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“Positively affecting the life of one child is what makes it all worth it.”

~ Staff Sgt. Danillo Martinez
1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment Task Force Pathfinder



Photos by Pfc. Ronald Leydet

Iraqi children surround Staff Sgt. Danillo Martinez, platoon sergeant assigned to “A” Company, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment, Task Force Pathfinder after singing a local Arabic song in Al Harbi Village, Nov. 1.



Sgt. Kyle Hicks, from Rouses Point, N.Y., Alpha Section Team Leader, passes out new backpacks and school supplies to the third grade class at Al Diyar School in Al Muthanna, Nov. 1.

Investing in Iraq's Next Generation

By Capt. John Landry
TF 2-29 Pathfinder, 4th BCT, 1st Armd. Div 

COB ADDER – Educating children might not be the first thing Americans discuss when the subject of Iraq comes up.

Yet, for the Soldiers of Task Force Pathfinder, helping the next generation of Iraqis obtain a basic education is a critical part of their mission. In order to leave a safe, stable nation when American Soldiers depart, Iraq must develop the social infrastructure required to sustain the progress made.

Prior to deployment Soldiers train to perform conventional military tasks, whether serving as riflemen, tankers, or cooks. When they leave for deployments, they depart confi-

dent in their abilities.

The Soldiers of Task Force Pathfinder took their training one step further, adding a range of Civil Affairs and project management skills to their pre-deployment preparations.

Through that training, they have adapted to a new role. They now provide military support to civil capacity operations, combining their movement and security expertise with a broader understanding of economic and social development as part of the Army's first 'advise and assist' brigade.

An important component of the advise and assist mission is supporting civil capacity.

In Southern Iraq, this means working alongside the U.S. State Department's Provincial Reconstruction

Teams (PRT), assisting efforts that range from providing clean drinking water to repairing damaged hospitals.

Among these many efforts, educating the children of Iraq is an important facet.

“We have made great progress in this country,” said Lt. Col. Michael Eastman, Commander of Task Force Pathfinder. “Sustaining those gains beyond an American presence here requires that the next generation of Iraqi leaders have access to a basic education.”

More than simply delivering school books and supplies, their



Photos courtesy of Basrah Blind Association

The first group of Basrah Blind Association members to complete a course that teaches the Braille method of reading and how to use assistive, talking computer software stands outside of the association's buildings. With financial assistance from the U.S. embassy, the first class of 25 students graduated the last week of November from the 18-day BBA course and 50 more members are slated for training in the next two months.

PRT supports Basrah Blind Association

By Michael D. Sunshine
Provincial Reconstruction Team, Basrah province

BASRAH – A stable society depends on a variety of non-governmental institutions to employ and educate its citizens and add meaning to their lives.

Under the former regime, many elements of civil society were neglected in Iraq, including the handicapped. Upon hearing of the needs of the Basrah Blind Association, the U. S. State Department's Provincial Reconstruction Team reached out to learn how the United States might help.

"It's an honor to meet Americans," said BBA President Surror Yousif Nasar when meeting representatives of the Basrah PRT. "I have always understood the United States is a country that cares



Mr. Nasar demonstrates talking software to a member of the Basrah Blind Association.

about all segments of society."

Nasar, who is blind and a leading advocate for BBA, teaches social studies in the Basrah school system.

Despite the many needs of BBA, it receives no support from the central or local government. Many BBA members, Nasar explained, have never learned to

use the Braille method to read and write.

For others, there is voice software enabling computers to talk. With this technology, Nasar said, BBA members could email and surf the Internet.

The Basrah PRT turned to the U.S. embassy to fund equipment and training. The request was approved, and the first class of 25 students graduated in November from the 18-day BBA course, and 50 more members are slated for training in the next two months.

The PRT is encouraging the provincial government, private sector and religious institutions to take a leadership role in supporting groups like BBA in the future.

For more information on reconstruction efforts, visit www.TheRedBulls.org

THE RED BULL REPORT

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Bulldogs teach IA commandos new tricks

By Spc. Maurice A. Galloway
17th Fires Brigade 

COB BASRA – When talking about any kind of training dealing with things that fly, it may not be the best idea to label the training a ‘crash course’. However that’s exactly what a group of 14th Iraqi Army commandos received during their intense week of training at Camp Wessam from the 1st Battalion (Air Assault), 377th Field Artillery Regiment.

Soldiers from 1-377th, “B” Battery (Bulldogs) Air Reactionary Force engaged in training designed to integrate Iraqi Commandos.

The course was more of a refresher, as many of the commandos have already gone through similar training in the past.

The course focused on using proper techniques at landing zones, loading and unloading from helicopters in secure and unsecure locations and establishing perimeter security in hostile and friendly environments.

“These commandos approached the training with the right attitude and an eagerness to learn,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jeff L. Keese, “B” Battery, platoon sergeant and ARF training instructor.

Keese said that they had been training the Iraqi commandos in ARF techniques for five days, spending about two days on each group that they trained.

The 1-377th Soldiers put the commandos through an intense yet repetitive regiment of drills that focused on making procedures second nature for them.



Photos by Spc. Maurice A. Galloway

Ready to lay down suppressive fire, the 14th Iraqi Army commandos take aim after a simulated helicopter landing during their ARF training conducted by 1st Battalion, 377th FAR at Camp Wessam, Nov. 21.

“When the call comes in and we’re needed in the air, there isn’t much time to think; you have to be able to just react,” said Spc. William C. Mautler, “B” Battery, cannon crew member. “It’s for that exact reason that we’re making them go over the same drills five-to- six times, so when the time comes they’ll be ready without a shadow of a doubt.”

The drills took the commandos through the intricate process of responding to an incident by air, replicating each step they would be faced with during an actual response.

“We can’t simulate the noise that the choppers make, but we can teach them to communicate without being able to hear,” said Pvt. Cheston K. Bun, “B”

Battery, cannon crew member and native of Philadelphia, Pa. “The hand signals that we use are universal and the commandos have picked up on them at a much more rapid pace than we had anticipated.”

Although much of the training was done on the ground, each of the groups did have the opportunity to conduct an actual flight response patrol.

“We are thankful for all of the training that our U.S. partners have provided,” said 1st Lt. Jassim, commando platoon leader, 14th Iraqi Army. “They have placed a great deal in making sure that we will be able to conduct operations on our own in the future.”

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



Pvt. Cheston K. Bun, 1st Battalion (Air Assault), 377th FAR, “B” Battery, leads a group of Iraqi commandos through a helicopter loading drill.



Sgt. 1st Class Jeff L. Keese, 1st Battalion (Air Assault), 377th FAR, platoon leader gives a brief class on the tactics, techniques and procedures.



The all thumbs-up gesture signals that everyone is aboard the helicopter and ready for takeoff. Just one of the many hand signals used by the ARF.

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GENERATION

efforts include improving and expanding the existing infrastructure by renovating damaged buildings, building new schools in remote locations, providing electrical access, and equipping them with supplies and furniture.

In the province of Al Muthanna alone, the Soldiers of "Able" Company, an infantry unit assigned to the taskforce, provided project oversight and security for the construction of two new, four-room schools, one school renovation and three corresponding electrical extensions.

By adding electricity to the schools, they created a learning environment safe from the elements and capable of bringing increased exposure to outside information.

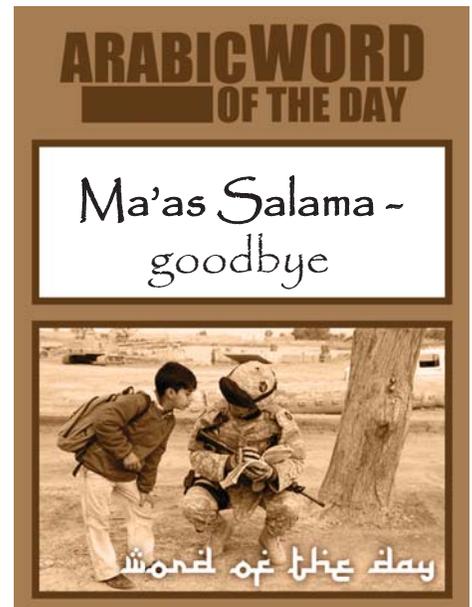
Based on this initial success, the assigned Army Civil Affairs team assumed responsibility for an additional three schools and the corresponding electrical extension proj-

ects.

"We see it as an investment in Iraq's next generation and pivotal to long term sustained national growth," said Walkertown, N.C. native Capt. Michael Martin, "A" Company, 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment attached to Task Force Pathfinder, when asked to describe how his soldiers view the progress they've made towards the province's education system.

Staff Sgt. Danillo Martinez from San Diego, Calif., added, "Positively affecting the life of one child is what makes it all worth it."

For more of Capt. Landry's stories, visit: www.TheRedBulls.org/Landry



HOMETOWN HIGHLIGHT

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MPs hit the range



Photo by Staff Sgt. Alina Kennedy, 810th Military Police Company

Specialist Allen Heredia, of Tampa, Florida, adjusts the front sight post of his M4 Rifle on the range at COB Basra, Nov. 28. The 810th MP Company regularly takes time during their deployment to perform weapons maintenance and inspections and now to even conduct their annual qualification.



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For puzzle solutions, visit: www.TheRedBulls.org/PuzzleSolutions



St. Paul to Iraq

Saturday, December 12th

For all Servicemembers on COB Basra: *Delicious Steak Meal with all the trimmings*

What: Volunteers from *Serving Our Troops*, a Minnesota-based civic group, are traveling from St. Paul to Iraq to serve COB Basra service members a grilled steak dinner.

Special DFAC Dinner Menu: On Saturday, December 12, both DFACs will serve a 12-ounce grilled steak dinner meal during regularly-scheduled hours, courtesy of *Serving Our Troops*.

A Special Invitation for Minnesota Soldiers: *Dinner with your family*

In St. Paul: *Serving Our Troops* is hosting a unique, free event for families at the Roy Wilkins Auditorium from 9:30am to 3:00pm CST. Your families will enjoy free steak meals, ice cold beverages, live music, special kids activities, and free tickets to the Science Museum and Children's Museum. **Tell your family to RSVP to www.servingourtroops.com.**

The St. Paul family event will be linked via two-way video to the COB Basra Red Bull LSA.

At COB Basra: Join *Serving Our Troops* volunteers for a special event in the Red Bull LSA from 1700 to 2200. Live music from the 34th Red Bull Division Band and special guest GB Leighton. Freshly-grilled steaks, a special program, and a live video link back to St. Paul, with opportunities to speak to loved ones.

The bAsra BEAT

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Note to Self:
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Around the world in 34 seconds

WORLD PERUGIA, Italy – American college student Amanda Knox was found guilty of murdering her British roommate and sentenced to 26 years in prison early Saturday after a year-long trial that gripped Italy and drew intense media attention. Her co-defendant, former boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito, was convicted and sentenced to 25 years. The two also were found guilty of sexual assault in the 2007 murder of Meredith Kercher, a 21-year-old student from England. “No, no,” Knox said, bursting into tears and clinging to one of her lawyers as the judge read the verdict just after midnight following some 13 hours of deliberations. Minutes later, the 22-year-old Knox, who is from Seattle, and the 25-year-old Sollecito were put in police vans with sirens blaring and driven back to jail.

U.S. NEW YORK - The United States may be emerging from recession, but some firms are canceling holiday parties for a second year in a row and others are bragging about having fun on the cheap. With one in 10 U.S. workers unemployed and the prospect of a double-dip recession looming, companies are aiming to balance rewarding their employees for a tough year against avoiding criticism for holding celebrations that are too lavish. “This is not an environment where anyone, including Wall Street, wants to have big Christmas parties,” former Merrill Lynch Chief Executive John Thain said. “I think that you will see a much more conservative tone across all the firms. “Everyone is pretty sensitized to the fact that excessive consumption or excessive anything is not acceptable,” he said.

SPORTS CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP)—Renowned for his fitness, David Beckham revealed Thursday he has been dealing with asthma for several years. The 34-year-old Los Angeles Galaxy midfielder, who will begin a second stint with AC Milan in January, was seen using an inhaler after the MLS Cup final. “It’s out there now,” he said on the eve of the World Cup draw in Cape Town. “Sometimes I have good days and bad days. I’ve never hidden it but it’s something I’ve had for a good few years now.” Beckham also dismissed a report that he regularly smokes cigars, but admitted he occasionally “tastes” one when he celebrates a major triumph.

ODD NEW YORK - A Maryland groom has created a viral story storm after he interrupted his wedding last month to update his Facebook and Twitter accounts from the altar. Dana Hanna, who works for a pet website, also posted a short video of the ceremony on the Internet. It showed him reaching into his pocket for his phone as the minister was about to pronounce the couple husband and wife. The video has had more than 350,000 views. “Oh, Dana is updating his relationship status on Facebook,” the minister said as the audience at the wedding laughed. “As I was saying, I now pronounce you husband and wife. It’s now official on Facebook.”