



ISOF senior enlisted meets US counterparts

Discusses developing strong, professional Iraqi noncommissioned officer corps

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

Less than an hour after III Corps joined the United States Forces – Iraq team, the senior enlisted advisor for the deputy commanding general for operations gathered the senior enlisted noncommissioned officers from the USF-I staffs and the U.S. Divisions for a meeting.

When Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur L. Coleman Jr., also the III Corps command sergeant major entered the room, he was accompanied by an Iraqi Special Operations Force command sergeant major.

Coleman introduced the Iraqi command sergeant major and said he is the type of senior noncommissioned officer who can help the Iraqis develop a strong, professional NCO corps that will improve the quality of the Iraqi armed forces.

“This is an example here,” he said. “A sergeant major, their senior enlisted, who wants to be better, wants to learn; wants to take that knowledge back to his Soldiers so that they can continue to improve.”

The ISOF command

sergeant major, himself a combat veteran, wears an American Combat Infantry Badge proudly. He credits the development of a strong NCO corps within the ISOF to the mentoring he and his Soldiers have received from the American forces.

“So far the support has been great,” he said. “We have been trained since the first day by Americans.

“They taught us to use the American system, which is a very great system,” the Iraqi command sergeant major continued.

See NCO, Page 5



Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur L. Coleman, Jr., senior enlisted advisor for the deputy commanding general-operations, United States Forces-Iraq and III Corps command sergeant major, speaks with the Iraqi Special Forces command sergeant major and senior NCOs from USF-I and the U.S. divisions during a meeting March 13. Coleman introduced the ISOF command sergeant major to the group and talked about the Iraqi NCO corps during the meeting

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Chaplain's Corner

Passover: Remembering the path to freedom

By Chaplain (Maj) Howard Fields
United States Forces-Iraq Jewish Chaplain

The Jewish festival of Passover, one of the three pilgrimage festivals in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), begins at sundown on March 29 this year and concludes April 6 at nightfall.

The first two nights of Passover are among the most memorable and most observed by Jews all over the world. On those nights the festival is observed, not in a synagogue, but traditionally in a home, at the dinner table.

Today, many places have community Seders, for those who cannot hold their own observance.

March 29 and 30 are the Seders this year. Seder comes from the word for "order," due to the order of the worship and readings that take place before and after the meal at the Seder.

There will be Seders in about nine locations in Iraq this year, in dining facilities and in chapels on both large and small bases. Everyone is invited to participate.

Passover takes a great amount of preparation. It is

traditional for Jews to not eat any leavened foods during Passover to remember their ancestors who left Egypt in such haste that their bread had no time to rise.

For Jews who observe Passover today, this means not eating any grains except for the special wheat that goes into the unleavened bread, the matza.

All possessions that come in contact with everyday grains have to be put away and "sold" for the duration of the festival.

It is an opportunity to take stock of all of the items one owns. It is a time to think about how much we have – and how little we need to enter freedom with.

When Jews sit down at the Seder table, they tell the story of how they were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and then were freed because of God's will.

The word for Egypt in Hebrew, 'Mitzrayim,' comes from the word "narrow"—the narrow place of bondage that all Jews go through to know what true freedom is.

Here in Iraq we have just helped a people remove the shackles of dictatorship.

The Iraqi people are beginning to go through the narrow place, the birth canal of freedom.

As the Jewish people re-tell their tale of entering and wandering in the desert for many years, the Iraqi people struggle with their desert – the unpredictable, often violent, difficult process that is democracy.



Image courtesy of www.wordpress.com

SARC Smarts



From the USF-I SHARP Team: Be "SHARP Smart" don't assume your partner will "get the message" without you telling him or her what you are feeling. Tell them how far you want to go, what you want and don't want to do, and when you want to stop. Be especially careful to communicate your limits and intentions clearly in such situations.

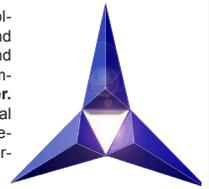
Call the USF-I Deployed Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (DSARC) at 485-5085 or 435-2235 for help. Army members should seek assistance with their Unit Victim Advocate (UVA) or DSARC.



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Keeping robots mission ready

Story and photos by Spc. Britney Bodner
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

When a robot is damaged after taking on an improvised explosive device or needs to be transferred to another location to continue the fight, the joint robotics detachment rolls into action.

The Joint Robotics Repair Detachment-Iraq, based at Camp Victory, Iraq is the only organization in theater that can fix the robots and get them where they are needed most.

When an explosives ordinance disposal unit prepares to leave Iraq, and is not going to be replaced, the JRRD-I takes the unit's robots, accounts for the equipment, makes any repairs, and sends them to OEF where they're critically needed, said Maj. Roger Deon, commander of the JRRD-I.

According to Deon, JRRD-I has repaired or upgraded more than 1,800 robots since April 2009 and approximately 500 of those have been sent to Afghanistan.

"Our primary goal is to maintain the robots we have here (in Iraq); our secondary goal is to assist Afghanistan in the transferring of the robot systems from here to over there," said Shawn Wyzlic, a robot technician from Wixom, Mich.

Repairs can range from normal wear and tear, such as the track wear, damaged cameras, or motors, to battle damage from an IED blast that may have damaged the robots arm or destroy the circuit board, said Wyzlic.

In the past, departing units have always taken robots and transferred them to the unit replacing them, he said. As units leave theater now, the JRRD-I takes the robots and ships them to Afghanistan to aid in the fight there.

The JRRD-I plays an important role in both transferring robots to Afghanistan and preparing them for the different terrain, said Deon. The requirements for the systems can range from software updates to body upgrades for the terrain in



Sgt. Benjamin Wagner, a robot technician with the Joint Robotics Repair Detachment-Iraq, works on a control board for a robot that was recently brought into the shop.



A robot is driven on the gravel to test its functions outside the Joint Robotics Repair Detachment-Iraq Facility.

Afghanistan, and he ensures his team has them ready for the mission the robots will face.

"They are in one hundred percent operating condition before we send them out," said Sgt. Benjamin Wagner, a JRRD-I robot technician from Buffalo, N.Y. "... If the robot is fixed and in great operating condition then there will be less casualties when investigating an explosive."

Wagner said they know their repair work on the robots help save Soldiers' lives.

Roadside bombs are always a threat, he said. They are still one of the primary weapons of terrorists. Anything can be an IED and the robots play an important part in identifying what is harmless and what is not, Wagner said.

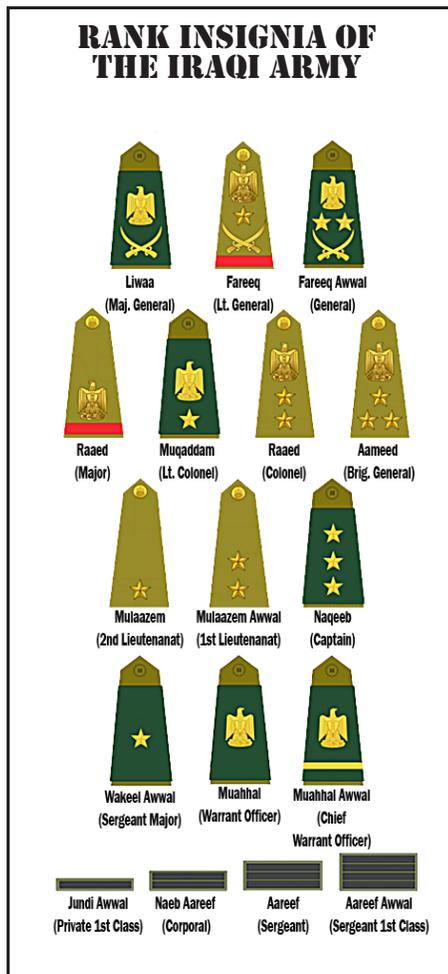
"If the unit actually runs across something that looks like a roadside bomb, they can utilize the robot to check it out and see if that is what it is. This is by far a better option than (sending out Soldiers.)"

The military hand salute, a sign of respect

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

A Soldier walks down a sidewalk on Camp Victory. He peers intently at the caps, collars and blouses of oncoming service members in an effort to discern each person's rank.

If it's an officer, he snaps out a salute as they pass. It's a courtesy rendered countless times by military personnel around the world; one of the most basic displays of courtesy and respect in the military. It is drilled into members of every service branch from the first day of training.



Unfortunately this same Soldier may not realize that the Iraqi soldier he just walked past without saluting – the Soldier with an eagle and two stars on his shoulders – was a “full bird” colonel in the Iraqi Army, and according to Army regulations, deserves the same show of respect as an American officer.

Army Field Manual 3-21.5, Drill and Ceremony, states Soldiers in uniform are required to salute those individuals entitled to a salute unless it is impractical or inappropriate.

Army Regulation 600-25, Salutes, Honors and Visits of Courtesy, expands on that, stating: “It is customary to salute officers of friendly foreign nations when recognized as such.”

When forces from other nations were serving here as part of the multi-national coalition, American troops routinely showed friendly foreign military leaders the same customs and courtesies as American leaders, said Anne Pallotta, executive assistant to United States Forces-Iraq Commanding General, General Ray Odierno. She said U.S. forces should observe the



Photo by Staff Sgt. Dan Yarnall

Spc. John Androde, personal security detail for the USF-I Chief of Staff, salutes Iraqi Army Major Ali Haider. Androde is from Yakima, Wash.

same customs and courtesies in regard to the Iraqis as shown to all of our coalition counterparts.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert L. Menti, commander of the United States Forces - Iraq Special Troops Battalion and III Corps STB is a veteran of three Iraq deployments. He said he feels that American Soldiers fail to do salute Iraqi military officers primarily because they are not as well-trained as they need to be in the identification of Iraqi rank insignia.

Command Sergeant Major Timothy P. Livengood, command sergeant major, USF-I STB and III Corps STB, who is on his third deployment to Iraq, said Soldiers need to be more knowledgeable of the Iraqi military rank insignia.

“I don’t think we’ve done a real good job, in most cases, of ensuring that Soldiers know what the Iraqi rank insignia looks like,” he said. “I think we focus it more toward the interaction with the Iraqi leadership at the senior level.”

Both said that the solution to ensuring that American Soldiers properly recognize Iraqi military leadership begins with American military leadership.

For Livengood, on-the-spot corrections and efforts by senior leaders to enforce standards within the Army are key, but he said ensuring that Soldiers understand how important an issue respect is within the Iraqi culture is equally important.

Menti agreed and said “We, as leaders at platoon level and above, must continually articulate the expected behavior for our Soldiers. It is very important for leaders to sit their Soldiers down and explain why it’s critical in a larger context.”

Menti said U.S. Soldiers have a high standard of conduct to live up to and need to set the example as we continue to advise the Iraqi military.

NCO, from Page 1

“We were able to find out, especially when we went out on a mission that this is the best system for us.”

During the meeting, the Iraqi command sergeant major addressed the senior enlisted leaders and talked about training

Soldiers and the important role NCOs, from junior leaders to senior NCOs, play in a military organization.

“I was impressed by the depth of knowledge he

had on training, and his strong desire to take care of his Soldiers and take care of his Soldiers’ needs,” Coleman said. “In addition to that, I was very impressed with the range of knowledge on the special operations side of the house.”

The ISOF command sergeant major said he has always had the support of his commanders to learn more about the American NCO system. He appreciates that he and his NCOs are trusted to make the decisions they need to, adding that it builds confidence within his NCOs as they learn how to resolve

issues with Soldiers themselves.

Coleman said the Iraqi Army is learning the value in having NCOs who know how to check and recheck their troops and to make things happen on the ground.

“To prepare Soldiers, lead Soldiers and train Soldiers – that’s

where the rubber meets the road,” he said.

Preparing and leading Soldiers is what the Iraqi command sergeant major said he likes about the American NCO corps structure.

“What I like about the whole

thing is that the American system gives me the authority to lead my Soldiers on a mission or in training,” he said.

While the Iraqi NCO corps continues to mature, Coleman said that everyone must continue to build upon the success.

“It is critical that we continue to team up with our Iraqi counterparts at all levels,” he said. “They want a successful noncommissioned officer corps. They want to learn from us and to build a noncommissioned officer corps that will last for years and years to come.”

“The American system gives me the authority to lead my Soldiers on a mission or in training. ”

Iraqi Special Operations Forces Command Sergeant Major

MOS Conversion Bonus Program changes announced

Active duty Soldiers are eligible for up to a \$4,000 bonus if they choose to leave their over strength/balanced MOS and joint one of four other Army jobs in need of highly-qualified Soldiers.

The changes to the program were announced March 23 in MILPER Message 10-089 and offers the bonus for Soldiers in the rank of staff sergeant and below in certain MOS’ to switch career fields. Volunteers for this program must meet certain requirements.

The following MOS’ and rank are authorized the conversion bonus amount listed below.

For more information and to determine eligibility, Soldiers should contact their unit career counselors.

MOS/Title	SGT	SSG
25E - Electromagnetic Spectrum Analyzer	\$4,000	\$4,000
35L – Counter Intelligence Agent	\$4,000	\$0
51C – AL&T Contracting NCO	\$0	\$2,000
79R – Recruiter	\$2,000	\$2,000

New GI bill improves Soldier benefits

As Soldiers look to the future, beyond military life, most believe that education is a critical path to success.

The military also recognizes the need for education and the Post 9/11 GI Bill offers service members the opportunity to pursue their education with little or no out-of-pocket expenses.

The Post 9/11 GI Bill expands on the previous education benefits offered to service members, increasing money available for tuition and books, and even allowing the benefits to be passed along to spouses or their children.

“The Post-9/11 GI Bill is the most aggressive education benefit package out there,” said Robena Tomlinson, a guidance counselor at the education center on Camp Victory and a retired first sergeant.

She said that what makes the bill, enacted Aug. 1, 2009, such an impressive education option for anyone serving on active duty after September 11, 2001, is that there is no cap placed on money for classes. Under the previous benefit packages, a Soldier was authorized a certain amount money, and when it ran out, their GI Bill was done.

In addition, someone using the new bill will be given a basic housing allowance at the E-5 with dependents rate, regardless of the previous rank held, and a book stipend, Tomlinson said. The housing allowance is based on the location of the school.

While there is no longer a cap on the benefits, there is still a four year limit on using the GI Bill, she said. Soldiers are eligible for four years, or 48 months, of benefits.

Perhaps the biggest change, and one that many feel truly makes it a great benefit, is that it can be passed along to your spouse or children.

The new Post 9/11 GI Bill can be transferred to others in your immediate family, Tomlinson said. A Soldier can use one or two years to finish up their degree and then share the balance with their family.

Or if they choose, they can give all four years to their spouse or children and divide the benefits up any way they need.

To determine if a service member qualifies for the new GI bill, everyone will go through a three step process.

Eligibility is established by visiting the Department of Veterans Affairs Web site, at www.gibill.va.gov/ and filling out an eligibility form, Tomlinson said. The VA will process the

form and send a letter stating what you are entitled to as a service member.

After receiving the letter, the second step is the validation process.

For enlisted troops, letters can only be validated by a retention noncommissioned officer. For officers, letters will only be validated by their career managers.

Once eligibility is established and validated, service members will be able to transfer Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, known as TEB, to their family members, she said. To do this, they will need to access the TEB Web site, at www.dmdc.osd.mil/

TEB/ and fill out additional forms. The forms will establish a family member’s eligibility benefits.

The education center counselors offer a monthly class to spell out all of the benefits of the Post 9/11 GI Bill and how to apply.

“I am here to make sure you get the right information,” Tomlinson said. “I don’t give you any of that fluff-fluff.”

For more information about the Post 9/11 GI Bill, service members can go the education center here or contact the VA by calling 800-827-1000 or go to the www.gibill.va.gov Web site.

Editor’s Note: Several members of the USF-I Public Affairs Office contributed to the article.

Post 9/11 GI Bill benefit amounts are determined by the cumulative active duty service performed after Sept. 10, 2001. For more information about the benefits, service members can visit the education center at Camp Victory.

Active Duty Completed after September 10, 2001	Percentage of Maximum Amount Payable
At least 36 months	100%
At least 30 continuous days on active duty and discharged due to service-connected disability	100%
30 months to 36 months	90%
24 months to 30 months	80%
18 months to 24 months	70%
12 months to 18 months	60%
6 months to 12 months	50%
90 days to 6 months	40%

EDUCATION BENEFITS BRIEFING

All service members are encouraged to attend a brief about the new benefits under Chapter 33, the Post-9/11 GI Bill education option.

Robena Tomlinson, a guidance counselor at the education center on Camp Victory and education services officer, Patricia David-Mullins, conducts a one-hour brief each month at Camp Victory's Hope Chapel.

The brief addresses every aspect of the new bill, as well as provides the most up-to-date information regarding the benefits package. Tomlinson and Davis-Mullins answer questions at the end of the brief. "We cover everything. If they have questions I didn't answer, I will be more than happy to get them the answer they need," Tomlinson said.

What: Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits brief

When: Third Wednesday each month

Where: Hope Chapel on Camp Victory

Units can schedule briefs for their troops by directly e-mailing Tomlinson at robena.tomlinson@iraq.centcom.mil, or Davis-Mullins at patricia.davismullin@iraq.centcom.mil.

The only requirement for a unit briefing is that at least 50 people will attend the brief.

Operating Hours

Coalition Cafe DFAC
Breakfast 5:30 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Dinner 5 - 9 p.m.
Midnight Dining 11 p.m. - 1 a.m.

Sports Oasis DFAC
Breakfast 5:30 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Dinner 5 - 9 p.m.

Education Center
8 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Camp Liberty Post Exchange
8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Fitness Center
Open 24 Hours

Victory Main Post Office
Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

USF-I Unit Mail Room
Customer Services/Mail Call:
Daily 3 - 6 p.m.

Al Faw Palace Post Office
Wednesday and Sunday
12:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Golby TMC Sick Call
Monday - Friday 7:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Saturday & Sunday 9 - 11:30 a.m.

Dental Sick Call
Monday - Friday 7:30 - 10:30 a.m.
Saturday 9 - 10:30 a.m.

Mental Health Clinic
Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Saturday 9 a.m. - noon

Pharmacy
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - noon;
1 - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday 9 a.m. - noon

Notice

To all USF-I personnel:
Remember to apply OPSEC to your e-mails, blogs, Facebook, and other social networking sites.

Use the USF-I and Reduction of Forces critical information lists if you are unsure whether or not it should be posted. This applies to any time on a NIPR computer or personal computer.

Make sure your families know about OPSEC as well.

SAFETY ZONE

RUNNING BY THE BOOK: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW IF YOU PLAN TO RUN ON VICTORY BASE COMPLEX

- Individual runners and informal running groups will use sidewalks and road shoulders when available. Runners will make every effort not to force vehicular traffic to cross traffic lanes.
- Runners will face traffic when jogging.
- All runners will wear appropriate reflective clothing, vests, or belts at all times and carry personal identification at all times.
- Informal running groups will be no larger than four persons and will run in a column not abreast.

REMEMBER, MAINTAIN SITUATIONAL AWARENESS AND MAKE SURE YOU CAN BE SEEN.

Traffic Safety is everyone's job

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Dan Yarnall
United States Forces-Iraq Public Affairs

In a "road war" between a human and a vehicle, the vehicle is going to win.

That is the message Lon Cooper, United States Forces-Iraq safety manager wants service members and civilians to remember as they move around Victory Base Complex.

While pedestrians do have the right of way when crossing streets, both the walker and the driver need to assume the other one does not see them.

People on Victory Base seem to put too much faith in assuming drivers are paying attention to everyone from behind the wheel, according to Cooper.

"If I'm walking down the road and somebody is driving by, I don't know what is going on inside that vehicle," he said. "There might be a conversation going on, or any other distraction. I don't know that the driver actually sees me."

Drivers of specialized vehicles such as an up-armored humvee or a Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle may have even more difficulty looking out for pedestrians.

Such is the case for Spc. Zachary Rosling, a member of the personal security detail for the USF-I chief of staff, who drives an up-armored Suburban and said the reduction in visibility makes it a challenge to see people walking around.

"When I'm driving I have to pay attention to the road, other traffic, speed limits, and all the pedestrians," he said. "It's hard to see out of the up-armored Suburbans, with the small windows and limited visibility. It's similar to an up-armored humvee."

Adding to the problem, people take their right-of-way for granted without paying attention, said Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Ploeger. According to the garrison command sergeant major, people tend to be too complacent and think they can just walk out into the road.

To combat the problem, Victory Base Complex regulation 190-5 states that: "Where sidewalks are available, pedestrians will not walk on

"Where sidewalks are available, pedestrians will not walk on the roadway. When sidewalks are not available, pedestrians will walk on the shoulder of the road in the opposite direction as the flow of traffic."

VBC regulation 190-5

the roadway. When sidewalks are not available, pedestrians will walk on the shoulder of the road in the opposite direction as the flow of traffic."

Nighttime compounds the safety issue for pedestrians, and many people are not wearing their reflective belts.

"Sometimes people get distracted or for whatever reason, they just walk off and leave their belt lying on their desk, table, or bed," Cooper said. "Some people make a conscious decision not to wear it simply because they don't believe the risk is there."

The use of reflective belts is not only a smart decision; it is also required by policy.

According to the regulation currently in effect, "Wear of the reflective belt during hours of reduced visibility (dusk to dawn) is mandatory by all personnel regardless of uniform worn. Safety is the responsibility of everyone!"

"Without that (reflective) belt, it's definitely a challenge to spot pedestrians at night. It's dark out there; sometimes street lights are on, and sometimes they're not," said Cooper. It takes involvement from all levels of leadership to correct the problem and ensure their personnel are safe, according to Ploeger. Leaders must continually put out safety messages and make on-the-spot corrections.

"We are pushing this for troop safety," he said. "What it really boils down to is we are trying to make sure everyone goes home in one piece."



A Soldier wears his reflective belt properly as he walks on Camp Victory.