

IRAQI DESTINY

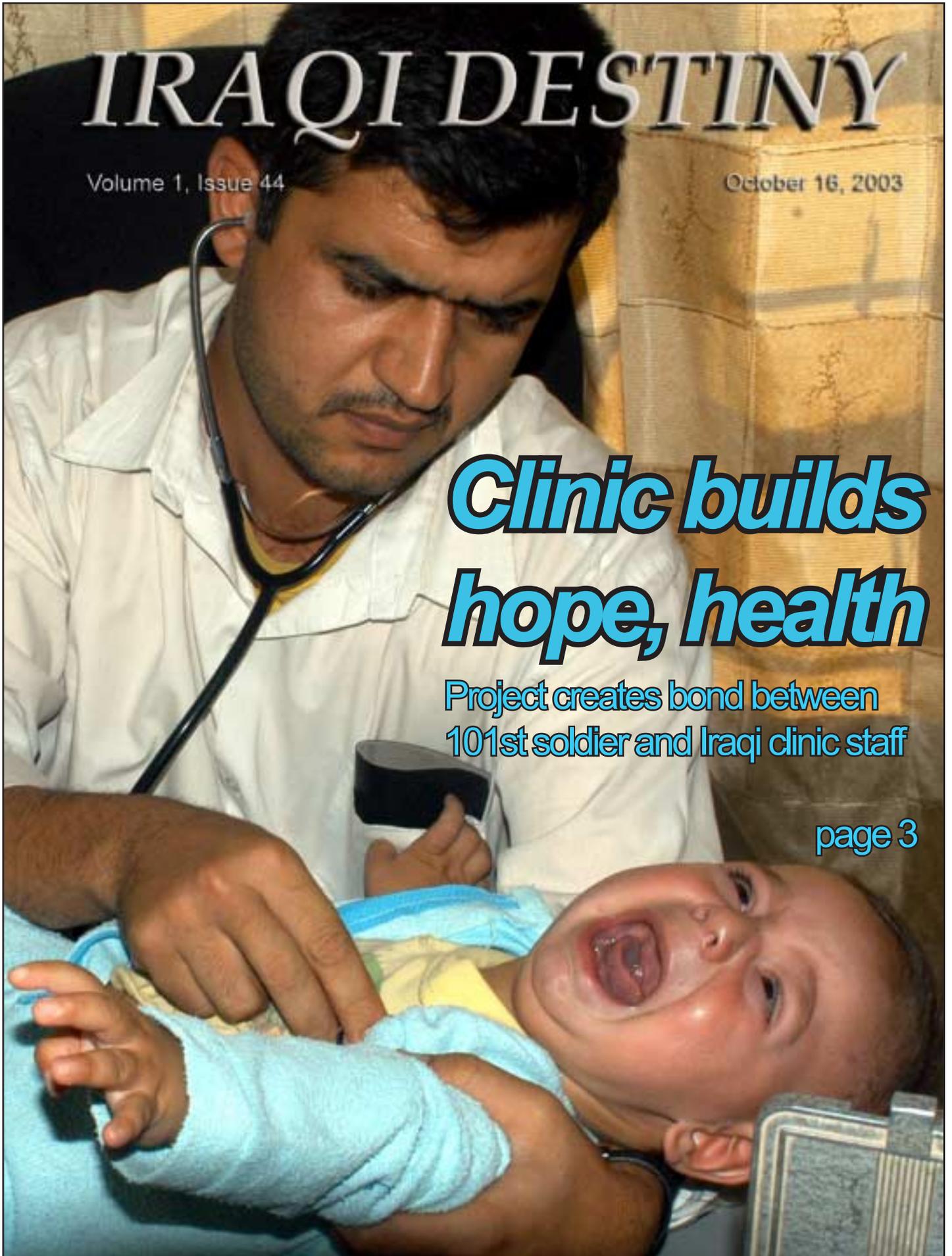
Volume 1, Issue 44

October 16, 2003

Clinic builds hope, health

Project creates bond between
101st soldier and Iraqi clinic staff

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Safety hero of the week

by Duane Soumis, Sgt. Maj. (ret.)
Division Safety Officer

Safety focuses on the prevention of accidents. When driving around Mosul, Iraq, or any of the outlying areas, one can grasp how important prevention becomes. Hundreds of military drivers effectively negotiate hazards every day in various missions. Many of us never expected to confront mass amounts of civilian vehicles that dart in and around convoys, often with no lights at night and driving on the wrong side of the roads.

How does one ensure that the drivers are prepared for their driving and equipment operations? Ask Sgt. David Shipula, master driver for the 52nd Combat Engineer Battalion.

During a visit by the division's tactical safety specialists, Shipula had an opportunity to show his stuff.

As a master driver, he is responsible to certify the battalion soldiers and supervisors in safe and effective operation procedures with their unit's equipment. He also manages the unit's driver training program for the commander. A personal life incident involving fellow soldiers who were involved in a vehicle accident was all it took to motivate Shipula to do more.

His first step was to get qualified on every piece of equipment that the engineers had, to include generators and unique engineering pieces. Taking Army

references and using a little ingenuity, Shipula developed a great training plan and became an instructor, an examiner, and a road test examiner. As a noncommissioned officer, Shipula knows that shortcuts create problems. You will not find his students receiving any slack in testing, they all must meet the requirements or go back to the duffle bag drag and burn that shoe leather.

The unique experience of operating in northern Iraq was a challenge to this great sergeant and pushed him to excel. A driving course set up at Quayarra West puts the final touches on his program. This course requires the person behind the wheel to demonstrate what it takes to not only drive in Iraq, but drive defensively and with an ability to react to the hazards that are thrown their way.



Sgt. David Shipula

Shipula admits that he doesn't do it all himself, but that the 52nd Engineer Battalion is unique in that it is a tri-component battalion consisting of active duty, reserve, and National Guard companies. Each had a unique approach to the aspects of licensing drivers. If one goes to the 52nd Engineers today and asks to speak to the master driver, several heads will turn your way. Master drivers are there for dozers to graders, from bucket loaders to cranes and other vehicles of all types. Safety focuses on prevention of accidents and no one focuses his drivers better than Shipula.

CJTF-7 commander clarifies tour lengths

The purpose of this memorandum is to reinforce the one year rotation policy. I have already stated my intent to soldiers and their families that they can expect to spend no more than a year in theater. Commanders will ensure that soldiers rotate back to their home station or mobilization station after one year in theater. I want commanders to tell each soldier when they are going to redeploy.

There may be units or portions of units that will be deployed to Iraq longer than one year because of transportation or backfill issues. I expect commanders to take all measures possible to meet my intent. However, I will retain approval authority for exceptions to this policy and will entertain only extreme cases due to operational necessity. If we absolutely require soldiers to stay longer than one year, then we owe the soldiers and families an explanation.

There may be reserve component units who meet their two-year mobilization requirement prior to having one year "boots on the ground." These units must redeploy in time to demobilize according to law. Commanders will identify those units now and identify mission impact to the CJTF-7 C3.

I have made a commitment to soldiers and their families and I expect you to do the same. We cannot go back on our word. This policy directly impacts the morale of soldiers and your unit. I need your assistance to make sure our soldiers understand the policy.

Ricardo S. Sanchez
Lieutenant General, USA
Commanding

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On the front: A doctor at the Avgani Primary Health Care Center checks an Iraqi baby girl for tonselitis. The child's mother was worried about her cough and fever, common symptoms for tonselitis. (photo by Pfc. Chris Jones)

Clinic restoration instills post-war pride in 101st soldier

By Pfc. Chris Jones
40th PAD

AVGANI, Iraq -- The rutted road to the clinic swings around miles of undeveloped farmland, patched with one-item shops run by all-day salesmen. It's a half-hour drive from "The Fort," a former Iraqi police barracks outside Tallafar now housing various 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) units.

A three-vehicle convoy packed with soldiers disappears from The Fort and rumbles down the road. To their left a pair of Iraqi contractors shovel dirt, a still-hot October sun showering their skin. A tall lieutenant in the middle vehicle leans over and fixes his eyes on the workers.

"You know, those guys work all day non-stop," he says. "I see them in the chow hall sweeping and mopping. It must be hard being in there and not being able to chow down. Tomorrow, I'm going to invite them to come and eat with me."

Turning back in his seat, 1st Lt. Michael Lefler, who considers himself softhearted for the strong-hearted, says, "Yeah, they're gonna chow down."

Lefler is the executive officer of Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). Last Wednesday, he left his dwelling at The Fort, which also lodges parts of the 101st's 187th Infantry Regiment, to visit his second-home at the Avgani Primary Health Care Center.

"I think it's the best project in the brigade," Lefler says of the clinic. "I haven't seen all the projects, but I have seen most of them, and this one is just -- I don't know, pretty amazing."

Lefler, like many officers in

3rd Bn., was given the task of directing the reconstruction and renovation of two clinics in Northern Iraq -- the Avgani center and a smaller clinic in Al Zumar.

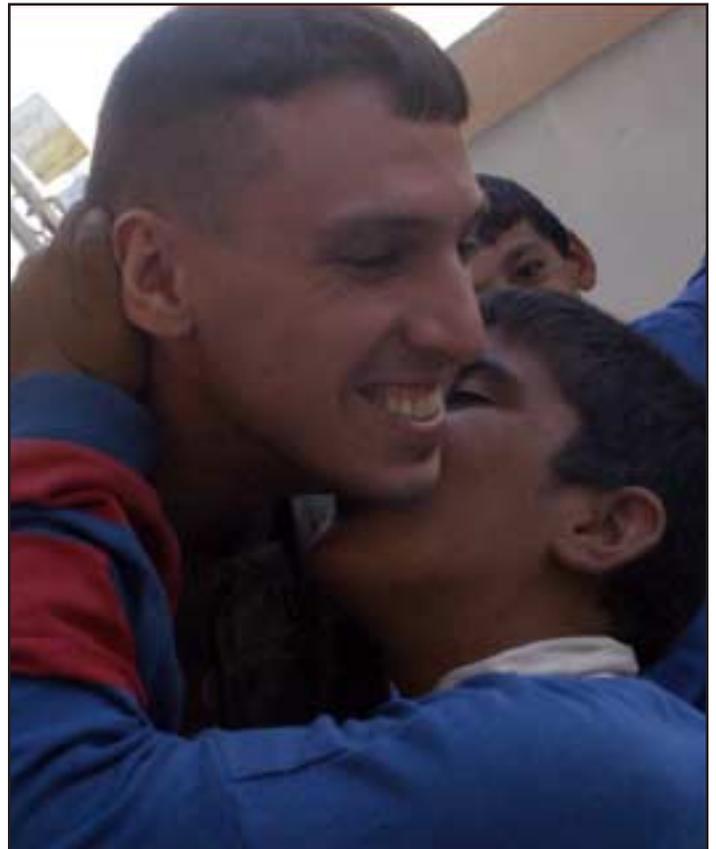
"Basically, [division leaders] handed me \$10,000 and said, 'go.' Everyone in the division had their own little projects, so I had mine. After the war, I really needed something to give me pride, a way to feel needed. I didn't expect much out of the clinic, you know. But this clinic became my pride, my baby. Now it's everything to me."

To Lefler's soldiers, it was more-or-less just another trip to the clinic. Though many of the 62 soldiers in his battery made friends with the health center's doctors and patients, the project was essentially Lefler's. And to the New York-native Lefler, this was more than another trip; it was probably the last time he'd be spending time with the group of people he sees as "maybe the nicest, most honest, giving people I have ever known."

At last, Avgani, a city bear-hugged in yellow fields, comes into sight. Lefler and five other artillerymen in his unit pull to the side of the road beside a white building wrapped in trees and children. With a long shadow dragging on the cement, Lefler makes his way down the path as an Iraqi boy suddenly ruptures from a flock of children and flings his arms around the soldier. Lefler bends over, and the boy kisses him twice on his right cheek. A restrained smile crosses the boy's face, as if having greeted a long-gone brother.

Walking through the door of the clinic, Lefler states, "He's mentally handicapped. We met a while back and now we're friends."

As Lefler walks inside the clinic, a familiar face approaches him -- the manager, Dr. Nahla Kalaf Ali. Ali has



Pfc. Chris Jones

1st Lt. Michael Lefler, executive officer, Battery B, 3rd Bn., 320th Field Artillery Regt., gets a hug and a kiss on the cheek from a mentally handicapped Iraqi boy who lives near the Avgani Primary Health Center. The two became friends after Lefler was assigned to oversee the clinic's reconstruction efforts in July.

managed the clinic for the past 15 years, but before Coalition allotments, the facility had cracking walls and poor electricity, and it never had a bathroom, Ali said.

With the \$10,000 Lefler was given, these problems were fixed, and a grand reopening ceremony was held Aug. 15. By Sept. 18, another \$15,000 had provided new furniture such as desks, chairs, computers, curtains and yard tiles. The money also paid for the construction of several new rooms. The man in charge of the construction was no other than the clinic manager's husband, civil engineer Hameed Fars. By early October, "you simply could not tell it was the same place," Lefler says. "The doctors tell me that more was accomplished in

three months than in the past 10 years."

"If you had seen this building before, you would have seen a sad place," Fars says. "Now it is a very happy place -- too much happy."

A happy clinic and a happy home go hand-in-hand to Fars and Ali, since after work each night, the two retire to their abode next-door to the health center. When the clinic was first built in 1961, Fars says constructors found the best way to keep a doctor on hand at all times was to keep one sleeping there, so a house was soon built, affixed to the clinic.

Given the couple's professions -- doctor and engineer, each with more than 15 year of experience -- the house is

Re-ups roaring at 140 percent

101st Airborne tops Army divisions in retention success

by Pfc. Thomas Day
40th PAD

The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) scored a three-peat this past fiscal year as the division landed the highest number of reenlistments of any division in the Army. The division also reenlisted the most soldiers in the Army in both the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 fiscal years.

Incredibly, the division's success seems to have come because of the ongoing war on terrorism, not in spite of it. The 101st reenlistment strength stands at more than 140% for the 2002-2003 fiscal year – surprising numbers as the division has been deployed to Kuwait and Iraq for nearly eight months.

“The soldiers are proud of the 101st,” said Sgt. Maj. James Plemens of Norfolk, Va., Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 101st Airborne Division. “A lot of units have seen a drop in re-enlistment rates. We haven't seen that with the 101st.”

The 101st hasn't just exceeded retention objectives, they've destroyed them. The division had hoped to reenlist 917 soldiers who had been serving their first enlistment; they signed 1,236 (135 percent) as of Sept. 30.

The objective of 610 enlistments of “mid-career soldiers,” usually junior-grade non-commissioned officers who have served more than one enlistment but no more than 10 years, was easily met as 758 mid-careerists re-up'ed (124 percent).

Career soldiers, those who have served more than 10 years, beat the objective 423 to 382 (111 percent).

“That's a success story for the division, any time we have that high numbers of soldiers electing to say here,” Plemens said. “We've got the best leadership in the Army in the 101st. The career counselors out in the units are motivated, they're well trained and they understand the Army personnel system.”

Plemens, himself a former Army recruiter, was able to convince several of his own soldiers to re-up with the division, including Staff Sgt. David Carr of Pennsylvania Furnace, Penn., and Sgt. Claudia



Pfc. Thomas Day

Staff Sgt. David Carr of Pennsylvania Furnace, Pa., Sgt. Maj. James Pleamons of Norfolk, Va., and Sgt. Claudia Tapia of Houston, Texas, stand in front of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) “Screaming Eagle” at the 101st's headquarters in Mosul, Iraq. Pleamons successfully recruited Carr and Tapia to reenlist, joining the more than 500 soldiers who have reuped in the last fiscal year.

Tapia of Houston, Texas.

So, what would inspire a soldier to reenlist in middle of a combat tour?

“I have a lot of time invested, plus I think I have a good chance of making a senior rank,” said Carr, who has deployed in Haiti, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, and Kosovo in his ten years in the Army. “I enjoy the Army and to be honest with you, my wife supports the Army.”

Tapia, who has just completed her third year in the Army, has not yet reenlisted by has promised to shortly. “Why do I want to do this here? Because it was here that I decided I needed to do more.”

Re-up Rationale

The Army needed to reenlist around 52,000 soldiers this fiscal year and has accomplished that goal, according to Plemens.

Reasons for staying in vary from soldier to soldier.

- “I got a good school option,” said Spec. Philip Bursby of Corpus Christi, Texas, 3-320th Field Artillery Regiment.

“I came in (to the Army) to get a little college.” Bursby will attend Austin Peay State University for six months when he returns to Fort Campbell, Ky., with the division.

- “This is where I need to be right now. Of all the careers, this is the most challenging,” said Spc. Anthony Heimas of Grant's Pass, Oregon, 1-327th Infantry Regiment.

- “It wasn't time for me to get out of the Army. I got six years in, I might as well keep going,” said Heimas' battle-buddy Sgt. Matthew Goering of Pittsburg, Kansas.

- Pvt. Thomas Woods of Huntsville, Ala., knows exactly why he plans to reenlist. “For the money... tax free money!”

A number of soldiers who enlisted in the final months of the Army's fiscal year, which ends Oct. 30, got paid up to \$5,000 for their decision.

Soldiers interested in reenlisting should keep in close contact with their career counselor, Plemens said, so they don't miss out on similar bonuses.

'New' Faithful: 101st re-opens reservoir

by Pfc. Chris Jones
40th PAD

AL JEZEERA region, Iraq -- Thousands of gallons of water surged from a reservoir into an aqueduct Sunday afternoon at the Al Jezeera Pump Station, the start of a long journey to more than 200,000 farmers throughout the arid plains of Northern Iraq.

With support from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Iraqi engineers worked to fix the water pump, which was inoperative before Operation Iraqi Freedom. After nearly three months of sweat, engineers brought the pump back to life two weeks ago, and on Sunday Iraqi citizens and 101st soldiers watched thousands of gallons of water propel through a dam into an aqueduct, with the pull of a lever.

"This is one of the greatest projects in the Ninevah Province," said 101st commander Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus. "It shows again there's nothing that can't be done if we work together."

The water in the reservoir is not filtered, therefore it will be used primarily for nourishing crops and feeding domestic animals, Petraeus said.

"This aqueduct will offer constant water for livestock and farms throughout the region," he said. "Now, farmers will be able to plant crops in more than just one season (the rainy season), therefore increasing output, and therefore increasing the economy."

With the success of the waterway, the 101st completed the third stage in a project designed to increase water dispersion in the Ninevah Province.

"This project required many different types of people to work together," said Ninevah Province Governor Ghanim Al-Basso, "and that's not an ordinary thing for many people in Iraq."

According to Petraeus, the pump station is running more efficiently than it has in years, and it will continue to be manned by Iraqi workers.

"It has been running perfectly 24-hours a day for the past few weeks without problems," he said.

"Eventually," Petraeus continued jokingly, "we want there to be so much water in the Al Jezeera area that the farmers have to say, 'Stop, no more!'"



photos by Pfc. Chris Jones

(Above) Thousands of gallons of water stream through the dam at the Al Jezeera Pump Station near the Syrian border in a ceremony celebrating the completion of the third stage in a project designed by Coalition Forces to replenish water supply in Northern Iraq. (Below) A group of Iraqis watch as water fills an aqueduct after being pumped out by the Al Jazera Water Pump Station. The aqueduct was dry for years, and began working again Sunday after the water project was finished.



101st, CPA detail agricultural initiatives to local farmers

Coalition invests more than \$55 million in Northern Iraq farming projects

by Pfc. Thomas Day
40th PAD

Farmers from all over Northern Iraq gathered Monday on the campus of Mosul University to hear how exactly the Coalition is helping stabilize the agricultural economy in the region. The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), which has patrolled the northern region since the fall of Saddam's regime, has devoted more than \$55 million towards stabilizing the current planting season, which ends in late December.

Brig. Gen. Frank Helmick, 101st Airborne Division assistant division commander-operations, joined Trevor Flugge, senior agriculture advisor to Ambassador L. Paul Bremer and the Coalition Provisional Authority, in the symposium's opening session. The main topic of discussion centered around the upcoming year's wheat and barley harvests.

"Iraq has changed in the last 200 days. No longer do we have a regime that dictates what we do, how to do it and when to do it," Helmick told the farmers.

"We have many issues to work and I know many issues are on your minds, but we all realize we are not where we need to be with respect to the planning season ... I anticipate a bumper crop for 2004, we have no other option."

Seeds from the upcoming years harvest are being planted now and will continue until late December. After a rough harvest last year, the stakes are high for this year.

More than 260,000 metric tons of wheat and 200,000 metric tons of barley have been paid for in Coalition subsidies. The division supported life-support subsidizing of wheat and barley and fungicide this summer after thousands of metric tons of spring produce became ravaged by virus. Infected wheat and barley is now being quarantined and health standards are being enforced.

Additionally, in an effort to increase agricultural production, the Coalition has increased prices. Wheat, for example, will now be sold at \$140 a ton, where before it was sold at \$105.

The set prices still undercut market competition from Syrian and Turkish farmers, who sell wheat from \$190 to \$250 a ton.

This year will mark a drastic change in

philosophy in government subsidizing of farming. The Coalition is now focusing on providing equipment and teaching proper harvesting methods to modernize local farmers, before shifting attention to bottom-line production.

The plan then, Flugge said, will be to support the actual produce, not the inputs like fertilizer, as the former regime had done with little effectiveness.

"All the inputs into agriculture have been very heavily subsidized but the prices the farmers have received for their wheat and barley are not that high, in fact they are quite low," he said.

"It will be a gradual process of three to five years, moving support of agriculture from the inputs to the outputs," Flugge added. "It doesn't mean you get rid of the subsidies, we're just changing the way the support is delivered to the farmer."

With the borders of trade with Syria and Turkey open, Flugge predicted that agricultural trade will increasingly become robust. Farmers in the past had only been able to trade across the borders illicitly.

The CPA has recommended to the Ministry of Agriculture that tariff rates be set at five to ten percent, according to Flugge.



Pfc. Thomas Day

Brig. Gen. Frank Helmick, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) assistant division commander (operations), Khasro Ghoran (center), Mosul deputy mayor, and Trevor Flugge (left), CPA senior agricultural advisor, listen as Dr. Sawsan lil-Sharify, Iraqi deputy minister of agriculture speaks at the symposium.

Civilian turns in missiles, soldiers pick up to destroy

By Spc. Joshua M. Risner
40th PAD

DOHUK, Iraq -- Soldiers with Battery B, 1st Battalion, 377th Field Artillery Regiment picked up a load of 188 SA-7 surface to air missiles for transport to Mosul and disposal.

The missiles are shoulder-fired weapons, similar to a rocket-propelled grenade in operation, according to Sgt. 1st Gilbert Ortiz, G-3, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). "Just one of these things is capable of taking down an aircraft; they could also be used as improvised explosive devices," Ortiz said.

The weapons were turned in by a civilian, according to 2nd Lt. Steven Whitmore, Bat. B, 1st Bn., 377th FAR. "He turned them in and received about \$250 for each missile," he said. "He buys them from people and then turns around and gives them to us."

The civilian came to Coalition Forces and discussed his plan to buy the missiles and turn them in. He explained that he had the trust of the people in the area and could buy weapons from them as long as he told them they were going to the Kurdistan Democratic Party, according to Ortiz.

"He claimed to be able to get his hands on anywhere between 1,000 and 2,000 rockets," Ortiz said. "Everybody thought he was joking until the missiles started coming in. We've gotten over 200 and he shows no signs of stopping."

Moving the missiles was a tedious process; the serial number of each one had to be recorded and accounted for before it could be loaded onto the trucks.

Having these weapons taken off the streets is a relief to Ortiz. "This will help to reduce the threat to our troops on the ground and in the air," he said. "We are making things safer."



Spc. Graig Hollis, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 377th Field Artillery Regiment, takes an SA-7 surface to air missile to load onto the truck for Mosul. The missiles were turned in by a civilian (photo by Spc. Joshua M. Risner)

Regional leaders pay respects to fallen local heroes

by Pfc. Thomas Day
40th PAD

Policemen and firefighters wearing the Iraqi Colors have fought alongside the Stars and Stripes in patrolling the streets of Mosul since the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) arrived in the city last April. In working to clear the remaining enemy elements in the city and protect the people of Mosul, the "Coalition" has included Iraqi policemen and firefighters.

And in the last six months, nine policemen and two firemen have lost their lives in the line of duty.

On Friday those Coalition members were remembered in a memorial ceremony in Mosul. Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus,

101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) commanding general, joined an assembly of city leaders for the ceremony including Mosul Deputy Mayor Khasro Ghoran and the Mosul fire and police chiefs.

The heroes of Mosul were given every last respect given to their Coalition brothers from America. Local police have been trained by the 101st Airborne Division in Coalition-supported police academies, one of which was the setting for the somber ceremony.

"We have lost many soldiers as well," Petraeus told one mother, "and we feel like your son was one of our soldiers."

The 101st Airborne commander met with each family of the deceased policemen and firemen, greeting the mothers, fathers, and wives with the same messages:

"Our soldiers are very proud to serve alongside your husband."

"Your son was a hero, you should be proud of him."

Ghoran also met with the families and presented each with an Iraqi flag and flowers.

Petraeus and Col. Joseph Anderson, the 101st Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade commander, watched as medals were pinned on several dozen policemen and firemen for valor under fire.

Mosul Chief of Police Muhammad Khadi Barhawi and Fire Chief Muhammad Mahory did the honors for their respective services.

Both Barhawi and Mahory also spoke during the service.

"Today we celebrate the lives of the heroes who sacrificed their lives for the safety of our citizens," Mahory said. "We shall continue in our duty to provide safety for our citizens."



Pfc. Thomas Day

Mosul Deputy Mayor Khasro Goran offers condolences to the father of one of the 11 Mosul policemen who lost their lives in the line of duty within the last six months. Division leaders, including Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, division commander, also met with families to express their sentiments.

Engineers repair bridges on key road to Mosul



photot by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson

(Above) Soldiers from various engineering battalions unload 163-pound deck filler panels from the back of a truck to replace all of the panels on the south bridge. After five months of constant use, the original panels had become cracked and threatened to collapse the bridge. (Below) Soldiers from the 326th Eng. Bn. 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), 52nd Eng. Bn. and the 957th Multi Role Bridge Company replace the deck filler panels on the south Khazir river bridge. The complete replacement operation took a little less than five hours.



by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson
joshua.hutcheson@us.army.mil

After five months of constant use, the two military constructed bridges over the Khazir River, thirty minutes east of Mosul, were ready to be repaired or replaced.

The two bridges span Highway Two and connect Mosul and Erbil, the two largest cities in Northern Iraq. Engineers from the 326th Engineer Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), 299th Engineer Company and the 74th Multi Role Bridge Company installed the bridges in April to take the place of two two-lane bridges that were destroyed by Iraqi forces during the war.

The southern bridge is a Medium Girder Bridge, an old design that takes more personnel and time to build, and isn't meant to hold the weight of tractor trailers, said Maj. Christopher Lestochi, operations officer, 326th Engineer Battalion.

But the months of people driving too fast in large vehicles caused cracks to appear in all of the 82 deck filler panels that run perpendicular to the two long beams that span the banks.

"You get a big truck with a heavy load on it and you'll see the stress fractures forming," Lestochi said.

The northern bridge is a more modern Dry Support Bridge, which can support heavier loads. Its simple design originally required only eight soldiers to assemble it. Cracks also started to form on some of the 16 filler panels that made up its 34-meter length.

A team of civilian structural engineers, soldiers from the 326th Eng. Bn. and from the Army Corps of Engineers were unable to determine the cause of the cracks in the DSB, so they placed a phone call.

Using an \$85,000 video teleconferencing unit over a secure satellite link that offers the transmission voice, video and data, the engineers talked to a network of military and civilian scientists and engineers who work for the Army Corps of Engineers, including the people who designed the bridge, Lestochi said.

Instead of flying people to the bridge to assess the damage, or e-mailing pictures of the damage, the engineers were able to

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startlingly modest, a mere 100 square yards in size with just two rooms, states Ali.

"It's very small," she says. "Very small."

Lefler says he was staggered to find such skilled, educated people living in such a humble house.

"They certainly don't live like the kings their American counterparts do," he says "Money just doesn't matter to them. Their life is the clinic. They've dedicated their entire life to it. Hell, it's where they sleep. You've got to figure, these are extremely intelligent people who live just to do their job. I don't know if I've ever met anybody quite like them."

Lefler says his first impression of Iraqis during the reconstruction effort was that they were only out to grab money leached out by Coalition Forces.

"You get a lot of [Iraqis] who want something from you, because they know you've got money," he says. "If they read the news, they know what we've got. I get the same thing from the clinic, but they're not trying to milk us. It's obvious these people want to take advantage of us while we're here, but not in a negative way. I realize why they ask. They don't want wealth; they really need this money. It took this clinic to make me realize that Iraqis are just like Americans; they're just a little lost."

The clinic, responsible for approximately 60,000 people in Avgani and its nearly 50 outlying villages, is sustained by the Iraqi Ministry of Health in Baghdad. Under the former regime, doctors around the country made hardly enough money to keep food on the table. Dr. Mohamed Jassim, the former manager of the Avgani clinic, now directs 18 clinics in Northern Iraq. Before Operation Iraqi Freedom, he says he made just \$24 per year. By comparison, the average director of just one clinic in the United States has an average yearly salary of \$90,312, and more than \$200,000 per year for multi-clinic directors such as Jassim, according to salary.com.



Pfc. Chris Jones

A group of Iraqi boys smile for the camera after playing a game in front of the Avgani Primary Health Care Center.

"He's in charge of all the clinics in the region – Tallafar, Rabeaa, Avgani, Sinjar – but you can tell how he lives – humble," says Lefler, who has made good friends with Jassim, even inviting him to The Fort to play new Playstation 2 football games. "He doesn't make a lot of money. If he had the same role in the States, he'd be making hundreds of thousands of dollars, easy. He'll probably never make what American doctors do. He'll never have the fancy car and nice house. But, you know what, he'll have pride."

After the fall of the former regime, his salary rose to \$180 per month.

Jassim makes weekly trips to the Ministry of Health, while Lefler makes weekly updates of his two clinics' progress to 187th leaders., who then brief Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, 101st commander. Jassim and Lefler have since helped make a change that could significantly accelerate the pace of which medical assistance can be provided to the many small Iraqi villages without a nearby hospital. Before the war, the Ministry of Health allocated 10 percent of its funds to clinics and 90 percent to hospitals. Since the only hospital in Northern Iraq is in Mosul, the two argued that the percentage gap should be narrowed, and last month their requests were honored – Iraqi clinics now receive 20 percent of the share, according to Jassim.

"[Avgani] is too far from Mosul," Jassim says. "Sick people cannot go from here to the hospital in Mosul when they need to. If they get break a bone, they will need medical attention immediately. This clinic can treat a broken leg now, because of the money Coalition Forces gave us. [The patient] will have to go to the hospital still, but we can provide the initial medical treatment necessary."

As personal as the project has become to Lefler, he says he understands he is but one soldier in Iraq, and the clinic is but one of many. He understands the clinic will never be able to save every life nor cure every disease. He understands he can't make the clinic a hospital.

"Health care was deeply neglected here," Lefler says. "It's gotten better, but it's not even close to where it needs to be. I mean, it's funny to think how much these clinics are responsible for. You don't think about that in the States, about how much we need medical care, because there are doctors everywhere. Here, a village is lucky to have one doctor. This clinic makes up for all those villages without doctors."

But the clinic was more than a project to Lefler, it was the catalyst to the quiet pride which he says is at the heart of Operation Iraqi Freedom. When Lefler returns home to his wife in Fort Campbell, Ky., he may not have astonishing war stories to tell, the

ones painted with intrepid soldiers in hopelessly perilous circumstances, the ones we see in movies, because for the last three months he has simply helped bring a little Iraqi clinic to its feet.

After visiting Ali, Jassim and Fars for about an hour, the time comes for Lefler to say farewell in what could be the last time all four – the doctor, the leader of doctors, the clinic craftsman and the American soldier – are together at once, like a group of high school friends going their separate ways after graduation. After all, the clinic is now fully operational, with twice the funds it previously had. All that Coalition Forces can do for the clinic may now be done, Lefler says.

Ali, whose placid temper and soft voice epitomize the Arabic woman, cuts into Lefler's path and offers him and his soldiers soda before they go.

"Just stay for soda," she says. "Not long."

"We really must go," Lefler replies with a warm smile. It takes another few minutes to assure Ali, but Lefler and his team finally leave the clinic. Before he makes it to his vehicle, though, someone else wants to say goodbye. Having waited outside the clinic throughout the hour-long visit, Lefler's young friend makes his way to the soldier and gives him two more kisses, on the left cheek this time. And as Lefler makes his way back into the vehicle, the boy vanishes into a parade of children outside the clinic.

The convoy sets off back to The Fort. Pfc. Matthew Dupre, a medic in Lefler's unit, drives the middle vehicle, with Lefler in the passenger seat.

"I don't think you're gonna like me in about two months, sir," Dupre states.

"Why?" Asks Lefler. "Oh yeah, the shots. I swear, for as long as I've been at Fort Campbell, which is 2 1/2 years, when the time comes to get our shots, it seems like he's always the one who gives me them. Somehow I always get in his line when it's time to get my arms poked."

With Lefler, medicine is a love-hate relationship.

BRIDGE, from page 9

show and explain the problem in real-time and come to an immediate solution.

After a 20-minute conference with people in Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., the Engineer Operations Center in Vicksburg, Miss., and engineers from Baghdad and Tikrit, it was decided to take the bridge down and replace it with another of the same design.

Use of the VTC expedited the operation, Lestochi said.

"It helped us make a quick decision on a course of action," he said.

Saturday the soldiers from Bravo and Headquarters and Headquarters Companies, 326th Eng. Bn., Alpha and Bravo Companies, 52nd Eng. Bn. and 957th Multi Role Bridge Co., a National Guard Unit out of Bismark, N.D., came together to fix the south bridge.

The 957th flew in to the work site with 90 replacement deck filler panels, in CH-47 Chinook helicopters.

It was a routine five-hour operation. The soldiers removed the original cracked seven-inch wide, 163-lb. panels and replaced them with brand new panels with the same dimensions, said Staff Sgt. Mark Mitzel, bridge crew chief, 957th MRB Co.

The engineers also replaced link reinforcement cables since the original ones had been looted weeks earlier, said Sgt. Stephen Podymaitis, bridge crew, 814th MRB Co.

The next day the 326th enlisted the help of the 37th Eng. Bn. and the 74th MRB Co. to replace the northern DSB. The 11-hour operation was difficult due to the amount of tears and damage to the original bridge, Lestochi said.

The first bridge was removed entirely and a new one installed the same way the old one had been five months earlier.

Since the bridges on Highway Two are the only way to cross the river into Erbil, there were some traffic delays during construction. But once the Iraqis were made aware that without the work being done

the bridges would end up falling, traffic problems smoothed out.

The construction made it possible for people to continue to use the bridges to get to and from work and home, and for truckers to get shipments of goods to their destinations on time. The two coalition bridges will serve the needs of the community until contractors can be brought in to rebuild the original bridges sometime in the future, said Lt. Col. Allen Ware, forward support team leader, Northwest Division, Army Corps of Engineers.

2nd Brigade thwarts recent convoy attack

Soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) 2nd Brigade Combat Team killed an enemy attacker Oct. 13 when their convoy came under attack in eastern Mosul.

The convoy was fired on by two rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire at approximately 7:25 p.m. while on a routine patrol in the city.

Soldiers in the convoy returned fire, killing an individual as he prepared to fire a rocket-propelled grenade.

Two traffic control points were established by the unit, who confiscated one rocket-propelled grenade, one RPK assault rifle, and four hand-grenades. There were no U.S. injuries.

In a second incident, soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team pursued a vehicle as it attempted to evade a mounted patrol along the Syria/Iraq border at 11:09 p.m. The vehicle was stopped and searched.

Soldiers apprehended three passengers, and confiscated two AK-47s with two magazines and a sniper/night vision scope.

The three were detained in the 3rd Brigade holding facility.

(Editor's Note: This information was taken from a press release distributed by the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Public Affairs Office).

The Judge Says...

Items of legal interest to soldiers

Q: What would you do if you saw a \$10 charge on your monthly bank statement that you couldn't explain?

A: *The starting point should be to contact your bank, and find out who the charge is being paid to. It may be a company you are familiar with, but the charge itself is unclear. In such a case, you should contact the company to explain, and dispute the charge through the company.*

But what if you've never heard of the company the charge is being paid to? If the charge is relatively recent, usually within 30-90 days, then the bank may refund the money while the charge is being disputed. If the charge is older than that, then it is usually the individual's responsibility to dispute the debt and try to recollect the money.

Debts should be disputed in writing, not by phone. The person should state the amount in dispute, and why it is being disputed. The company then has the responsibility of justifying the debt.

Disputing bills and charges can be a long process, sometimes taking months to resolve. Create a file and

save all correspondence, even after the case is closed!

Q: What are slander and libel?

A: *"Slander" and "libel" are two forms of defamation, which are false statements that injure a person's reputation.*

Slander is spoken defamation, while libel is written defamation. If you have written or spoken falsely and caused injury in doing so, you could be sued for defamation.

Speak to an attorney if you have further questions..

Preventive law tip of the week:

Suppose you received a letter saying a poem you wrote was chosen to appear in an anthology. Could it be a scam?

It could be, depending on what the company demands from you in return. If the company states that there is a charge to buy the anthology, let's say \$50, and for another \$25 will include your biography, etc., then the company may be running a scam.

Be wary of literary contests that claim you have won a prize, which turns out to have a price tag attached!

Man on the Street

How are you going to spend all that extra money you're earning?



"I'll spend it on souvenirs, phone cards, food and the PX."

- Sgt. Dominic Devilla, Company D, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment



"I'm going to go to Memphis and spend it."

- Spc. Ben Carr, 431st Civil Affairs Bn.

"I'm going to take the money and spend it on my house."

- Spc. Chad Lloyd, 431st CA Bn.



"I'm going to buy a new car."

- Pfc. Christopher Wegman, Co. A, 3rd Bn., 327th Inf. Rgt.



"I'll invest it in stocks and bonds and then go on a shopping spree."

- Spc. John Brito, 381st Military Police Detachment



"I'll send my daughter to college, buy a new TV and wine and dine with my wife."

- Sgt. 1st Class Raul Rios, Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)