



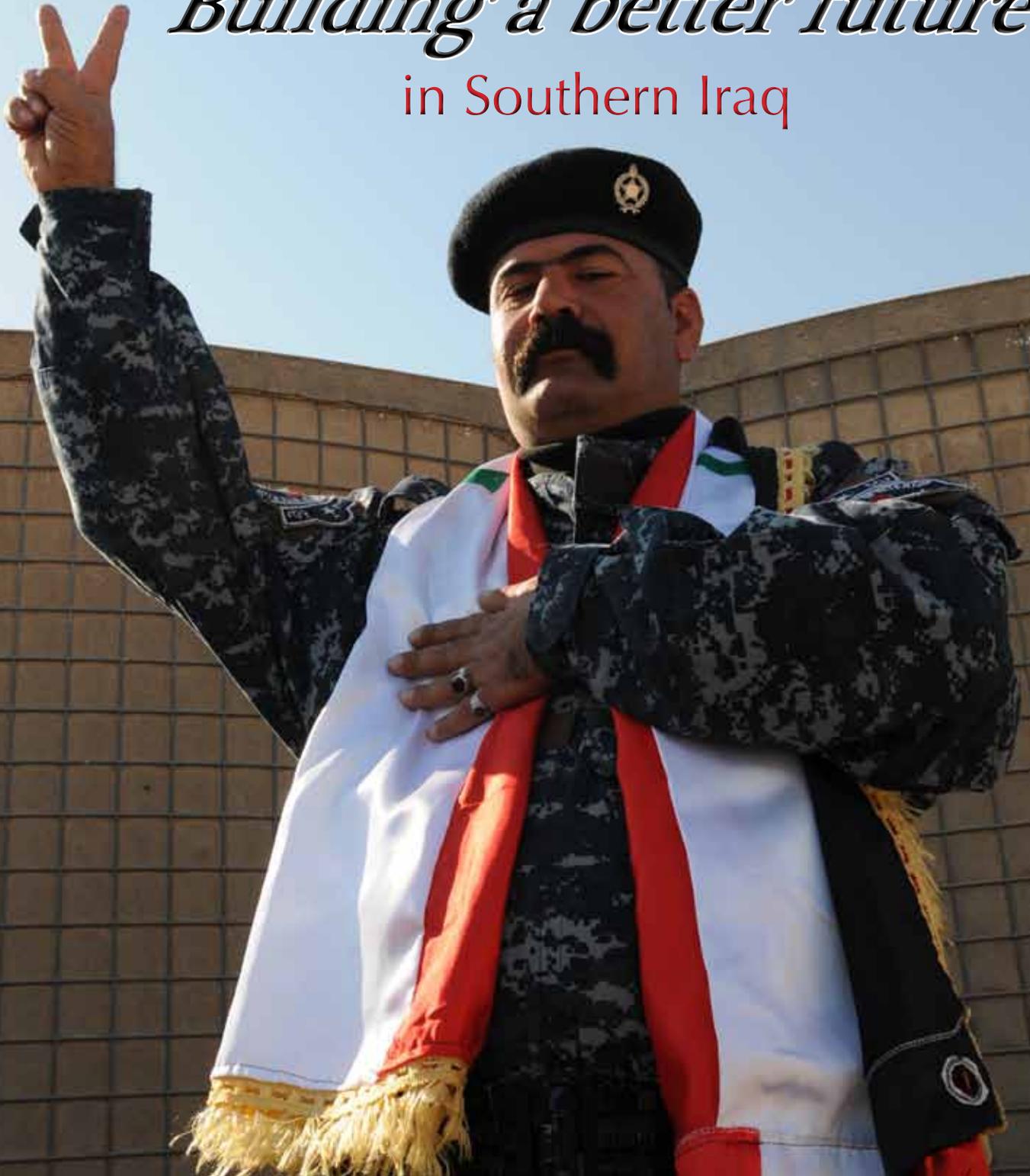
# THE ARROWHEAD

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June 2011

*Building a better future*  
in Southern Iraq





Photos by Sgt. James Kennedy Benjamin, 305th MPAD, USD-S Public Affairs

# This month...

## 4 Italian-led PRT leaves Iraq with smiles and well wishes

*The little known Italian-led Dhi Qar Provincial Reconstruction Team will wrap up their almost six-year mission at the end of June, marking the end of a successful cooperative endeavor between Americans, Italians and Iraqis.*



## 8 36th Inf. Div. prepares base for transition

*Preparation for the transition of Contingency Operating Base Basra to the U.S. State Department and government of Iraq is underway and on track to be completed as scheduled.*



## 12 Serving a new nation to save his own

*It was the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 that forced Ahmed to make the decisions that would lead him down a new and perilous path.*



THE  
**ARROWHEAD**

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## EXCERPT OF MEMORIAL DAY REMARKS BY MAJ. GEN. EDDY M. SPURGIN COMMANDER, 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION AND U.S. DIVISION – SOUTH BASRAH, IRAQ

From the American Revolution to the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, from the fertile fields of North America to the dark blue deep of the South Pacific, from the rugged mountains of the Korean Peninsula to the flak-filled skies over Germany, from the jungles and rice paddies of Vietnam to the streets of Mogadishu, more than one million, three hundred thousand American service members have perished in battle.

Five young Soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice in May. They came from places as diverse as New Orleans, New Jersey, New Mexico, Michigan, and even the Philippines; together, they embodied what is truly great about our Nation and our Armed Forces. In the United States of America, young men and women can aspire to be whatever they want to be, with few obstacles in their path that can't be overcome by dedication, perseverance, and desire.

Staff Sgt. Christian A. Garcia, Staff Sgt. Quadi S. Hudgins, 1st Lt. Omar J. Vazquez, Private 1st Class Antonio G. Stiggins, and Spc. Robert M. Friese died in support of a noble mission, to help the Iraqi people secure their own new birth of freedom for future generations, and to make our world a safer place in the process.

They were among the special few of their generation who chose

to answer their Nation's call to duty and to serve in harm's way, wherever they were needed. Each of them died a hero.

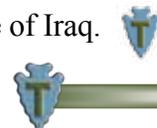
Words alone cannot do justice to their memory, or to the deeper meaning of their sacrifice. Their actions in life spoke louder than any words of praise or thanks that we can offer here today. I believe this is what President Lincoln meant when he said, "The world will little note nor

long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did." Lincoln's advice to that quiet crowd at Gettysburg in 1863 is worth repeating here.

He said, "It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

The best way that we can honor their sacrifice, and the sacrifices of the one million, three hundred thousand service members who came before them, is to resolve that we will finish their work with success and honor, in the same spirit of Selfless Service and devotion to duty that characterized their own courageous lives.

In closing, let me say what at an honor it is to serve with you on this historic mission. Take pride in what you do, do it to the best of your ability, and look out for one another as we would our own brothers and sisters, or sons and daughters. I couldn't be more proud of the work you're doing on behalf of the American people, and the people of Iraq.





# Italian-led PRT leaves Iraq with smiles and well wishes

Story by Sgt. Jeremy Spires  
36th Inf. Div., USD-S Public Affairs

**T**ALLIL, Iraq – It was a hot, dusty Iraq afternoon and on the front “lawn” of the historic Ziggurat of Ur men and women from three different countries gathered to say thanks to the Dhi Qar Provincial Reconstruction Team for their efforts in making the lives of Iraqi citizens a little easier.

The little known Italian-led Dhi Qar PRT will wrap up their almost six-year mission at the end of June, marking the end of a very successful cooperative endeavor between American’s, Italian’s and

Iraqi’s.

“The team in Dhi Qar is unique because it is the only PRT in Iraq currently led by a U.S. ally,” said David H. Thorne, the U.S. Ambassador to Italy in an online statement release from the U.S. Embassy

Throughout the years the PRT has been responsible for building schools, infrastructures, training teachers and doctors, and increasing the professional capability of elected officials.

“With U.S. logistical support, a

team of twenty Italian doctors and nurses performed corrective cleft lip and palate surgery on hundreds of Iraqi children over the past four years,” said Thorne. “The doctors trained Iraqi medical staff in performing this relatively simple procedure that literally brings a smile to a child’s face and changes his or her life for the better.”

The PRT also helped in making the government more efficient.

During the closing ceremony, Dhi Qar Province’s Deputy Governor Ackmed Bunyan,

thanked the Italians for their efforts in training the government staff, inside and outside of Iraq in efforts to support their new government.

“Although the Italian and American flags will come down together at the PRT in Dhi Qar this week, I hope we will find new opportunities and sustain the spirit of U.S.-Italian partnership and innovation embodied in this mission,” said Thorne. “And I take this opportunity to thank the government of Italy, the brave and creative Dhi Qar team, and all Italians for having accomplished so much in rebuilding Iraq.” 



*U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Kenny Sargent and Spc. George Karam with 3-29th Bravo Battery, 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division speak with Iraqis in Dhi Qar province, Iraq, June 18. U.S. Soldiers on the Provincial Reconstruction Teams conducted reconnaissance missions to ensure projects have progressed. (U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Lynn Friant)*



LEFT: *Volunteers with the Smile Train give anesthesia to a small boy before his cleft palate surgery at Camp Dhi Qar near Nasiriyah, Iraq. This is Smile Train's second trip to the region and includes Iraqi and Italian doctors. They will operate on 90 children over the next few weeks from a mobile operating room donated by the Italian government. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Brendan Stephens, Joint Combat Camera Center Iraq)*



*(Photo by 1st Lt. Patrick Wilson 13th Sustainment Command)*



# Soldier's Health

By CW2 Bryan Shaw and Sgt. 1st Class Michael Knox  
36th Inf. Div., USD-S Safety Office

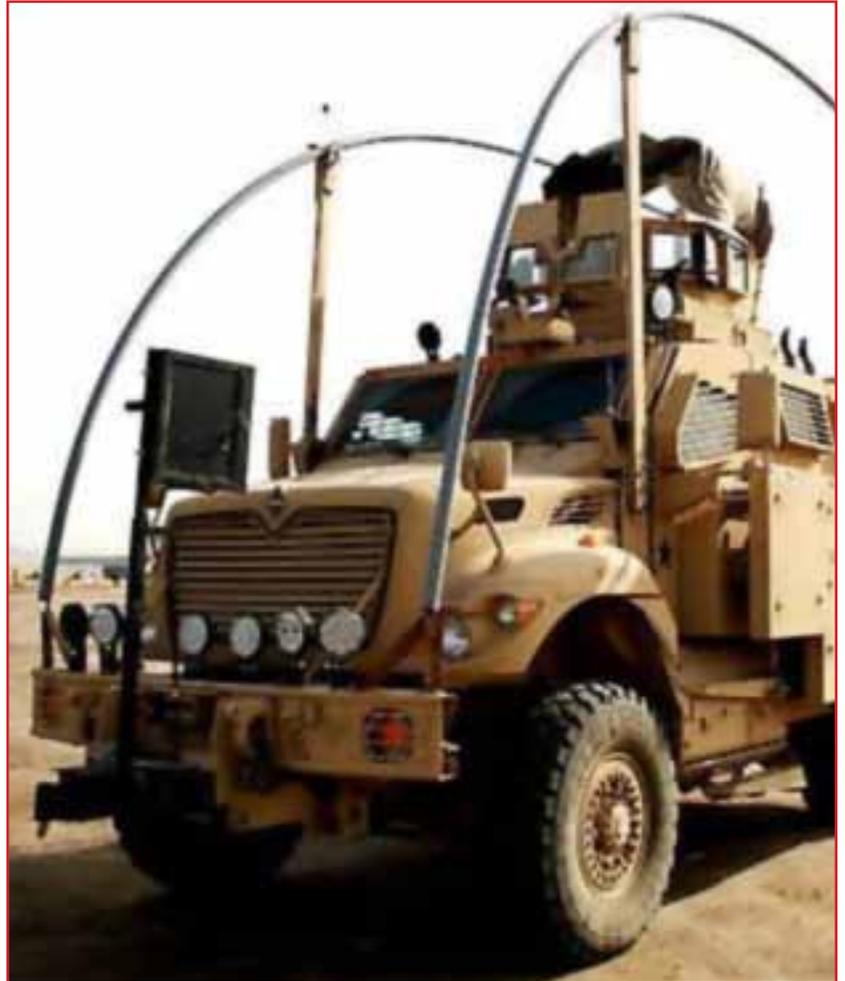
U.S. Division-South has performed operations in Iraq for a period of more than 365 days without a Soldier fatality. This is a tremendous achievement for all personnel who are and have been assigned to USD-S, and on behalf of all commanders and leaders I would like to thank the personnel of USD-S in achieving this benchmark.

I am often asked what has led to our success in preventing Soldier accident fatalities here in theater. I don't believe that is a question that is easily answered. It can be very difficult to pinpoint a specific reason for an event that occurs over time and over a large organization. However, I believe this trend can be attributed to two specific categories: leadership and lessons learned.

Completing a mission to standard does not have to compromise operational or Soldier safety. I think the evidence of this leadership attitude is evident not only in the lack of an accident fatality but also in the minimal amount of serious injuries and a low rate of accidents and injuries in general.

USD-S is currently at about half of the accident rate for equivalent-sized elements from last calendar year to this year, and has significantly lower rates than historical norms in theater. Maj. Gen. Spurgin has made Soldier safety a focal point, but leaders at all levels, and all personnel, have been instrumental in carrying out this guidance successfully.

The other key reason is lessons learned; the hard, hard lessons taught to us by our brothers and sisters in arms. This is particularly revealing in the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) fleet activities. Many of those lessons we learned in using these vehicles, and other Soldier activities, were provided to us by Soldiers who received serious injuries or lost their lives. These lessons cannot be forgotten. I believe the application of these difficult learning experiences is another indicator of our current Soldier accident and fatality free streak.



I also believe it provides vindication to some extent of the sacrifices our brothers and sisters have made. Their lessons have been learned and applied by us, and we have been safer through their sacrifice.

There have always been patrols, logistics convoys, etc., throughout our Army's history; only the equipment has changed. It is the continual adaptation to a changing environment, the application of lessons learned, and the situational awareness of the American Soldier that has led to this Soldier accident and fatality free streak.

All members of USD-S have contributed to this accomplishment and should be proud of their efforts. This is an embodiment of completing our mission with success and honor. 

# Chaplain's Corner

By CH (Capt.) Benjamin Bender  
36th Inf. Div., Deputy Division Chaplain

I learned an important lesson on my first deployment. We arrived in Balad, Iraq in August. I remember my first shower as if it were yesterday. I remember turning on what I thought was the cold water only to have the first layer of my skin boiled off. I thought, “(insert nonchaplain-like word here) That hurt! I will try the other faucet.” There went the second layer. It took me two days to figure out why there was no cold water.

You see the “cold” water sat outside in a giant plastic tank where it was super-heated by the sun all day, while the “hot” water sat in a 40-gallon heating tank inside the shower trailer, shaded from the sun’s life-sucking rays. Thus, the cold water was hotter than the hot water and for two days I couldn’t figure out, for the life of me, which nozzle was hot and which was cold. I finally developed a fail-safe system to differentiate the two; if I only got first degree burns, that was the cold water.

Water pouring from a shower head at roughly the temperature of the surface of the sun creates a most undesirable second-order effect; It sucks a nasty, slimy, mildewy shower curtain all up against you. I was dancing around in my flip-flops trying to avoid drops of scalding water while at the same time waging a losing battle against a malign Iranian shower curtain! I asked, and the VA doesn’t offer any benefits for Post Traumatic Shower Disorder.

The important lesson I learned was this: when I find myself in

some place new, things don’t always operate the same. When you go back home after this deployment, you are going to find yourself in a new place. A place you have never been before. Not completely different, but different nonetheless. Even if you have been on multiple deployments, this redeployment will be different. This redeployment will be new. Not everything will operate the same.

For 37 years I had been turning on the water faucet to the right for cold water and now I could not figure out why, all of a sudden, that had changed. For six years my kids came and hugged me when I came home from work and now I could not figure out why they hesitated when I saw them for the first time in the parking lot after my deployment (it’s actually a very common reaction with young children when they have been separated from their parents for a long time, and it only lasts for a very short time).

For 21 years I had never been bothered by another vehicle going faster than 20 km/h. Now, going 40 was like breaking the sound barrier, and getting up to speed on the access ramp felt like the Autobahn.

Your experience may be much different than mine, but of this I am sure, not everything will work the same for you as it did before you left. That is neither bad nor wrong. The key is not to get mad; get smart. When I understood why the cold water was SO not cold, I adapted and overcame. I adjusted my battle rhythm and began conducting

# Showers of Life

personal hygiene in the morning, after the water had all night to cool down. When things change in your relationships or your attitudes, don’t get mad, get smart. Find out why things have changed, try to understand what has happened and then adjust accordingly and go forth boldly into this brave new world.

When you encounter change in others, don’t automatically assume the worst or attribute mal intent. Regardless of what I thought, that shower curtain did not have a personal vendetta against me, it was just reacting to forces beyond its control. So are those in your life. My children did not hesitate to greet me rather than run to meet me, not because they did not love me or were not glad to see me, they just did not know how to process the emotions they were experiencing. The key is to be patient and understanding.

Although addressing husbands specifically, I believe Peter’s advice applies to all in this situation when he says, “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way” (1 Peter 3:7). And James offers sage advice in this regard as well when he says, “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” I pray that you are preparing for a great redeployment, and I’m praying that you don’t get burned in the Balad showers of life. 

# 36th Inf. Div. prepares base for transition

Story and photo by Sgt. David A. Bryant  
36th Inf. Div., USD-S Public Affairs

**B**ASRAH, Iraq – Preparation for the transition of Contingency Operating Base Basra to the State Department and the government of Iraq is underway and on track to be completed as scheduled, according to Sgt. 1st Class Sloan Baker, 36th Infantry Division force protection noncommissioned officer-in-charge.

On May 8, division Soldiers and Iraqi contractors began leveling Life Support Area Brady Lines, the former living area for Soldiers attached to the Area Medical Clinic. It is one of several areas of the COB undergoing the required process of responsibly removing military equipment and ensuring the property is ready for its new tenants.

“We currently have the T-wall line in place that encompasses the limits of the Department of State perimeter, except for the roads and a few other areas we can’t close up just yet,” said Baker, a 38-year-old native of Medina, Texas. “But we’re making room for them. We already have one area fully leveled and being used to store all their equipment, housing units and vehicles. We’ll see a big change soon with Department of State personnel coming in and preparing their area to move in.”

“The Department of State conducted a walk-through with the mayor cell back in January and gave us the requirements of

what they wanted concerning the preparation of the grounds,” said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Bell, COB Basra property management non-commissioned officer-in-charge. “Those requirements were to clear and level the land to the best of our ability and remove most in-ground systems like septic tanks. Several structures actually fit into the department’s plan so they were not touched.”

The area designated for the State Department is currently about 85 percent ready, added Bell, 35, of Lyons, Kan.

“The interior area for the

department will be ready for the most part by June 1,” Baker said. “There are a few small camps they aren’t sure they want to keep or bulldoze yet, since they’re still in the planning stage, but we’ll be ready to roll whenever they are.”

Baker’s primary job is to set up and maintain all force protection structures on the base, which includes blast walls, bunkers, entry control points and the perimeter fence, he said. While he doesn’t actually work for the mayor cell, he assists them because he runs the contracts with Al Yamama and Al Dalham, two local Iraqi companies



*Sgt. 1st Class Sloan Baker, 36th Inf. Div. force protection noncommissioned officer-in-charge, shows the foremen where to stage the refuse of a former Life Support Area area May 8 until the companies can haul it to a dump site approved by the local government. Soldiers from the Texas division, currently in charge of U.S. Division-South, are preparing the base for a responsible turnover prior to the Dec. 31, 2011 deadline for U.S. military forces to withdraw from Iraq.*

hired for their heavy equipment — such as bulldozers, dump trucks and cranes. The mayor cell does not have access to the heavy equipment that Baker does as the force protection NCOIC.

“Al Dalham will clean up the majority of the area around the airport in order to turn it over to (the government of Iraq),” Baker said. “Everything outside of the T-wall perimeter for the Department of State belongs to GoI, with perhaps a few contractors Iraq authorizes to remain.”

The areas where U.S. military and civilian employees of U.S. Division-South live will be cleaned up and turned over to Iraq for use by Iraqi Security Forces, said Bell. Each area, called a Life Support Area or LSA, contains everything needed to sustain personnel: power generators, living areas, shower and restroom facilities, medical clinics and even recreational facilities.

“As far as the transfer to GoI, the requirements are a little different (from setting up the State

Department area) as we follow the rules outlined for base closure,” Bell added. “The guidelines are if we remove the basic life support for the camp, such as generators and septic systems, then we have to completely clear the camp and take it back down to its original state. The goal is to make it look like there was never a camp there. If we don’t remove the BLS, then the camp can be transferred at closure to the government of Iraq through the (Foreign Exchange of Personal Property) process.”

“The list of equipment we give to GoI has to be approved by (U.S. Div.-South) and (U.S. Forces-Iraq),” continued Bell. “Analysis of real property, or permanent structures, is done and all force protection structures have to be declared and documented in order to

leave a permanent record of what we’re giving to Iraq.”

The current worth of items COB Basra is prepared to turn over to GoI, such as the containerized housing units, latrines, generators and force-protection structures, is approximately \$30 million USD, added Bell. Most items have no use on military bases back in the States, and the cost of shipping it all back to the States is so excessive that handing it over to Iraq is more cost-effective.

“It’s going to take a little time, but we’ll have no problems meeting our deadlines for transition – either to the Department of State or to GoI,” said Bell. “We have a great team of people working on this, Soldiers and (foreign service nationals) alike. We are really putting the mayor and incoming garrison commander in a good position for a smooth transition before we redeploy back to Texas.”



*Every day Soldiers from the 36th Inf. Div. and foreign service nationals work tirelessly to prepare Contingency Operating Base Basra for transition over to the State Department and the government of Iraq.*



# TEARING DOWN THE HOUSE



Photos by Sgt. Jeremy Spires  
36th Inf. Div., USD-S Public Affairs



**“ We’ll have no problems meeting our deadlines for transition - either to the Department of State or the GoI. ”**

-- SGT 1ST CLASS ROBERT BELL  
COB BASRA PROPERTY MANAGEMENT NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER IN CHARGE



# SERVING A NEW NATION

*Native Iraqi served in Saddam's Army, now U.S. Soldier*

Story and photo by Sgt. David A. Bryant  
36th Inf. Div., USD-S Public Affairs

**B**ASRAH, Iraq – Decisions can be painful to make, and sometimes choices can alter the entire course of a person's life. For one 36th Infantry Division Soldier, the tormenting decisions he was forced to make would lead him to a life fraught with danger, isolation and a journey that he never expected.

Sgt. "Ahmed" was born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1976, three years before Saddam Hussein officially took control. His father, a pharmacist, was not a big fan of the new regime, although they continued to live and work in the nation's capitol. With all of his siblings either in college or working respectable jobs, silence was the best policy for their survival.

It was the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 that, as it did for so many others, forced Ahmed to make the decisions that would lead him down a new and perilous path.

"I was a corporal in the Iraqi Army stationed at a place called Taji. I was always paying money to not go anywhere," he said. "The corruption in the Iraqi Army at the time was very well known – you pay money, you don't have to go out on patrol: you pay money, and you don't have to do guard duty. Then when the war started, I couldn't do that anymore and I had to stay there for a couple of weeks. I almost died three times... I mean I was close to death."

The first incident occurred when two of his friends were attempting to see who could clear his AK-47 assault rifle the fastest. The charging handle on the rifle they were using

for the competition had been pulled back so hard that it caused a hair-trigger. One went to pick up the rifle and touched the trigger, setting off the rifle and putting a bullet through the other's back.

"I had to keep my hands on the exit wound for about an hour, because his guts were literally coming out," Ahmed said. "We took him to the hospital, but he literally died a few minutes before we made it there. I was looking at him the whole time, and he was looking at me. On the way back from the hospital was the first time I almost died."

A government headquarters building was situated between the hospital and his unit's base; a prime target for the U.S. military. The driver of the van knew this and told Ahmed and his fellow soldiers he would try to drive by it as fast as possible. Less than a mile before getting there, a U.S. rocket hit the building with a blast so powerful it rained clots of mud down on them.

"We made it to the gate of that building and three bloody soldiers jumped on the van, hoping we could help them," he recalled. "But another car from my unit that was behind us came up, pulled over, and said, 'That's the first missile. Leave.' Because back when the war started, when (the Americans) were bombing us from the air, wherever they hit they would hit twice. We weren't even half a mile away when the second rocket came in. When it hit, the vehicle we were in was lifted into the air from the force of the explosion."

Two days later, a second brush with death shook the corporal serving as a physical fitness instructor in Saddam's army.

"We were digging holes for shelters; I was outside the hole and some of my friends were inside it, and we were talking. They stopped talking and started looking at something behind me," Ahmed said. "I was like, 'What's going on? Why are [you] guys not saying anything?' And that's the only thing I said. The next thing I know I'm flying through the air and dropping onto them. A rocket landed about half a mile behind me. Lucky for me it didn't blow up, but the shockwave from the hit threw me into the shelter hole."

The third incident occurred at night while Ahmed was doing weapons-guard duty. The weapons were in a large metal shipping container, and the lights were on inside. Officers and enlisted alike were inside a nearby shelter hole. A plane was circling overhead.

"When I say 'shelter', I mean a hole dug about five meters by four meters, and maybe four or five feet deep," he explained. "There were 15 people in there. The only thing I saw was the rocket flying straight for a distance and then dropping right away. When it was dropping, I was looking at it from outside the hole, and I was [thinking] 'It's coming close to me. It's coming at me.' So I'm walking to the shelter hole, and right before it hit I jumped inside. When the explosion came, it was like being in the middle of an earthquake. We were shaken just

like that.”

After that he'd had enough, he said, and simply dropped his weapon and walked away.

“I figured, I don't like the government, don't like anyone in it, so why am I holding a weapon and just waiting to die?” he said. “And when I left, I looked behind and there were about 40 soldiers coming after me. They were leaving too, so I was the motivation for them. I took a bus back to Baghdad, and when I got there I couldn't find my family. They had run north to Diyala, which was a place the U.S. Army didn't bomb at that time.”

For a time, Ahmed said he just stayed in Baghdad and watched the war. A fight broke out between some Saddam loyalists and two U.S. Army Bradley Fighting Vehicles, the loyalist's bodies disappearing in a red mist. Soon after, an incident occurred that would land him a new job.

“There were two guys walking around my neighborhood, posing as followers of Hussein, a respected Shia Imam,” Ahmed recalled. “Two brothers who were also Shia invited them to lunch. The guys told them to go away. The brothers were like, ‘We just invited you to lunch, why do you have to be so mean about it?’ One of the followers pulled out a 9 mm handgun, and the other a grenade. We found out they were not Shia followers – they were Syrians; not even Iraqi. They were members of Saddam Hussein's Fedayeen, ‘The Sacrificers.’”

“The guy with the 9 mm ran through an alley and was caught by

Iraqis and beaten to death. The guy with the grenade, though, got inside the alley but wasn't fast enough. So the people trapped him in the middle of the alley, all armed with AK's. The guy couldn't go anywhere, so he swallowed the grenade and blew himself up. We checked the body and saw a letter saying, ‘Kill nine Shia and you will go to heaven. If you kill no one and come back home, you will be killed. If you get captured, kill yourself.’ Which is what he did. At the bottom was the signature of his mom and dad. We checked the body, and his passport was Syrian. The people were outraged and spit on his body. We dragged the body to a garden area we had in the middle of our houses and buried him there. That's how my story with the U.S. Army started.”

A platoon of American Soldiers came by and wanted to know what happened. Ahmed explained everything that had happened to the lieutenant in charge.

“The L.T. asked, ‘Where are you from?’ I said, ‘I'm from here. That's my house right there.’ He said, ‘No, you're not from here; you're lying. Where in the States are you from?’” Ahmed said. “I told him that I'm not from the States and had never been there. My house was right here. They didn't believe it because of my accent, I spoke English when I was 15 years old. I learned it by myself, watching movies. Instead of just watching movies with sound, I would mute the sound and read the translations at the bottom and just try to speak it.”

The incident ended with an offer

to become a translator for the U.S. Army. His father was against it, as Saddam had not yet been caught, and he feared Saddam still had a chance of returning to power. His mother and siblings helped convince his father to allow it, however, and Ahmed soon began working at a forward operating base outside of Tarmiyah, just north of Baghdad.

“Tarmiyah is the most dangerous place, not just in Iraq, but also in the world,” Ahmed explained. “Al Qaeda called Tarmiyah the capital of the Islamic Iraq, because all the bad guys, all the Al Qaeda people, went there from other countries such as Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia; from there they would be spread out across the country.”

His first week on the job brought home just how dangerous it was. On a trip to visit the local police chief, a meeting known only to the Soldiers and the police chief himself, he had his first experience with an improvised explosive device. The highway leading to Tarmiyah – one he said was normally quite busy – was deserted. A sport utility vehicle was blocking traffic a few miles ahead of the convoy, and a media crew from Al Jazeera was waiting on the side of the road.

“The gunner spotted the first IED, and we had to call EOD since there wasn't really any (quick reaction force) back then,” he said. “We found out it was a string of seven IEDs linked together. They were waiting for us to get into the middle of the chain to blow it up. The SUV blocking the highway took off and we were unable to find them.

**We checked the body and saw a letter saying ‘Kill nine Shia and you will go to heaven. If you kill no one and come back home, you will be killed. If you get captured, kill yourself.’ Which is what he did. At the bottom was the signature of his mom and dad.**

**HE SAID, 'MY DAD'S BLOOD IS ON YOU.' I LOOKED AT HIM AND ASKED, 'WHY?' HE TOLD ME I WAS THE ONLY IRAQI THERE WITH THE U.S. ARMY, SO I WAS THE ONE BRINGING THEM HERE.**

Al Jazeera was videotaping and everything. That night in the news, they reported that two Bradleys had been burned and one U.S. Soldier had been killed. They made it look like we lost a lot, and the IED never even went off. At first I thought, 'Maybe that's in another place.' Until they said it occurred in Tarmiyah."

For a while, Ahmed said he got along well with the people of Tarmiyah, helping them relate to the American forces. They still received a constant barrage of mortar and RPG fire, but it didn't bother him because he was helping his people.

One day, while American troops were in the middle of rebuilding the police station after a fire, a mortar round meant for the Americans overshot the police station and landed on a house, killing the entire family within except for one son. The survivor immediately went before the tribal elders for vengeance, and the following morning, came to

Ahmed.

"He said, 'My dad's blood is on you.' I looked at him and asked, 'Why?' He told me I was the only Iraqi there with the U.S. Army, so I was the one bringing them here," Ahmed said. "I said, 'No, sir, you got that totally wrong. I'm here helping rebuild the police station, and the people who killed your family are the bad guys.' He told me, 'I don't know the bad guys. I know you.'"

From that moment on, Ahmed said he was marked for death in that city. The unit he was working for took him home to Baghdad and informed him he needed to go straight to the FOB the next day, bypassing Tarmiyah. He could continue going on missions anywhere else, but that would be one city forever closed to him.

Not long after that, his unit informed him he could not longer go to his home in Baghdad. They had received an intelligence report

of a plot to kill Ahmed, and for his own safety he would be restricted to the FOB.

"The bad guys had worked a deal with an Iraqi Army guy to invite me to lunch and kill me. They were waiting for me there and in Tarmiyah, so I could not go back a n y m o r e ,"

he said. "The Iraqi Army guy was going to get paid \$100,000 dollars for inviting me to lunch. And the bad guys somehow knew where I was working at. Fortunately, the intel made it to my unit first – they were the ones who told me. The one who was supposed to invite me to lunch was killed a week later."

"I had to live on base and be a stranger in my own country; be a foreigner in my own country. To save my family from all of this ... if I went back home, they wouldn't just kill me, they would kill my whole family," Ahmed added. "So I was safe if I was away from my family, and they had been safe until this moment. We got rid of the bad guys, and then along came the Mehdi Army, and same thing: they wanted me for working with the U.S. Army. Everyone was looking for me."

"I have a saying," said Ahmed, who was nominally raised a Muslim but does not consider himself one. "God brought me to life, so God can take my life whenever he wants. So whenever I went on a mission outside the wire, I'd put my body armor on but I'd have no plates in it. I got my butt chewed many times by the first sergeant, but I didn't listen. I did whatever I wanted to do," said Ahmed. "A lot of Soldiers were afraid to be near me because of possible snipers, but I didn't care. I kept doing it anyway, because what I was doing I was doing for my people. I can die for my people; I would give everything for my people and my family. I don't care about anything else."

Time passed, always under the threat of death. Ahmed said his boss finally approached him and asked him how long he intended to stay.



*Ahmed, an interpreter like the one pictured above, assisted Soldiers in gathering information from fellow Iraqis on how businesses are doing, what infrastructure needs there might be, and what sorts of dangerous weapons or bomb-making materials are in the area. As a result of helping the Americans, Ahmed's life was put in danger, forcing him to leave the country. (Photo by Spc. Samuel Soza, 367th MPAD)*

“I said, ‘I don’t know. Until everything gets okay, I guess?’ He said, ‘No. Congress signed the Special Immigrant Visa program. You need to go do it,’” Ahmed said. “I asked him what that was. He said, ‘You are a U.S. Army employee, so when you go to the States, you’ll have all the rights of a resident green-card holder. You won’t have to apply for anything; you will automatically have everything a citizen does.’”

His family was sad he would be leaving, but also happy he finally had a way out. His unit helped him get all the paperwork together, and the two-star general in charge of northern Iraq who he had been translating for, immediately signed it and sent it forward with his recommendation.

knew who I was, so at midnight, he took his wife and left, because he didn’t want to die. If the bad guys caught me, they would kill the driver as well. We went to another driver that didn’t know me, and the QRF guys said, ‘This is my friend, he needs to go back to Baghdad, just please cross the river.’ The guy took me, at least. When you cross the river, you have to pass the base at Balad and go through a checkpoint there. We were stopped, and I had to make out like I don’t speak English so I would not give myself away to the driver. They were checking the car and everything, and in one of my bags was my money almost \$6000 dollars. The private checking the bags was like, ‘Whoa, whoa!

who had chosen to work for the U.S. Army were hated the most. The landlord of the apartment Ahmed rented while he went through the interview process for his visa continuously fished for information about his reason for coming to Syria. So he came up with a believable lie.

“I told them that my mom had kidney failure and that I was doing all the tests and interviews in hopes to take my mom to the States, or Canada or Germany, to have the surgery where I could donate one of my kidneys to her,” he said. “They respected that. And, as usual, I was always talking bad about the U.S. Army; it was the only way to stay alive. I was always under interrogation from the landlord,



*SIV stands for Special Immigrant Visa. While there are many categories of SIVs, Iraqi citizens, like Ahmed, who worked on behalf of the U.S. Government for one year or more after March 20, 2003, and who have experienced an ongoing serious threat due to that employment, are eligible for a SIV.*

It was the very beginning of the SIV program, and his paperwork was approved within three months. His next step would be the interview to grant his visa.

The interview was originally set up at the U.S. Embassy in Jordan, a country he had already been banned from entering at the whim of a border guard who didn’t like his looks. He rescheduled it for Syria, but that would present him with another unique challenge.

“I left the FOB with the QRF and went to the Iraqi Army compound. We had a deal with a driver to take me across the river, make a u-turn, and then go to Baghdad, just to bypass Tarmiyah,” he said. “We were to leave at 5 a.m. The driver

There’s a lot of American money here, what the hell?’ And he started yelling. Slowly and quietly, I walked over and I literally told him, ‘Don’t kill me – but put the money back in the bag. I’m going to the States and you are not going to stop me!’”

He managed to get through the checkpoint but had to lie again to the driver, saying he had used sign-speak to get through to the Americans. If the driver ever suspected he was a translator working for the Americans, the driver would most likely turn him in for a reward.

Syria would prove to be nearly as dangerous as Iraq for Ahmed. The political climate was actively hostile to anyone associated with the American military, and those Iraqis

every single day. I had to tell him my story every day, because he wasn’t buying it.”

Ahmed finally completed his interviews and was called in to get his visa. The Syrian working for the embassy, who gave him the visa, told him he needed to get a plane ticket to the States immediately and get out of the country as fast as he could.

“I asked him what was up, and he told me that there had been four of us to come to the embassy under the SIV program. I was the only one to show up for my visa,” Ahmed said. “I asked him about the three others, but he said they were still looking for them. I heard later that one had been beaten to death, and the two

others had been taken by Syrian intelligence. The one who had been beaten to death had been living in a hotel, and he had told a janitor that he was a U.S. Army employee. The janitor was an Iraqi, and he called the Syrian authorities on him. The other two had relatives call the Syrian authorities on them; their own family turned them in.”

When he arrived in the States at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, Ahmed carried a large sealed envelope with all of his paperwork. The customs officials had been expecting him, but he said they were unsure of what to do with him. He was the very first person to arrive in the U.S. under the SIV program. He was led to the immigrant interview room, told to have a seat, and to hand the paperwork to the person behind the desk.

“Not one minute later, a lieutenant came in. He said, ‘You have paperwork for a translator.’ They said ‘Yes, here it is’. He called my name, and I was scared to death, thinking maybe I had done something wrong,” Ahmed recalled. “He said, ‘Where’s your bag?’ I grabbed it; he told me to put it on and said, ‘Welcome to the States.’ I said, ‘That’s it?’ He said, ‘Yeah, that’s it. Welcome to the States.’ I asked him what I was supposed to do, and he told me to go sign my name at a desk and put my index

fingerprint on the visa... I signed, did my fingerprint, and walked out the door. A lot of people were there waiting for their families. I was the only one on the plane who had no one there. So I just stood there, looking left and right, wondering where I was going to go.”

Unsure of his future, he said he wound up calling a girl he’d met online who lived in Tucson, Ariz. She was enthusiastic he’d made it to America and immediately invited him to come out and stay with her. His only problem was that he didn’t know how to go about getting there; the trip from Syria was his first time on a plane, and the process of buying a ticket was still a mystery.

“I went to a guy standing outside at the airport and asked him what I should do; I told him I was trying to get to Tucson,” Ahmed said. “He seemed knowledgeable, and he told me that Tucson wasn’t an international airport so I should go try Southwest. I said, ‘Okay, I’ll go. But I need to know where and what

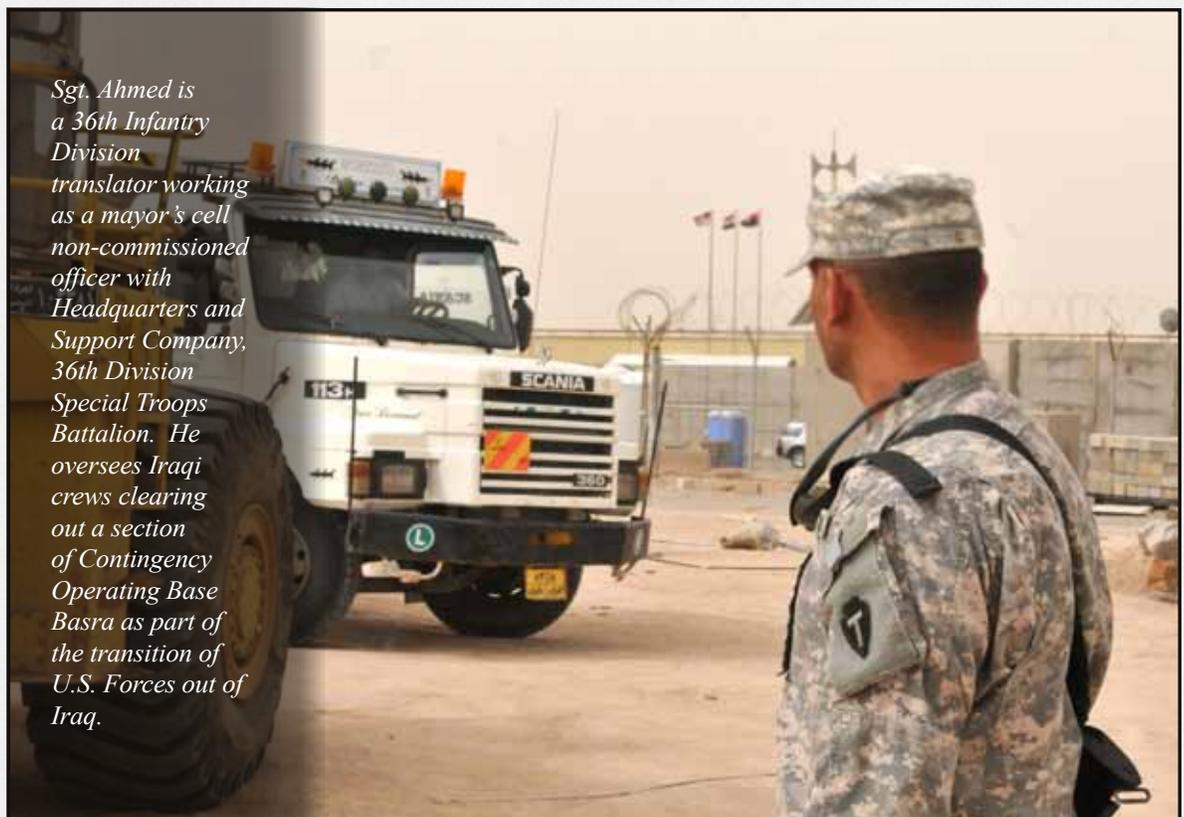
Southwest is!”

The gentleman told him how to get to the terminal he needed, and told him to speak to a lady there who’s job was to help people get to where they were going. Ahmed found the lady, who directed him to the counter he needed and told him to just let the person at the counter know he needed a ticket to Tucson.

“It’s that easy?” I asked, and she said it was. So I went to the counter, gave them my visa, got my ticket, then waited for a few hours and got on a plane to Tucson,” he said.

The trip from Syria to Tucson took him about 72 hours, and the only thing sustaining him throughout was fruit juice and coffee, he said. The novelty of the flight and the nervousness about his new life in the U.S. kept him from being able to sleep, and he avoided the food served on the airplanes because he was unfamiliar with it.

The only things Ahmed said he could think of when he arrived were food and sleep. His friend took



*Sgt. Ahmed is a 36th Infantry Division translator working as a mayor's cell non-commissioned officer with Headquarters and Support Company, 36th Division Special Troops Battalion. He oversees Iraqi crews clearing out a section of Contingency Operating Base Basra as part of the transition of U.S. Forces out of Iraq.*

him to his first fast-food restaurant and then took him home, where he showered and then slept for an entire day.

He stayed at his friend's house for two weeks and then called an Iraqi friend at the FOB where he had worked in Iraq. The friend gave him a number for an uncle who lived in Dallas, Texas.

"I called his uncle, who told me he'd been waiting for me to call. I said that I had just gotten the number, but he said he'd told his nephew to give me the number a



long time ago," Ahmed said. "He asked me where I was, and when I told him Tucson, he told me, hang up and wait for 10 minutes. Literally 10 minutes later, I got a call from another person, who asked me what address I was at. I told him, and he said to get my bags ready because he'd be there in 15 minutes. I asked him who he was, but he just told me to get ready."

The man who came and picked him up turned out to be one of the richest men in Tucson, a native Iraqi

who became a U.S. citizen and used his doctorate's degree in economics to become a real estate mogul. He and the friend's uncle in Dallas knew each other from when both left Iraq during the rise of Saddam in the 1970s. Both ended up staying in the U.S. after losing family members to Saddam's brutal reign.

Ahmed was fed, put up for the night, and then taken to the airport the next morning for the first flight to Dallas. He stayed with his friend's uncle for a few weeks before finally getting his own apartment and a job at a fast-food restaurant. His first job didn't last very long, because his manager was a former Muslim who converted to Christianity after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The manager hated Muslims, and because Ahmed was Arabic he simply assumed that Ahmed was also Muslim.

Ahmed soon found another job at a printing company. The pay was only \$8 an hour, but it paid the bills. He kept in contact with his former bosses in Iraq, and it was his former commander, a National Guard Soldier, who convinced him to go enlist in the Texas Army National Guard.

"He knew that my dad's dream was for me to finish my education, get a master's degree or something from the United States. He used that on me; he said, 'Are you going to let your dad down? Are you going to keep working for \$8 an hour? How are you going to study?'" Ahmed said. "I kept telling him that I'd think about it, and he eventually convinced me."

The captain in charge of recruiting at Camp Mabry, the headquarters of all Texas Military Forces, located in Austin, Texas, came out to visit Ahmed with another Soldier in the translator field, an "oh-nine-leema."

After discussing it with them for a while, he decided to join, and not just for the educational benefits.

"I did it to prove a point: that all Iraqis are not bad guys," said Ahmed.

Ahmed hates Al Qaeda and the ideology they espouse. Their brutal treatment of the Iraqi people is one of the reasons he decided to fight them as a U.S. Soldier.

After completing basic training and advanced individual training as a 09L, Ahmed worked for a time assisting recruiters in finding more translators. He was soon deployed with the 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team to his native country, where he served as a translator a mere 15 miles from his old home.

Finding a job after he returned to Texas proved difficult, and he soon had no money to live on and would go days without eating, he said. The opportunity to deploy with the 36th Infantry Division headquarters for Operation New Dawn came as a blessing. He moved to Austin for the unit's pre-mobilization and is now serving a second tour in his native land as a liaison between U.S. Division-South and local Iraqi contractors, assisting in the transition of U.S. forces out of Iraq.

Ahmed's love for his people led him down a long, dangerous road; a road that is still not safe for him, he said. He's not always happy with the path his native country takes at times, but he feels he's done his part to give his fellow Iraqis the freedom they need to become a truly great nation.

"Iraqis were victims, trapped in a cage for 35 years under Saddam Hussein," he said. "But the U.S. Army, we came and opened that cage wide open. The uniform I'm wearing, I wear first for my people." 



# One World

## *The 8th gate of Babylon*

Story and photos courtesy of David  
36th Inf. Div. Interpreter, USD-S Public Affairs  
Contributing writer: Sgt. Jeremy Spires

As the eighth gate to the inner city of Babylon, the Ishtar Gate was dedicated to the Babylonian goddess Ishtar.

Constructed with glazed bricks depicting lions, dragons and aurochs, the gate allowed access to the Processional Way statues of the deities of Babylon were paraded through each year during the New Year's celebration.

It was under the direction of king Nebuchadnezzar II, 605 B.C. to 562 B.C., that the Ishtar Gate was built. Nebuchadnezzar ordered the complete reconstruction of the imperial grounds, including the construction of the gate, during his reign.

Along with the building of the gate, a statue depicting a lion stalking a man was installed. The Lion of Babylon guards the entrance to the gate and is also dedicated to the

Babylonian goddess Ishtar.

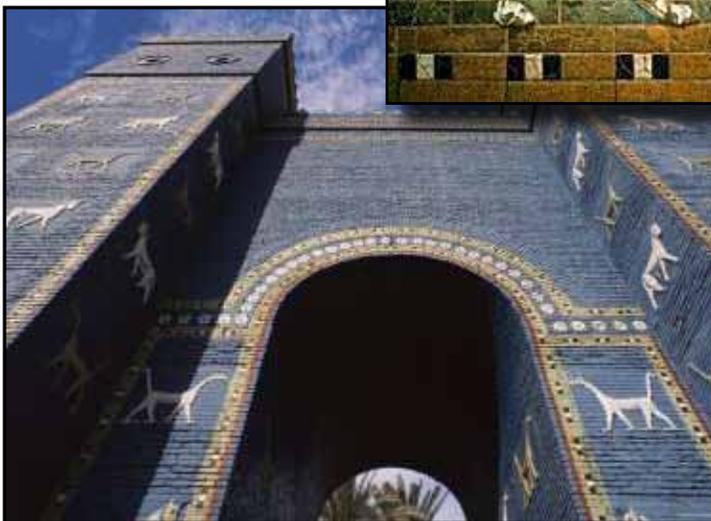
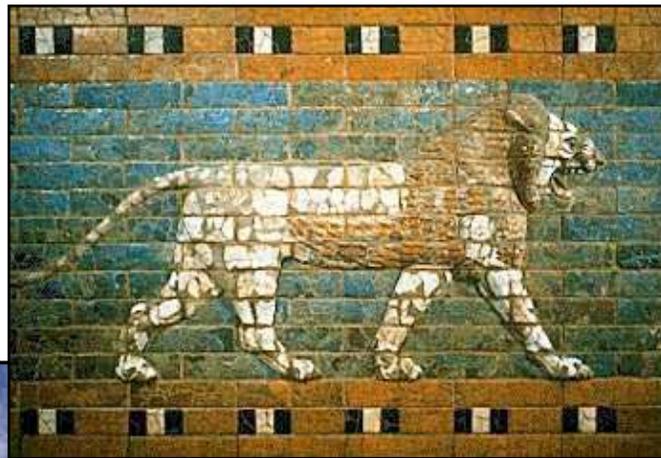
Some believe that the statue represents a symbol for Babylonians' triumph over their enemies and bringing gifts and plunders from the defeated cities. This idea was supported by the fact that both of the rigid mass and base of the Lion of Babylon do not indicate that the statue came from the plain land of Babylon its stone was mostly brought from a mountainous area.

Perhaps the Lion of Babylon was one of the plunders brought from the Hittite city of Hattusha, whose historical site is now known as Boğazkale, east of Turkish capital

Ankara, where the lions at the gates of the city too much resemble the lion of Babylon and are made from the same mountainous material.

Nebuchadnezzar was also credited with the construction of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, which were built for his wife Amyitis, although it is still disputed whether the gardens actually existed. Excavations by archaeologists reveal possible foundations.

Saddam Hussein installed a huge portrait of himself and Nebuchadnezzar at the entrance to the ruins of Babylon. He also had part of the ruins rebuilt with bricks inscribed in an imitation of Nebuchadnezzar and the inscription that reads, "This was built by Saddam Hussein, son of Nebuchadnezzar, to glorify Iraq." 





**S**adr City is a suburb district of Baghdad. Built by Prime Minister Abdul Karim in 1959, the city was unofficially renamed after the Shia leader Mohammad Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr after his death. Now, Sadr City, is one of the nine administrative districts in Baghdad and holds more than three million Shiite residents.

During the early stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom, U.S. military forces focused on rebuilding destroyed civilian infrastructure and training local leaders in democracy. The American forces established neighborhood councils and districts, giving the citizens of Sadr City representation in the new government. Although due in part to the increased tensions and violence against the American military, such progress was slow.

In March 2008, while farther south the Battle of Basra was raging, clashes in Sadr City between U.S. forces and the Mahdi Army increased. The Mahdi Army used IED's and engaged the U.S. forces with sniper fire and intense small arms engagements in the urban area.

While attacking the American military in Sadr City, the Mahdi Army also increased its rocket attacks against the Green Zone and other U.S. bases, killing and wounding several Iraqi civilians and U.S. military personnel.

On May 10, 2008, Muqtada Al-Sadr ordered a cease-fire. This allowed Iraqi troops into all parts of the city. An entirely Iraqi-planned operation, six battalions of Iraqi troops from the 1st (Quick Reaction Force) division stationed

in Al-Anbar, and armored forces from the 9th Division based in Taji, operating without involvement of U.S. forces pushed deep into the city.

The Iraqi Security Forces met little resistance in moving through the city and took up positions formerly occupied by the Mahdi Army. Sadr City then became the main base for the Shia Insurgent group Kata'ib Hezbollah, an offshoot of the Mahdi Army.

Sadr City has not only known violence since 2003, it has also known a giant leap forward in democracy. In 2009's provincial elections and in 2010's parliamentary elections, voters in Sadr City allowed the Iraqi National Alliance to make huge gains in building the present Iraqi government. 

# One People

# 3D ACR AND ISF TRAIN FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS



*Soldiers from the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment and Iraqi Army battle each other in a training exercise in preparation for Operation Eagles Rising, an event developed by the 3d ACR to enhance the Iraqi Security Forces offensive and defensive tactics and basic force protection measures. This training exercise will prepare the ISF to manage the nation's security requirements after the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. (Photos by Sgt. James Kennedy Benjamin, 305th MPAD, USD-S Public Affairs)*



# A moment in history...

By Lt. Col. Enrique Villarreal  
36th Inf. Div. Command Historian

From its formation in 1775, the United States Army has been the primary land-based portion of the U.S. military. Though not solely used as a military force, sometimes helping in domestic violence and natural disaster situations, the Army's primary responsibility has been the fighting of land battles and military occupation. First founded in response to a need for professional soldiery in the Revolutionary War, the U.S. Army has had several major periods of service from the War of 1812 to the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Formation of a New England army in the first months after Lexington marked the first phase in the military struggle with England, but even as the regional army gathered before Boston, a significant step in the creation of a national force was being taken in Philadelphia. The Continental Congress convened there on May 10, 1775 to resume its coordination of the thirteen colonies' efforts to secure British recognition of American rights. It faced the fact that four colonies were already in a state of war. News arrived a week later that Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold had captured Fort Ticonderoga, an event which expanded the dimensions of the conflict and largely ended hopes of a swift reconciliation with Britain. The Continental Congress reluctantly moved to assume direction of the military effort. Thus far the organization of forces had followed colonial precedents, but to establish an army representing all thirteen colonies Congress had to break

new ground.

On May 16, Congress formed itself into a Committee of the Whole to "take into consideration the State of America." This important parliamentary maneuver reflected the fact that Congress, although unsure of its objectives, was absolutely convinced of the importance of presenting an appearance of unanimity to the world. As the Committee of the Whole, the delegates could freely debate in secret and arrive at a consensus without placing any disagreements into the record. Congress successfully used this formula for the next month.

Decisive action came on June 14, when Congress adopted "the American continental army" after reaching a consensus position in the Committee of the Whole. The record indicates only that Congress undertook to raise ten companies of riflemen, approved an enlistment form for them, and appointed a committee (including Washington and Schuyler) to draft rules and regulations "for the government of the army. With that being resolved, six companies of expert riflemen were raised in Pennsylvania, two in Maryland, and two in Virginia. Each company consist of a captain, three lieutenants, four sergeants, four corporals, a drummer or trumpeter, and sixty-eight privates.

The following day, Congress unanimously elected George Washington to command all present and future military forces of those United Colonies. 

## George Washington was the best spy master in American History!

He ran dozens of espionage rings in British-held New York and Philadelphia. The man who supposedly could not tell a lie was a genius at disinformation. He constantly befuddled the British by leaking, through double agents, inflated reports on the strength of his army.

## The Americans of 1776 had the highest standard of living and the lowest taxes in the Western World!

Farmers, lawyers and business owners in the Colonies were thriving, with some plantation owners and merchants making the equivalent of \$500,000 a year. Times were good for many others too. The British wanted a slice of the cash flow and tried to tax the Colonists.



*Soldiers in the American Continental Army.  
(Photo taken from [www.freepublic.com](http://www.freepublic.com))*



# 36th Inf. Div. Hall of Heroes



CPL. CHARLES E. KELLY

COMPANY L, 143RD INFANTRY, 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of life above and beyond the call of duty. On Sept. 13, 1943, near Altavilla, Italy, Cpl. Kelly voluntarily joined a patrol which located and neutralized enemy machine gun positions.

After this hazardous duty he volunteered to establish contact with a battalion of U.S. infantry which was believed to be located on Hill 315, a mile distant.

He traveled over a route commanded by enemy observation and under sniper, mortar, and artillery fire; and later he returned with the correct information that the enemy occupied Hill 315 in organized positions.



Immediately thereafter Cpl. Kelly, again a volunteer patrol member, assisted materially in the destruction of two enemy machine gun nests under conditions requiring great skill and courage. .

Having effectively fired his weapon until all the ammunition was exhausted, he secured permission to obtain more at an ammunition dump. Arriving at the dump, which was located near a storehouse on the extreme flank of his regiment's position, Cpl. Kelly found that the Germans were attacking ferociously at this point. He obtained his ammunition and was given the mission of protecting the rear of the storehouse. He held his position throughout the night.

The following morning the enemy attack was resumed. Cpl. Kelly took a position at an open window of the storehouse. One machine gunner had been killed at this position and several other soldiers wounded. Cpl. Kelly delivered continuous aimed and effective fire upon the enemy with his automatic rifle until the weapon locked from overheating.

Finding another automatic rifle, he again directed effective fire upon the enemy until this weapon also locked. At this critical point, with the enemy threatening to overrun the position, Cpl. Kelly picked up 60-mm. mortar shells, pulled the safety pins, and

used the shells as grenades, killing at least 5 of the enemy.

When it became imperative that the house be evacuated, Cpl. Kelly, despite his sergeant's injunctions, volunteered to hold the position until the remainder of the detachment could withdraw. As the detachment moved out, Cpl. Kelly was observed deliberately loading and firing a rocket launcher from the window.

He was successful in covering the withdrawal of the unit, and later in joining his own organization. Cpl. Kelly's fighting determination and intrepidity in battle exemplify the highest traditions of the U.S. Armed Forces. 



*Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Henry runs with fellow Soldiers during the Army's 236th birthday on June 14. The 36th Inf. Div. along with supporting units formed up on Contingency Operating Base Basra for a three-mile run in celebration of the Army's birthday. (Photo by Sgt. Jeremy Spires, 36th Inf. Div., USD-S Public Affairs)*

