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November 26, 2009

PA Guard Soldier becomes American citizen in Iraq

By Sgt. James Waltz
28th CAB



BAGHDAD, Iraq – Many come to the U.S. seeking citizenship, but of those, only a few make the decision to prove their loyalty through military service.

One of those few, Sgt. Edgardo E. Arrazola, became a U. S. citizen during a naturalization ceremony at Al Faw Palace in Baghdad, Iraq Nov. 11.

Born in Cartagena, Columbia, Arrazola, his sister and grandmother left Columbia when he was 7-year-old to join his parents in Perth Amboy, N.J., where his father was a civil engineer and his mother was a postal worker.

“We tried to keep our family heritage by speaking Spanish within our household and eating traditional Columbian food,” said Arrazola, a member of the Pennsylvania National Guard’s 628th Aviation Support Battalion.

After graduating from Perth Amboy High School in 2004, Arrazola immediately joined the National Guard.

“I wasn’t really sure what I wanted to do. The recruiter said, ‘Why not try fixing Black Hawks?’ and I thought, ‘Why not?’” Arrazola said. “And here I am today, working with Bravo Company with the 628th, fixing Black Hawks in Iraq. How many people get that opportunity?”

In March, while working 12-hour days, seven days a week, Arrazola began his citizenship paperwork.

“I was really disappointed I missed the first naturalization ceremony with Vice President Joe Biden and then again in Arifjan, Kuwait.” He said. “Later, I was told my paperwork went through and I was going to Baghdad on Veterans Day!”

Shortly after arriving in Baghdad, Arrazola had his interview with Jonah Hadary, deputy district director for U.S.



Photo by Sgt. James Waltz

Sgt. Edgardo Arrazola (left) and Staff Sgt. Robert Smail of the Pennsylvania National Guard’s 628th Aviation Support Battalion, pose for a photograph before boarding a CH-47 Chinook for a flight to Baghdad. Arrazola and Smail, his sponsor, were going to Baghdad to attend a naturalization ceremony at Al Faw Palace Nov. 11.

“Here I am today, working with Bravo Company with the 628th, fixing Black Hawks in Iraq. How many people get that opportunity?”

**--Sgt. Edgardo E. Arrazola
628th Aviation Support Battalion**



Photo by Sgt. James Waltz

Sgt. Edgardo Arrazola shakes the hand of Robert Daum, director of citizenship, at Al Faw Palace, in Baghdad, Iraq Nov. 11. Arrazola became a U.S. citizen during a naturalization ceremony that morning.

Citizenship and Immigrations Services’ Rome District.

“The questions were straightforward. They basically checked my comprehension of language and understanding of U.S. history,” Arrazola said. “After immediately answering the first six questions right, my interview was completed within 10 minutes. I am glad I studied as hard as I did.”

During the ceremony, each Soldier received their Certificate of Citizen-

ship, a flag that was flown over Al Faw Palace from Command Sgt. Maj. Frank A. Grippe, senior enlisted leader of Multi-National Corps – Iraq, and a coin from Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby, I Corps commander.

For more of Sgt. Waltz’s stories, visit:
www.TheRedBulls.org/Waltz

New hometown inspired USO opens

By Spc. Samuel Soza
367th MPAD



COB BASRA – A sidewalk café in the middle of the desert would give any Soldier plenty of reason to pause.

But with the grand opening of the largest USO in southwest Asia at Contingency Operating Base Basra, a café is just one of many hometown influences.

The café includes glowing lampposts that would fit any downtown locale, and the fireplace, hi-definition television, and card table areas all have their own respective “living room” feel.

There is even a dedicated

Guitar Hero and Rock Band room, “battle stations” containing X-box and Playstation 3 consoles and a spacious cinema.

Throughout the USO, which operates from 10 a.m. to 6 a.m. every day, consideration was given to the colors, layout and lighting of the facility, said McConnell.

The facility boasts three United Through Reading rooms, where service members can record a video of themselves reading a book and send it, and the book, home to a loved. This is one of the most



Photo by Spc. Samuel Soza

Sgt. Andrew Ricken, of Washington DC, UH-60 Black Hawk crew chief, “B” Co., 1-150th Air Support Regiment, takes time out to jump onto a different kind of “battle station” one of the new X-box console stations at the USO facility on Contingency Operating Base Basra.

popular features, McConnell said.

McConnell was involved with the creation of a similar, but slightly smaller, USO at Camp Beuhring, Kuwait, and that facility served as an in-

valuable model for creating the one on COB Basra, she said.

“We didn’t reinvent the wheel, we just tweaked it,” McConnell said.

For more of Spc. Soza’s stories , visit: www.TheRedBulls.org/Soza



Turkey Day Trivia

The total dollar value for Thanksgiving meals in Iraq is \$2,741,483.49.

Here is a breakdown of quantities and dollar values for Thanksgiving meals for servicemembers in Iraq

- Raw and precooked whole turkey 225,980 pounds, \$87,421.94; \$795,359.08;
- Turkey white meat 77,648 pounds, \$416,969.76;
- Turkey dark meat 73,296 pounds, \$236,013.12;
- Ham 40,826 pounds, \$135,020.26;
- Beef 23,536 pounds, \$128,019.30;
- Shrimp 28,764 pounds, \$180,062.64;
- Stuffing mix 37,107 pounds, \$87,421.94;
- Potatoes 41,515 pounds, \$102,362.32;
- Sweet potatoes 9,702 cans, \$60,799.20;
- Vegetables, corn, green beans: 59,435 pounds, \$80,771.42;
- Cranberry sauce 7,188 cans, \$52,448.44;
- Pie 26,946 pies, \$245,320.33;
- Cake 13,544 cakes, \$220,915.68

ARABIC WORD OF THE DAY

Min-Fudluk-Please



بعد الفطرك من فضلك

THE RED BULL REPORT

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Iraqi Air Force squadron flies solo

Pilots of the 70th Squadron train new recruits and put the protection of Iraqis into their own hands

By Spc. Samuel Soza
367th MPAD



COB Basra – The saying goes, “Pride comes before the fall”, but since the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime it has been the opposite for the Iraqi Air Force’s 70th Squadron.

Working with U.S. forces, they now have increased their pride as pilots.

Now, the 70th is performing their own training from beginning to end, proving the era of independence they have worked so diligently for has arrived.

The goal has always been to create a sustainable training squadron that can effectively transition new recruits into operational missions and put the protection of Iraqis into their own hands, said Col. Sami Saeed, squadron commander for the 70th.

One important tactic was taking advantage of the “train the trainer” mentality, said U.S. Air Force Maj. Al Danza, native of Boise, Idaho, director of operations in the 124th Air Support Operations Squadron.

The self-sustaining method allows the squadron to pass on basic knowledge but also creates an element of leadership training.

“We started off with simple air-to-ground check-ins with the ground commander as the mission began,” said Danza.

“It was all basic intelligence, surveillance, and re-

connaissance stuff; teaching them to fly with their [sensor] pods,” he said.

Training begins with lectures, written exams, and courses on in-flight emergencies and limitations. The new pilots also learn the technical aspects of the surveillance cameras.

Soon after, without any time in a simulator, the pilots are 2,000 feet in the air, putting their classroom instruction to practical use.

Eventually, the training allows the pilots to follow multiple vehicles and individuals, monitor buildings and search main supply routes for improvised explosive devices.

“It’s become natural for them, just like anybody else,

and now they are able to work on the more advanced stuff,” said Danza.

In training, U.S. Airmen act as the opposing force. They drive around Contingency Operating Base Basra in a truck while the unit’s Seabird Seekers and CH2000 surveillance planes identify and follow them.

During another scenario, the Airmen move on foot and enter a building while the Iraqi pilots circle overhead, keeping watch.

“They are constantly communicating with the ground commander, who is also a student, and since they are working with the Iraqi special operation forces, their surveillance will allow them to find the OpFor on the

ground,” Danza explained.

The integration of ground forces allows multiple personnel to experience more realistic training at the same time.

“And that’s where we are today, doing the more complex type missions as these guys have gotten used to what the missions entail,” said Danza.

“They have the equipment, they know how to use it, now it’s just about transitioning from a training aspect to an operational environment,” he said.

AIR FORCE
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HOMETOWN HIGHLIGHT

The Statehouse in Boise and dozens of other buildings in the city are geothermally heated from underground hot springs.



Photo by Spc. Samuel Soza

A pilot with the Iraqi Air Force 70th Squadron conducts preflight and communication checks in a Seabird Seeker surveillance plane at COB Basra Nov. 19. After much hard work, the 70th is conducting training with minimal involvement from American troops.

From Page 3 AIR FORCE

The biggest challenge was working through civilian interpreters who were not familiar with some of the “air lingo” and concepts that did not translate easily into Arabic, Danza said.

Once the barrier was broken, there was instant solidarity among the men.

“I’ve found that pilots are pilots, the world over. I mean these guys, we instantly bonded being fighter pilots,” he said.

The squadron is made up of pilots who flew in the Iran-Iraq War who have hundreds of hours of combined flight time.

In fact, under Hussein’s regime, Saeed was forced to fly against the Americans during the Persian Gulf War.

Years later he met U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Bill Iuliano, air liaison officer with the 84th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron, who had flown against him in the Gulf War. Working together, Iuliano realized F-15s

escorting his F-111 bomber had almost shot Saeed down during the Gulf War.

Instead, the two had the opportunity to rebuild the Iraqi Air Force, and a plaque from Iuliano is mounted on Saeed’s wall reading, “Praise Allah for faulty maintenance.”

“That was my boss,” said Danza.

The Iraqi Air Force was founded in 1931 and steadily rose to be one of the largest air forces in the Middle East until the Persian Gulf War, when it sustained heavy losses.

Soon afterward, during the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, many fighters were ordered to be dismantled or buried in the desert.

After the invasion, it was a lengthy process to rebuild what had been lost.

The Iraqi Air Force performed its first medical evacuation March 4, 2007 when a wounded Iraqi policeman was taken from the 28th Combat Support Hospital to Baghdad.

In 2008, they played a major role in assisting ground



Photo by Spc. Samuel Soza

Col. Sami Saeed (right), commander of the Iraqi Air Force 70th Squadron, conducts preflight checks on a CH2000 surveillance plane during training at COB Basra. A Gulf War veteran, Saeed was almost shot down by the same American Air Force he would eventually work with to rebuild the Iraqi Air Force.

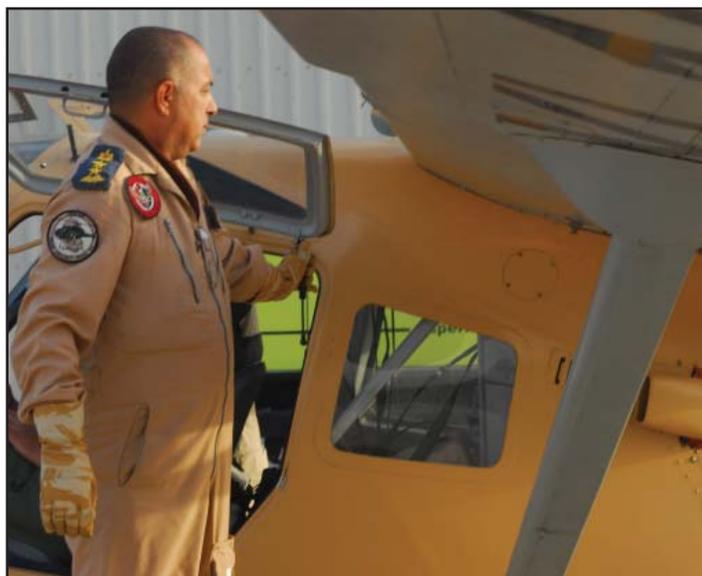


Photo by Spc. Samuel Soza

A pilot with the Iraqi Air Force 70th Squadron conducts preflight checks on one of the squadrons’ Seabird Seeker surveillance planes.

troops in the heavy fighting against the Mahdi Army in the city of Basrah.

Now, the 70th is helping with border security, conducting over-flights of cities and performing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions around oil pipelines.

Furthering the independence of the 70th to train, plan, and conduct operations is a milestone in the reconstruction of the Iraqi Air Force as a whole.

“I think they have strong leadership in place right now and I think their leadership is driven to-

wards that goal,” said Danza.

“Just like anybody else in the military, they love their country and want to support it as much as they can,” he said, “so they are going to drive toward those operational goals and be able to perform any mission that is tasked toward them.”

Saeed also sees a sustainable training squadron and the confidence it instills as one more step toward the recovery of Iraq.

“Before, we would get in our planes and not expect to come home,” he said. “Now it is different.”

For more of Spc. Soza’s stories, visit: www.TheRedBulls.org/Soza



Photo by By Spc. Maurice A. Galloway, 17th Fires Brigade

Chaplain Chief coins 17th FB Soldier

Maj. Gen. Douglas L. Carver, U.S. Army chief of chaplains, shakes hands with Staff Sgt. Caroline A. Keller, a chaplain assistant with 17th Fires Brigade, at Contingency Operating Base Basra Nov. 23. Chaplain Carver presented Keller with a coin for all of her hard work and dedication to the Chaplains Corps, during his Thanksgiving tour of Iraq.

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THANKSGIVING SERVICES

INTERIM CHAPEL

Join us!

Thursday, November 26, 2009

Interfaith Service
4:00 p.m.

Catholic Mass
9:00 a.m.

Questions? Contact 34th DSTB Chaplain Assistant SGT Groeneweg at 858-4596 or jonathan.groeneweg@iraq.centcom.mil.

Green Beans Coffee

Interim Chapel Tent

D-Main



Around the world in 34 seconds



PHILIPPINES - Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo placed two southern provinces and a city under emergency rule on Tuesday after 24 people were killed in the worst election-related violence in the country. "There is an urgent need to prevent and suppress the occurrence of several other incidents of lawless violence," Cerge Remonde, the president's press secretary, told reporters. The orders were issued as troops, using shovels and bare hands, dug up hastily covered graves on a grassy hillside in Maguindanao to recover the victims of the massacre on Monday. A photographer at the scene saw 22 bodies, 14 women and 8 men, with bullet and hack wounds. Some of the dead men had their hands tied behind their back and one of the women was pregnant. Eight of those found dead were local journalists.



WASHINGTON - A suspect in the bombing of the USS Cole and a man wanted in connection with the bombing of a 1982 Pan Am flight have been added to the U.S. government's list of "Most Wanted Terrorists," the FBI said on Tuesday. The additions bring the number of suspects named on the roster to 24. Fahd Mohammed Ahmed al-Quso is wanted for his role in the bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen, The FBI said, adding that he is believed to be 35 and may be living in Yemen. Seventeen U.S. sailors were killed when the Navy warship was attacked in the Yemeni port of Aden in October 2000. Husayn Muhammad al-Umari is wanted in connection with the 1982 bombing of Pan Am Flight 830, which killed a teenage passenger and wounded 16. A U.S. State Department program is offering up to \$5 million for information leading to their capture or convictions.



NEW YORK - Albert Pujols won his third National League (NL) Most Valuable Player award on Tuesday, having led the St Louis Cardinals to the Central Division title. The 29-year-old, who batted .327 with 47 home runs and 135 runs batted in, was a unanimous choice as he took the award for the second straight year. Pujols led the league in home runs for the first time in his career and was third in batting and RBI. He also topped the NL in runs, total bases and on-base percentage. An eight-times All-Star, Pujols totaled a perfect 448 points in voting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Florida Marlins shortstop Hanley Ramirez, who won the batting title with a .342 average, was second with 233 points.



TAIPEI - A man in Taiwan was robbed of more than \$2 million in cash that he had just withdrawn from the bank, a police official said on Tuesday. Three masked gunmen robbed the 50-year-old victim on Monday afternoon in the southern city of Tainan, logging the highest-value robbery in city history with a heist of 2.39 million, said a police investigation official surnamed Chang. The gunmen approached the victim, surnamed Tsai, as he drove from the bank to his watch shop nearby, Taiwan's Central News Agency said. One shot a shop employee in the foot during a scuffle to fight off the gunmen, the agency said. Police are looking for the three men while advising people in the city of 769,000 to be more vigilant.

