

# CUSF-I CHRONICLE

Volume 1, Issue 3 March 2010



***Iraqi security forces  
provide protection for  
National Elections***



An Iraqi army soldier directs civilians to a voting site in Mansour, March 7, during Iraq's historic national elections. Before passing through to the polling site, voters were searched thoroughly. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Kimberly Hackbarth)



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Vendor Fair aims to improve Iraqi economy

# USF-I CHRONICLE

The Official Magazine of  
United States Forces – Iraq

March 2010  
Volume 1, Issue 3

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# EOD unveils memorial, raises money for fallen Iraqi comrades

Story by by Senior Airman Mindy Bloem  
506th AEG Public Affairs



**Tech. Sgt. Eric Eberhard**, 506th Civil Engineer Squadron Explosive Ordnance Disposal team leader deployed from Hill AFB, Utah, paints a mural on one of the concrete walls at the EOD compound on Kirkuk Regional Air Base to honor three fallen Iraqi Police counter-explosive team members for an unveiling ceremony held Feb. 23. Photo courtesy of U.S. Air Force.



**Kirkuk Regional Air Base, Iraq** -- On Aug. 12, 2009, three members of an Iraqi Police counter-explosive team or IP CET responded to a possible vehicle-born improvised explosive device in downtown Kirkuk City. Unfortunately, the incident ended in tragedy when the IED went off, killing all three men.

Members of the 506th Civil Engineer Squadron Explosive Ordnance Disposal team and IP CET family members gathered together Feb. 23, on the EOD compound at Kirkuk Regional Air Base for an unveiling ceremony of a memorial wall painted to honor the fallen men.

The wall displayed the likenesses of the three men and included their names - Saman Barzan Mohamed, Ahmed Salih Rasheed, Twana Salam Salim - printed boldly in black to be forever remembered.

Salam Hama Salim, the father of Twana, spoke about his son's memory.

"My son was very funny and friendly with everybody," the father said through an interpreter. "Everyone who worked with him liked him. I feel honored, and it's a special day for us, especially with all the respect the EOD guys have shown my son."

The artist of the wall, Tech. Sgt. Eric Eberhard, EOD team leader deployed from Hill AFB, Utah, spoke at the ceremony regarding the symbolism of the wall.

The black and white theme is a representation of the EOD motto: Initial Success or Total Failure.

The red stripes are blood stripes - in memory of those who have paid the price for freedom with their own blood.

The flag represents the country and people these men served.

The EOD badge represents the brotherhood and partnership that is displayed in our joint effort to make the world a safer place.

The EOD technician working on an IED represents one of their own in the process of performing dangerous and selfless duties.

The Arabic script reads "We will never forget," meaning their sacrifice will be remembered by all who look upon the mural.

The black diagonal stripe in the top left corner is a cultural emblem. In Iraq it is placed upon pictures and images of those who have passed on.

"My hope is that the mural will help strengthen the



Members of the 506th Civil Engineer Squadron Explosive Ordnance Disposal team, memorialized three Iraqi Police Counter-explosive team members killed by a vehicle-borne IED on Aug. 12, 2009 with a mural painted in their honor at the EOD compound on Kirkuk Regional Air Base Feb. 23. The families of the fallen were presented donated funds raised during an EOD bomb suit run. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Tabitha Kuykendall)



bond we have formed with the Iraqi EOD technicians, as it is a display of support and dedication in our effort to see them succeed," Eberhard added. "They come to our compound often and will be reminded of the selfless sacrifice those who came before them have made."

Many family members listened with tears in their eyes to the deference being paid to their deceased loved ones.

At the close of the ceremony, the attending family members were called up to receive certificates of appreciation from the EOD team.

To raise funds, three members from EOD ran a 5-kilometer race while wearing an 80-pound bomb suit.

"In the States we have a good network built up for the fallen warriors and EOD warriors, but they don't have anything like that in Iraq," said Senior Master Sgt. Albert Schneider, 506th EOD flight chief, deployed from Eielson AFB, Alaska. We (the EOD team) got together and planned a bomb suit run and raised approximately \$1,600 for the families."

After the ceremony, EOD members gathered the families together to present them with the check from this past December's bomb-suit run.

According to Schneider, the homage being rendered should come as no surprise since that's what a team is all about.

"EOD, whether it's Iraqi EOD or U.S. EOD, is one big family," he said. "And if something bad happens to one of us, it's felt by all of us. I just want their sacrifice to be remembered. It is a dangerous job. They volunteered to do it. No one made them. They did it out of love for their people and fellow Iraqis, and their sacrifice should always be remembered."

# Iraqi security forces provide protection for National Elections

Story by Sgt. Cody Harding  
USD-S Public Affairs



Iraqi security forces maintain security at a Karbala, Iraq, polling site during the national elections, Mar. 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. U. S. Army photo by Spc. Samuel Soza)

**AL-KUT, Iraq** -- In 2005, faced with staunch resistance from extremists looking to overthrow the government, Coalition Forces provided security for Iraqis as they elected their new leaders.

Five years later, the role of U.S. forces has changed dramatically.

The Iraqi Army and police - once fledgling forces - provided the security for the March 7 national elections.

The Iraqi police searched cars as they entered and exited the city, provided security at polling sites, and used air assets to provide surveillance for ground forces.

In the city of al-Kut, Wasit Province, members of the 252nd Military Police Company, a U.S. Army National Guard unit based out of Cleveland, Tenn., provided support to the Iraqi Police during the elections.

They served as a quick reaction force to respond to emergencies and inspected checkpoints with the help of K-9 units.

Cpl. Randall Baldwin, 252nd MP Co., a Cleveland, Tenn. native, said that placing the security of the elections in the hands of Iraqis signals a large step forward in their ability to ensure safety in the country.

"If you have your own people running your own government issues, it's a big step," said Boldin.

Staff Sgt. Ian Spivey, an Air Force K-9 handler from the 6th Security Forces, based at McGill Air Force Base,

An Iraqi man near a Karbala, Iraq polling site, March 7, displays his inked finger - a sign of having voted - during only the second Iraqi national election since the ousting of Saddam Hussein. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Samuel Soza)



Fla., said that this deployment is a lot more peaceful than his other three deployments.

"I've been over here since 2004, and every year has changed," said Spivey. "You see more and more presence as they're slowly taking over, which is good for us."

Boldin said that the Iraqis have been willing to take security into their own hands, and the elections will allow them to prove they can.

"Ever since we've arrived, they've had a really strong will to do things themselves," said Boldin. "They've said 'look at us, we can do this', and from what I've seen, the Iraqi police are taking the initiative and doing the job they're supposed to be doing."

An Iraqi police officer inspects a vehicle at a checkpoint on election day, March 7. The Iraqi Police were the primary security for the elections. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Cody Harding)



# Iraqi-led clinic treats villagers with advise-and-assist paratroopers



**Capt. Joseph Matthews**, brigade surgeon with 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division (Advise and Assist Brigade), examines an Iraqi mother's infant in the village of Al Uwesat, Iraq, Feb. 11, 2010, in a temporary clinic operated by Iraqi and U.S. Army medical staff. Providing medical services to Iraqis living in rural areas is one way to help win the goodwill of the people in Iraq's bid to rid the country of terrorism, their leaders believe.

**AL UWESAT, Iraq** – Medical doctors with 1st Iraqi Division set up a temporary clinic, Feb. 11, in Al Uwesat, Iraq, and treated 312 villagers for a variety of common maladies in a partnered operation with U.S. Army medics.

The two Iraqi physicians, with support from the 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division (Advise and Assist), brigade surgeon and medics, treated 144 males and 168 females during the clinic's five hours of operation at a primary school in an east-Anbar village to provide medical service and win the goodwill of locals.

Capt. Ahmed Zyara, who treated patients for conditions that included ulcers, hernias, tonsillitis, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and the aches and pains of old age, said not only did the operation provide a much-needed service for the villages, it also provided excellent training for him and the other medical professionals.

"The people get to see that the Iraqi army is here to help them," said Ahmed, a doctor of six years. "Plus, I get to see cases that are not the usual cases I see in the army."

"We hope this will encourage the people to cooperate with the Iraqi army because the Iraqi army is the

only savior from the terrorists," said Ahmed. "Hopefully, the charity will reverse the brainwashing [the terrorists] do on the people, and this will help get them back on the right path."

For five hours, the four examination rooms and Iraqi-run pharmacy were constantly busy, he said.

Given the opportunity for free, local medical care, many mothers came in with their entire broods, seeking to eliminate common colds, toothaches, sore throats and other common childhood ills, according to Sgt. Bethany Smith, a medic with

**Capt. Ahmed Zyara**, a physician with 1st Iraqi Division, examines an Iraqi boy complaining of joint pain his knees during a one-day medical clinic operated by Iraqi and U.S. military medical staff in the village of Al Uwesat, Iraq. The prognosis: growing pains.

Story and photos by  
Spc. Michael J. MacLeod  
USD-C Public Affairs

**"The people get to see that the Iraqi army is here to help them."**

Capt. Ahmed Zyara  
1st Iraqi Division

Company C, 307th Brigade Support Battalion, 1/82 AAB.

Amel Hussyin, a mother of five who lives near the school where the clinic was operated, said there was only one medical clinic nearby and no doctor.

For the 7,000 residents of Al Uwesat and the surrounding area, there should ideally be three clinics, each with a resident physician, according to Ahmed.

"I have to drive two hours to see a doctor," said Amel.

Three of Amel's children exhibited cold symptoms, and a fourth was having bed-wetting issues, she said.

"We thank the Iraqi army doctors for seeing us here today," said Amel.

Since 2007, the Iraqi army has set up 48 such medical clinics and has seen 14,600 patients in and around the Habaniya area while working with the Americans as a team, according to the Iraqi doctors.



**Sgt. Bethany Smith**, a medic with 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division (Advise and Assist Brigade), provides medicine to two Iraqi villagers in a one-day medical clinic operated by Iraqi and U.S. military medical staff in Al Uwesat, Iraq. Smith explains, through an Iraqi linguist, the proper use of the medicine.

# Charlie Wilson Performs in Midst of Iraqi Sandstorm

Story and photo by  
Master Sgt. Marcia Triggs  
USD-N Public Affairs

**CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICER, Iraq** – Charlie Wilson went from rags to riches – to homeless. However, in his testimonial to troops and civilians on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Wilson said his faith brought him back to the stage and back to the top of the music charts.

This funkadelic and soulful artist is known for 80s hits like, “You Dropped a Bomb on Me” and “Burn Rubber on Me”. However, in the midst of an Iraqi sandstorm, Feb. 21 at the Speicher Main Gym, younger troops braved the weather to hear the artist croon his most recent lyrics from his newest CD “My Name is Charlie, Last Name Wilson”.

Wilson, 57, the former lead singer of the Gap Band, gave a 93-minute, nonstop concert that was packed with energy, inspiration and rhythm and soul.

“Real music isn’t easy to do,” Wilson told the crowd, after harmoniously belting out a ballad, “but somebody’s got to do it.” Along

with the music, Wilson openly acknowledged that he still has the energy he brought to the stage more than 40 years ago. During the show Wilson and his dancers changed three times, within minutes. However, the audience didn’t mind those few moments they spent listening to the instrumentals of his band members, who are also his nephews and a younger brother.

Wilson, a Grammy Award nominee from Tulsa, Okla., admitted that he remembers at one point ignoring troops when he saw them out in their uniform, but said that now he’s a changed man. He fought prostate cancer and won. He’s also vowed to never use drugs and alcohol again. “I’ve been clean for 15 years,” he said.

Wilson said he also threw out selfishness. “You go outside the wire. You lay it on the line, and I love you for that,” he said to the crowd. “And for your sacrifices, I’m not afraid to come over here when you want me to. Regardless, if it’s

during the heat of the battle, if you ask me, I’ll come and perform.”

This was Wilson’s second trip to Iraq. He performed in Mosul, February of last year. However, this was the first time some Soldiers were able to see him on stage. Pfc. Tiffany Goode wasn’t aware of Charlie Wilson until he collaborated with younger artists like, Justin Timberlake and Snoop Dogg. However, she said she finds his smooth voice and modern R&B songs very appealing.

“He has this never-ending soul voice and his music touches us,” said Goode, a radio transmitter operator with 3rd Division Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, out of Fort Stewart, Ga.

All ages and ranks filled the gym from the bottom of the stage to the top of the bleachers. Very seldom, could anyone be seen sitting down during the hour-and-half performance. Some stood to rock to the beat, and others stood because their hearts wouldn’t let them sit

down.

“I found it invigorating. His songs touched my soul,” said Sgt. Cortez Anderson, from the 249th Quartermaster Company, out of Fort Bragg, N.C. “He inspired me because we all make mistakes, but if we have faith another door will open.”

Anderson said he’s been listening to Charlie Wilson since he sang with his brothers in the Gap Band, and now he has even more respect for the artist because he came to Iraq to bring some enjoyment and a piece of home to the troops.

Prior to the concert, Wilson and his band members visited servicemembers and civilians in the Task Force Marne headquarters. While posing for photos with troops, Maj. Gen. Tony Cucolo, and Command Sgt. Maj. Jesse Andrews, task force commander and command sergeant major, stopped by to thank Wilson and his crew for their support to the troops.

Charlie Wilson accepts a phone number from a Soldier in jest during the concert. All of the women were invited to the stage to serenade Wilson.





**Governor Martin O'Malley**, from Maryland and 18 Maryland native Soldiers hold up the Maryland state flag during Gov. O'Malley's visit at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq. The visit consisted of a tour of route-clearance vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles and the Joint Operations Center. (U.S. Army photo by Spec. Jessica Zullig)



**A Soldier with U.S. Forces - Iraq**, gazes at a large American flag hanging in Al Faw Palace as an Army band plays Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" during the U.S. naturalization ceremony, Feb. 13. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey)



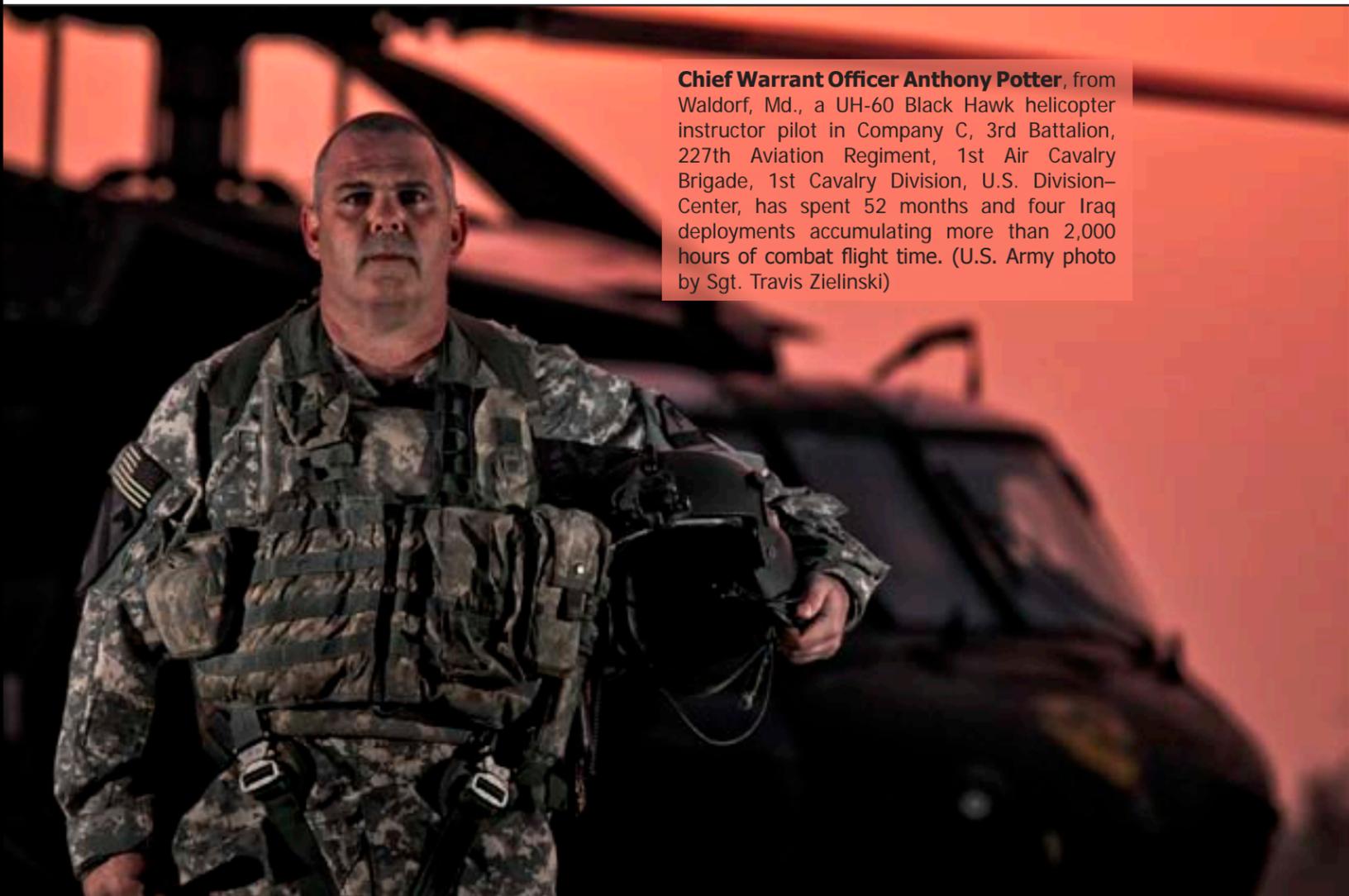
**Hussein Enkntaal Abel**, 5th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Federal Police shoots at a target during a reflexive fire range on Contingency Operating Station Falcon. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jared Eastman)



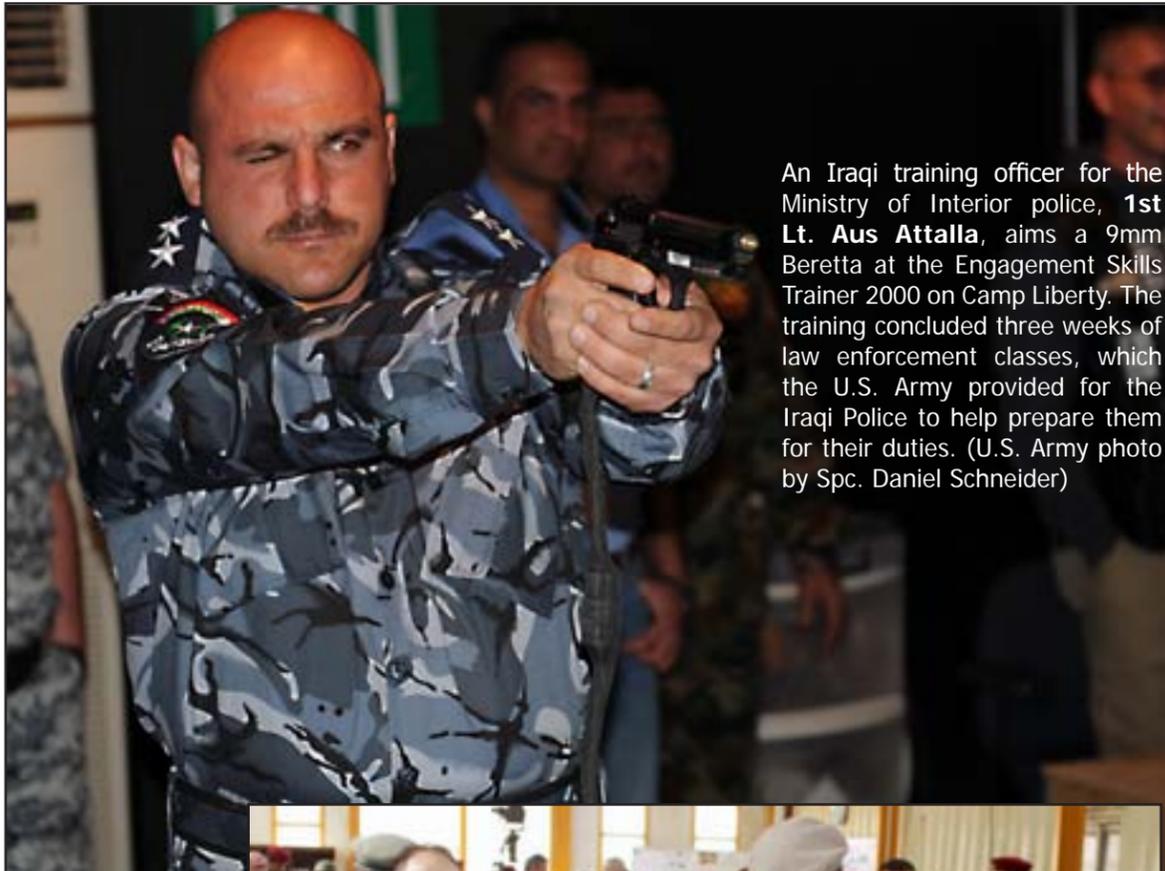
**Soldiers of the 1st Armored Division**, based at Camp Liberty, react to a missed catch while watching Super Bowl XLIV in the Iron Oasis dining facility, Feb. 8. The game aired live at 2:25 a.m., local time. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kristina Scott)



**A small boy** waves to American Soldiers from 317th Engineer Company as they move equipment from Victory Base Complex to Joint Security Station Deason. The engineers hauled the equipment for a project shared by Iraqi Engineers from 17th Iraqi Army Division and 317th throughout February. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ronald Carlson)



**Chief Warrant Officer Anthony Potter**, from Waldorf, Md., a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter instructor pilot in Company C, 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division-Center, has spent 52 months and four Iraq deployments accumulating more than 2,000 hours of combat flight time. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski)



An Iraqi training officer for the Ministry of Interior police, **1st Lt. Aus Attalla**, aims a 9mm Beretta at the Engagement Skills Trainer 2000 on Camp Liberty. The training concluded three weeks of law enforcement classes, which the U.S. Army provided for the Iraqi Police to help prepare them for their duties. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Daniel Schneider)



During the Black History Month ceremony at Camp Liberty Field House, the spoken-word artist known as "Scott Free," performs in front of a room full of deployed servicemembers. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Luisito Brooks)



**Brig. Gen. Glenn Hammond** (right), 16th Engineer Brigade commander, and Col. Tris Cooper, 16th Engineer Brigade Deputy Commander, receive a tour of the Iraqi Explosive Ordnance Disposal School. He witnessed the capabilities of a robot while visiting the school, at Besmaya Training Complex north of Baghdad. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Brian Johnson)



# LIGHTNING HORSE AIRCRAFT HIGHLIGHT PARTNERSHIP, SHOW OF FORCE

**CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE WARRIOR, Iraq** – One of the most critical milestones in Iraq’s future will be safe and secure elections for the people of Iraq, which are slated for March 7.

The Government of Iraq, Iraqi Security Forces and their U.S. counterparts recently took a resounding step toward that goal with a new security initiative.

The Combined Security Force, consisting of 12th Iraqi Army Soldiers, Iraqi Police, 1st Peshmerga Brigade Soldiers, and U.S. Forces from 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, attached to 2nd Heavy

Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, graduated after 30 days of training. This unified force, known as the “Golden Lions,” showcased their skills, including air ground integration, during the graduation ceremony in front of senior GoI officials, Kirkuk provincial leaders, and Maj. Gen. Tony Cucolo, commander of United States Division-North, near Contingency Operating Site Warrior, in Kirkuk, Iraq, Feb. 15.

“The significance of today’s event is to show the people of Iraq, government officials, (and Iraqi and U.S. forces) the culmination of

all the training that the Combined Security Force has gone through,” said Capt. Paul Horton, Fire Support Officer, 1/30th Inf., 2nd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. “It is to show that they are a capable, cohesive force that can work together for national unity to provide safe and secure elections.”

The demonstration showcased the CSF’s ability to integrate with aviation assets as they conduct full-spectrum operations. During the CSF’s validation exercise, a scout weapons team from 2nd Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Lightning Horse, conducted area security for a CSF patrol, followed

by precision target acquisition.

“2-6th Cav. is our partnered unit and they work closely with us as part of this key and essential mission to (secure) the elections of Iraq,” said Lt. Col. Daniel Cormier, commander, 1/30th Inf., 2nd HBCT, 3rd Inf. Div. “Aviation assets have been (fully) integrated into our training. Everything from scout weapons teams to cold-load training, air movement to air assault training. And we plan on using all those capabilities for this force in the future.”

Additionally, fixed-wing close air support from F-16 fighter jets made an appearance, simulating an ordinance drop before UH-60L Black Hawks, from TF Lightning Horse, swept in with a CSF element to simulate an air assault during the course of the demonstration.

“The aircraft are a vital part of not just the demonstration but really the capabilities the Combined Security Force brings to the ground, whether it be OH-58D Kiowa Warriors or lift assets like Black Hawks or even fixed wing assets such as the F-16s and F-15 Strike Eagles,” Capt. Horton said. “That’s an asset that the Combined Security Force can call upon if their brothers-in-arms need help. For example, if they run into troubles with IEDs, small-arms fire or house-borne IEDs, they can call upon those assets and we can push them out for support during their maneuvers.”

Equally as impressive as the demonstration was the crowd of spectators in attendance.

“We’ll have the provincial governor, the deputy governor;

**A UH-60L Black Hawk** from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment, assigned to Task Force Lightning Horse, lands during a simulated air assault with a Combined Security Force element at the Kirkuk Training Center, outside of Contingency Operating Site Warrior. (Photo by: Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall)



you’re going to see a lot of the candidates from political parties, and also the senior leadership of all the security forces in the province, to include Maj. Gen. Cucolo,” said Lt. Col. Cormier, prior to the graduation and CSF training exercise.

The Soldiers and policemen of the CSF are equally excited and up to the task of providing security for the elections and beyond.

“We are very happy to work with the Combined Security Force, and we are very happy the force exists here,” said Halo Omar Abdulla, a Peshmerga Soldier and platoon sergeant for the CSF. “This was almost a dream for many of us, for such a force to be here in Kirkuk. We hope to see it start working soon. It doesn’t matter how hard our training is or how hard they make us train – we don’t feel tired. We won’t give in.”

He added, “These are very, very important events to us. The most important thing is we, as Kurds, Turkomen, and Arabs and the U.S. Forces, are working together.”

With this theme of teamwork and partnership, the CSF was also cognizant of the resources and

capabilities the aviation assets of the Lightning Horse Squadron have brought to the fight.

“I think that aviation is a key enabler that we bring to the table, and it does a lot of things for us not only with reconnaissance and surveillance,” Lt. Col. Cormier said. “(It) also helps us diffuse any situation very rapidly and decisively because we gain a significant advantage when we have aviation involved.”

Captain Horton, who oversaw the execution of the graduation and demonstration agreed, adding his final thoughts.

“2-6th Cav. has done a great job supporting us with aerial (reaction) force training. They’ve also supported us with their Kiowa Warriors in pulling area security, area and route (reconnaissance), in support of (the CSF’s) validation exercises,” said Capt. Horton. “They’ve also supported us with photo recons for areas we sent the patrol out to, to do their validation on their graded patrols. They’ve been a great support. 2-6th Cav. has been (awesome).”



**Soldiers of the Combined Security Force, “Golden Lions,”** simulate combat operations during a graduation and demonstration at the Kirkuk Training Center, outside of Contingency Operating Site Warrior, Feb. 15. The Golden Lions consist of Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, Peshmerga Soldiers and U.S. forces from Kirkuk Province with the mission of providing security during the upcoming Iraqi elections. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall)

# IRAQI FIREFIGHTERS DEMONSTRATE THEIR CAPABILITIES

*Story by Senior Airman Jarrod Chavana  
Photos by Master Sgt. Trish Bunting  
U.S. Air Forces Public Affairs*

**F**irefighters from the Iraqi Joint Fire Training Academy displayed the abilities taught to them by U.S. Air Force and Army personnel Feb. 17, during a demonstration.

Air Force and Army instructors from the United States Air Force's 821st Expeditionary Training Squadron, the Army's 110th Chemical and 414th Civil Affairs Battalions mentor Iraqi firefighting students who assemble at the academy to receive formalized training.

The instructors at the Iraqi Joint Fire Training Academy teach six core courses; basic firefighting, rescue technician 1, incident command systems, hazardous materials, first aid and explosive ordinance disposal.

During the demonstration, the Iraqi firefighters rappelled from a fiery three-story building, and responded to a simulated vehicle borne improvised explosive device, in which pyrotechnics were used and first aid was administered to the injured.

"The Iraqi Joint Fire Training Academy is currently working to establish an internationally accepted based curriculum," said Air Force

Tech. Sgt. Kevin Cotton, 821 ETS fire rescue advisor deployed from Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas. "The future vision of the academy is to become internationally certified and become one of the premier fire training institutions in the Middle East."

In addition to responding to everyday local emergencies, the firefighters have been assigned to emergency management duties such as maintaining warning sirens, national disaster notifications, evacuations, bomb shelter maintenance, and recovery of explosive residue of war.

"We are giving these firefighters the basic foundation on how to protect their country by fighting fires and maintaining the protection of their country," said Master Sgt. Jeffrey Kimball 821st ETS, fire rescue advisor. "They will be able to build up their country a lot faster by being able to rescue and respond to any incidents that may occur."

During one class the students were taught auto extrication. The next day a bomb detonated in Baghdad, which required them to put their training to the test.

"It was amazing that these young firefighters were able to use the ideas

**Firefighters with the Iraqi Civil Defense Training Academy pull a hose down from a building after a demonstration in Baghdad, Iraq.**



and tools they were just taught in a real life situation," said Sergeant Kimball. "Because it showed, during a real life situation, they were able to act and respond effectively."

Because the students are picking up the information and are able to use them in real situations the academy staff uses the "train the trainer" concept; allowing students who've successfully completed the course to become future instructors.

"The Iraqis are teaching the basic firefighter course; and the hazmat course is about to be turned over to them," said Army Spc. Michael Burris, 414th Civil Affairs Battalion assistant instructor, deployed from Fort Bragg. "I'm very proud of what they've achieved."

**Master Sgt. Jeffrey Kimball**, fire rescue advisor for the 821st Expeditionary Training Squadron, oversees a firefighting demonstration in Baghdad, Iraq. The Iraqi Civil Defense Training Academy is currently working to establish an internationally accepted based curriculum; the future vision of the academy is to become internationally certified and become one of the premier fire training institutions in the Middle East.



# Vendor Fair aims to improve Iraqi economy

The small, wooden model of a gazebo housed a pair of plastic action figures. Flanked by painted wooden replicas of T-walls and Jersey barriers on one side, a miniature office desk and bunk bed on the other, it dominated a display of products provided by the Barakat al-Taqqadum company, an Iraqi construction and supply firm that took part in Victory Regional Contracting Center's Vendor Fair, Feb. 13.

The toy soldiers hanging out in a scaled down smoke shack stood out among the exhibits by 156 local Iraqi vendors who came to Camp Liberty Field House hoping to do business with United States Forces-Iraq. Vendors, among them 27 female business owners, had goods and services ranging from gravel samples to leather holsters and multimedia presentations on display for the swarm of contracting officers looking to help supply their Soldiers and Airmen.

According to Maj. Humberto Jones, the chief contracting officer with the VRCC, a major goal of the fair was to allow Iraqi businesses a face-to-face chance to prove to United States military contracting officers that they can provide goods



and services at a level of quality on par with companies from the U.S. or around the world.

"You're used to getting certain quality of goods back in the States. When you come to Iraq, sometimes you don't get that same quality," Jones said. "What we've done is gone out there and chased after some of the local vendors that can produce that same type of quality."

Convincing American Servicemembers that Iraqis can produce quality goods and services is only part of the equation. Increasing contracts with Iraqi companies is a long-standing mandate for contracting centers that was recently reinforced in a memo from Gen. Ray Odierno, the commanding general of USF-I. In the Jan. 31 memo, he stated that "employment of Iraqis not only saves money but it also strengthens the Iraqi economy and helps eliminate the root causes of the insurgency - poverty and lack of economic opportunity."

Mohammed Al Shara, a U.S. citizen from Detroit who was born and educated in Iraq, now works as a business development consultant with the VRCC. He noted that the focus on awarding contracts to the Iraqi vendors injects money into the Iraqi market because the

Story and photos by  
Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey  
USF-I Public Affairs

Maythem Al-Asdi, president of the Kufran Group in Baghdad, discusses the construction services his company can provide to United States Forces-Iraq.



vendors will hire Iraqi labor and build the value of the Iraqi dinar. Al Shara added that such companies provide an additional asset to the new Iraq business community, bringing with them experience in dealing with companies from foreign countries.

Maythem Al-Asdi is an example of the success a contractor can have. He has been doing business for five years as a construction contractor with the U.S. military and the United States Agency for International Development. He said he has learned management processes for his company through training provided by the VRCC.

The opportunity to talk directly to potential clients at the Vendor Fair was appreciated by Al Asdi. "Interaction teaches you so many things," he said. "Before this vendors didn't have many events where they could interact with Americans."

Al Asdi sees events like this as a way to improve the future of his country. "My hope is if we can duplicate the American dream, we can have the Iraqi dream."

Basim Abdulameer, a manager with Dar Al Hana company speaks with Capt. Robert Heiden, a contracting officer with Joint Contracting Command-Iraq, about the services his company can provide to United States Forces-Iraq. Abdulameer was participating in the Victory Region Contracting Center's Vendor Fair held at Camp Liberty, Iraq.

# IN MEMORIAM

NAMES OF SERVICEMEMBERS WHO DIED BETWEEN FEBRUARY 1 AND  
FEBRUARY 28, 2010 WHILE SERVING IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

**GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS: THAT A MAN LAY  
DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.**

*JOHN 15:13*

**February 10**

***Pfc. Adriana Alvarez, 20***

**February 21**

***Capt. Marcus R. Alford, 28***

***Chief Warrant Officer Grinder, Billie J., 25***

**February 23**

***Cpl. Daniel T. O'Leary, 23***

**February 25**

***Sgt. William C. Spencer, 40***



While adjusting the mouthpiece, **Lt. Col. Charles Dalcourt** (right), of Baton Rouge, La., commander, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Division–Center, shows **Cpl. Charles Dominguez**, from Ontario, Calif., how to operate a crew chief headset. Dominguez, who was visiting 1st ACB as part of Operation Proper Exit, suffered serious burns in 2006 when he was attacked by a suicide bomber while supporting the ongoing War on Terror in Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Alun Thomas)