBCT, were present to view the demonstration and offer their insights on how their counterparts could employ the unit’s dogs in the coming months.

us,” Akeel responded. “We would like to do more training with you so we can be better prepared.”

Akeel explained that he was happy with how his dogs are operating. They found several rockets in Najaf’s old city and a potential suicide bomber a few days after. Still, he is certain that more training from his U.S. friends is never a bad thing.

“My wish is for my men to be more like the American Soldiers,” he said. “I like working with you and learning how you do things.”



Photo by Sgt. Ben Hutto

Dianna, an Iraqi bomb-sniffing dog, searches for explosives during a demonstration at an INP base in Najaf, Feb. 27. Soldiers from Co. C, 1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt., 3rd HBCT, were present to view the demonstration and offer their insights.

Whitfield took the compliment with a smile and assured Akeel that setting up a training session would be no problem.

“We will help out any way we can,” he said.

Getting the search dog unit was not an easy task, Akeel said. He has only had it for about two years, but he is confident he can build on it and hopes to eventually have 25 dogs.

“I would like to be the canine manager for all of Iraq,” he said. “They showed us how to use dogs in 2008 and I knew it was something the police could use. I’m glad to have the chance to use it. I had to fight very hard to get this unit.”

After lunch, Akeel took his guests out to the training yard to show them a demonstration involving two of his best dogs.

The two dogs found every explosive that was hidden in the yard. Concealed in boxes, in tall grass and inside the frames of motorcycles, the disguised explosives were no match for the dog’s acute sense of smell.

“They are good aren’t they?” said Akeel.

Whitfield smiled at his counterpart’s pride in his animals.

“Yeah, they did really good,” he said. “You should be proud.”

For more from 3rd HBCT, visit www.facebook.com/3hbct3id

Iraqi ops center helps secure future

By Staff Sgt. Natalie Hedrick
3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

COS ECHO – The success of the March 7 national elections for five southern provinces rested on the Mid-Euphrates Operations Center, located at Contingency Operating Station Echo.

The MEOC, which is co-located with the 8th Iraqi Army Division headquarters in Diwaniyah Province, is the monitoring station for operations and intelligence assets for the provinces of Babil, Karbala, Najaf, Diwaniyah and Wasit. The 8th IA Division is the military unit responsible for securing those provinces.

Initially, the center was assembled to facilitate the 8th IA Div. and 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division's efforts in supporting and securing the elections through March 7. Leaders are now expecting its role to continue even now that the elections are over.

"The American's role was just to set it up," said Sgt. 1st Class Danny Waldrip, a battle noncommissioned officer at the MEOC. "Also, to advise and assist the Iraqis and improve the overall operations so that it suits their purposes so they can ultimately take the MEOC over from the U.S."

The MEOC is made up of an operations center, an intelligence fusion cell and a communications department. Each section is comprised of Soldiers and leaders from both the 3rd HBCT and the 8th IA Div., with the Iraqis in the lead.

"This is the first true Iraqi-run election," Waldrip said. "Americans really didn't have that much to do with it."

Waldrip explained how the Iraqi Soldiers



Photo by Staff Sgt. Natalie Hedrick
Staff Sgt. Edward Nowicki, intelligence fusion cell noncommissioned officer, and 2nd Lt. Mustafa Mahdi, intelligence fusion cell chief, discuss locations on a map at the MEOC March 5, at COS Echo.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Natalie Hedrick
Lt. Col. Nabras, 8th IA Div., proudly displays his purple finger March 5, at the MEOC at COS Echo, indicating he voted during the March 4 special needs elections.

and leaders working in the operations center would monitor when ballots were delivered to the different polling sites and track statistics.

Second Lt. Mustafa Mahdi, intelligence fusion chief, said his cell's main mission is to gather intelligence information.

"Some people want to make chaos for the elections and spread rumors about the elections and the political figures," he said through a translator. "We need to know about that so we can stop it."

Staff Sgt. Edward Nowicki, 3rd HBCT intelligence fusion NCO, explained that the fusion cell is combining multiple sources of intelligence and will be able to paint a complete picture and make an assessment of what can be expected to happen. He said the information gathered and the assessments made are then taken to both Col. Peter Jones, commander for the 3rd HBCT, and staff Lt. Gen. Othman, commander for the 8th IA Div.

"We are combining our assets," Nowicki said. "They are out on the ground and we have the technology."

Mustafa explained that, by working with Soldiers of the 3rd HBCT, he and his Soldiers and leaders are able to use assets they have never used before.

"It has been perfect working with the American Soldiers," Mustafa said. "They have given us many assets that are new to us like overhead surveillance and geospatial

software."

Nowicki also explained that his Iraqi counterparts are familiar with the local culture, and that familiarity helps tremendously in gathering intelligence.

"They can just go out on the street or make one phone call and get the information," he said. "What would be a much slower and complicated process for me, they can get with one phone call."

Sgt. Mohammed Salim, MEOC Communications sergeant with the 8th IA Div., voted March 4 in the special needs elections. The day was open specifically for members of the Iraqi Security Forces, hospitals and prisoners who would be unable to vote in the March 7 general elections.

"I was not nervous," Mohammed said through a translator. "It was very normal. These elections were something special because the list was open and the voters could see who they were voting for."

"From 2005 until now the Iraqi people learned a lot about the public figures," he said. "We are more educated now to choose the right person for the position. The votes are more accurate now."

Waldrip explained that the March 4 special needs elections were successful and every voter was accounted for.

The MEOC was the hub for election security and operations. But for people like Nowicki and Waldrip, it was also a learning experience they will never forget.

"For me this is the most rewarding part of the tour," Nowicki said, "being able to work here and to understand the differences between them and us helps us better support them."

"We came out here with a good package," Waldrip said. "We are managing well. I just wish I knew more Arabic."

Waldrip said he didn't know what to expect before coming out to work in the MEOC. He explained that he had worked in the brigade's tactical operations center most of his deployed military career.

"This is the closest I've come to talking with Iraqis, even if it's through a translator," he said. "This is a learning experience for me. It's something that will stay with me for a long time."

For more from 3rd HBCT, visit www.facebook.com/3hbct3id

Troopers have towering presence on border

By Sgt. Cody Harding
1st Inf. Div., USD-S PAO

COL SHOCKER – The Iraqi Department of Border Enforcement, the Government of Iraq’s primary force for border security and the interdiction of smuggling, continues to keep an eye on the border with Iran.

They pursue and catch smugglers who attempt to cross the border with weapons, drugs or other means of harming the Iraqi people.

With help from A Troop, 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, the Iraqi border guards of 3rd Battalion, 7th Brigade, Department of Border Enforcement, have added a new watchtower along Iraq’s border with Iran. The new tower will help trained observers crack down on smuggling and reduce the presence of insurgents.

Sgt. Steven Glatfelter, a noncommissioned officer with 1st Platoon “Assassin” Troop, said that working with the Iraqi DBE is a good mission for the unit.

“It’s like working with any Iraqis,” he said. “There’s challenges like language,



Photo by Sgt. Cody Harding
Col. Paul English (right), and Capt. Travis Trammell, both 3rd Sqdn, 1st Cav. Regt., 3rd HBCT, speak to an Iraqi DBE major before inspecting DBE tower sites Feb. 25. A Troop works closely with the DBE, providing assistance to help stop illegal movement on the border with Iran.

but they’re eager to learn and they like working with us. They’re very friendly and engaging.”

The two-story tower, placed on the boundary between the 7th Brigade and

8th Brigade of the DBE, was placed in the area due to intelligence suggesting the area to be a possible smuggling route, said Capt. Travis Trammell, Assassin Troop commander.

The experience of working with the DBE is a new one for Assassin Troop, who have worked with the Iraqi Police and Army in the past, but not with the DBE, said Trammell.

“The tactics and techniques of the DBE are somewhat foreign to the troops”, he said. “But it has given them an opportunity to learn and they’ve enjoyed it. It’s an interesting setup that the DBE have and it’s something to see.”

Glatfelter, who is from Kinzers, Pa., said that he has seen substantial improvement in the border guards since his two previous tours in Iraq in 2005 and 2007.

“First time we were here, they were just following our lead”, he said. “It was a fledgling military force we were working with, and now they run the show. We are here now as an advise and assist brigade and that’s what we’re doing.”



Photo by Sgt. Cody Harding
Col. Paul English, left, goes over tower emplacement sites with 1st Lt. Frederick Do, both 3rd Sqdn, 1st Cav. Regt., 3rd HBCT, while inspecting a tower site on the Iraqi border with Iran Feb. 25. The towers are being placed to help the Iraqi DBE crack down on illegal smuggling.

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Soldiers develop strong bonds with counterparts

By Sgt. Ben Hutto

3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

COS ENDEAVOR – Iraq’s security forces are in the lead, dedicated to and invested in the ongoing stability of their nation and ensuring the security of their U.S. partners, but the fewer U.S. troops still in the country assisting the Iraqi forces still have an essential job to do.

For the Soldiers of Company C, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Divi-

For Penttila, working with his Iraqi partners means more than just waiting by the phone for a call for help. It means meeting with them before there’s an emergency and understanding what support U.S. forces can provide to keep the Iraqi forces from needing help.

“Personal relationships are the deciding factor in making things happen here,” said Penttila. “When you can establish a rapport with a respected leader, a lot of roadblocks disappear and you can get things done.”

assets and set us up for success,” he said.

Maj. Stefan Lockton, team chief for the 30th MiTT, has worked with the 30th Iraqi Army Div. since June, and has been impressed with their professionalism and open-mindedness towards their U.S. counterparts.

“They are an extremely capable fighting force,” he said. “They have been working to secure Najaf longer than we have. Our main effort has been to provide them with better training in areas like medical training and humvee maintenance.”

Lt. Col. Salah, commander of the 3rd Bn., 30th IA Div., spoke highly of the assistance given.

“American forces provided us with excellent training,” he said. “My unit was the first unit to be given M-16 rifles from the Americans. It was something we were all very proud of. They have been invaluable in helping with our operations and our training.”

Salah also takes great pride in providing security for his U.S. partners.

“We work very hard to secure the roads and make sure the routes are safe,” he said. “We are very capable of not only taking care of our people, but our American friends.”

Lockton and Penttila appreciate the concern and support.

“They take a lot of pride in keeping us safe,” said Lockton. “It is funny how the tables have turned from a few years ago, but they take our well-being very seriously. They view us as their guest in their country and get very upset if any of our Soldiers are hurt.”

Penttila said he looks forward to working with his counterparts and further developing their excellent friendship.

“I consider it a peer-to-peer relationship,” he said. “We are not working with an inferior force. I give Lt. Col. Salah the same amount of respect I would an American lieutenant colonel. It is a military courtesy he has earned.”

With that mutual respect and trust in one another, both forces hope to continue working to ensure the citizens of Najaf are safe.



Photo by Sgt. Ben Hutto

Maj. Stefan Lockton, team chief for the 30th MiTT, speaks with Lt. Col. Salah, commander of the 3rd Bn., 30th IA Div., during a meeting at the 3rd Bn.’s headquarters in Najaf, Feb. 23. Lockton, who has worked with 30th IA Div. since June, helps schedule training with ISF leaders to ensure the ISF can operate more efficiently.

sion, assisting their Iraqi security partners doesn’t mean less work on their part.

Despite not being in the lead of security operations, Co. C is still playing a vital role in Najaf, home to one of the most holy shrines of the Shi’a faith, said their commander, Capt. Neil Penttila.

Prior to the March 7 elections, he outlined the role his Soldiers would play in assisting civilian elements, such as the U.S. State Department’s Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

“We will have liaisons throughout our area of operations during the upcoming elections, we will be escorting U.N. and PRT officials to the polling sites, sharing any of our assets with our Iraqi partners, and planning on doing more joint patrols to counter the IED [improvised explosive device] threat” said Penttila. “We are still working hard, even if we aren’t always out front.”

Penttila has seen first-hand that a business-like approach isn’t always the best way to accomplish your mission when dealing with Iraqi leaders.

“A lot of leaders come in with a set of canned answers and expect things to go a certain way,” he said. “I’ve found that absolute directness isn’t always the best way.”

In response, Penttila has adjusted his approach and has seen positive results.

“I have often found that friendly conversations over a cup of tea yield more results than mutable, formal Key Leader Engagements,” he said. “It reaches the point where, you get the answers you are looking for from them without even having to ask.”

Penttila and Co. C have also had the advantage of working with other units who have developed a relationship with the Iraqi’s prior to their arrival.

“Our [Military Transition Team] and [Stability Transition Team] have been great

For more from 3rd HBCT, visit www.facebook.com/3hbct3id

Drip irrigation holds promise

By Spc. Samuel Soza
367th MPAD, USD-S PAO

QASIM – Even as the U.S. hands more and more responsibility for the future of Iraq back to the Iraqi people, projects continue to ensure that the people are set up for success in every possible way.

As part of these efforts, Soldiers, from 3rd Platoon, Company C, 2nd Brigade, 69th Armor Regiment, and the 1411th Civil Affairs Co., met with Babil Province Director General of Agriculture, Hassan Housoui, Feb 14, to assess the progress of drip irrigation projects funded by micro-grants in the province.

“The event went very well and a positive message was sent to the local people,” said Capt. Timothy Smith, fire support officer for the 2nd Bn., 69th AR, “We want to get the word out and let them know what [U.S. forces] are doing in their areas.”

Also on hand at the location east of Qasim were Hameed Hussain, project manager and contractor from the Debana Co., and reporters from the al-Sumaralah newspaper in Badr.

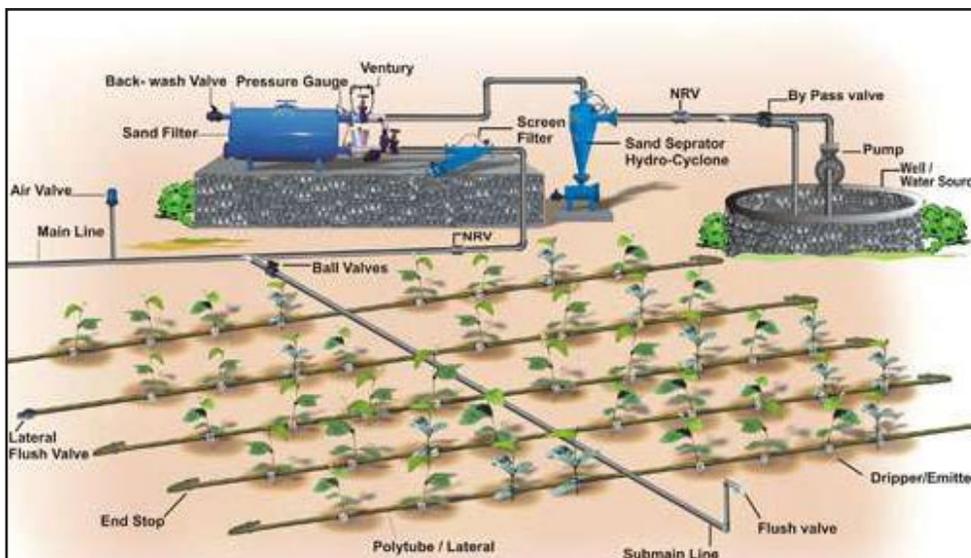


Photo 1st Lt. Joe Correa
The first drip irrigation system installed in Babil Province by Co. C, 2nd Bde., 69th AR and the 1411th CA Co., stands ready to boost production in the arid region. Drip irrigation uses water and fertilizer efficiently by dripping water slowly onto the roots of plants.



Photo 1st Lt. Joe Correa
First Lt. Jonathan D. Roland, a platoon leader with Co. C, 2nd Bde., 69th AR, and Sgt. Jose Anglero, 1411th CA Co., meet with officials to give local farmers the first of approximately 100 drip irrigation systems.

How drip irrigation works



Initially, the civil affairs unit made assessments of the area to determine where assistance was most needed, and proceeded to address those needs accordingly.

The agricultural base is a key area of the province’s economy that officials have concentrated on developing. Many challenges present themselves in the arid region, not the least of which is finding ways to stretch a little water as far as possible.

One method that offers great promise in Babil – and Iraq as a whole – is drip irrigation. The method involves a system that uses water and fertilizer efficiently by dripping water slowly onto the roots of plants.

Using little water, it allows farmers to grow vegetables year-round.

“We’ve done a bunch of these across our AO [area of operation],” said Smith, “About a hundred or so.”

In the next two months, the Soldiers will conduct follow-up assessments to ensure that the project effectively increases crop production.

“Spring is coming,” Smith said, “so we put these in just in time.”

The projects are not only effective, but are aiding in the right areas, said Smith.

“We’re helping people out who need it,” he said.

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Supporting Small Government in Iraq

By 1st Lt. Adam Marquis
Lt. j.g. Christopher Deluzio
TF Pathfinder

COB ADDER – While considerable attention has been devoted to Iraqi reconstruction at the national and provincial levels, U.S. forces are leveraging their resources to advise and assist local Iraqi governmental bodies as well.

Such an effort is underway in the southern province of Dhi Qar. By combining the expertise of the Army's civil affairs teams and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to create a District Government Support Team, a host of governing issues have been addressed, helping to strengthen the democratic process at the city and village levels.

Soldiers assigned to Company C, 401st Civil Affairs Battalion, Task Force Pathfinder, are leading the DGST to reinforce local political effectiveness as part of the Army's first advise and assist brigade. They are a specialized group, trained to act as liaisons with host nation governmental, tribal and business leaders. They have extensive cultural and language training, often making them the first line of engagement between the military and their Iraqi counterparts.

Through their efforts and with advisory help from the U.S. State Department's Provincial Reconstruction Teams, civil affairs teams operating in Dhi Qar have built relationships with district councils.

First Lt. Adam Thomas, of Niagara Falls, N.Y., is the team leader of Civil Affairs Team 111, which operates in Dhi Qar Province.

"District councils throughout the province jumped at the opportunity to work with us," Thomas said. "They were extremely interested in learning how to forecast for future budgets and improve the delivery of services to their citizens."

During such a meeting with the Nasiriyah District Council in Dhi Qar, the DGST asked a round of questions aimed at understanding how the council operates.

The team was impressed with how enthusiastic the council members were in discussing their role, with one member saying they are accustomed to that question due to the local people's lack of familiarity with democracy.

What started as a learning experience for the DGST then shifted to identifying where project nominations have met road blocks. The council members described how currently all project nominations are small and originate at the sub-districts, and then are forwarded up to the provincial council.

The provincial council then re-prioritizes them, based in-part on their budget from Baghdad.



Photo by Spc. Aaron Brooks
First Lt. Adam Marquis, from Buffalo, N.Y., TF Pathfinder, talks with locals during a project site assessment in Dhi Qar Province.



Photo by Spc. Aaron Brooks
First Lt. Adam Thomas, of Niagara Falls, N.Y., and the District Government Support Team meet with the Al Fajir District Council to discuss ways to improve their chances of getting reconstruction projects approved.

Unfortunately for many sub-districts, the provincial council tends to choose projects with the greatest chance to affect a large number of people, preventing smaller projects from being approved.

Since provincial council support of U.S. reconstruction projects is a requirement in order to guarantee Iraqi government support and sustainment, the DGST leveraged their knowledge to recommend various courses of action, also offering their services for any future obstacles.

From the perspective of USAID, en-

gaging local government at the district and sub-district level is a very practical and productive way to involve and empower them to better serve the communities they represent.

Efforts from the DGST will continue to lay the groundwork for an effective local government that has the potential to strengthen democratic values and improve the lives of countless Iraqis.

For more from 4th BCT, visit
<http://www.facebook.com/4BCT1AD>

US partners assist Najaf's growth

By Sgt. Ben Hutto
3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

COS ENDEAVOR – Military leaders, diplomats, politicians, influential businessmen and shaykhs came together for an informal dinner to celebrate President's Day at Contingency Operating Station Endeavor, Feb. 24.

The Najaf Provincial Reconstruction Team invited key leaders in the province to attend a face-to-face meeting with their U.S. counterparts in a relaxed setting.

"It was a nice reception with a good theme," said Angus Simmons, team leader for the Najaf PRT. "We had a good cross-section of Najaf society attend. It was really just a good chance to sit down and get to know one another as friends. In my experience, personal relationships lead to great cooperation."

According to Lt. Col. Jon Lukens, the PRT's deputy team leader, the province of Najaf benefits from these relationships in a variety of ways. Lukens is a member of the 304th Civil Affairs Brigade and currently attached to the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

As U.S. diplomats have focused on helping Iraq improve its agricultural base, its ability to draw tourists and its educational system, their U.S. military partners have assisted their Iraqi counterparts with training and security.

Najaf recently opened the largest civilian-operated airport in Iraq. Operating 24-hours a day, the airport is now supporting at least 27 flights daily. During the recent holiday of Arba'een, over 20,000 religious pilgrims flew in to the airport for the holiday.

Religious holidays, such as Arba'een, and places like the Wadi al-Salam – "The Valley of Peace" – cemetery, the world's largest cemetery, present Najaf with unique tourism opportunities.

With a major airport, the city of Najaf is expanding its tourism potential by promoting the construction of more hotels and other places for tourists to stay.

"This area is one of the most important religious sites for the Shi'a faith," said Lukens. "Now that the country has opened

up, it should have no problem attracting [tourists]. With the airport operational, it is set up perfectly to accommodate the large numbers of people that want to come here."

In addition to promoting tourism, the Najaf PRT and the 3rd HBCT have been working with the Najaf agricultural departments to help promote farming with drip irrigation and green house projects.

"We are providing training and micro-grants to ensure that the farmers know how to maximize these systems and get the best crops," said Lukens.

Soldiers assigned to the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd HBCT, have been instrumental in helping the Najaf PRT process the applications for these grants.

"We are totally synched in with the 3rd



Photo by Maj. Stefan Lockton

Following a dinner at COS Endeavor, a small outpost outside of Najaf, Brig. Gen. Ricky Gibbs, deputy commanding general for maneuver, USD-S, shakes hands with Shaykh Ali Abdul Razaq Al-Alsadi, a local tribal leader, Feb. 24. The informal dinner, held to celebrate President's Day, allowed military leaders like Gibbs to meet with civilian leaders and hear what their needs are.



Photo by Maj. Stefan Lockton

Before a dinner at COS Endeavor, Iraq, a small outpost outside of Najaf, Lt. Col. Kenneth J. Harvey (left), the commander of the 1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt., 3rd HBCT, speaks with Col. Murad, a brigade commander in the 30th Iraqi Army Div., Feb. 24. The informal dinner, held to celebrate President's Day, allowed U.S. military leaders, such as Harvey, to speak with their Iraqi counterparts in an informal setting.

Brigade and they have supported what we are doing in many ways," said Simmons. "They have done a wonderful job of helping us distribute CERP [Commander's Emergency Response Program] funds, and providing us with security and transportation."

In the coming weeks, the Najaf PRT is hoping to help open three health clinics in the area, distribute more small business grants, aid Najaf's largest college, Kufa University, with the construction of several buildings on its campus and expand the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) Center's ability to train and test English teachers and students.

With all this in mind, Simmons is excited about the future for Najaf.

"As a city, Najaf is very open and welcoming to people," he said. "The citizens see themselves as the center of religious pilgrimage, learning, business and commerce. We just hope to help them with that."

As the leaders of Najaf plan their expansion, their U.S. counterparts are hoping that the informal President's Day gathering will be another step forward.

For more from 3rd HBCT, visit www.facebook.com/3hbct3id

Iraqi-run national elections rousing success



Photos by Spc. Samuel Soza
Iraqi Security Forces maintain security at a Karbala, Iraq, polling site during the national elections, March 7. U.S. and Iraqi forces patrolled Karbala city and escorted the Karbala Provincial Reconstruction Team and international observer teams between election sites. The Karbala PRT and observer teams assisted polling sites with organization and ensured a fair voting environment for Iraqi citizens.

'Gunslingers' host COB Basra Strongman contest

By Sgt. Neil W. McCabe
17th FiB PAO

COB BASRA – Needing to bench press 315 pounds one time in the final “bench-off” for the title at the Gunslinger Strongman Competition, Spc. Travis E. Dobson, of Long Beach, Calif., pumped out an extra four repetitions, March 1.

“He is a strong Soldier, full of stamina,” said 1st Sgt. Derek Q. Bazile, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion “Gunslingers,” 377th Field Artillery Regiment, an element of the 17th Fires

the competitors.

One Soldier, who wanted to compete but could not because of another obligation, was Sgt. Maj. Garret L. Spencer, the 1st Bn., 377th FAR operations sergeant major, Bazile said. Spencer was there to lend support at the contest opening and demonstrated the perfect bench press technique for the competitors.

“He’ll compete next time. I guarantee it,” Bazile said.

It is also guaranteed that the battalion sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel S. Moriarty, and the battery executive

until all but one had dropped out.

“The bench press is normally the dominant factor in the gym. Plus, this being the month of the NFL Combine, we decided to go with the bench press at 225. We started at 225, because that is the weight most NFL scouts are looking for, and it’s the strength that the Army bases our strength off of,” Bazile said.

In the 225-pound bench press for the 180-pound class, Spc. Nealy D. Edwards won with 12 repetitions, in the 200-pound class, Dobson won with 20 repetitions, and in the 240-pound class, Staff Sgt. Jay P. Gawronski won with 28 repetitions.

After declaring Dobson the overall winner, Bazile awarded him the grand prize: a camcorder. Edwards, 17th FiB, and Gawronski, from Baraboo, Wis. – who won in their own weight classes – each received an Army digital camouflage-patterned 17th FiB backpack, and all competitors received Gunslinger tee-shirts.

During the squat competition, each competitor starts with a barbell on the back of his neck and along his shoulders, “squats” from a standing position, and then returns to a standing position.

“A Soldier needs to use his legs,” Bazile said.

The winners of the squat event – Edwards, Dobson and Gawronski – each executed a single rep at 465 pounds.

“I raised it up to 495, but nobody could do it, so we had to dial it down,” Bazile said.

For the dead lift, the competitor lifts the barbell from a hunched start and curls it over his knees as he stands up straight.

“It’s all about form and keeping your back straight and using your knees,” Bazile said. “Knees to hip, then rock the back out.”

The winners of the dead lift – also Edwards, Dobson and Gawronski – were the night’s Strongman “Troika”. But, these were not easy victories.

In the 180-pound class, Spc. Bobby G. Fowler, also of the 1st Bn., 377th FAR,

See **GUNSLINGERS**, page 16



Photo by Sgt. Neil W. McCabe

First Sgt. Derrick Bazile, 1st Bn., 377th FAR, the judge and organizer of the Gunslinger Strongman Competition, held at COB Basra, March 1, watches to see if Pfc. Matthew A. Moses fully extends on this 225-pound bench press. The Gunslingers, an element of the 17th FiB, are the only air assault battalion in its branch.

Brigade deployed to Contingency Operating Base Basra. The competition was held at the Gunslinger Gym at Camp Allenby, the battalion’s compound.

Bazile said Dobson, who played semi-pro football before joining the Army, is a Soldier in his battery.

“Originally we only had five people sign up,” Bazile, a Dayton, Ohio native, said. “But, in the end, we had 16 competitors – we had some walk-ons. But, that is good.” More than 25 Soldiers and civilians attended the event to watch and cheer-on

officer, 1st Lt. Daniel S. Hunt, would participate in the next competition, which he expects to host in April, he said.

There were three primary events, the bench press, the squat and the dead lift, and the Soldiers were broken up into the three weight classes: under 180 pounds, under 200 pounds and under 240 pounds.

The fourth and final event was the bench-off, which, like the squat and the dead lift, was a one-off elimination match forcing competitors to execute a single repetition at each ascending weight level

TROOPS IN FOCUS

Danger Forward

March 15, Issue 7

Cavalrymen run air operation in southern Iraq

By 1st Lt. Juan Torres Jr.
2nd Sqdn., 13th Cav Regt (4BCT-1AD)

COS HUNTER – As the engines of approaching helicopters roar in the distance, flight operations at the Task Force Saber air cell at Contingency Operating Station Hunter once again prepare to receive aircraft that support troop movements all across southern Iraq.

“Controlling our aerial assets around Hunter is a 24-hour-a-day job that requires continuous coordination, including the human resources section, when arranging troop movement,” said Sgt. Eric Johnson, a fire support specialist and member of the TF Saber air cell assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Squadron, 13th Cavalry Regiment, based in Sonoma, Calif.

The 1st Infantry Division’s “Big Red Express,” cycles a steady flow of Soldiers through COS Hunter and beyond. Ever-adapting, this invaluable air asset calls for the synchronization of both the air cell and human resources section to facilitate passenger and cargo movement.

Last-minute changes and cancellations due to weather and mechanical issues require flexibility and constant communication with pilots, as well as brigade-level air cells. Keeping immediate lines of communication open with aircraft is the responsibility of Johnson and his Soldiers.

“It’s so important to maintain constant communication in order to manage multiple pieces of ‘air’ coming in for landing – as well as for those operating in our vicinity,” said Johnson.

Commonly referred to as “air de-confliction,” the air cell has the responsibility of managing simultaneous flights, including passenger movement, reconnaissance and refueling missions.

“We’ve had every piece of ‘air’ possible flying at one time. It can get kind of messy up there at times,” said Johnson referring to the CH-47 Chinooks, UH-60 Black Hawks, C-130 planes and Shadow



Photo by 1st Lt. Juan Torres Jr.

Soldiers set foot on COS Hunter after exiting CH-47 Chinooks from the 1st Inf. Div.’s “Big Red Express,” Feb. 24, before receiving directions to the passenger marshalling area from Staff Sgt. Armando Ortiz, HHT, 2nd Sqdn., 13th Cav. Regt., a human resources specialist from Ponce, Puerto Rico.

UAVs that fly around southern Maysan Province.

On the ground, confirming approaching flight times with the air cell, is Staff Sgt. Armando Ortiz, a human resources specialist from Ponce, Puerto Rico, assigned



Photo by 1st Lt. Juan Torres Jr.

Second Sqdn., 13th Cav. Regt. Soldiers exit a pair of CH-47 Chinook helicopters in the distance as others wait to board the 1st Inf. Div.’s “Big Red Express” on COS Hunter, Feb. 24.

to Headquarters and Headquarters Troop.

“Once the birds are on the ground, I control the flow of incoming and outgoing personnel,” said Ortiz.

Ortiz and others from the human resources section are responsible for ensuring that personnel are properly manifested on future flights and for receiving Soldiers as they land.

“As soon as the birds arrive, the flight crew chiefs and I discuss the number of seats available and try to put as many Soldiers on as possible,” said Ortiz.

Unfortunately, all the planning, with confirmed times and dates, is ultimately at the mercy of weather.

“In bad weather, when it looks like flights are cancelled, I am in contact with [Task Force Saber] air in order to have the latest updates on weather and adjusted flight times,” said Ortiz. “I never want to see Soldiers stranded.”

Though sometimes taken for granted, Soldiers on the ground such as Johnson are continuously coordinating daily air operations at COS Hunter, providing quick and convenient transit across southern Iraq.

For more from 4th BCT, visit
<http://www.facebook.com/4BCT1AD>

Dojo in the desert:

Martial arts master trains Soldiers and civilians

By Sgt. Cody Harding
1st Inf. Div., USD-S PAO

COL SHOCKER – Training in the martial arts takes dedication, time and the will to continue to grow and learn. It can take years of patient study and practice to gain a black belt, a sign of respect and knowledge. Even then, the martial artist continues to learn and grow, eventually attaining the proficiency to share his knowledge with others.

Within a military career, the demands can become even more involved. The student must balance a career with training and ensure success in both. Overseas deployments and the responsibilities of being a Soldier only add to the challenge.



Photo by Sgt. Cody Harding

A Ugandan guard employed by Saber International takes the 'Cat Stance' with Maj. Rob Boone's instruction during a karate class at COL Shocker. Boone is a 3rd-degree black belt in Matsubayashi Shorin-ryu, and uses his 12 years of experience to train anyone willing to come to the class.



Photo by Sgt. Cody Harding

Maj. Rob Boone, right, instructs Staff Sgt. William Morris on proper stance during a karate class at COL Shocker. Boone, who has been involved in karate for over 12 years, uses the class to help relieve stress and pass on self defense skills to Soldiers, Iraqis and the Ugandan guards employed by Saber International to protect the COL.

For Maj. Rob Boone, A Troop, 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, a liaison for the 1st Commando Battalion, Iraqi Department of Border Enforcement, the challenge of being an instructor in Matsubayashi Shorin-Ryu, a style of traditional karate, and an infantry officer working for the Stability Transition Team at Contingency Operating Location Shocker, serves to help him improve himself.

"It's a unique challenge, because I have Iraqis, Ugandans and Americans in my class," said Boone. "You don't see a lot of formalities in here, because, with these guys, they have to deal with formalities all day. So, it's a relaxed atmosphere."

Boone, from Spring, Texas, finds enjoyment in helping teach the Soldiers and workers at COL Shocker, which also acts as a way to relieve the stress of operations. In the class, he teaches the students ways to defend themselves when unarmed and runs them through katas, a set of motions designed to improve balance and familiarity.

"We'll spend time hitting bags, kicking bags and working on self-defense", he said. "Katas are a great way to relieve stress and exercise. You can work up a sweat doing these moves back and forth."

Though he had learned Kung-fu as a child, Boone's beginning in karate went back to his time as a Ranger School instructor in Florida, which was where he learned about his current discipline. From there, he progressed in the art, finally gaining his black belt in 2005. He is now a 3rd-degree black belt.

"You never finish training in karate," said Boone. "Once you get your black belt, it starts. It's like being a college graduate, and you have to apply what you learned those past four years."

Being able to teach others is a relief for Boone, who has trained the Iraqi Commandos as well as the Ugandan guards employed by Saber International to protect the COL and U.S. Soldiers.

"We have people on the camp who are black belts in Jujitsu and Judo and who also have a knowledge of Kempo" he said. "So we have a lot of background here. It's good to tap into that experience, balance, and share it with the Iraqis."

As for his future plans, Boone will continue to progress in karate even after he leaves the military, he said.

For more from USD-S PAO, visit www.facebook.com/1stInfantryDivision

Basketball and ballots: Soldiers reflect on national elections during downtime

By Staff Sgt. Natalie Hedrick
3rd HBCT, 3rd Inf Div

COS ECHO – Soldiers do many things to prepare for missions, but as important to the success of the mission as all the planning is, the moments spent not thinking about the mission can be just as essential. Leading up to the March 7, national elections in Iraq, some 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division Soldiers took some time to relax and reflect.

Trading their combat boots for sneakers, Soldiers of the Scout Platoon, Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd HBCT, gathered March 6 at Contingency Operating Station Echo to let off steam on the basketball court.

They weren't thinking about the mission at that point. They weren't thinking about the elections that were going to happen just on the other side of the barriers that separate COS Echo from Iraq and all its culture.

"It's good to be in shape," said Spc. Andrew Cook, a scout in the unit. "It's good cardio and it's fun to run around and get crazy."

"It helps keep our morale up," added

Spc. Robert Flanagan, also in the platoon. "It keeps our mind off of being here. We are doing something a little different than our mission."

The mission, which expands beyond their platoon to the entire 3rd HBCT, is to advise and assist the Iraqi Security Forces who protect and serve the people of Iraq. The brigade is responsible for assisting in five provinces across southern Iraq. The scout platoon operates in the province of Diwaniyah.

In the last few months, the ISF has held center court.

"We try to stay out of their way," Cook said.

"We just let them handle their business," Flanagan added. "We pretty much just keep a lookout and help them if they need help."

"We can tell we are part of something important even though we don't really see it," said Pfc. Matthew Mischler, the platoon medic.

The next day, Soldiers across Iraq would be supporting the ISF in keeping the national elections safe for voters. These would be the first elections since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in

which the Iraqi government and ISF were completely in the lead.

"It's gonna be cool when my kids are in school and they come home and say they are learning about Iraq," said Pfc. Julian Smith, another scout in the platoon. "I could tell them that I was a part of that. I will have stories to tell."

The scouts took a moment to put themselves in the shoes of the local citizens. In their own words, they talked of pride, hope and freedom.

"I would be happy that these elections are taking place," Flanagan said. "That means we are pulling away from U.S. forces and running our own show."

"I would be proud," Cook said. "It would mean the U.S. would be on their way out of the country. The Iraqi people have been through a lot and for them to be able to vote for who they want to run their country is great."

"I would have a sense of national pride," Mischner said.

After a pause, the scouts continued to reflect on the elections.

"Hopefully they will choose the right people to make the right decisions for this country," Flanagan said.

He added that, if he were part of the ISF, he would be confident in his unit but would also question whether things might start to revert back to the way they were once U.S. forces left the country.

Although they could speculate what it would be like to be citizens of Iraq, they aren't. They are U.S. Soldiers, part of the 1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt. They remain focused on their mission.

"There is so much going on and all of the units play such a crucial part," Mischler said. "We have been really lucky we haven't seen anything serious. The combat medic badge is good and all, but if I never get it, I'll be happy."

So, until their next mission, the scout platoon will play basketball, getting away from the stresses of the deployment but never forgetting why they're in Iraq.

And while they're in Iraq, the Soldiers remember that loved ones are the key players in their lives.

"Laura, I love you," Cook added for his wife back home. "I miss you."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Natalie Hedrick

Spc. Andrew Cook, Scout Plt., HHC, 1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt., 3rd HBCT, goes up for two points during a pick-up game, March 6, at COS Echo.

For more from 3rd HBCT, visit
www.facebook.com/3hbct3id

GUNSLINGERS, from page 13

was chasing Edwards, a Houston native, all night.

In the dead lift, he came the closest to beating Edwards, matching the winner's single rep of 360 pounds, but unable to pull 365.

"I will be back. I know what to do now," Fowler said.

The event is a good way for Soldiers to learn their own limitations, Bazile said.

"During a deployment, a lot of Soldiers use weightlifting to pass the time and enhance their strength," he said. "Events like this one tell the Soldiers where they are compared to their goals and aspirations."

In April, three new events will be included, Bazile said. In addition to bench pressing on an incline and decline bench,

there will be a straight-bar curling event.

Although the event was open to all Soldiers, the first sergeant said he could not convince any of the female Soldiers he sees at the gym to compete this time.

"There were three or four female Soldiers who told me they will compete in the next competition," he said.

In the post-competition crosstalk, Edwards put out that, because Dobson was in a heavier weight class, he was staking his own title claim: "Pound-for-pound, I am the strongest man."

It will all be resolved in April when the next competition is held, Bazile said. Until then, Dobson is the strongest man on COB Basra.

"He took on all comers," Bazile said.

For more from 17th FiB, visit <http://www.lewis.army.mil/17FA/>



Photo by Sgt. Neil W. McCabe
Spc. Nealy D. Edwards (right), 1st Bn., 377th FAR, hands Spc. Bobby G. Fowler, also 1st Bn., straps to use in the dead lift event during the Gunslinger Strongman competition held at COB Basra, March 1. Edwards beat Fowler in their weight class when he could not match Edward's 365-pound dead lift.

BUZZ, from page 1

ing and sewing.

The course was taught at the Agricultural Extension, a local branch of the local Agricultural Community College.

Karbala, one of the nine provinces making up United States Division – South, is not the first to look to beekeeping as a way to help residents help themselves.

"The beekeeping project has a larger history that has been going on in USD-S for a while," said Kincannon.

Success with similar projects in Basra Province led to the efforts in Karbala, Kincannon said.

Like with other industries in Iraq, the hope is to revive a business that was once thriving in this, the heart of the Fertile Crescent.

"Iraq had a strong honey industry and they're trying to rebuild it," said Muhammad.

Now that they have finished the course, the next challenge that awaits the new "apiarists" is selling the honey they produce. For this, they will be looking to the local markets and neighboring Babil Province, which has a higher demand for honey and even houses a honey factory.

The Karbala Beekeeping Association and the Agricultural Extension were important partners in creating the class and in teaching the skills, said Muhammad.

"They are the subject matter experts," she said.

The PRT also procured financial support through the use of Quick Release Funds by submitting a proposal that explained the capacity-building potential of the program.

Beekeeping is just one of several projects that the Karbala PRT and the college are involved in together.

Another project is focused on creating an agriculture lab that will be used to help with the problem of soil salinity, a dilemma for the region that dates back to the time of Hammurabi, said Kincannon.

One solution being looked at is Bermuda grass, or "cynodon dactylon," a native plant of the province that naturally removes salt and can be used as animal feed.

A similar project uses mobile test kits that will allow farmers to assess soil composition.

One of the other major issues the agricultural labs will be able to address is the lack of an independent way to know the protein content of animal feed, said Kincannon.

Farmers pay for feed based on protein content, ideally 20-25 percent. However, without a reliable way to determine the true content, farmers may unknowingly purchase feed containing just 9-15 percent protein, but at the same price, he said.

Tackling such challenges of the local agricultural industry requires projects that address the concerns of people from each



Photo by Nabil Mohamed
Sgt. Fatimah Muhammad, 308th CA Bn., gives a box with a beehive to one of the first graduates of the beekeeping course at the local Agricultural Extension of the Agricultural Community College in Hussinyah, Mar 1. The class of 20 was made up primarily of widows, said Muhammad, who works with the Karbala PRT as the women's initiatives coordinator.

cross-section of the Iraqi agricultural community – not to mention building relationships with those people, said Kincannon.

"The beekeeping project was a good opportunity for the U.S. forces to reach out to women who have had little or no contact with Americans," he said.

Muhammad also felt it was important to target specific groups within the community.

"Women are a large part of society," said Muhammad, "I love working with the different women's organizations to see [women] empowered."

For more from USD-S PAO, visit www.facebook.com/1stInfantryDivision

Rec centers get \$3 mil renovation

Anthony Gottschlich
Dayton Daily News

DAYTON, Ohio — College Hill resident Darlene Brookshire works out at the city's Northwest Recreation Center two to three times a week, she said. But she might come more often now that the city has poured \$1.5 million into renovating the center at 1600 Princeton Ave.

"It does make me we want to come and see what they have, see what else they offer," the 67-year-old Brookshire said as she walked on a treadmill March 12.

Mayor Gary Leitzell, city commissioners and others unveiled Northwest and the Lohrey Recreation Center in Belmont after a \$3 million renovation of both centers.

Improvements include remodeled and expanded fitness rooms, a new auxiliary gymnasium at Northwest, modern lobbies and computer labs.

Commissioners noted the investment came at a tough time for the city and its shrinking resources.

"We're going to do everything in our power to keep this place up, well maintained and a place you can come to enjoy with your families," Commissioner Joey Williams told a crowd at Lohrey, the 53-year-old center at 2366 Glenarm Ave.

The city has closed several family rec-



Photo by Jim Noelker

The City of Dayton Department of Recreation and Youth Services held an open house at the Lohrey Center at 2366 Glenarm Ave. March 12. The open house was a celebration of the remodel of the building. The remodel expanded the lobby and fitness rooms.

recreation centers in recent years, including the Burkhardt and Stuart-Patterson centers this year, in the face of a declining population and budget. When its new Rec Plex on the former Roosevelt High School site opens late this summer, the city will have just three such centers, down from a dozen or more years ago, said Lashea Smith, interim recreation services director.

But Smith and others said they hope the centers, with added fitness programs, too, will draw residents from around the city

and beyond. Commissioner Nan Whaley said the centers also show the city's desire to get its residents in shape, a goal aligned with the county health department's Get-Up Montgomery County campaign.

"It's really important we encourage our citizens, especially our younger citizens, to get out there, go outside, and if you can't go outside, to have places like this to exercise and have fun doing it," she said.

Dayton, Ohio is the hometown of 1st Sgt. Derek Bazile, featured on page 12

Education doing well in Niagara Falls

Paul Westmore
Niagara Gazette

NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y. - Though Niagara Falls may be one of the state's poorest school districts, it has recently become one of the elite when it comes to 21st Century technology.

In the last month, the district completed a \$65 million technology project that made it only the sixth school system in the state to have installed 61/2-foot interactive SMART Boards along with Red Cat audio enhancement systems and document cam-

eras in all of its 448 classrooms.

Administrator for Information Services Darlene Sprague said the other five school districts to have these very large computerized systems districtwide are: Binghamton, New Rochelle, Massapequa, East Chester and the New York City Department of Education. The state has more than 700 public school districts.

Sprague said if other school districts have installed other brands of interactive whiteboards in all their classrooms, she hasn't heard of it.

The first phase of the project started

more than three years ago with the construction of the \$25 million Niagara Street Elementary School in which SMART Boards and the other technology were installed in all 35 classrooms. The school opened in September 2007.

Phase II saw 413 SMART Boards, Red Cats and document cameras installed in the district's 11 other schools, including LaSalle and Gaskill Preparatory schools, the Community Education Center and Niagara Falls High School.

Niagars Falls is the hometown of 1st Lt. Adam Thomas, featured on page 9

AROUND THE COB

Danger Forward

March 15, Issue 7

Dining Hours

DFAC 2

0530 - 0830

1130 - 1400

1700 - 2000

DFAC 3

0530 - 0830

1130 - 1400

1700 - 2000

0000 - 0130

Hair Cuts

Barber Shop

0900 - 2000

Beauty Shop

0900 - 2000

Legal

(VOIP 858-4098)

Legal Assistance Office

Mon. - Fri.

0800-1800

Sat.

0800-1700

Trial Defense Services

Mon. - Sat.

0900-1130

1300-1700

USO

Every day

Closes 0600

Re-opens 1000

This week at the USO

Fight Night, Round 4

X-box 360 Tournament

Mon., March 8

2100

AAFES New Release

Movie Day

Wed, March 10

1900 - 0200

550 Cord Cuff Night

Fri, March 12

1600 - 1800

March Madness

Bracket Tournament

Mon, March 15

Religious Services

(All COB Basra Chapel)

Protestant

Sundays:

Contemporary Worship

1000

General Protestant

1130

Gospel Worship

1400

Chapel Next Protestant

1830

Roman Catholic

Sunday Mass

0830

Saturday Vigil Mass

2000

Daily Mass

1130

Jewish

Friday

1800

LDS

Sunday

1700 - 1800

Chaplain Programs

Bible Studies

Book of Colossians

(HHB 17th FiB Conf Rm)

Wednesdays

2000

Regular

(Panther Den / MWR)

Wednesdays

1930

New Believers

(COB Basra Chapel)

Thursdays

2000

Fellowship

Every Man's Battle

(HHB 17th FiB Conf Rm)

Thursday

1800 - 1900

AA

(COB Basra Chapel)

Thursday

2000

Holy Joe's Coffee

(Chaplain's Programming Tent)

Regular hours

Mon.-Sat., 0600 - 1800

Fridays and Mondays

Music night

Come after-hours for a midnight snack.

Special Events

This Week

Bad Company in Concert

(MWR stage)

Tue, March 16

1930

Golf Driving

Accuracy Contest

(COB Basra Driving Range)

Sun, March 21

0900

- Open to all military and DoD civilians.

- Competitors will have 5 attempts and their best attempt will be recorded for the competition.

- Prizes awarded to top three competitors in each division.

- POC: darwin.m.nealy@iraq.centcom.mil

Fannie Mae's Cafe

(COB Basra Town Hall)

Fri, March 19

1930

- A play written and directed by Sgt. Mario Ward, 546th SMC, and performed by members of the Basra Gospel Choir.

Women's History Month

March is a time to celebrate women's contributions to our nation and our military.

Molly Pitcher 5K Run

(Location pending)

Sun, March 21

0600

Women's History Month Observance

(COB Basra Town Hall)

Fri, March 26

1900

New Times, programs

Fire Warden and Fire Extinguisher classes

(Fire Station 1, across from D-Main)

Wednesday @ 1000

- All unit Fire Wardens are required to submit the USF-I Task Force Safe Fire Safety Checklist to the fire chief monthly. This form can be taken to either fire station or emailed to Mike White, mwhite@sallyportglobal.com. For an electronic copy, email Mike White.

- Fire extinguisher exchange and re-service program: Expelled or unserviceable extinguishers can be brought to either fire station for exchange or re-service. We also have a limited number of extinguishers to hand out.

March Madness on the COB

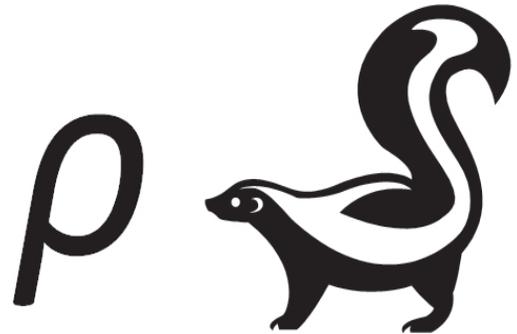
March 20 - April 20, every Wednesday and Saturday at the main gym courts

- 10 teams
- Battle to elimination
- Prizes provided by Harley Davidson and other businesses on COB Basra.

“Hopefully, we give the Soldiers something to do and a memorable event.”

- Master Sgt. Darwin Nealy senior medic, 1314th CA Co. and tournament organizer.

Big Red One Puzzle of the Week



Hint for this week: Clean water?

Each week, look for a new brain teaser here, with the answer in the following week's Danger Forward.

*Solution for last week: Bye-bye Miss American Pie
Brought to you by the 1st Inf. Div. ORSA Cell*

A look around USD-S



Courtesy photo
Staff Sgt. Bryan Smith, from Peterstown W.Va., AMD Cell, Ops Company, DHHB, 1st Infantry Division, reenlists in an AH-64D Apache helicopter on COB Basra, March 8, while Maj. Thomas Steele administers the oath.

Have a photo from around USD-S? Email it, along with the photographer's name, rank and unit, the date and place it was taken, and a short description, to benjamin.kibbey@iraq.centcom.mil, and you could have it featured here and receive a coin from DCSM Jim Champagne.

Sudoku

3		4		1	8	5		9
1				6	4			
	8	2						
	1				6	9	4	
	9	6						
			7		1	6	3	
	2			5	3			
	5	7	9				8	
						4		

For solutions visit: www.puzzles.ca/sudoku.html