

COALITION CHRONICLE

Volume 4, Issue 11 November 2009

*Port of Entry
Prepares to
Open for Hajj
Pilgrims*

*Deployed
Scholar
Honored*

**Ali Base assumes
additional duty role**



U.S. Army 1st Lt. Brandon Thomas, of New Orleans, La., assigned to Charlie Company, 3rd Brigade, 8th Cavalry, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, stands with Soldiers from his platoon in front a temple at the Athar ruins, outside the of town of Al Hadr south of Mosul, Iraq, Oct. 16. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Carmichael Yopez)



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Joint medical mission conducted at COB Basra



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Medical skills drill used to train Iraq Police



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“Hunters from the Sky” pay tribute to Saint Michael

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FEATURE UP FRONT



Airmen from the 407th Air Expeditionary Group form an assembly line to package school supplies and toys for Operation Iraqi Child Sept. 5. The school supplies will be distributed to local communities in southern Iraq to prepare children for the upcoming school year. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Tony R. Ritter)

... ‘advise and assist’

Story by 1st Lt. Korry Leverett/Photos by Senior Airman Tony R. Ritter
407th Air Expeditionary Group Public Affairs



U.S. Air Force Col. Glen A. Apgar, commander, 407th Expeditionary Air Group visits with Iraqi Army Col. Muhammad Abd Al-Muhssan Khalaf Mahd, commander, 10th Iraqi Army Division at Camp Dhi Qar, Iraq, Oct. 14. During the visit Apgar witnessed the impact U.S. Airmen make using their technical expertise and equipment to advise and assist Iraqi military forces.

ALI BASE, Iraq - As the responsible drawdown of forces continues in Iraq, Airmen at Ali Base have embraced the additional role of advising and assisting the local Iraqi Army and citizens during this transition.

The 407th Air Expeditionary Group, which operates, maintains and secures the largest airfield in southern Iraq, is one of several Air Force units that have accepted this task in an effort to better equip and prepare the Government of Iraq to be self-sustaining.

“This is why we are here as a nation,” said Col. Glen A. Apgar, 407th AEG commander. “What we are doing is assisting the Iraqi people standup as a country ... it’s much bigger than only running the airfield.”

Advise and assist is typically an Army mission, and Airmen here have made a commitment to link up with their Army counterparts in this effort, not just because of their expertise but also because of their

willingness.

“Airmen have accepted this role because they have the technical skills to do so,” said Apgar, who is deployed from Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala. “It’s something we have to do.”

The decision to take on this function came in part because the 407th AEG assists the Army’s 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, also at Ali Base/Contingency Operating Base Adder, which deployed to Iraq as the first Advise and Assist Brigade, as well as others.

Airmen have also started augmenting local Military Transition Teams and Logistics Military Advisory Teams in their efforts to help establish initial operating capabilities for the Iraqi Army.

“The 407th AEG brings a unique and professional skill set to the fight,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Steven Ramsay, Tallil LMAT senior advisor, deployed from Keesler Air Force Base, Miss. “The Airmen

have a willingness to support, and a heart to make a difference I haven’t seen from others in the AOR ... the support provided the LMAT has made the difference in our success outside the wire.”

Tech. Sgt. Shane Lacaille, noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the 407th Expeditionary Medical Squadron and deployed from Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., has augmented the local LMAT and other units on several occasions in an effort to establish independent Iraqi medical services.

“As an advisor to the Iraqi Army we are charged with mentoring our medical counterparts so they are able to conduct activities without the aid of outside forces,” said Lacaille. “I have seen the strides the Iraqi Army has taken at four different location commands as an advisor, and I am proud of the work the teams and others have done.”

If we don’t support the Iraqi Army with training and mentoring it could have an adverse effect on the

population, he added.

Just recently, Lacaille and an advisory team aided the Iraqi Army in a public health and bioenvironmental investigation following a typhoid fever outbreak on an Iraqi Army camp. The investigation allowed the Iraqi and U.S. forces to resolve how the disease was contracted, learn how to mitigate the threat, and ultimately immunize 5,000 Iraqi soldiers against it.

The medical team is just one of many that has stepped up to advise and assist the Iraqis. 407th AEG teams from weapon safety, power production, petroleum, oil and lubricants, and communication have all volunteered their skills to support this effort.

Just as the Iraqi Army needs assistance from technical experts, it also needs additional materials and equipment to help sustain their efforts through this transition.

“We began to identify excess material that wasn’t cost effective to send to other U.S. units at different locations, and looked for ways to put it to use,” said Lt. Col. Derek Scott, 407th Expeditionary Civil

Engineer Squadron commander, deployed from Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., and a native of Little Rock, Ark. “Because of this we started forging a relationship with the Iraqi Army commanders at Camp Dhi Qar and found that the local Iraqi Army units were in desperate need of supplies and materials. We knew that we would be able to provide them excess supplies, but more importantly, the knowledge to put them to good use.”

The involvement should help the Iraqis reach their initial operating capability roughly six months earlier than planned ... that’s making a positive impact on the mission, he said.

The effort to advise and assist doesn’t just extend to the Iraqi Army, it also extends to the citizens of Iraq.

Firefighters of the 407th ECES conduct training for many fire departments from the city of An Nasiriyah and the local Dhi Qar province. To date they have provided training to more than 100 Iraqi firefighters who in turn are supporting their own country.

“This is what it’s all about,” said Tech. Sgt. Zachary Townsend,

who recently redeployed from Ali Base. “If we’ve given them (Iraqi firefighters) just the slightest bit of training that will help make a difference in somebody’s life then our job is complete.”

Though ‘advise and assist’ might not be the primary mission for many of the Airmen of the 407th AEG, their work is definitely making a difference.

In a recent visit to Camp Dhi Qar, Apgar met with Iraqi Army Col. Muhammad Abd Al-Muhssan Khalaf Mahd, 10th Iraqi Army Division commander, and witnessed the impact Airmen are having through this additional mission set.

“Col. Muhammad is ecstatic,” Apgar said. “Because of the Airmen who are willing to share their skills and expertise, they have a more secure perimeter, a modest dining facility, a maintenance shop, and beds to sleep in.”

He added that this relationship is a win-win for everyone, “it helps us with our responsible drawdown efforts while at the same time furthers the cause as to why we as a nation are here.”



Left to right: **U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class DeMario Greene** and **Lt. Col. Derek Scott**, commander, both with 407th Civil Engineer Squadron and **Iraqi Army Col. Muhammad Abd Al-Muhssan Khalaf Mahd**, commander, 10th Iraqi Army Division assist in off loading fencing material at Camp Mittica, Iraq, Oct. 14. The fencing was part of a significant donation of building material made by the squadron to the 10th Iraqi Army Division assigned to Camp Mittica.

Iraqi Army, 17th Fires Brigade Conduct Joint Medical Mission

Story and photos by Spc. Maurice Galloway
17th Fires Brigade



2nd Lt. Kaveraber Reade, 14th Iraqi Army Division, medical officer provides care to a man suffering from minor burns. "We were able to meet the needs of a lot of people here, thanks to the help of our partners of the 17th Fires Brigade," said Reade.

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE BASRA, Iraq – Sunlight glared through the entryway of Basrah Operation Center, cascading off a crowd of Iraqi men, women and children seeking help for a variety of minor ailments such as chronic back pain, burns and allergies.

The Soldiers of 17th Fires Brigade and 14th Iraqi Army Division conducted their first joint Medical Military Civic Operations clinic at the cCenter, drawing approximately 150 people, Oct. 8.

"The purpose of an event such as this is to provide treatment for minor illnesses and teach these people how to better care for themselves," said 1st Lt. Jennifer L. Leathers, 1314 Civil Affairs Company, 17th FB, operations

manager and native of Omaha, Neb. "With the right teaching and instruction, a lot of the illnesses and injuries that we saw here could have been treated at home or prevented."

The patients were comfortably seated on couches as they awaited their turn to be seen at one of the nine stations set up to treat and assess the needs of the community's members.

Iraqi civilian and medical personnel and U.S. Soldiers evaluated the patients and offered analysis and guidance on treatment and preventative care. In addition to providing medical attention, the Soldiers dispensed food, medicine and personal hygiene items.

While conducting medical screenings and providing

humanitarian assistance packages Iraqi soldiers provided security. The purpose of the mission was to allow Iraq to take the lead and to showcase their civil-military role in helping its country's citizens.

The Iraqi and U.S. medics were fully prepared for the event and had plenty of supplies on hand to treat each patient and were successful in ensuring each person was seen and evaluated.

The IA took the lead in security and medical

treatment at the event, allowing 17th FB Soldiers the chance to evaluate and train their Iraqi counterparts.

"The Iraqi army met their goal, which was to provide the barest of necessary equipment needed to treat and teach the local populace how to better care for minor injuries and illnesses that could progress if not assessed early on," said Leathers. "Our role was to evaluate the Iraqi army's procedures during the event and make on-the-spot corrections as needed. This is so they could learn while doing, making them much more efficient and effective when they conduct other events like this in the very near future."

The Soldiers at the clinic recognized its value toward

providing care for the city's citizens. According to Iraqi Col. Abbas Abdul Ghafar Altmymy, 14th IA Div., BaOC, public information officer, the event's large turnout indicated the people's desire for coordinated healthcare in the Basrah province and the need to implement and sustain such operations.

"Today we did something that was extremely positive and progressive for the people of Basrah," said Abbas. "We were able to take care of the needs of 150 patients, which is no small task. With the help of our partners from the 17th Fires Brigade, we'll conduct an evaluation to see how we can improve to make our next community outreach project an even bigger success."

The 17th FB Soldiers were proud to be a part of the event, not only for the opportunity it provided to help the citizens of Basrah, but to see firsthand the united IA and U.S. efforts in working toward a worthwhile cause.

"Having done similar events before, by working side by side with them we've given them a template in which to measure their progress by," said Sgt. 1st Class Maryfaith B. Payne, brigade medical operations non-commissioned officer,

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 17th FB, and native of Honolulu.

"It's really good to see the people of Basrah receiving the help and assistance that they need from the Iraqi army," said Spc. Christina R. Kreite, 206th Military Police Company, 17th FB and native of Long Island, N.Y. "We've been training them to handle these types of situations and there was a time when a crowd this large would have been a bit overwhelming for the Iraqi army. But this shows just how far they've come."

Medic Pfc. Leah K. Brook, healthcare specialist, 17th FB's 206th MP Co., considered the event similar to humanitarian missions in which she's participated. The Syracuse, N.Y., native said she felt moved by the faces of the people seeking treatment and impressed by the level of care given by the Iraqi military and civil medical community.



Sgt. 1st Class Maryfaith B. Payne, 17th Fires Brigade, medical operations NCO, soothes a young child while his mother is seen by a member of the 14th Iraqi Army Division medical staff.



Maj. Diane Greenpope, 308th Civil Affairs Brigade, health team leader and a native of Syracuse, N.Y., and **1st Lt. Jennifer L. Leathers**, 1314th Civil Affairs Company, operations manager and native of Omaha, Neb., sort through boxes of supplies that were distributed among the people seeking care.

AIR CAVALRY, IRAQI AIR FORCE FLY JOINT MISSION OVER BAGHDAD

Story and photos by Sgt. Travis Zielinski
MND-B Public Affairs



An AH-64D Apache attack helicopter (left) flies alongside an Iraqi UH-1 Huey (right), during a joint air mission between 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, and 2nd Squadron of the Iraqi Air Force, Oct. 21.

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Through a growing foundation of trust, friendship and detailed planning, two separate armed forces have taken their abilities to higher levels.

The leadership of 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, has spent the last six months working with 2nd Squadron of the Iraqi Air Force – strengthening bonds.

This close relationship between U.S. military aviators and the IAF resulted in two AH-64D Apache attack helicopters and two Iraqi UH-1 helicopters flying in formation together on a mission over Baghdad, Oct. 21, to display the combined strength of the partnership.

The main goal of the flight was to reiterate the trust between both the 1-227th and 2nd Squadron, said Lt. Col. Charles Dalcourt, commander, 1st ACB, from Baton Rouge, La.

“We want to show the Iraqi people, through this flight demonstration, that we’re linked together,” Dalcourt said. “Our relationship is solid and the Iraqi Air Force has emerged as a premier and pre-eminent force here in Iraq for movement of their troops.”

According to Dalcourt, he established a relationship with 2nd Squadron on his last deployment to Iraq, which made the day a special one.

“This day has evolved through a lot of work over the last three and four years,” he said. “To come to this point is not only a great sign of progress, but also a great sign of the mutual trust that has developed between the United States Army and the Iraqi Air Force.”

The American aviators took a step towards the background as the Iraqi pilots ran the mission briefing and took the lead on the flight itself, showing the ability

of the Iraqi Air Force to stand on its own.

“They are very competent pilots and many of them have upwards of over 5,000 hours (of flying),” Dalcourt said. “They’ve fought in the Iraq-Iran war and they’ve been fixed wing as well as rotary wing aviators, so they’re very capable.”

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Frank Almeraz, the standardization pilot in 1-227th, from Albuquerque, N.M., said although the Americans offered assistance, the Iraqi’s briefed the bulk of the mission themselves.

“We discussed the differences between the [Iraqi] Air Force and Army, but we tend to be more similar in the way we do things than I thought,” he said.

The joint mission was the first step in what Almeraz said he hoped would be a series of similar flights.

“Today is a plain, just getting started type of scenario,”

Almeraz said. “We want to continue doing these missions and hopefully they’ll (the IAF) become more detailed.”

After numerous deployments, Almeraz said this was the first time he had flown an Apache alongside a Huey

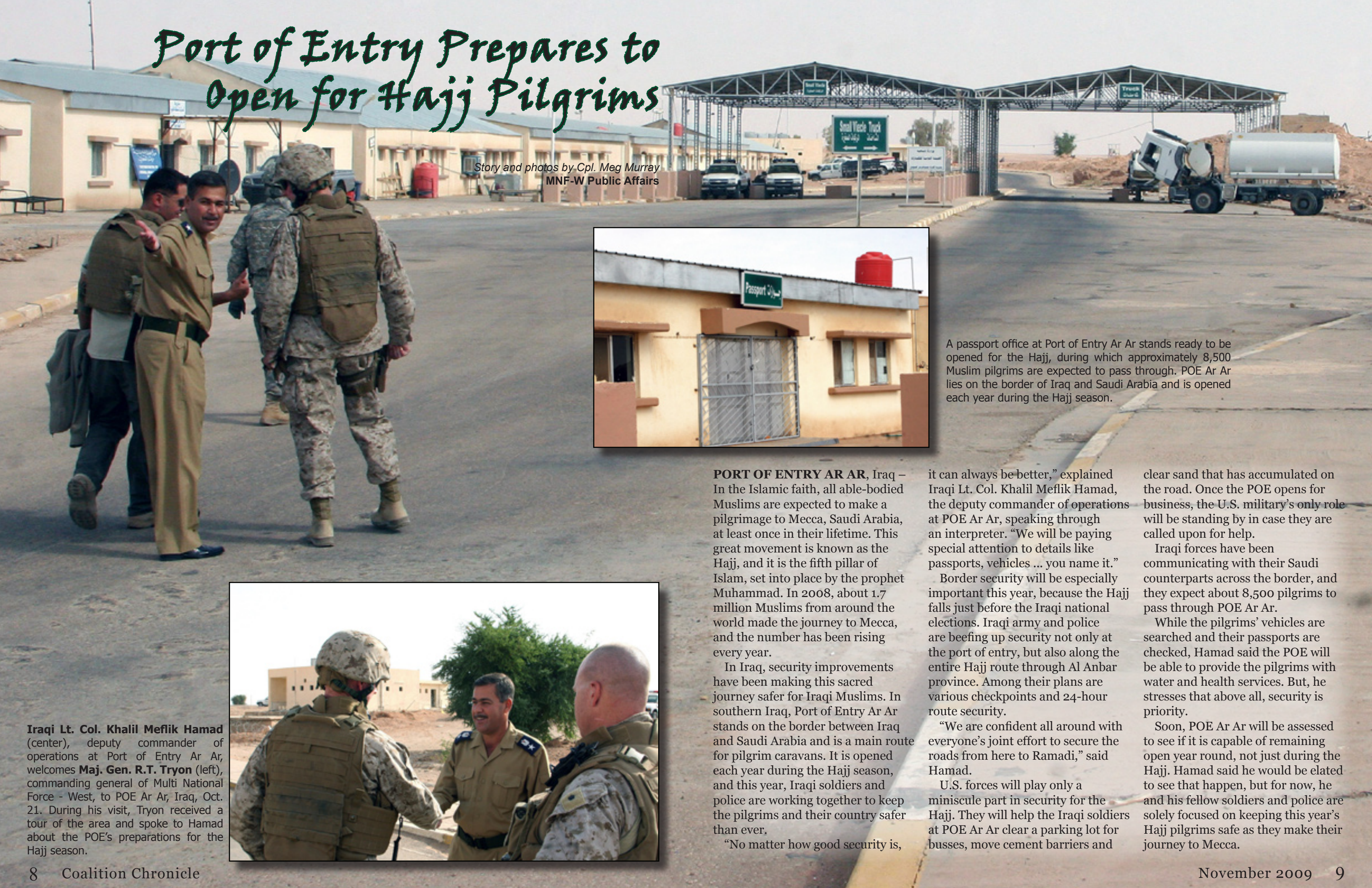
“This is my fourth trip to Iraq ... my third at Taji and we’ve never been able to do a joint mission together,” he said. “Sometimes we would do stuff where they would come from one side and we’d come from another, but we wouldn’t really mix. Today we will be part of the same formation.”

Flying in formation shows the advances made by both sides, Almeraz said.

“From the first time we came here, this is the point we wanted to get to,” he said. “It shows the progress between the Iraqi Air Force and the [U.S.] Army.”

Port of Entry Prepares to Open for Hajj Pilgrims

Story and photos by Cpl. Meg Murray
MNF-W Public Affairs



A passport office at Port of Entry Ar Ar stands ready to be opened for the Hajj, during which approximately 8,500 Muslim pilgrims are expected to pass through. POE Ar Ar lies on the border of Iraq and Saudi Arabia and is opened each year during the Hajj season.

PORT OF ENTRY AR AR, Iraq – In the Islamic faith, all able-bodied Muslims are expected to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, at least once in their lifetime. This great movement is known as the Hajj, and it is the fifth pillar of Islam, set into place by the prophet Muhammad. In 2008, about 1.7 million Muslims from around the world made the journey to Mecca, and the number has been rising every year.

In Iraq, security improvements have been making this sacred journey safer for Iraqi Muslims. In southern Iraq, Port of Entry Ar Ar stands on the border between Iraq and Saudi Arabia and is a main route for pilgrim caravans. It is opened each year during the Hajj season, and this year, Iraqi soldiers and police are working together to keep the pilgrims and their country safer than ever.

“No matter how good security is,

it can always be better,” explained Iraqi Lt. Col. Khalil Meflik Hamad, the deputy commander of operations at POE Ar Ar, speaking through an interpreter. “We will be paying special attention to details like passports, vehicles ... you name it.”

Border security will be especially important this year, because the Hajj falls just before the Iraqi national elections. Iraqi army and police are beefing up security not only at the port of entry, but also along the entire Hajj route through Al Anbar province. Among their plans are various checkpoints and 24-hour route security.

“We are confident all around with everyone’s joint effort to secure the roads from here to Ramadi,” said Hamad.

U.S. forces will play only a miniscule part in security for the Hajj. They will help the Iraqi soldiers at POE Ar Ar clear a parking lot for busses, move cement barriers and

clear sand that has accumulated on the road. Once the POE opens for business, the U.S. military’s only role will be standing by in case they are called upon for help.

Iraqi forces have been communicating with their Saudi counterparts across the border, and they expect about 8,500 pilgrims to pass through POE Ar Ar.

While the pilgrims’ vehicles are searched and their passports are checked, Hamad said the POE will be able to provide the pilgrims with water and health services. But, he stresses that above all, security is priority.

Soon, POE Ar Ar will be assessed to see if it is capable of remaining open year round, not just during the Hajj. Hamad said he would be elated to see that happen, but for now, he and his fellow soldiers and police are solely focused on keeping this year’s Hajj pilgrims safe as they make their journey to Mecca.

Iraqi Lt. Col. Khalil Meflik Hamad (center), deputy commander of operations at Port of Entry Ar Ar, welcomes **Maj. Gen. R.T. Tryon** (left), commanding general of Multi National Force - West, to POE Ar Ar, Iraq, Oct. 21. During his visit, Tryon received a tour of the area and spoke to Hamad about the POE’s preparations for the Hajj season.





Left to right: **Spc. Jamie Aldridge**, of Savannah, Ga., **Chief Warrant Officer Kevin Shoulders**, of Port Gibson, Miss., **Chief Warrant Officer Phillip Sinclair**, of Texas City, Texas, and **Spc. Arnell James**, of Savannah, Ga., assigned to Charlie Company, 3-25th Aviation Regiment, Forward Support Medevac Team, stand in front of their H-60A Black Hawk medevac helicopter prior to going on a mission from Forward Operating Base, Diamondback, near Mosul, in northern Iraq, Oct. 22. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Carmichael Yopez)



Left: **Randy Mendenhall**, a computer specialist with the Army Corp of Engineers, visits with Tom Richmond, the cartoon artist for "MAD Magazine," while he draws his caricature at the Marez Memorial Dining Facility on Forward Operating Base Marez in Mosul, Iraq, Oct. 20. Mendenhall is from Portland, Ore. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Sharla Lewis)



An Iraqi child points to the inscription of Saddam Hussein's name, which is engraved on almost every block on walls and buildings at the Athar ruins site near the town of Al Hadr, south of Mosul, Iraq, Oct. 16. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Carmichael Yopez)



U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jennifer Neve, a member of the Wasit Provincial Reconstruction Team, meets with a member of the Professional Teachers Training Center in Kut, Iraq, Oct. 21. The PRT members were there to discuss the upcoming Women of Substance seminar. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Brien Vorhees)



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PARTNERSHIP

"ULTIMATELY OUR SUCCESS WILL BE
DETERMINED BY THE QUALITY OF OUR PARTNERSHIP"

-LIEUTENANT GENERAL CHARLES H. JACOBY JR.





Left: **U.S. Army Capt. Cicely Dent**, with Task Force 47th Combat Support Hospital, mimics a series of emotions, as she reacts to the lyrics of a song during Showtime at the Marez. Below: **U.S. Army Chaplain, Maj. Brian Chepey**, of Tawakoni, Texas, with 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, plays Rymer Mcloud, a Scottish-Irish poet, speaking with a heavy hybrid accent while reading his rhymes to the audience. The show featured Soldiers performing musical numbers and comedy skits, at Forward Operating Base, Marez, near Mosul, Iraq, Oct. 9. (U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Carmichael Yopez)



Pfc. Roberto Alvarado scales a signal tower to realign an antenna for the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, at Forward Operating Base Marez in Mosul, Iraq, Oct. 3. Alvarado is assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division's, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Special Troops Battalion. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jason Pagan)



First Lt. John Cross, a platoon leader from Company B, 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division and Iraqi Army Soldiers assigned to the 45th IA Brigade, 11th IA Division, practice movement techniques and pulling security upon exiting a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter at Combat Outpost Carver, Oct. 9. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell)



From left to right, **Maj. Richard Dennis**, his father-in-law, **Senon Valdilles Jr.** and Valdilles' son, **Spc. David Valdilles** share a light moment in the Oasis Dining Facility, Oct. 16. Dennis and the elder Valdilles are both based on Victory Base Complex. Dennis, a Division Special Troops Battalion officer, is deputy provost marshal on VBC, while Senon is a civilian working at the Camp Cropper detention facility. Spc. Valdilles, is a medic assigned to the Camp Taji-based Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div. (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Jon Soles)



First Lt. Heather McGhee (left), of Fayetteville, N.C., a registered nurse with Company C, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, applies make-up to create realistic visuals on casualties.



An Iraqi Federal police officer helps a fellow officer after a make-shift explosion at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Oct. 6.

Iraqi Police Drill on Core Medical Skills

*Story and photos by Spc. Ruth McClary
MND-B Public Affairs*

Sounds from an explosion erupt as a call for medics blares from loud speakers.

This sends Iraqi police running to respond to victims of an improvised bomb during a training exercise at Forward Operating Base Falcon, here, Oct. 6.

Eighteen Iraqi Federal police officers of the 1st Mechanized Brigade attended the first organized medic's training implemented into their curriculum with the medics of Company C, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team; better known as "Charlie Med".

"The Federal police have done a lot of training with Maj. Leigh Shakir, the Mechanized Brigade Surgeon," said Sgt. Alex Norman, the 6010th Federal Police Transition Team's medical advisor. "A lot of this training may be redundant, but it's better to go back over it."

The two-day training course, held at the U.S. base south of the capital, began with classroom instruction and basic patient assessment demonstrations, and then progressed to the officers taking on the role of medics in a tactical environment.

Shakir said the officers usually receive bi-monthly medical training that is on par with American standards, except they lack the use of training aids such as pressure dressings, and tourniquets.

U.S. medics ran through the lane first; giving the officers a visual guide on juggling the application of patient assessment, the order of treatment for the five victims, removing casualties, teamwork and maintaining a safe perimeter throughout the scenario.

"If you know anything about Charlie Med, when we train we

take it seriously," said Sgt. 1st Class Barbara Campbell. "Every day there is training here, usually taught by one of the medics in either trauma or medical aid. It's hard work but it's worth it."

The Federal officers split into teams; each running the lane as the others observed. Charlie Med medics and Soldiers of 6010th Federal Police Transition Team, who were on hand throughout the scenario, nudged the officers along, reminding them of time, teamwork and quick assessment tips as they worked through the lane.

Pfc. Mike Lovette, a native of Fayetteville, N.C., asked the Iraqi officers questions to keep them on track during the scenario.

Is this a life threatening injury? Have you checked his vital signs; is the patient going into shock?

Haider Ali, an Iraqi Federal officer with some experience in basic medical treatments, was impressed with

Staff Sgt. Tory Jones (right), of Company C, 230th Brigade Support Battalion, 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, teaches Iraqi federal police officers, of 1st Mechanized Brigade, basic pressure dressing techniques, Oct. 5. Jones, of Durham, N.C., was one of the coordinators of a two-day medic's training course for the officers at Forward Operating Base Falcon.

the realistic aspects of the training, especially with the weight of one of the casualties.

"The training was very practical. The guy we pulled to safety was very heavy; so, I'm very tired now, but it was good training."

Sgt. 1st Class Gerard Thomas, of Fayetteville, N.C., cast as a casualty during the scenario, summed up the training, as he removed a fake stomach casing with intestines oozing out.

"This was a great experience for the Iraqi police officers, but it definitely was a great experience for us too."



Hamid Matrood, a 1st Mechanized Brigade federal police officer, coordinates with members on his team to make sure combat lifesaver bags are properly equipped before the medic's training exercise began.



Paratroopers pay tribute to Patron Saint

Courtesy story and photos



2nd Lt. Brain Showman and Sgt. Ezekiel Farley of B Co. conduct a parachute landing fall into the Al Bakir Airfield Pool during sustained airborne training for the 37th Engineer Battalion St. Michael's Jump while deployed to Iraq.

AL BAKIR AIRFIELD, Iraq – In honor of St. Michael, patron saint of paratroopers, jumpmasters and a unit chaplain carry out the first-ever Saint Michael's jump into a pool, Oct. 18, while in Iraq.

37th Engineer Battalion - Joint Task Force Eagle, based out of Fort Bragg N.C., honored St. Michael and recognized the history and importance of the paratrooper in the U.S. Army. The day's event began with Capt. Tim Behnke, chaplain, of Wales, Wis., giving a brief history according to the Christian faith of St. Michael and God's need for someone to lead the angelic army against Lucifer and the forces of evil. Hence, St. Michael was chosen to spearhead the army. St. Michael has since been adopted as the patron saint of the paratroopers, also known as Hunters from the Sky.

Following the briefing, JTF Eagle broke down into two sets of Soldiers gathered for air movement or "chalks" in an airborne-speak. The chalks rotated through a variety of stations, to include mock door training, sustained airborne training, parachute landing falls, and proper rigging of the modular lightweight load-carrying

equipment pack and the M-1950 weapons case.

After completing all stations, Soldiers made their way to the high dive, approximately 30 feet, waited for the Jumpmaster to give the ok to go and then exit the concrete platform and descend into the pool below. After nearly five months in Iraq, this was a great chance for Soldiers to have fun and reflect on the pre-deployment airborne operations they were accustomed to back at Fort Bragg.

"Any unit that's unique feels a great sense of pride for that quality which makes them different. This was a great opportunity for our Soldiers to revisit their pride for being paratroopers and being among a small number of elite men and women in our military, while having fun," said Behnke.

With no jump refusals and Soldiers getting a chance to cool off from the Iraqi heat, the event concluded with an awards presentation by Lt. Col. Paul Huszar, JTF Eagle commander, and Behnke of St. Michael's Certificates and medallions to all Soldiers who participated in the event.



JTF Eagle Soldiers rig their MOLLE packs during sustained airborne training for the 37th Engineer Battalion St. Michael's Jump while deployed to Iraq. Jumpmaster, Sgt. 1st Class Peter Strassels looks on.

Deployed Young Scholar Honored at U.S. University

Story and photo by Spc. Mike MacLeod
82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs

CAMP RAMADI, Iraq – On Oct. 29, while a 25-year-old Department of Defense civil service specialist provides intelligence on the Iraqi human landscape – history, culture, religion, insurgent groups – to Navy SEALs and paratroopers of 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division Advise and Assist Brigade in Al Anbar province, Iraq, a major American university will be hosting a dinner in his name.

The first “Lee Bagan Endowment Dinner” will be held Oct. 29 on the University of Texas campus in Austin, Texas, to recognize the endowment’s supporters and to attract further financial support for a scholarship fund for gifted University of Texas students struggling with debilitating learning disabilities.

In spite of a reading disability, Bagan was the top student in UT’s Middle Eastern Studies undergraduate program in 2005, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in only three years. As part of a master’s degree in Middle Eastern Studies earned from UT in 2007, he learned Arabic, Persian, Tajiki and Hebrew.

“Lee Bagan is a what they mean when they say ‘gentleman and a scholar,’” said Aaron Bar-Adon, an international scholar and former professor of Bagan’s. Bar-Adon fought in Israel’s 1948 Arab-Israeli War, known by Israelis as the War of Independence, and was instrumental in the subsequent transformation of the Hebrew language.

Amy Hendrick, who was a severely disabled student also studying under Bar-Adon with Bagan, said that her classmate rekindled a student group that gave voice to

the disabled on UT Austin’s sprawling campus.

“What he did for the disabled on campus is just amazing,” said Hendrick, currently a graduate coordinator for the Folklore and Public Cultures Department at UT. “It’s a big campus, and it’s an old campus.”

“Old architecture is often unfriendly to disabled persons,” she noted.

After serving as the principal Middle East and Central Asia subject matter expert for Navy SEAL Teams 7 and 10 and for Marine Corps Regimental Combat Team 8 in western Iraq in spring and summer of 2009, Bagan began supporting the 82nd Airborne Division’s advise and assist brigade.

The brigade, 1-82 AAB, is a new tool in the Army’s arsenal, developed specifically to nurture the growth and capacities of Iraqi civil and military institutions.


Bagan was recently recognized by the Marines Corps for expert consultation in support of military operations and praised Bagan as undaunted as a forward deployed subject matter expert.

“[Bagan] went out on virtually every mission with us and provided expert and reliable economic, cultural, and political analysis and advice for the Rutbah [Iraq] area,” said 1st Lt. Raphael Clarke, former team leader of Civil Affairs Team 1, Detachment West, Regimental Combat Team 8.

“He was our no bull resident academic. We called him ‘Professor,’” said Clarke.

In addition to his professional and academic pursuits, Bagan is an undefeated heavyweight boxer and hours away from earning his private pilot’s license.

Bagan is originally from Chigago.



Lee Bagan, a civil-service intelligence specialist deployed in Al Anbar province, Iraq, briefs a unit before their departure on a mission from Camp Ramadi, Iraq, Oct. 21. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Michael J. MacLeod)

IN MEMORIAM

NAMES OF SERVICEMEMBERS WHO DIED BETWEEN OCTOBER 1 AND
OCTOBER 31, 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

October 1

Spc. Paul E. Andersen, 49

October 6

Maj. Tad T. Hervas, 48

October 18

Pfc. Daniel J. Rivera, 22

October 19

Staff Sgt. Bradley Espinoza, 26

October 27

Maj. David L. Audo, 36

October 28

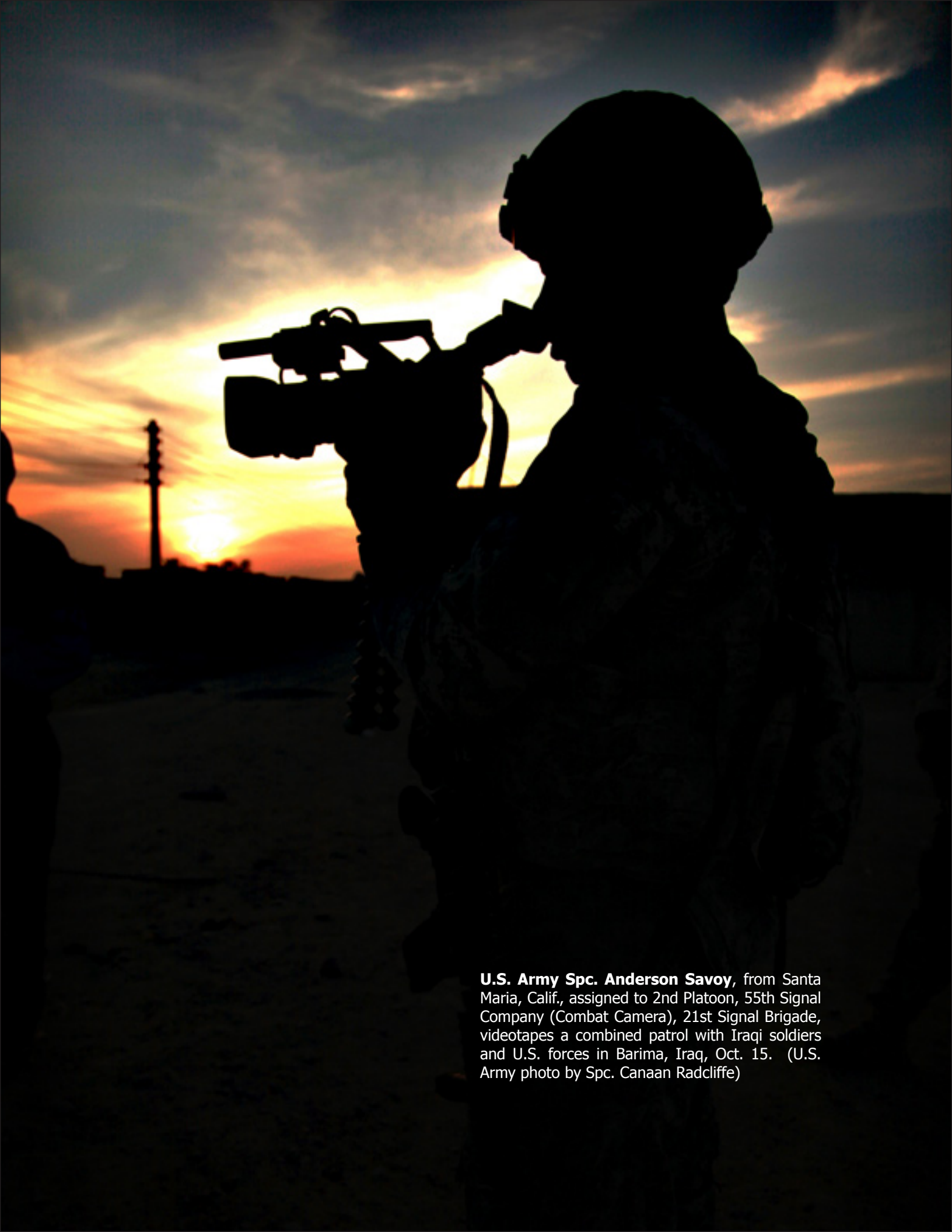
Joseph L. Gallegos, 39

October 29

Spc. Adrian L. Avila, 19

October 30

Pfc. Lukas C. Hopper, 20
Spc. Christopher M. Cooper, 28



U.S. Army Spc. Anderson Savoy, from Santa Maria, Calif., assigned to 2nd Platoon, 55th Signal Company (Combat Camera), 21st Signal Brigade, videotapes a combined patrol with Iraqi soldiers and U.S. forces in Barima, Iraq, Oct. 15. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Canaan Radcliffe)