

The North Star

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NCOs meet with Salah ad-Din community leaders

By Spc. Cassandra Monroe
135th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Security has dramatically improved in the Salah ad-Din provinces. So much so that discussion with local community leaders are focused on elections and financial stability. At the last meeting, Soldiers from 1st Platoon Personal Security Detachment, Headquarters and Headquarters Support Company, Division Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division happened to take part in a meeting between both forces Jan. 21.

The team discussed security in the local area and covered procedures dealing with the upcoming elections, said Staff Sgt. Keshon Henry, a food serviceman and 1st platoon leader for the security detachment, HHSC, DSTB, 3ID.

The Al Sequor Iraqi Police commander attended the meeting, along with village sheiks and Sons of Iraq leaders.

"The local sheiks and SOI all run the villages in the area of operations," said Staff Sgt. Henry. "They are pretty much the elders of the villages and they handle all of the security and decision making. If there are any projects going on, they will present the project to us and then we will send it up further. If there is any information to be disseminated, the sheiks act as the top leaders for their area. Their villages also have checkpoints and they let the checkpoint guards know anything of importance, such as suspicious vehicles coming through the area.



Photo by Spc. Cassandra Monroe, 135th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Specialists Jacob Baxley (left), a medic, and David Nix (right), a truck driver, both with 1st Plt., PSD, HHSC, DSTB, 3rd Inf. Div., interact with local Iraqi children while pulling security outside of an Iraqi Police station, Jan. 21.

The group also discussed different ways to bring jobs and businesses to the local area.

"There are different businesses coming into the area, and the leaders are looking to benefit from these businesses by hiring locals, that way, they can benefit from it financially."

For example, there is a sew shop in Al Sequor that will benefit the whole village because it is facilitated by all of the village residents, since they can make and repair the materials. Other businesses that were established are a bakery and a restaurant.

Besides conversing about businesses and projects, the group also discussed the security in the area. The discussion included situations that

could arise between the next 24 to 48 hours, sharing information that the IP commander received from his commander in Tikrit.

The team can then send this information up through the ranks of the U.S. forces so that they have the same information that the Iraqi forces have, said Staff Sgt. Henry. Along with that, we're making sure everyone is aware of the information being put out, from all the way down to the schools' principals and teachers, who will then pass the information down to their students.

Also, the information will be sent to village residents. If any of the information is suspicious, residents will

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'Hailstorm' Soldiers work night shift with Iraqi forces

By Pfc. Adrian Muehe
3SBCT, 2nd Inf Div PAO

On the night of Jan. 21, residents of Muqdadiyah, Iraq, were soundly asleep in their beds, completely oblivious to the "hailstorm" that was outside.

No ice fell from the sky, just the "Hailstorm" Soldiers of 4th Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, doing their part in a joint combat patrol with their partners in the Iraqi

Army and Iraqi Police.

The Soldiers of 4th Platoon, Company C, 2/3 Inf., rolled out late at night to meet up with soldiers of 3rd Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division, and members of the Muqdadiyah IP Emergency Company Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Team at the IP compound in Muqdadiyah.

After linking up, Capt. Laith Muhammad Nagen, commander of the IP SWAT team and Capt. Zehid Muhammed Shmiel, the commander of IA 3rd Company, provided 2nd Lt.

Nicholas Beazley, from Roanoke, Va., platoon leader of 4th Plt., with intelligence about key points where suspicious activity had been seen.

Around midnight, the Soldiers of 4th Plt., along with their IA and IP counterparts, set out on foot to patrol the streets of Muqdadiyah. The patrol, which consisted of about 60 people, marched on with night optical devices and a few flashlights.

The IA company and the IP SWAT team took the lead, with 4th Plt. in the rear. The mission lasted roughly two hours and covered about seven miles.

"We didn't find anything, but this has been our best patrol," said IP Capt. Nagen. "The cooperation was really good."

This mission took four days of planning between the leaders of the three teams, but they have been working together for the last six months, especially 4th Plt. and the 3rd IA Company.

"We work with these guys every week," said Sgt. 1st Class Jeffery Ship, a native of Laurel, Mont., platoon sergeant for 4th Plt.. "They're our primary partners."

The "Hailstorm" Soldiers have created a good working relationship with the 3rd IA Company through training and joint combat patrols throughout Muqdadiyah.

The Soldiers have trained on a wide variety of combat skills, differ-



Photo by Pfc. Adrian Muehe, 3SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. PAO

Soldiers from 4th Plt., Co. C, 2/3rd Inf. Regt., 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., get ready to go on a night patrol with members of 3rd Co., 1st Bn., 20th Bde., 5th IA Div., and the Muqdadiyah Iraqi Police Emergency Company Special Weapons and Tactics Team, Jan. 21.

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'Black Lions' return Samarra hotel to Iraqi government

By Spc. Richard Colletta
4IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. PAO

Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division out of Fort Riley, Kan., signed over Patrol Base Olsen to the Iraqi government, Jan. 21.

The patrol base was actually an old hotel called "Albohera" which means, hotel by the lake. The hotel boasts a scenic lake view and from its rooftop, the famous Al-Askari "Golden" Mosque can be seen in the distance. Before turning over the former patrol

base to the Iraqi government, "Black Lion" Soldiers completely demilitarized the hotel, removing barriers and restoring it closely to its previous condition.

Lieutenant Colonel Sami Gayath, the Iraqi Army's Director of the Samarra Joint Coordination Center said that it was an important day and that the turnover of the hotel back to the Iraqi government was a good indication that Iraq Security Forces were capable of maintaining security in Iraq.

"We are very proud of our security and we hope to continue what we have accomplished here in cities and vil-

lages throughout Iraq," he said.

Major Daniel Gates, the battalion's executive officer, said the turn-over was a good sign of security since his first deployment to Iraq in 2005.

"Now, since we've been here most of our missions are joint with [Iraqi Security Forces] ...," said Maj. Gates. "They are the ones doing the majority of the missions."

This is the third of several U.S. bases that the "Dragon" brigade plans to turn over to the Government of Iraq as they begin to withdraw from Iraq in accordance with the Security Agreement.



Photo by Pfc. Adrian Muehe, 3SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. PAO
Sergeant Jeffery Ship and 2nd Lt. Nicholas Beazley, of 4th Plt, Co. C, 2/3rd Inf. Regt., 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., discuss the plan for a night patrol with Iraqi forces.

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ent battle drills, such as how to react to contact as well as how to react to a near ambush. The IA soldiers have also learned how to search personnel and vehicles, and how to operate and move as a fire squad.

"We have a level of trust that allows for better cooperation during training and on missions," said Sgt. 1st Class Ship.

The training has helped these warriors of two nations create a bond.

"Since we started working with them, they have started joking a lot more," said Pfc. Nicholas Bartell, of Syracuse, N.Y., a Stryker driver for 4th Plt.

Since working with the IA Company, the U.S. Soldiers have a first-hand view of the vast improvement in their skills.

"A couple of them have graduated from 'train the trainer' courses, and they have taught the other soldiers," said Pfc. Bartell. "The ones who catch on faster teach the ones who don't seem to get it right away."

Even with this great relationship between these forces, the IA and IP are hopeful for a future on their own.

"Working with the [U.S.] forces has been great, but we will be able to conduct these missions on our own soon," said IP Capt. Nagen.

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be told to question outsiders and ask them what they are up to because the villages are so close to the contingency operating base.

"We're here to help the people outside with security and to make this place a safer area, and they're looking out for us as well," said Staff Sgt. Henry.

While the meeting between the U.S. military and Iraqis took place, part of the platoon provided routine security outside of the police station, and interacted with the community.

The Soldiers handed candy out to children, tried samples of food from the local cuisine and talked to the adults.

"It's something we like to do because we like to see the smiles on the little kids' faces," Staff Sgt. Henry said. "We want to have that good rapport with them, instead of us in these big trucks just driving through."

To prepare for the upcoming elections, Staff Sergeant Henry's platoon has taken advantage of time to train by cordoning off barracks on base, and searching them for possible Improvised Explosive Device threats, and even

having a couple of Soldiers and Interpreters act as unruly citizens, giving the Soldiers in the training a chance to practice their Escalation of Force and Rules of Engagement training.

Additionally, the platoon is helping the IPs prepare for the elections by giving them hands-on weapons training to prepare them for new responsibilities once the U.S. troops leave Iraq.

"We had a range day where we got them familiar with firing weapons," said Staff Sgt. Henry. "We know that they don't fire much in their area, but

we got them familiarized, being that they are a security force and they must know how to use different weapons.

"It's a process that we will need to discuss with Iraqi forces as far as getting people in and out and deterring the enemy force," Staff Sgt. Henry said. "Our job will be to run a sweep of the building, making sure that there are no IEDs anywhere, and to make sure that people are flowing in and out properly."

"We're also teaching them that the dissemination of information has to

go down to the lowest level. If you only have the people at the top knowing what is going on, those at the lowest level will be negatively effected."

However, when it comes down to U.S. troops making their exit of Iraq, it is all about establishing good rapport.

"I believe it is important for U.S. forces to work with the IP because we're in their area," said Staff Sgt. Henry. "We're working towards building a better Iraq; we have to join forces with them to make amends with keeping their area safer for when we go out."



Photo by Spc. Cassandra Monroe, 135th Mobile Public Affairs Det.
Staff Sergeant Keshon Henry, a food serviceman and platoon leader with 1st Plt., PSD, HHSC, DSTB, 3rd Inf. Div., hands out candy and interacts with local children, Jan. 21, after a meeting between U.S. Soldiers, IP and local Iraqi leaders.

Task Force Marne Heroes of the North



Pat Williams, of Katy, Texas, is a motivated professional, dedicated to supporting the warfighter with a driven work ethic. She serves as the Sous Chief for the Marne Dining Facility and provides first-class service to Task Force Marne and its subordinate units on Contingency Operating Base Speicher. Williams has worked in food service for more than 30 years and has been in Iraq for more than two years. Her dedication to quality service is evident in the special care and effort she provides to Soldiers and civilians every day. She routinely executes successful conferences and special events in addition to her daily mission including the Provincial Reconstruction Team Conference and the Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast. Williams is a consummate professional and is a natural choice for this week's Task Force Marne Service Provider of the Week.



Specialist Michael Andrade, of Jacksonville, N.C., is with Company F, 701st Brigade Support Battalion, and 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. He serves as the M250 caliber machine gunner for his vehicle. Specialist Andrade is completely focused on mission accomplishment, often times performing tasks that exceed his level of responsibility. He took the initiative to learn skills outside of his military occupational specialty and motivates his peers to do so as well. He is a critical member of every mission and always ensures his weapon and vehicle are in top condition at all times. When not on or preparing for a mission, Spc. Andrade maintains a high physical fitness level, scoring 299 out of a possible 300 points on a recent Army Physical Fitness Test. Specialist Andrade's dedication has enabled his platoon to successfully close out and hand over two joint security stations to the Iraqi National Police. For his commitment to excellence, Spc. Andrade is selected as today's Task Force Marne Hero of the North.

Iraqi history contributes to cultures around world

Cultural Tidbit

Special to the North Star

Modern Iraq covers roughly the same land that ancient Mesopotamia covered.

That ancient civilization began around the Fertile Crescent, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. This area of the world has seen the rise and fall of numerous cultures.

The Sumerians were in control of Mesopotamia around 4000 B.C. This culture invented the earliest form of

writing, the math system on which the modern world is based, the wheel and the first plow.

When the Sumerians collapsed around 1700 B.C., King Hammurabi took over and renamed the nation Babylonia. As King, he created the first recorded legal code in history.

After Hammurabi's reign of power, the area went through some turmoil until Nebuchadnezzar II took over in 604 B.C.

He restored Babylon to its former

glory. During his tenure, Babylonia, located about 30 miles south of modern-day Baghdad, became the most famous city in the world and home to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

In 762 A.D., the capital city of Baghdad was founded and it became an important commercial, cultural and educational center. It linked Asia to Mediterranean countries via trade; welcomed visitors, scholars and commercial traders from all over the world.

Safety Thought of the Week: Vehicle Safety

When mounting and dismounting vehicles, such as Mine Resisted Ambush Protected Vehicles, Light Medium Tactical Vehicles and Light Tactical Vehicles, do so in a safe manner:

- Failure to mount safely can result in the following injuries: fractures, dislocations, abrasions, concussions, strains, sprains, cuts and lacerations.
- When mounting equipment, both hands and at least one foot should be on the equipment.
- When mounting, always face the vehicle.
- Only mount the equipment when the vehicle is stationary.
- Don't use wheel hubs, tracks, or door handles for mounting and dismounting.

Remember: Always maintain three points of contact!



REGIONAL HEADLINES

Pair first to cross Antarctica unassisted United Press International

ATLANTA- An American -- who had never cross-country skied before -- and a Norwegian woman-- together became the first to cross Antarctica unassisted, records show.

Ryan Waters, 36, a native of Cobb County, Ga., now living in Boulder, Colo., and Cecilie Skog, 35, a native of Alesund, Norway, reached the South Pole on New Year's Eve and arrived at their destination Jan. 21 at the Ross Sea, completing their 70-day, 1,000-mile expedition, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported.

Others have traversed the continent, but with the assistance of kites or dogs.

Waters and Skog did it all alone, each pulling 300 pounds of equipment as they skied in temperatures as cold as minus 50 degrees.

"The mental part was the most difficult part. It was so many days of constant skiing and at times it was hard," Waters said.

Waters currently lives in Boulder, Colo., where he runs his own business called Mountain Professionals, his parents said.

Waters worked as a geologist for a number of years before focusing on his passion for exploration, the newspaper reported.

In May 2004, Waters became the second Georgian to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

He resided for a number of years in South America, where he led more than 30 Andes Mountains expeditions.

The Norway Post reported Skog is the only woman to have reached both the North and South poles, climbed Mount Everest and the so-called "Seven Summits," the highest peaks on each of the Earth's seven continents.

Four Puyallup youngsters raise Haiti funds

Thenewstribune.com

PUYALLUP, Wash.- It's more than 3,400 miles from Puyallup to Haiti, but four Puyallup kids Jan 23 nonetheless felt a strong link between themselves and the earthquake-ravaged people of Haiti.

Acting on that instinct to do what they could, they braved gray skies and sporadic rain to improve the lot of the homeless and injured thousands.

The Lappin kids -- Raymond, 9, and Olivia, 6 -- and their friends, the Abdellas -- Drew, 9 and Mason, 5 -- became fund-raisers for the day, serving hot chocolate to participants at a Puyallup school levy rally on River Road.

In return for the hot beverages, they asked for donations to help the earthquake survivors.

"We were watching TV about the problems in Haiti," Raymond Lappin said, "and I realized just how lucky we were to live in America. That's when

I decided that such a wealthy country should do something to help."

Drew Abdella said he was likewise struck by the misery he was witnessing.

"I didn't like what I was seeing on TV," he said. "It made me sad that they had no food, no water, no medicine."

The Lappin kids first thought of opening a lemonade stand, said their mother Stacy.

But they decided the weather was too cold. That's when they decided on hot chocolate.

With the help of their friends' mother, Tracy Abdella, and Starbucks, they made plans last week to serve hot chocolate.

Starbucks would lend them insulated canisters to hold the hot water, but they still lacked a ready market.

The youngsters initially proposed going door-to-door in their neighborhood with the hot chocolate, but that idea proved too time consuming and awkward, Stacy Lappin said.

Then their parents remembered the school levy rally and decided to set up shop there.

"The kids made the sign and the cookies and the snacks," said Nathan Lappin, their father.

Once all the donations were in, they'll research the Haiti relief organization landscape and decide where to send their money. Their first day raised more than \$200.

THE North Star

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2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team,
3rd Infantry Division

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