Victory Times

Telling the United States Forces - Iraq story

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Iraqi government takes control of Cropper TIF

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey

Major Gen. Jerry Cannon, United States Forces-Iraq deputy commanding general for detainee operations and provost marshal general (right), and Sameer Al-Haddad, receivership secretariat of Iraq, sign documents officially transferring the Cropper Theater Internment Facility to the Government of Iraq, July 15 at Camp Cropper. The facility was renamed Karkh Prison, by the Iraq Minister of Justice Dara Nur al-Deen at the ceremony.

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

The Cropper Theater Internment Facility, the last major U.S. run detention facility in country, was officially transferred from U.S. to Government of Iraq control during a ceremony at Camp Cropper July 15.

Major Gen. Jerry Cannon, United States Forces-Iraq deputy commanding general for detainee operations and provost marshal general, Sameer Al-Haddad, receivership secretariat of Iraq, and Dara Nur al-Deen, the minister of justice, signed the transfer documents during the ceremony.

"The transfer of the Cropper Theater Internment Facility is a major milestone

See Cropper, Page 4

INSIDE:

U.S Forces working to transfer bridges **Page 3**

COINSOC brings expertise to VBC **Page 5**

Tips for operational security **Page 6**

Faith is an anchor in difficult times

By Chaplain (Capt.) Paul Polk
VBC Garrison Chaplain

A number of years ago, a woman named Ruth Jones wrote a song entitled "In Times Like These."

The first verse proclaims "In times like these, you need a savior. In times like these you need an anchor. Be very sure, be very sure, your anchor holds and grips the solid rock."

The song quickly became a christian classic, driven in part by its relevance to real life during difficult times.

The song was written in the early 1940's, during World War II, but it could have been written at any time in our nation's history. Every decade brings its own challenges, and in each period we discover new struggles we must face. Jones' song is still true: in times like these we need something solid.

Courtesy photo

When we feel the stress and pressure collapsing us, we try to control everything we can. We grab power wherever we can, we begin to dictate, dominate, and manipulate. But control is not an effective rock to which we can cling because so much is outside of our control.

Many things in life promise security, but ultimately they fail. Status, prestige, money, even health; any of these can disappear with little notice. In times like these, we need a supreme being, an anchor, a rock.

How we define our anchor or higher power will vary based on our faith tradition. Jones, being a christian, declared in the chorus to her song that the solid rock is Jesus. For others, the stabilizing force in their lives might be the teachings of Buddha, or the Torah or Koran. The major religions may relate to the divine in different ways, but they all offer an anchor or a rock to which its followers might cling.

Communities of faith are there to help one another through difficult times. These provide a sense of belonging, a place of rest, a safe space in which we can express our fears and speak our doubts.

No matter how deep our personal spirituality might be, most of us still need a community of believers to help us survive the "times like these."

We need to gather with others who find strength and stability in that sacred truth. When my hope is faltering, I can hold on because yours is strong. When you are feeling fragile, I can do the same for you.

SARC Smarts

SAPR (Sexual Assault Prevention and Response) Program was designed by the Department of Defense to put in place a means of eliminating incidents of sexual assault through a program that centers on the training and prevention of sexual assault in the military. The program provides training to Soldiers providing awareness on the means to prevent anyone from being a victim of sexual assault.

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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U.S. Forces to transfer 13 bridges to GOI

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

United States Forces-Iraq is working to transfer 13 Mabey-Johnson bridges deemed as excess property by the U.S. Army, to the Government of Iraq.

The bridges were originally put in place as temporary structures to assure the mobility of U.S. and Iraqi forces. They have since become vital to local residents who rely on them for travel and access to markets and schools, said Lt. Col. Kelly Slaven, USF-I J7 chief of operations.

According to Slaven, the government of Iraq submitted a request justifying the transfer of the bridges and then the leadership of the three U.S. divisions conducted key leader engagements with the communities where military bridges were located to determine the effect of removing the bridges or leaving them in place.

"These bridges currently serve to support our military operations, as well as quality of life and economic opportunities for the local communities. However, as we draw down our forces they will become excess property and it will be in the best interest of the U.S. forces, the Iraqi people and the ISF for them to be transferred to the Government of Iraq and remain in place," Cox added.

In June, the Army deemed seven bridges as excess equipment. Prior to that, in 2009, six other bridges were announced as eligible for transfer to the Government of Iraq.

"The bridge transfers are a major part of our strategic partnership program," said Brig. Gen. Kendall P. Cox, USF-I J7, director of engineers. "These bridges will continue to provide the Iraqi people with a much needed capability to move goods to markets in areas where there previously has not been access to cross existing rivers or canals."

Most of the 13 bridges approved for transfer are in the southern and western belts around Baghdad, and fall into Capt. Charles Taylor's 250th Engineers Multi-role Bridge Company area of operations.

His unit is responsible for inspecting and maintaining more than half the bridges slated for transfer and he understands why U.S. forces are leaving the bridges and has seen first-hand the impact they have on communities.

"They rely (on them) a lot for their mobility, as civilians, to be able to travel back and forth," Taylor said. "We've been out at bridge sites during school season, when school is in session and you'll have a hundred kids walking across that bridge to go to school. To know that if that bridge isn't there, that those children wouldn't be able to go to school, that's something that my Soldiers take a lot of pride in, but it's also something that means a lot to the community."

"This is a win-win situation for U.S. forces and the people of Iraq," said Slaven. "U.S. forces brought over a lot of equipment and resources to sustain ourselves here in Iraq, and as we continue our reduction in forces, it is clear that there is a continued need for some of this equipment here in Iraq for use by the ISF and Iraqi people. Transferring these bridges to the people of Iraq and the Government of Iraq will enhance our strategic partnership and is the right thing to do."

Slaven said that Iraq was the world's leading buyer of Mabey-Johnson bridges prior to Operation Desert Storm. And based on the condition of those bridges, he said he is confident that the Iraqi government is fully capable of maintaining the bridges, once they are transferred.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Dan Yarnall

From left, Pfc. Ron Murray from Stratford, Conn., and Sgt. Nathan Lehman from Sault Ste Marie, Mich., with 250th Engineering Company Multi-role Bridge Company, Connecticut Army National Guard, build a Mabey-Johnson Logistical Support Bridge at Salman Pak. Thirteen Mabey-Johnson bridges in use throughout Iraq are slated for transfer to the Iraqi government in 2011.

Cropper, from Page 1 —

along the democratic journey of self-determination and reliance for the Government of Iraq," Cannon said. "Success is not only measured in the security gains, but in the enhanced capability and capacity of the ministries. Our continued partnership with the Ministry of Justice has enabled the transfer of detainees in a safe and orderly manner to the Iraqi correctional service in accordance with the security agreement."

The Cropper TIF currently houses approximately 1,500 detainees being held on Government of Iraq arrest warrants, detention orders or convictions. The facility was used by U.S. forces for the care and custody of detainees since April 2003 and can hold up to 4,000 prisoners.

According to Cannon, the transfer has set the stage for the continued success of the Iraqi Correctional Service and the Ministry of Justice.

"Conditions have been set with a trained force and with modern functional and well-built facilities that will last for years to come," he said.

"We would like to thank our American friends for delivering Cropper prison to the Ministry of Justice," said al Deen. "After strengthening the security and stability of our country, the Iraqi government will be taking over the responsibility and administration of areas related to national security, including the Iraqi Corrections Service, detention facilities and prisons."

Photo by Lee Craker

Major Gen. Jerry Cannon, United States Forces-Iraq deputy commanding general for detainee operations and provost marshal general (right), symbolically turns over the key to the Cropper Theater Internment Facility to Dara Nur al-Deen, the Iraq minister of justice, on behalf of USF-I during the transfer ceremony July 15 at Camp Cropper.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Roger Dey

Framed documents officially certifying the transfer of the Cropper Theater Internment Facility from United States Forces-Iraq to the Government of Iraq bear the signatures of Maj. Gen. Jerry Cannon, and Dara Nur al-Deen.

The TIF, which has been renamed Karkh Prison by the MOJ, is manned by approximately 700 Iraqi corrections officers and about 100 support staff.

The facility has had $48 million in infrastructure investments, including six detainee compounds, a family visitation center and supply buildings, as well as a tactical operations center, dining facility and logistics support area for the corrections officers.

"This is the first day of a new era, one in which all elements of the Iraqi criminal justice system are able to assert their role in providing for the continued safety and security of the Iraqi people," Cannon said.

The Cropper facility is the third and final major detention facility transferred to Iraqi control or closed in the last year. The Camp Bucca TIF closed in September 2009 and the detainees were transferred to the Taji Theater Internment Facility and Reconciliation Center and Cropper TIF.

On March 30, the Taji TIFRC was transferred to the Government of Iraq.

Leaders learn local lessons at COINSOC

Photo by Pvt. Daneille Hendrix

Command Sgt. Maj. William Johnson with 1st Armored Division, United States Division-Center, speaks with other command sergeants major about their impact on their units during a presentation at the Counter Insurgency and Stability Operations Center, July 10.

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

As units deploy to Iraq, one of the critical challenges they face is learning the culture and how to effectively interact with the local population.

The Counter Insurgency and Stability Operations Center at Camp Victory provides unit leaders with training that immerses them in the local language and culture to provide them the tools they need to best communicate with the people of Iraq, said Col. Robert Shaw, COINSOC commander.

The center offers two courses, the COINSOC Leader's Course, and the Iraqi Partnership and Leadership Course.

The Leader's Course is six days and designed for incoming brigade commanders and their leadership teams. The course allows them to learn area-specific information from the units they are replacing.

"The remarkable thing is they had the theater commander and the commander of the brigade we're relieving come in and speak about their experiences through the year," said Lt. Col. Eddie Gillon, commander of the 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, which recently deployed to Al Asad Air Base.

"Hearing them speak about challenges they faced and how they were handled, plus hearing about upcoming challenges we may face, was very helpful," he said.

"Outgoing leadership will also bring in Iraqi personnel they have worked with over the year," said Shaw, "This has the benefit of establishing relationships here at COINSOC before they arrive at their final destination."

According to Shaw, no two classes are the same because they are continuously updated and fitted to each incoming unit.

To prepare for these courses, COINSOC personnel are constantly traveling to keep classes up to date, he said.

"We visit units who have been on the ground for six months and try to learn as much as we can about what they're doing," Shaw said. "We come back with that information and we update our classes based upon what we've learned during that trip. Then we build a class specifically for that area and the replacement unit."

"The classes are all relevant and cutting edge," said Gillon,

See COINSOC, Page 8

Four tips for operational security

Story by Lt. j.g. Troy Loyd
United States Forces-Iraq OPSEC Officer

Wherever we serve on military deployments, there are always little things that help to make the time go by faster, such as the packages we get from family, friends and relatives. The internet allows us a greater ability to order and enjoy what our great country has to offer, and care packages from home remind us that we are loved and appreciated for our contribution to our nation.

Our adversaries also enjoy the little things—tips and clues we leave behind in our carelessness that can easily aid their intent to harm us. The following four simple steps will help keep you and your battle buddies safe while protecting your family and friends back home:

1. Ensure that unserviceable or unwanted uniforms stay out of the trash. Uniforms and uniform items should be turned into the Central Issue Facility or your unit's supply officer or noncommissioned officer-in-charge. Your command should already have a plan to take care of these so make sure that you are engaging your chain of command to learn your local policy. Uniforms that are haphazardly thrown away are easily used by our adversaries in plots to harm us.

2. Do not post your movements or work-related activities on any website, blog or social networking site such as Facebook, MySpace, or Twitter. It is very easy for our adversaries to exploit certain security weaknesses inherent to these sites or to create a fake account and gain permission to see your account updates. The most seemingly innocuous information can be exploited and used to harm you, your unit or your family.

3. Keep any conversation in public or on a cell, satellite or Iridium phone strictly unclassified! But don't stop there: Even unclassified conversations can contain sensitive information that can be used against us. Never discuss dates or times for unit or individual movements in public, such as at the dining facility, Green Bean, or while walking around camp. Those around you without a need to know are listening and might tell or sell what they hear to the nearest interested party. It has been proved that unclassified information provides 80 percent of what our adversaries need to plan attacks against us.

4. USF-I policy is to shred 100 percent of paper trash to include any address labels from received boxes or letters—use common sense—newspapers and magazines don't count. This might seem tedious and overly cautious but this simple action has the power to keep this information out of unwanted hands: Having your address is an opportunity for an adversary to attempt to cause emotional or financial distress to our loved ones by sending false information or threatening e-mails or letters.

These tips and techniques are certainly not all inclusive, but represent quick and simple ways for all of us to practice good OPSEC.

Sexual Assault is incompatible with Army Values and the Warrior Ethos

For more information or to report an incident, contact your Deployed Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (DSARC) at: 485-5085 or 435-2235

VBC Facility Operating Hours

Sports Oasis DFAC
Breakfast 5:00 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Dinner 5 - 8:30 p.m.
Midnight chow 11:00 p.m. - 1:00 a.m.
Sandwich Bar open 24 hours

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

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

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

Paul Smith Gym
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.

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

Websites

Check it out:

USF-I Web pages
www.usf-iraq.com
www.flickr.com/photos/mnfiraq
www.twitter.com/USF_Iraq

Facebook -
United States Forces-Iraq
U.S. Army III Corps
Phantom Battalion
III Corps Fort Hood

COINSOC, from Page 5

who recently attended the leadership class with his unit staff. "It's the latest and greatest about what's happening in theater and gives us a chance to learn our role in the upcoming year."

Shaw said that up to 120 personnel can attend the CLC and it can be shortened to four days depending on a unit's schedule.

The Iraqi Partnership and Leadership Course only allows 50 students into the 10 day class, said Shaw. It is designed for anybody who is going to be partnered with Iraqis. It teaches communication and understanding about the culture in Iraq.

Master Sgt. Gerry Aponte, a member of the COINSOC staff, said the 40 hours of Arabic is the most demanding and rewarding part of the course.

It's the latest and greatest about what's happening in theater and gives us a chance to learn our role in the upcoming year.

"In ten days, Soldiers learn the basic Arabic Alphabet, writing, and phrases and they are assigned to an Iraqi instructor who they will continue to work with throughout the course," he said.

"It's really an immersion course into Iraqi culture," Shaw said. "Everything they learn is reinforced throughout the day with practical exercises we built with Iraqi nationals who work with us."

After the end of the day, students have the chance to sit with Iraqi instructors or translators in an environment outside the classroom, he said.

"Here they can learn about the habits and customs from our interpreters that are not discussed in class, or watch the Iraqi news and discuss local politics over a glass of chai," Shaw said.

These classes help units understand the situation they are going into. Ultimately, the information that COINSOC passes along solidifies our relationship with the Iraqis, Gillon said.

Warrant officers celebrate 92 years of service

Chief Warrant Officer Jeanne Y. Pace, executive officer for the United States Forces-Iraq Manpower and Personnel staff section, assigned to III Corps based out of Fort Hood, Texas, and Warrant Officer Jermaine A. Solomon with the 373rd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion out of Beaumont, Texas, participate in the cake cutting at a dinner commemorating the 92nd anniversary of the Army Warrant Officer Corps, July 9, in the Al Faw Palace ballroom at Camp Victory. More than 100 warrant officers attended the event, including two from the Navy and one from the Marine Corps. (Photo by Warrant Officer Shannon Casey)