

IRAQI DESTINY

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Brain surgery with bombs Workers strive to clear minefields

By Spc. Blake Kent
22nd MPAD

It's rock hounding with an edge, viper training with a real bite and brain surgery with bombs.

Mine clearers working in northern Iraq on the Iranian border put their lives on the line everyday, to make life safer for the shepherds and villagers in the area.

Mine clearers have been working to illegally clear mines in northern Iraq, against the previous regimes will with bounties placed on their heads and the daily danger of the mine fields in their faces.

These labors clear 10 meter sections at a time, on hands and knees with a rather primitive set of tools.

The workers first use a mine detector to locate mines under the ground. Using a red painted pebble, the de-miners mark areas where the detector picks up the presence of a possible mine.

Then, slowly uncovering the area around the red pebble, the workers look for where the mine is hidden.

"The work is very meticulous," said Shwan Faig, a mine field operations officer, Pirmam De-mining Organization, "the workers must be very careful."

The de-miners are paid 150 dollars each month and are unable to get promoted or receive medical benefits if they are injured.

The local de-mining organizations are currently funded through the United Nations Oil for Food program, but will soon have to either become a government organization or a non-government organization, seeking funding from donations to keep working.

At one mine field, Sartayara, 73,846 square-meters in size, there have been four people killed and two injured, not including sheep and cattle that have wandered into the field.

There is a small community just 200 meters from the field, with shepherds herding their sheep right on the outskirts of the marked off mined areas.



Spc. Blake Kent

Workers in the EMERGENCY rehabilitation clinic make prosthetic arms and legs for patients. Mine clearers risk life and limb to make sure that fewer people will need these in the future.

The field is being cleared by 10 workers, working in 45 minute intervals, which began November 2001, and is now 92 percent complete. They hope to be complete by October of this year though.

More than 943 mines have already been destroyed from this field.

To assist in decreasing the area that the de-miners must meticulously go over, trained mine detection dogs are used to determine portions of land that do not have mines.

"When the areas have been cleared, a United Nations Operations team will come in and take samples to assess the safety of the area before the land is turned back over to the local people," Shwan said.

There have been 3,200 mine fields already surveyed in northern Iraq, not including anything south of the Green Line which marks the northern no fly zone into Kurdish controlled areas, or the five kilometer area along the Iranian border.

"At least 60 new mine fields have been found since the end of the conflict in these

areas," said 1st Lt. Rachel Voss of Leavenworth, Kan., 404th Civil Affairs Battalion, who is working to coordinate the mine clearing and education programs and ensure a minimum amount of duplication in effort is occurring between all the groups working to clear the mines.

The Mines Advisory Group is about to begin an emergency rapid response survey group to look at the newly liberated areas, which is everything that is south and west of the Green Line, Voss added.

Currently there are six different non-government organizations, with 50 mine clearing teams working to clear mines in northern Iraq.

The villagers are all eager to see the mine fields near their homes cleared, but it is going to take time for them to be marked, much less cleared.

The organizations meet together to determine which fields are a necessity to be cleared and which ones can be marked and left.

Freakley bids farewell to 101st

By Pfc. Thomas Day
40th PAD

Brig. Gen. Benjamin Freakley, 49, assistant division commander (operations), 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), flew out of Mosul Monday, leaving his post for Brig. Gen. Frank Helmick, formerly the post commander at Fort Bliss, Texas.

Freakley, who took over as the assistant division commander (support) in January of 2002, has served as the "O" since June of last year.

He now heads to Fort Benning, Ga., to take over the U.S. Army Infantry Center and School and assumes post command July 1. "It's a two star position," Freakley said. The new position may warrant another star.

The Woodstock, Va., native leaves the division with a simple message: "maintain the honor of the history and legacy of the 'Screaming Eagles.' That's done by maintaining high standards, accomplishing the mission, bringing our soldiers home safely, and remembering our history and those who went before us."

His tour at Fort Campbell spanned two division commanding generals, Maj. Gen. (now Lt. Gen.) Richard Cody and current 101st commanding general Maj. Gen. David Petraeus.

"(Gen. Cody) gave me wide open access to the division...I learned a tremendous amount from General Cody about Army Aviation."

Cody is now the operations officer at the Pentagon.

"I've enjoyed watching General Petraeus with the city council and the city leadership in Mosul."

"My favorite memory would be seeing

the crowds, especially the children, respond to our soldiers." Freakley said. "I've regretted the loss of our soldiers killed."

"It's been wonderful working with the commanders."

Freakley leaves the division as 101st soldiers are awaiting word on their ticket home to the States. The division arrived in Kuwait in late February and early March shortly after many 101st soldiers returned home from deployments in Afghanistan.

"We have to get this right," Freakley said.

"When a country acts to remove the leadership of another country, we have a moral obligation to make sure the communities are better off."

Freakley could not give a time frame for redeployment but promised that the division would fly back to Fort Campbell, "when the mission has been accomplished."

Freakley commented that success in Mosul and Iraq is defined by "the restoration of services, power, water, a police force, hospitals and a stable economy...a free, moderate and democratic nation."

The former rugby player at West Point will now tackle his first post command, Fort Benning, home of the Army's Officer Candidate School, U.S. Army Infantry



Pfc. Thomas Day

Brig. Gen. Benjamin Freakley, assistant division commander (operations), 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) during Operation Iraqi Freedom

Center and School, and the elite Ranger School.

"For the Army, the challenge is balancing world-wide commitments in the War on Terrorism and maintaining the high quality trained and ready forces," the soon-to-be major general said. Freakley, who is in his 28th year of service in the Army, encourages soldiers to "strive to become leaders, that's what the Army is all about."

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Organization teaches mine awareness

By Spc. Blake Kent
22nd MPAD

How many Iranians have the mine fields in northern Iraq helped to keep out?

The people in the villages along the Iranian border don't know about Iranians, but would be hard pressed to list off all their friends and neighbors who have been injured or killed by the mines littered across the Iraqi countryside.

Even with de-miners meticulously working to clear more than 3,200 already marked mine fields in northern Iraq, the shepherds and villagers still must worry about the remnants of dead wars every day.

The Kurdistan Organization for Mine Awareness, a local non-government organization currently funded by the United Nations, is working to help lower the number of mine and unexploded ordnance related injuries through a village education program.

KOMA teachers spend their time in school buildings and villages instructing men, women, and children about the types of mines and UXOs in the area and why to avoid them.

"We give information to all the people," said Fuad Noori, supervisor for a KOMA team.

When the children are through with their lesson, the women come in for classes, then the men as well, he added.

The teachers have a number of tools they use to help villagers of all ages be more prepared to protect themselves in the mined areas, from puppet shows for the little children to drama videos.

"The drama videos help show the dangers of the mines and UXOs, what not to do with mines and UXOs, what can happen by playing with them, and how to identify them, so that they can be avoided," Fuad said.

In one classroom in the village of Beurey, a teacher uses a picture game that helps the children recognize the types of mines and UXOs, and the differences between them.

One game is played by having a single child leave the classroom while she changes things around in the class, then having the child point out the changes made.

"This game helps show children how



Spc. Blake Kent

KOMA teaches students in a northern Iraqi village about the types of mines and UXOs that litter the countryside surrounding the villages. Teachers not only give lessons to the children, but to the men and women of the villages as well.

attentive they need to be of their surroundings," Fuad said.

They must look very carefully when they go into the fields so they can see camouflaged mines, Fuad added.

Another lesson a teacher gives is by blind folding one child, tying the arms of one, and tying the leg up of another, leaving them in an awkward position.

This way students learn and feel to a limited degree what it would be like to lose a limb or their eyesight from a mine or UXO.

"How many of you want to go to the university when you are older?" asks the teacher.

"How will you be able to if you lose your arms or legs, or eyesight? The teachers interact with the classes, making

the lessons informative and fun for the students," Fuad said.

KOMA teachers must travel up dangerous roads into the mountains, hours away from major cities.

"There are more than 1,000 villages affected by these mine fields, and we will get to them all," said 1st Lt. Rachel Voss of Leavenworth, Kan., 404th Civil Affairs Battalion, who is working to coordinate mine clearing operations and training in northern Iraq.

Before leaving, the adults of the village show their thanks to the KOMA teachers for their labors.

Many villagers lift up their pants legs, showing prosthetic limbs, knowing all too well about the damage that mines and UXOs cause.

Civil Affairs works out problems, Mosul citizens don't go unheard

By Spc. Joshua M. Risner
40th PAD

In an effort to quell future riots and ease unrest, the 431st Civil Affairs Battalion has been tasked with going out on the streets to mingle and interact with the local population.

"Our purpose here is to try and solve situations with small groups before they turn into large groups who will riot," said Sgt. 1st Class Rocky Upchurch, 431st CA Bn. "There are some people out there who are instigating; but there are a

lot more who have real problems and just want somebody to listen to them."

June 13, the day after the riot at the mayor's office, soldiers of the 431st took to the streets and managed to calm the frustrations of the people who had massed outside and threatened to riot once again.

Seeing that the strategy worked, they have continued this practice to try and keep the frustration and anger at a minimum with the people, according to Upchurch.

The people on the streets and in the market places were receptive to this approach and

greeted the soldiers with much conversation. The people were very friendly and curious about everything, according to Spc. Zach Johnson, 431st CA Bn. "They're really receptive if you try to speak even a little Arabic," he said. "A simple greeting can sometimes open a floodgate."

The key to these missions is respect, Johnson added. "The more they see us out there, they'll start to understand that we're here to help them and they'll work with us," he said. "We have to show the initial respect. The more we show it, the more they will respect us."

Mingling with the people and making progress has outweighed the negative events that have popped up, according to Spc. Thomas Baker, 431st CA Bn. "There's a small number of people out there who want to cause trouble, but the majority want democracy and want our presence," he said. "It's those people who will have the patience to see this society really turn around."

For the most part, this tactic has made a large difference for the people of Mosul, according to Baker. "It's a good feeling; it reminds us of why we're here."



Spc. Joshua M. Risner

Sgt. 1st Class Rocky Upchurch, 431st Civil Affairs Battalion, meets with a group of locals to find out what their concerns are. The main complaints centered around electricity and jobs. The 431st is trying to solve small problems before they grow into large ones.

EMERGENCY provides care

By Spc. Blake Kent
22nd MPAD

For the people of Iraq, war is not a new thing. They know what it is to be the victim of it, caught in the middle, and they know where they can get unequalled care when the worst occurs--EMERGENCY.

EMERGENCY is a non-profit organization based in Milan, Italy, which provides aid to war victims.

Since March of 1995, EMERGENCY has been helping the northern Iraq, Kurdish population. During this period they suffered from not only their proximity to the Iranian border but from oppression from Iraq, and battles between PUK and PDK, which are the two major Kurdish parties in Iraq.

In Sulaimaniya, EMERGENCY has a surgical center that cares for war-wounded, mine-injured, pediatric burn patients and spinal cord injuries.

"Families bring patients to the EMERGENCY hospitals from around the country," said Nawzad Mohamad, the hospital's operating team leader.

There are surgical centers located in

Sulaimaniya and Erbil, Sulaimaniya has seen more than 59,000 people since its opening in 1996 and Erbil more than 34,000 since opening in June 1998.

The EMERGENCY centers are known to give care that the local hospitals can't provide-- at no charge.

"We have very high quality standards for hygiene and can provide medications, surgery, more beds, and free care that just can't be provided right now by the local hospitals," said Jabar Ibarahim, head nurse. "We are the only ones with physical therapy for the patients and can give spinal injury care. Here, the patients are not only physically cared for, but are put on a program that helps rehabilitate them into their normal lives."

Patients are able to receive immediate care from First Aid Posts that are in towns and villages. "If a person is injured by a mine, they are first brought here (FAP) to be treated, then taken to Sulaimaniya to the surgical center, which is an hour away," said Soram Hakim, United Nations Office for Project Services, Mine Awareness Program, Mine Victim Assistance worker.

After receiving medial care, amputee patients can take part in a rehabilitation

program, which provides prosthetic limbs and teaches the patient how to use them.

"We teach people how to go on with their normal lives, simple things from climbing stairs, getting on a bus and being able to move around. The therapy is not only a physical but psychological learning process," said Kamal Omer, physical therapist.

The center has a team of 12 physical therapists and has teams that visit patients' homes, helping make changes so that the patient can get around easier.

"Most of the people we see are shepherds from villages in the mountains near the border of Iran," Kamal said. "Because of their injuries, many of the people are unable to go back to their normal jobs." Patients can learn a new skill while in the rehabilitation center before they return home.

They can learn tailoring, leather work, blacksmithing, carpentry, shoe-making, and carpet-making.

EMERGENCY also has hospitals in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Sierra Leone, and is continuing to improve the care they are able to provide for the people of Iraq, including adding adult burn units in Sulaimaniya, Erbil and Karbala.



Spc. Blake Kent

Rozgar from Kirkuk, in the EMERGENCY Medical Center in Sulaimaniya. He lost his left arm from below the elbow while attempting to remove the explosive piece from a mine. The EMERGENCY facilities will provide him with a prosthetic limb and help him learn a new trade if he needs one.

Woman on the Street

What issues do women in the military face that men don't?



"Some people have more confidence in men than they do in women."

- Spc. Veronica Barela of Clovis, N.M., 431st Civil Affairs Battalion



"(Men) treat you different... they set you apart."

- Spc. Mary Brown of Muhlenburg County, Ky., Company C, 526th Forward Support Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)

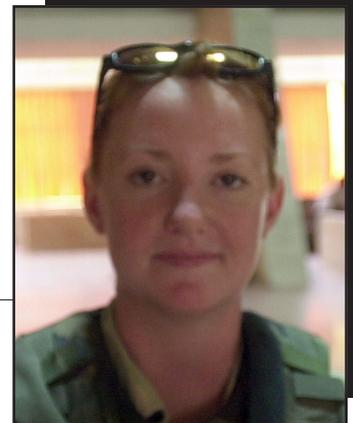
"Some men don't think we can do what they can do."

- Spc. Erin Thomas of Little Rock, Ark., 431st Civil Affairs Battalion



"Here in Iraq, there's far more attention to females in uniform."

- Spc. Samantha Ward of El Paso, Texas, 431st Civil Affairs Battalion



"They need better bathrooms in the field."

- Spc. Tarklima Figuero of New York, N.Y., Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Division Support Command, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)



"We have power struggles that men do not have."

- Sgt. Nikki Wade of Little Rock, Ark., 431st Civil Affairs Battalion