

# COALITION CHRONICLE

Volume 4, Issue 10    October 2009

*MNC-I Commanding  
General with Troops  
at FOB Salie, Iraq*

*Enemies to Brothers:  
an 18-year Odyssey*

OPERATION  
EXHALE BRINGS  
SIGHS OF RELIEF



Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby, commanding general, Multi-National Corps - Iraq, talks with U.S. Soldiers from Alpha Troop, 5th of the 73rd Cavalry Squadron, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division, after visiting a market outside of Forward Operating Base Salie, in Baghdad, Iraq, Sept. 9. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Albino Mendoza III)



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Aircraft maintainers continue training in Iraq



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Iraqis hone battle skills at Warrior Academy



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Muhandis is the Arabic word for engineer

# COALITION CHRONICLE

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Volume 4, Issue 10

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An Iraqi Army Soldier looks on as **Staff Sgt. Dan Fisher**, a cavalry scout from Cross Lanes, W. Va., assigned to Troop B, 1st Battalion, 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, puts a fresh battery in a metal detector during an ongoing mission to search for hidden weapons caches on the southwestern outskirts of Baghdad, Sept. 21. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell)

# FEATURE UP FRONT

Joint mission  
uproots, disrupts  
insurgent activities





Platoon leader with Troop B, 1st Battalion, 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, **1st Lt. Will Hargis**, of Huntington, W. Va., helps dig a hole with Iraqi Army Pvt. Mohammed Ishmael Khalil, after a metal detector indicated buried metal in a mound of dirt in southwestern Baghdad, Sept. 21.

*Story and photos by  
Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell  
MND-B Public Affairs*

**A**s part of an ongoing mission, U.S. and Iraqi Army Soldiers searched farmlands on the southwestern outskirts of Baghdad, Sept. 21, with metal detectors, grit and determination.

“We may not work directly with Iraqi Security Forces in the city, but we’re still in the rural areas trying to keep the weapons out of Baghdad,” explained 1st Lt. Will Hargis, a platoon leader assigned to Troop B, 1st Battalion, 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team.

To keep arms and ordnance out of enemy hands in Baghdad, the Soldiers patrolled over the bubbling canals and green pastures with children tending to cows, although it

hasn’t always been this way.

In the past, insurgents have used this area as a place to store weapons caches, said Hargis, from Huntington, W. Va.

“[These types of searches] help because if we actually find anything, then it takes bombs and explosives out of the hands of the enemy and that helps our buddies out,” said Sgt. Jacob Facemyre, a cavalry scout from Charleston, W. Va., also assigned to B Troop. “I want to make a difference here and these patrols make it safer for us.”

After splitting up into groups with a mixture of Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers, the troops spread out searching different plots of land.

“We try to do all our missions joint for two reasons,” said Hargis. “One, it shows the local people the IA is out here trying to keep them safe...and two, they know the terrain better

than us and they’re a great asset to have.”

The leader of the IA troops, 1st Lt. Mohammed Adel Jassim, agreed.

“When the farmers see the IA escorting the U.S., then they feel good seeing the IA in the lead,” said Mohammed, the commander of 3rd Company, 1st Bn., 23rd Brigade, 17th IA Division.

Since the security agreement on June 30, all the training the U.S. forces have provided for IA Soldiers has paid off because they are expected to take on more of a leadership role in their communities’ security, added Mohammed.

“It has to progress this way because the U.S. Army cannot be here forever, so we have to step up, like today,” Mohammed said, as his troops were quick to be the first to start digging in piles of dirt when the metal detector beeped.

“If we have a suspicious area and then we search it, it is no longer suspicious,” explained Mohammed who has worked with U.S. Forces for more than four years. “We are just like one army; same mission, same targets.”

After digging up many suspected sites, the combined force unearthed only a metal cap to an expended illumination round.

“Yeah, we came back empty-handed, but people still see us out there looking for weapons and they know we’re still out there trying to find the enemy and keep the locals safe,” said an upbeat Hargis. “Though we didn’t catch them today, we may have disrupted the enemy because now that’s one place they know we’re searching.”

Keeping the pressure on the enemy and not allowing insurgents to move freely is the main idea behind this ongoing operation.

“We didn’t get lucky, but, hey, maybe next time we’ll find

something, but we’ll keep looking,” said Hargis with a dirt-stained and sweat-soaked uniform.

This is the first time that B Troop and IA Soldiers participated in the ongoing brigade mission to root out suspected cache sites in the area, but will not be the last time they share sweat and dirt together to protect the local population.

Right: **Iraqi Army 1st Lt. Mohammed Adel Jassim**, commander of 3rd Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Brigade, 17th IA Division, gets on his hands and knees to dig in a dirt mound where a metal detector used by Staff Sgt. Dan Fisher (standing), a cavalry scout from Cross Lanes, W. Va., assigned to Troop B, 1st Battalion, 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, indicated a possible weapons cache site.



**Sgt. 1st Class Brad Preece** (left), a cavalry scout platoon sergeant from Scott Depot, W. Va., holds a metal piece of an illumination round that Iraqi Army Soldiers unearthed during a joint cache search in southwestern Baghdad, Sept. 21. Preece is assigned to Troop B, 1st Battalion, 150th Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team.





Story and photos by Sgt. Frank Vaughn  
MND-S Public Affairs

# From Enemies to Brothers: An 18-year Odyssey

fired two missiles apiece at the Iraqi planes, but something went wrong. Due to a maintenance issue, all four missiles hung and never fired. It turns out they were loaded wrong.”

Iuliano, now a lieutenant colonel and commander of 84th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron and air liaison officer for Multi-National Division – South, said he was upset when he didn’t get to see Iraqi planes shot down that night. It was a feeling that would stay with him for 18 years.

“I arrived in Iraq about 4 months ago,” said Iuliano, a native of Boise, Idaho. “I took an interest in helping strengthen the Iraqi Air Force any way I could, and it was through that effort that I met Col. Sami.”

Sami, who commands the 70th Iraqi Air Force Squadron stationed at Contingency Operating Base Basra, made fast friends with Iuliano. They have worked together and enjoyed each other’s company for three months now, but only knew each other about a month when Sami told Iuliano a story that shook him.

“He told me about being on a mission back during Desert Storm,” Iuliano said. “When he told me the moon was full on the night he was talking about, I put two and

two together and realized he was talking about that same night. He was piloting one of the planes we engaged that night.”

Iuliano said he didn’t want to say anything about being in the air that night and he didn’t tell Sami the jets fired on him.

“We had such a good friendship and I didn’t want this to get in the way of our work,” Iuliano said. “Some of the pilots in the 70th Squadron have asked me if I flew in Desert Storm and I told them I didn’t. I just thought it would be better that way.”

Iuliano, who is now at the end of his tour in Iraq, knew he couldn’t leave the country without telling Sami. He had a plaque made to present to Sami and prepared to tell him the truth about that night.

“I’m going to get emotional when I tell him,” Iuliano said with a sigh. “I don’t know how this is going to go, but I’m ready.”

The men met at Sami’s office building Sept. 14 to present gifts to each other in a brief ceremony. Sami presented Iuliano and two other service members with tokens of appreciation, then Iuliano took the floor. He cleared his throat, looked around the room, and began with his story – the part of Sami’s story he

didn’t know.

“A lot of you have asked me if I flew in the war in 1991,” Iuliano said to Sami and other Iraqi Air Force officers in the room. “I told you at the time that I hadn’t, but that wasn’t exactly the truth. I said that at the time because I didn’t really know how to answer your question, but now I do. On the night of Jan. 17th, under a full moon...” Iuliano began.

Sami looked at him in surprise, but allowed Iuliano to continue.

“...I flew in an F-111 bomber as part of a package sent to destroy targets in northern Iraq,” Iuliano continued.

When Iuliano got to the part about IL-76s flying east toward Iran, Sami put his hand on his chest and simply said, “Me?!”

Iuliano looked him in the eye and nodded. The next thing he said caused his voice to catch in a brief display of emotion. “The F-15s were sent to intercept you. They locked you in and fired, but due to a maintenance malfunction, the missiles hung. You are alive today

because they were loaded wrong.”

Sami said he was never aware he was engaged by the U.S. Air Force during that mission.

“I had no idea I was being fired on,” he said in amazement.

After Iuliano finished telling his story, he presented Sami with a plaque that read, “Praise Allah for faulty maintenance. Major Sami, 17 Jan 1991, my enemy. Colonel Sami, 17 Jul 2009, my friend. LTC Bill ‘Julio’ Iuliano, USAF.”

The two men shook hands and embraced following the presentation, and Sami told Iuliano, “Don’t worry. Please don’t worry about that.”

Sami said he was very fortunate to live that night, though he didn’t know it at the time. He has certainly lived life to the fullest since then, though he hasn’t always understood the way things sometimes are.

“When I took off on my mission that night, I was father to a six-month-old son, Ali,” Sami said. “Now I am father to four children. I also have a daughter, Noor, another

daughter, Sama, and another son, Muhammad. Life is good because of them, but it has sometimes been hard.”

Sami said he has seen his wife shot in the neck while hanging clothes out to dry, been thrown in jail by an associate of Saddam Hussein and been forced to participate in three separate wars as a result of Hussein’s administration.

“I could not understand why we were always at war with Saddam in charge,” Sami said. “The Americans have always tried to help the people of Iraq and he had to make it hard for all of us.”

Iuliano agreed with Sami, saying, “The last people who ever want to see war are those of us in uniform.”

However, it was war – two, actually – that brought the two men together. The first war, though neither man knew it at the time, made them enemies. The second has made them more than friends.

“We are now brothers,” Sami said with a smile.

**Air Force Lt. Col. Bill Iuliano** (left), commander, 84th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron and air liaison officer for Multi-National Division – South, and **Col. Sami**, commander, 70th Iraqi Air Force Squadron, embrace during a brief ceremony at Contingency Operating Base Basra Sept. 14. The two officers flew on opposite sides of the Persian Gulf War in 1991, but have worked together in Operation Iraqi Freedom to strengthen the Iraqi Air Force.





# Maintenance training continues for Iraqi aircraft technicians

Story by Senior Airman Alyssa C. Miles  
AFCENT Public Affairs



**Tech. Sgt. William Kusar**, aircraft structural maintenance and metals technician advisor assigned to the 321st Air Expeditionary Advisor Squadron, evaluates an Iraqi maintenance airman's weld and provides feedback during a training session, Sept. 5. Kusar's training ensures the Iraqi airmen will be fully capable of performing structural repairs on their C-130 aircraft. He is deployed from Charleston Air Force Base, S.C. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Johnny L. Saldivar)

**NEW AL MUTHANNA AIR BASE, Iraq** -- Although the 321st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron will soon be deactivated, U.S. Air Force maintainers will continue to assist the Iraqis by making sure they are fully capable of keeping their C-130 aircraft in the air.

Tech. Sgts. Julie Litz, electrical environmental specialist, and William Kusar, aircraft structural maintenance and metals technician advisor, are two Airmen who will remain deployed to complete this mission.

For Litz, remaining in-country is necessary, as more than half the 25 Iraqi airmen she trains have yet to reach the desired skill level.

"We have three 7-levels, approximately four 5-levels and 13 3-levels," she said. "It's my goal to have all 3-levels to 5-levels within the year I'm here."

Litz says a major difference can be seen in the day-to-day operations here versus at her home station, Travis Air Force Base, Calif.

"The maintenance here is a lot more slow paced," she said. "It's a lot of DV missions here, not many cargo missions. It makes it a lot slower paced. They might fly two to three lines a week, where we might fly six lines a day. We just turn it into a training situation here."

So far, Litz has trained her students on alternating and direct current power, and is in the process of teaching them pressurization and air conditioning.

"I try to teach one main thing a week," the Escalon, Calif. native said. "As soon as I get an opportunity to train hands-on, I try to do it immediately. Anything my career field has, I plan to pass on so they can fulfill their mission and become a qualified, full-fledged air force on the C-130."

Kusar, who is deployed from Charleston AFB, S.C., is the third advisor his section has had and says thanks to his predecessors, he can take the Iraqis to the next level in on-the-job training.



**Tech. Sgt. Julie Litz**, electrical and environmental specialist assigned to the 321st Air Expeditionary Advisor Squadron, explains the different codes that could fault a C-130's generator control unit Sept. 5. Litz works with 25 Iraqi airmen, teaching them different skills from alternating and direct current pressure to air conditioning. Her goal is to get them trained to a higher level during her deployment. Litz is deployed from Travis Air Force Base, Calif., and is a native of Escalon, Calif. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Johnny L. Saldivar)

"We're about to move into a new facility, and we ordered some power equipment to help us do our job easier," he said. "They are used to working with hand tools because that's all they've ever had. It's kind of a unique situation to try to tell and show them the benefit that a precision machine will have versus hands. I think we've overcome that barrier and they understand why we need to have it."

"Basically what we're doing is teaching them to take care of their own entity and aircraft and to be a safe and reliable air force to carry troops and equipment throughout Iraq," he continued.

Knowing both sergeants will be deployed for a year away from their families at home, the Iraqis have accepted their advisors as not only teachers, but family as well.

"They've always supported us," one Iraqi C-130 engineer officer

said. "In the beginning of this base, they opened the classes to teach my guys technical levels for their jobs. Now we're able to make everything ourselves. Sometimes, we still need the help. We still need Americans as a friend and a family."

Both students and teachers are looking forward to the possibilities the newly learned skills offer.

"I see better aircraft and I really

see them being competent and able to keep them flying safely," Kusar said. "We'd like to see them to the point where their maintenance and their aircraft can assist everything we're doing throughout the world."

With each day of C-130 maintenance training, Litz and Kusar are helping the Iraqis soar to a better future.

***"Anything my career field has, I plan to pass on so they can fulfill their mission and become a qualified, full-fledged air force on the C-130."***

*Tech. Sgt. Julie Litz*  
**321st AEAS**





**Soldiers interact with children** outside of a new school built in the city of Khalkalan in Kirkuk province, Iraq, during the school's opening ceremony, Sept. 14. The school can accommodate 500 children and is the first school built in this community.

# Stacking the Building Blocks of Education

*Story and photo by Pfc. Jared Sollars  
MND-N Public Affairs*

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq** — During the 2nd “Black Jack” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division’s time in Iraq, the unit has helped build and renovate 25 school facilities - now ready to open for the upcoming school year.

“The three schools I visited in the last two weeks in the vicinity of Rashaad are excellent examples of how the Soldiers are making a tremendous difference in their areas of operations,” said Lt. Col. Hugh R. McNeely, the deputy commander of

2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.

Those three schools are the only ones the villages of Saba Nissan, Al Fashka and Al Wadwai have ever had. For the first time in the history of these villages, the local children will have a place to go to develop their young minds.

“These schools are beacons of these communities, which are made up of mud houses and no other significant structures,” said McNeely. “Each one is well constructed and should be a lasting example of U.S. commitment and

friendship with the people of Iraq.”

Each schoolhouse is a six-room building with running water, electricity and student desks. These school projects also help their local economies by providing temporary and permanent jobs.

“The people in the villages where we’ve built these schoolhouses have been very receptive and supportive of the projects,” said Lt. Col. Andrew Shoffner, commander of 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. “They are taking pride in these schools.”

During his visit to Al Fashka, McNeely spoke with an elementary-age child who said he was excited to go to the new school, and it would be his first time ever attending any form of school.

Another recently constructed school in Qaranaw village in Kirkuk province will be able to facilitate over 500 students, a first for the community.

“The kids get a better education, which is good for long-term stability,” said Lt. Col. Terry Cook, the commander of 3rd Battalion,

82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div., whose unit is responsible for the small community.

According to Cook, however, most efforts go into renovation as opposed to new construction. The Iraqi Ministry of Education assesses they need 200 new schools throughout Kirkuk province to accommodate the population, an endeavor which 2nd BCT and members of the Kirkuk Provincial Reconstruction Team are working with the provincial government to plan and resource.

“For now, we analyze the situation and look at existing schools to find ways for renovation or expansion to improve the quality of education,” Cook said.

The “Black Jack” Brigade still has a number of other school projects under construction which will open as they are completed.

McNeely said the partnership between the government of Iraq, the civil affairs team, the battalions and the provincial reconstruction team is responsible for these projects coming together.





**Iraqi teens from the Tirkrit Orphanage**, enjoy a tour of a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter during the Community Service Project for the Tikrit Orphanage hosted by U.S. Soldiers from 25th Special Troops Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, Sept. 23. The event's goal was to set an example of community service and show commitment to those affected by the violence in Iraq. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Luke P. Thelen)



**U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby**, commanding general, Multi-National Corps - Iraq, and an Iraqi National Police Command brigadier general greet each other "with respect" at Forward Operating Base Salie, near Baghdad, Iraq, Sept. 9. (U.S. Army Pvt. Albino Mendoza III)

**The 101st Engineer Battalion Chaplain (Capt.) Paul Barnett** (right), of Wareham, Mass., assists Spc. Ezekiel Earle, of Morganton, N.C., 621st Survey and Design Team, 101st Eng. Bn., 225th Eng. Brigade, after he was baptized. The ceremony took place at the Engineer Chapel at Camp Liberty, Iraq, Sept. 19. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Tracy Knowles)



**Sgt. Joe Minoie**, of Braintree, Mass., a mechanic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team located in Clinton, N.C, welds a security door at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Sept. 19. (U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Robert Jordan)

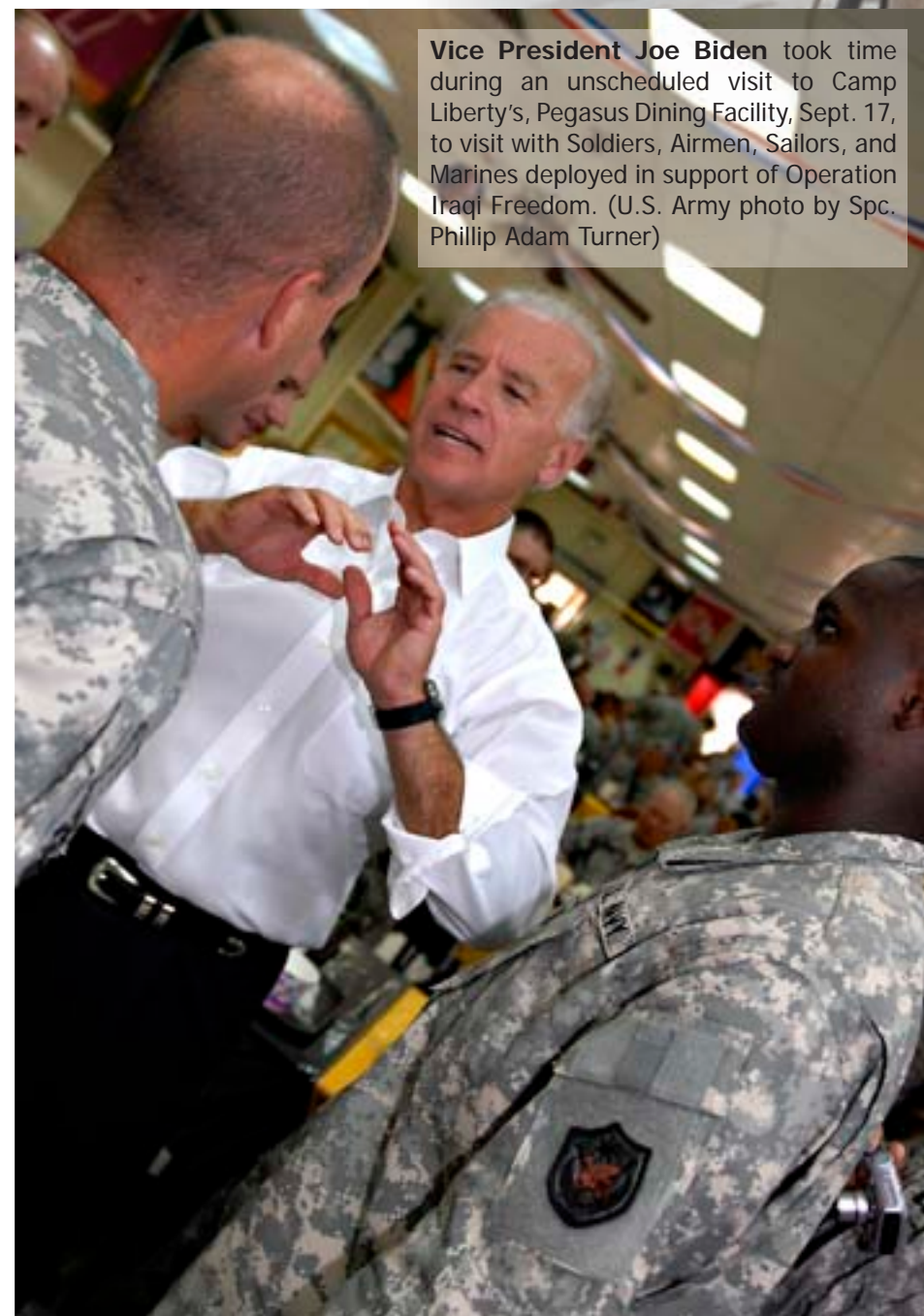


Atlanta, Texas, native, **Staff Sgt. Avery Washington**, primary instructor for the noncommissioned officer leadership course assigned to Company C, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, assists Sgt. Hussein, a checkpoint NCO in charge, assigned to the 43rd Iraqi Army Bde., in clearing his weapon at Joint Security Station Shield, Sept. 19.





**Pfc. Ryan Short**, of Saint Clair, Mo., leads his Iraqi Army partners to the firing line in order to conduct a reflexive live-fire qualification exercise, Sept. 9, at Combat Outpost Carver, Iraq, located outside of southeastern Baghdad. Short and his fellow Paratroopers are training their Iraqi partners as part of the unit's training academy dubbed "Cold Steel." Short is an infantryman assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Multi-National Division- Baghdad. (U.S. Army photo by Pvt. Jared Gehmann)



**Vice President Joe Biden** took time during an unscheduled visit to Camp Liberty's, Pegasus Dining Facility, Sept. 17, to visit with Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, and Marines deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Phillip Adam Turner)



Servicemembers look on as pro skateboarder, **Jud Heald**, from Joplin, Mo., performs a stall on a 15-foot high T-wall during the "Bikes Over Baghdad" tour at Camp Liberty, Sept. 9. The show enthralled hundreds for over an hour as the athletes showed their appreciation for the sacrifices that servicemembers are making. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jon Soles)



**Oghale Oddo** (left), Aid Representative for the Agency for International Development, greets the Director General of the Wasit Ministry of Youth and Sports following a meeting, in Kut Iraq, Sept. 8. The sides met to discuss future youth programs for the Wasit Province. (U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Brien Vorhees)





Under the morning sun, a **UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief** from 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad, starts to remove the fly away gear from a helicopter during a preflight inspection, Sept. 24. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Travis Zielinski)



Left: **U.S. Sailors** participate in the 2010 Chief Petty Officer Pinning Ceremony at the Al Faw Palace, Camp Victory, Baghdad, Iraq, Sept. 16. The CPO Pinning is a 116-year old naval tradition indicating the Sailor has completed the transition from the rank of Petty Officer 1st Class to CPO. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Edwin L. Wriston)



An **Iraqi soldier** from the 4th Battalion, 18th Iraqi Army Brigade, plays with a local boy during a combined clearing mission with U.S. Soldiers from Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, in the village of Ibrahim Jassim, in the Diyala Province of Iraq, Aug. 29, 2008. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sergeant Ali E. Flisek)



Right: **Airman 1st Class Theodore Wilkins**, assigned to the 732nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, plays the saxophone on stage during a music concert featuring the Grammy Award winning rock 'n' roll trio Los Lonely Boys, at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, in northern Iraq, Sept. 4. Wilkins is deployed from Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Luke P. Thelen)





**Sgt. Heriberto Fuentes** (right), of Bradenton, Fla., shows an Iraqi Soldier how much dirt and debris is in his rifle during a weapons-cleaning session at Warrior Academy, Sept. 16. Fuentes is an infantryman assigned to the Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. Basic rifle marksmanship and weapons maintenance are key blocks of instruction at the academy for Iraqi Soldiers.

**Spc. Carl Treen**, of Northville, Mich., demonstrates ways to apply a dressing to a head wound during the first aid block of instruction at the Warrior Academy, Sept. 16. Treen, a medic assigned to Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, helped teach the Iraqi Soldiers at the academy about first aid.



## Iraqis Improve Battle Skills at Warrior Academy

Story and photos by Sgt. Jon Soles  
MND-B Public Affairs

**S**oldiers of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, are the instructors of the Warrior Academy at Joint Security Station Ur – a 3-day academy designed to train Iraqis in everything from rifle marksmanship to first aid.

The focus of the academy's first day is BRM – a well-known acronym to all U.S. Soldiers as basic rifle marksmanship. According to Staff Sgt. Benito Santos, an infantry platoon sergeant and the academy's lead instructor, BRM is often neglected among Iraqi Soldiers because of the scarcity of ammunition. But at Warrior Academy, the Iraqis fired over 800 rounds at JSS Ur's firing range.

"The course is three days so we compress everything into those three days," said Santos, a native of Kagman-3, Saipan.

Santos also points out that the Iraqi Soldiers improperly clean their weapons and sometimes use techniques that are harmful to the weapon.

"They use diesel fuel to clean their weapons, it makes the bolt sticky and makes dust stick to it and it becomes like sludge," said Santos, who is assigned to Co. A "We looked through the barrels of these weapons and you couldn't see through them."

To test the theory that a clean weapon is a functional weapon, Santos said the Iraqis were allowed to fire their weapons before cleaning them. The result was a malfunction rate of about 80 percent, proving the academy's technologies on weapons' maintenance

works.

Another day of class focuses on squad movement tactics and recognizing improvised explosive devices.

"This class helps them understand why it's important to be in certain formations when in the city," said Santos. "They kind of understand that now."

The anti-IED portion of the class involves slideshows and parts of actual IEDs found by U.S. Soldiers. Sharing this knowledge helps the Iraqis become more able to pick out a deadly IED, added Santos.

On the final day of instruction, the Iraqis lead a patrol in the surrounding Sadr City area to show their Warrior Academy instructors what they've learned. A graduation ceremony is then held during which the Iraqi soldiers are given certificates by an Iraqi Army officer.

Capt. John Ulsamer, commander of Co. A, 2nd Bn., 5th Cav. Regt., 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div., said the academy is already showing its worth in the Iraqi Army.

"We're seeing a lot of success from it," said Ulsamer, an infantry officer from Staten Island, N.Y. "The Iraqi Army has detained eight times more people this month than last month."

Ulsamer said his goal is for the Iraqis to eventually take the reins of the Warrior Academy.

"We're trying to get the Iraqis to train and we just provide the facility," Ulsamer said. "We've got a range and classrooms and we can have it so Iraqis could conduct their own training."

As Iraqi security forces continue to take the lead in securing their country, the knowledge gained at the Warrior Academy is sure to help them become more confident and competent.

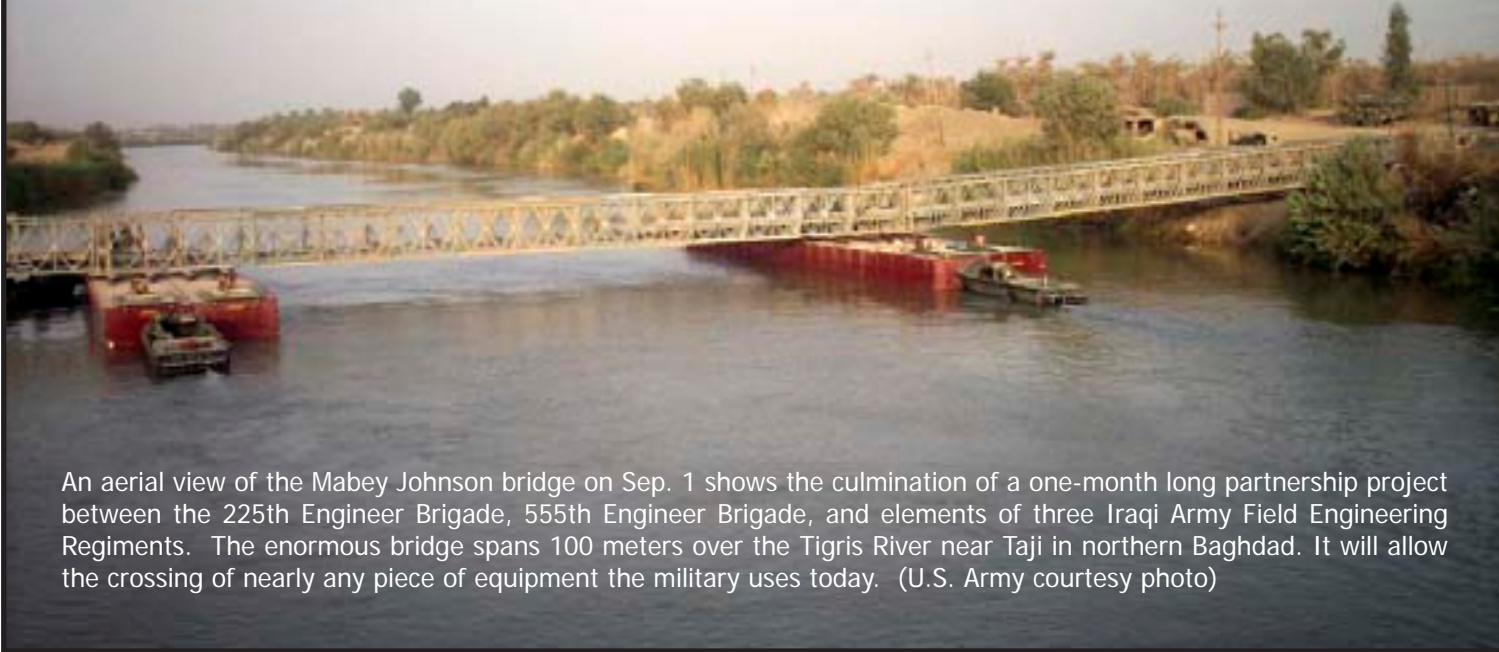


**Staff Sgt. Benito Santos** (right) shows an Iraqi Soldier how to clean his weapon using a small brush at the Warrior Academy at Joint Security Station Ur, Sept. 16. Santos, an infantry platoon sergeant assigned to Company A, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, is one of the instructors of the academy. "We make it so that when they come here, they enjoy it," said Santos, a native of Kagman-3, Saipan. "We make it so they tell their other buddies and they want to come here."



# Muhandis is Arabic for engineer

Story by Spc. Amburr J. Reese  
MNC-I Public Affairs



An aerial view of the Mabey Johnson bridge on Sep. 1 shows the culmination of a one-month long partnership project between the 225th Engineer Brigade, 555th Engineer Brigade, and elements of three Iraqi Army Field Engineering Regiments. The enormous bridge spans 100 meters over the Tigris River near Taji in northern Baghdad. It will allow the crossing of nearly any piece of equipment the military uses today. (U.S. Army courtesy photo)

**M**uhandis is the Arabic word for engineer. Team Muhandis is made up of eight Servicemembers, three stationed on Camp Victory and five in Taji, Iraq. The team's main mission is to effectively stand up an engineer branch in the Iraqi Army through partnership with Iraqi Ground Forces Command.

Team Muhandis was initially developed in late 2005 to assist the Iraqi Army's route clearance team. Over the past few years the program has evolved into a partnership with IGFC Engineer Branch to help monitor the progress of all Iraqi Army engineers.

"Muhandis facilitates a link between tactical and operational units within U.S. Forces and Iraqi Forces," said Maj. Bill M. Reding, Elizabethtown, Ky. native, and Team Muhandis officer-in-charge. "We have frequent engagements with our IGFC counterparts, and help with information exchange on all levels."

IGFC and Joint Headquarters are encouraging IA officers to rely more on their noncommissioned officers. In turn, this will help increase decision-making on a lower level and create a more fluid information flow.

"We are trying to enhance already existing skills, and help teach them how to delegate authority," Reding said.

Team Mahandis's training concept with Iraqi Security Forces encompasses route clearance, construction, maintenance and bridge building through mentoring, training and advising.

Route clearance is the primary focus of training for the team which is also helping their engineer counterparts to develop platoons to conduct independent missions.

"With the Iraqis taking the lead on route clearance, it

will develop assured mobility for ISF," Reding said.

Construction and equipment maintenance has also been emphasized in the partnership between Team Muhandis and the IA engineers. Muhandis has been teaching the Iraqis basic horizontal and vertical construction, and provided them with the knowledge to maintain heavy equipment to an acceptable level of operation.

"We are trying to help give them the knowledge that puts them in the position to be effective in a way that fits their needs and methods," said Capt. Leslie J Ratcliff, Ft. Lewis, Wash., and member of Team Muhandis.

Looking to the future Team Muhandis has been very active in helping stand up the first Strategic Bridge Company.

"Two major rivers segment the country, bridges are required in many areas," said Reding. "In the past, insurgents have attacked these bridges, so the ability to provide a solution to bridge interdictions or to allow increased loads over existing bridges is critical to ensuring the mobility of the Iraqi Security Forces, civilians and supporting groups and agencies."

Team Muhandis has also developed the train the trainer program, supported the Iraqi Army Engineer School, in Taji, Iraq and acted as mentors to basic, noncommissioned officer and officer courses used to train IA Soldiers.

"Now that the Iraqis have taken the lead in engineering they have been able to support ISF more effectively and have been able to provide for a greater effect," Reding said.

# OPERATION EXHALE BRINGS SIGHS OF RELIEF

Story and photo by Sgt. Mark Burrell  
MND-B Public Affairs

**O**xygen tanks are necessary for any hospital and they are vital for performing surgery.

"Sometimes we stop doing these surgeries because we have to wait for oxygen," said Mohammed Mamoud Ahmed, an electrical engineer for Abu Ghraib Hospital. "It has happened a couple of times and when it gets critical, we have to get it from other hospitals."

To prevent this incident from happening again, the Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment and 442nd Civil Affairs Bn., dropped off an industrial oxygen generator at the hospital, Sept. 12.

"One of our biggest problems is the oxygen supply," said Mohammed.

"With the winter coming, that's the peak season for colds and illnesses when we need oxygen here the most."

The staff at the hospital waited patiently for a long time for an answer to this problem and were excited when U.S. troops offered a solution, explained Mohammed.

"We used to suffer too much because we would bring oxygen from as far away as Ramadi," explained Mohammed. "That's about 100 kilometers away."

He also said that the community is grateful to have a good connection with U.S. forces and have a chance to have their concerns really listened to and understood.

"This project has tangible benefits ... it actually keeps

people safe and that's an important perk," said

1st Lt. Noah Webster, project manager and native of Austin, Texas, assigned to HHC, 2nd Bn., 8th Cav. Regt., attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

The new oxygen machine will provide the over-capacity hospital with a necessary tool to help the people of Iraq, added Webster.

"It gives the hospital more independence and it helps the local people," said Mohammed. "The poor and underprivileged people will benefit the most from this machine."

According to the administration, the hospital needs about 50 bottles

of oxygen a day for patients. The new oxygen generator running at maximum capacity will be able to provide 75 bottles per day, explained Webster.

It wasn't easy for U.S. forces to coordinate getting the generator to its new home. The hulking machine came from New York to Chicago and then overseas to Dubai and eventually Baghdad, but Webster said the bottom line was good cross-unit coordination.

After moving the machine into place with a large forklift at the congested Abu Ghraib Hospital, the Soldiers held a small ceremony to complete the event.

"We're really not here anymore to fight in a kinetic capacity, but more in a civil capacity," explained Webster. "The locals see us getting this huge piece of equipment off the back of a flatbed truck and they may not know what it is, but they know we're here to help."

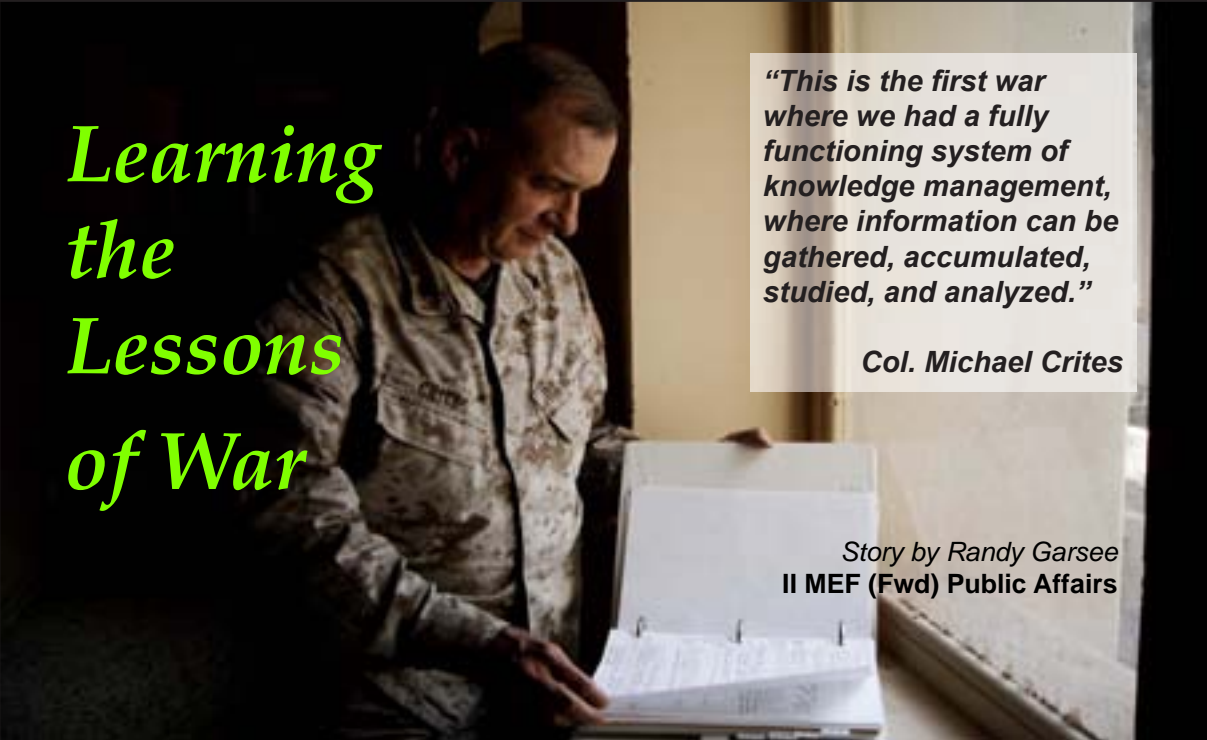
With a sigh of relief, the Soldiers graciously accepted thanks from the staff of the hospital and agreed that Operation Exhale brought a breath of fresh air to a hopeful community.

"Hopefully this equipment will help the people of Iraq," said Lt. **Col. Mark Solomons**, from Honolulu, Hawaii, the commander of 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, as he watches Mohammed Mamoud Ahmed, an electrical engineer at Abu Ghraib Hospital, ceremoniously cut the wrapping of a brand-new oxygen generator delivered to the people of Iraq, Sept. 12.





# Learning the Lessons of War



*"This is the first war where we had a fully functioning system of knowledge management, where information can be gathered, accumulated, studied, and analyzed."*

**Col. Michael Crites**

Story by Randy Garsee  
II MEF (Fwd) Public Affairs

**AL ASAD AIR BASE, Iraq** - An improvised explosive device blast rips apart a Humvee, and those inside it, near Baghdad. A tribal elder approaches a military officer in the war-torn city of Ramadi. A Marine places the stock of his M-16A4 against his shoulder and fires at a target on a shooting range in the Al Anbar Province, teaching the Iraqi soldier standing next to him by example.

Cause and effect. Problem evolves into solution. But in the case of Operation Iraqi Freedom, how are the lessons of war extracted from the bullets and bombs of the battlefield? You would need experts who view the combat zone as a classroom.

Enter the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned.

"My job is to make sure that gets recorded for posterity at Headquarters Marine Corps," explains one of those experts, Col. Michael Crites, from his office at Al Asad Air Base in Iraq's Al Anbar Province. He describes his job as "a mixture of consultant and reporter."

Crites is the MCCLL liaison to Multi-National Force - West, the force that covers western Iraq which includes all of Al Anbar Province and the cities of Ramadi and Fallujah, to name two. That's a massive area. Iraq is about the size of California

and Anbar is the size of North Carolina.

"The command is the source," Crites says. "They're going to guide me into what lessons they want recorded, what lessons they've learned, according to their operations."

As if writing an encyclopedia of war, the Marine Corps records and learns from every operation. "In our history, we've built host-nation armies, like in Central America in the 20's. We've participated in the occupation of Japan, a security kind of mission," Crites says. Those lessons include, "Key leader engagements. Building that host military capability. Civil action projects borrowing from what we learned in Vietnam with the civil action platoon and successfully being able to retrograde and leave [Iraq] in the hands of its own security forces reasonably peaceful."

Operation Iraqi Freedom has resulted in reams of recommendations and life-saving changes. Crites highlights a specific example from Iraq that's also made its way to Afghanistan. "Improvised Explosive Devices became the weapon of choice of the enemy. We've gone through, learned all kinds of lessons and, in fact, transformed our vehicle force since we began in Iraq.

The MRAP, [Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle] is created to withstand an explosive device. So that's something that is continuing to evolve and be used in Afghanistan."

By accessing MCCLL's secure web site, Marines make a record of combat-related events by filling out an After Action Report. The information is collected and analyzed. The lessons learned from a particular battle or event are extracted and published once a week. "This is the first war where we had a fully

functioning system of knowledge management, where information can be gathered, accumulated, studied, and analyzed," Crites says, emphasizing how the lessons are also passed on to the next fighting force. "A Marine that comes to war studies Lessons Learned, studies what his predecessor did before him, and that's how he gets ready for deployment."

The battlefield is a fluid classroom. Imagine a teacher who keeps changing the lesson plan. The enemy is also constantly changing. "Just as we improve our tactics, force protection measures, the enemy tries to think of a way to defeat us," Crites says. "So it's a constant learning process."

Like many Marines in the Al Anbar Province, Col. Crites will soon pack up and head back to the U.S. His replacement will collect information on the drawdown of forces and equipment in Iraq, lessons certain to be applied one day to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

"Marines are famous, I think, in strength and physical courage and intellectual ability," Crites says. "But now I think we're showing more intellectual prowess overall because of the effort of Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned."



# IN MEMORIAM

NAMES OF SERVICEMEMBERS WHO DIED BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 1 AND  
SEPTEMBER 30, 2009 WHILE SERVING IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

**GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS: THAT A MAN LAY  
DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS.**

*JOHN 15:13*

## **September 3**

*Staff Sgt. Todd W. Selge, 25*

*Spc. Jordan M. Shay, 22*

## **September 8**

*1st Lt. Joseph D. Helton, 24*

*Staff Sgt. Shannon M. Smith, 31*

*Pfc. Thomas F. Lyons, 20*

*Pfc. Zachary T. Myers, 21*

## **September 12**

*Sgt. 1st Class Duane A. Thornsbury, 30*

## **September 19**

*Spc. Michael S. Cote Jr., 20*

## **September 20**

*Senior Airman Matthew R. Courtois, 22*

## **September 29**

*Spc. Ross E. Vogel, III, 24*





Straddling a pontoon holding a floating piece of a Mabey-Johnson Bridge and the land-based ramp, **Soldiers from the 50th Multi-Role Bridge Company, 37th Engineer Battalion, 555th Engineer Brigade and Iraqi engineer Soldiers** make adjustments with a pry bar to insert a pin and connect the two pieces. The huge 100-meter bridge spans the Tigris River near Taji in northern Baghdad, and can accommodate all types of vehicles. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rebekah Malone)