
IRAQI DESTINY

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Here's human rights!

Iraqis move back home to Domez with the help of U.S. troops

By Spc. Joshua M. Risner
40th Public Affairs Detachment

Imagine going on vacation and coming home only to find someone else living in your house and telling you that you are no longer welcome there.

This is close to a reality for the people of Domez, a village north of Mosul.

"When the war started, shelling from coalition bombs destroyed eight houses in Domez and the people there decided that it was a good idea to leave the area for awhile," said Capt. Teresa Raymond, judge advocate, 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). "The people stayed in Mosul for a few days and came back to



Photo by Spc. Joshua M. Risner

A villager from Domez waves the Iraqi flag in celebration as he and the rest of the villagers return to their homes May 8. They have been displaced for over a month.

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Destruction, thievery of ancient ruins rampant in Iraq

By Pfc. Mary Rose Xenikakis
22nd MPAD

**MORE THAN 39,400
MANUSCRIPTS AND 700
ARTIFACTS WERE
RECOVERED BY AUTHORITIES**

In efforts to protect ruins, soldiers were positioned at an ancient palace in Nimrud, Iraq. A palace, which was built by the Assyrian King Assur Nassirpal II, was looted and ruins were stolen from it, on April 24-25.

Archeologists from northern Iraq have been struggling to keep

ancient ruins from being stolen or destroyed by vandals.

"We started guarding the ruins Wednesday," said Sgt. Robert McNeilly, company D, 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). The native of Morganton, NC, said "So far we have kept the looters out with our presence, and with the help of Iraqi police."

The palace was built in the 9th century BC, and it took Assur six years to complete the structure, according to Muzahim Mahmud an archeologist and the director of the Mosul museum. He said the size of the palace is 26,000 square meters, but many of the rooms have deteriorated and been destroyed by visitors over the years.

Muzahim said there are many other ancient sites in the town of Nimrud that have been looted.

US and Iraqi authorities recently found numerous amounts of ruins and manuscripts that were taken from a museum in Baghdad during the war.

Soldiers are still working with Iraqi officials to recover more ruins, and to put security at the sites that have been disturbed.

Smiles, laughter in air after re-opening of amusement park in Mosul

Mosul, Iraq—As a part of continuing efforts to bring back a sense of normalcy around the Iraqi communities, a Mosul amusement park, closed since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, reopened Friday with the help of the soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). A ceremony officially opening the gates to the park was held Saturday morning.

Roughly 100 Iraqi townspeople toured the park Friday with soldiers from the 326th Engineer Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and the 926th Engineer Group out of Birmingham, Alabama. The 926th Engineers are attached to the 101st and worked with the 326th Engineers to make sure the park could reopen.

"We came here and asked the general manager what it would take to get the park going," said Maj. Chris D. Lestochi, commander of operations for the 326th Engineers. "The hardest part was convincing him to do it."

The park manager identified a broken water main and electrical issues that would prevent the park from reopening, but was primarily concerned with security.

"Their main concern was the safety of the

children of the park," said Maj. Scott Vick of the 926th Engineers. "They were never interested in money." In a brief 5 day

operation, the engineers of the 101st established a fountain inside the park with safe drinking water and cleared the facility of

lingering electrical hazards.

With Military Police continuously patrolling the park, security has been ensured. MP's will work with local police to protect citizens at the park until local officials are able to man the park on their own.

In broken english, one Iraqi was able to thank the engineers for their work in reopening the park. "We cannot live without you," the man told Vick. "You help us and save us from Saddam."

Reopening the park, located along the Tigris River in downtown Mosul, was a top priority of Maj. Gen. David H. Petreus, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) commanding general. "He was looking for ways to show that we're here to help," according to Lestochi.

"It's not often you get to help people like this," the Nittany Lion added. "People appreciate the efforts the Army is making, you can see it in the faces of the kids."

The engineers of the 101st have been instrumental in the post-war rebuilding process, with a mission that constructed two bridges crossing the Kaziel river outside the city of Mosul last week, according to Lestochi. The engineers have also been involved with missions helping rebuild schools.



Photo by Pfc. Thomas Day

A Mosul youth rides the "bumper cars" as the Mosul Amusement parks celebrates the park's reopening. The park, located along the Tigris River, closed after the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 326th Engineers, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), and the 926th Engineering Group (Birmingham, Ala.) were instrumental in allowing the park to reopen, reestablishing safe drinking water and solving various electrical issues the park was having.

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find that people of the Pashmirda tribe had moved in.”

The Pashmirda were only living in five or ten homes in a village of almost 800 houses but they told the Domez people that they were no longer welcome and could not live there. Since they had weapons and were more powerful, the Pashmirda prevailed, according to Raymond.

The displaced villagers then traveled back to Mosul where they lived in parks, with family or anywhere they could bed down.

They tried to remain together to keep their identity, but that was hard to do with so many people, Raymond said.

After a few days, a spokesperson for the displaced people went back to Domez to reason with the Pashmirda. When he got there, he found that not only the Pashmirda were there, but also Kurdish families, who had made their move on the housing complex.

This angered the Domez people, but they did not want any trouble, Raymond added.

It was a month before they told anyone about the issues they were facing. “We have known about this for about eight days,” Raymond said. “It was then that they started gathering with banners explaining their situation.”

At first, they thought that coalition forces were involved in their eviction. “These people know so little about democracy that they assumed the Americans had given this village to the Kurds and Pashmirda,” Raymond said. “All that they had been told about democracy was that everyone lived together in peace.”

Army officials have traveled to Domez and assessed the situation, according to Raymond. “What we’re trying to do now is make sure the area is clear and find some solution to see that everyone is happy,” she said.

The problem is a complex one. Each side claims ownership of the land dating back thousands of years.

The Arabization program, put in place by the regime of Saddam Hussein, displaced many of the Kurds and other tribes in this area and gave the land to Arabs in an effort to gain support for the Baath party in the northern regions of Iraq.

This problem is not a military issue, but a political one, according to Raymond. “It is too big for us to approach,”



Photo by Spc. Joshua M. Risner

Villagers are all smiles as they enter Domez for the first time in over a month. Soldiers regulated the flow into the village to prevent chaos.

Raymond said.

“This is a problem that is going to have to be approached with patience and open-mindedness,” Raymond said. “The average Iraqi is just beginning to understand this.”

For the time being, the Army has established a temporary housing project in an effort to give some of the displaced people shelter. They are housing about 120 families in an old Iraqi training camp, said Raymond. But even there, they are running into problems.

“The Iraqi people do not mix with each other,” she said. “We have so many empty rooms in the temporary housing because this family won’t live near that family even though there are a hundred empty rooms. They’re not willing to give on certain issues.”

In addition to social problems, the facilities themselves are in need of improvements. There is no running water and sanitation is becoming an issue, but it is shelter if nothing else, Raymond said.

The dilemma also stretches to the occupiers of Domez, the Kurds and the Pashmirda. Their leaders promised this village to the families of those who died in the fight against the regime of Saddam Hussein. “They consider those people who died to be martyrs,” said Lt. Col. Mohammed Abdal Ramadhan, KDP Guard.

This promise however, was never honored by the coalition, according to Col. Joseph Anderson, commander, 2nd

Bde., 101st Abn. Div., (AAslt.). “I sympathize with these people, I really do,” Anderson said, “but no one has the right to displace someone else.”

In an effort to rectify the situation, Anderson went to Domez to talk with the leaders of the Kurd and Pashmirda.

He told them that they were not allowed to occupy the village of Domez and they had to leave. Many of the people did not understand because of the promises their own leaders had made. However, they consented to go, without incident.

Two days later, Anderson returned to find the village still occupied. They were given an ultimatum: move out by sundown or be arrested.

After much discussion and clarifying, they once again agreed to leave. This time, they kept their word as trucks and vehicles began to clear away the area, bearing the belongings of the people inside.

“We respect the fact that they are our allies, but this is reverse Arabization,” Anderson said. “We can’t allow the leadership to put us in the middle of a political dispute.”

The houses were finally cleared and the residents of Domez were allowed back into their homes, Thursday, May 8.

The people gathered in droves outside the gates and impatiently waited

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Hospitals returning to normalcy after war

By Spc. Blake Kent
22nd MPAD

Mosul saw its share of change and damage due to the war, but the Mosul hospital system has weathered much of the storm.

“The hospital system is intact,” said Capt. Kermit Huebner from Baetsville, Ohio, medic, 2nd Brigade, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

Only two hospitals in the area received heavy damage from looting

after the war –the military hospital and the infectious disease hospital.

“People raided every government building because they thought they all stood for Saddam,” Huebner said. “The military hospital now wants to become a civilian hospital.”

“The facilities had been extensively damaged,” said Col. J. M. Harmon III, San Antonio, Texas, commander, 62nd Medical Brigade. “Supplies, furniture, and medical equipment were stolen. Some of the local religious leaders and doctors secured equipment in their homes so that it wouldn’t be stolen.”

“Even though the places were looted, the doctors and nurses still showed up for work,” said Lt. Col. Richard. W. Thomas of Morgantown, West Va., a 101st Abn. Div. (AAslt.) surgeon.

The hospitals are doing emergency care primarily now, Thomas said.

“Even though the places were looted, the doctors and nurses still showed up for work,” said Lt. Col. Richard. W. Thomas of Morgantown, West Va., a 101st Abn. Div. (AAslt.) surgeon.

“There are currently four to six weeks of medications in the hospitals, and another four to six weeks supply in warehouses,” Huebner said. “To conserve supplies, they have quit doing elective surgeries. The biggest things they are asking about now are chronic and long term medications.”

According to Thomas, the hospitals are mainly focused on getting all their medications restocked before they start worrying

about new equipment.

“It isn’t like back in the United States, they are a bit behind the times in equipment and medications,” Huebner said. “All their doctors’ training is in English, and all seem aware of current techniques and equipment, which they just haven’t been able to acquire.”

Thomas said, “Mosul had an established medical capability before the war, and it is operating well now. We’ve been impressed with the caring attitude of the doctors and nurses who want to take the best care of their patients; they have a real professionalism and compassion.”

Teams from the Army have been assessing the conditions and needs of the hospitals, but financial aid will have to come from non-governmental organizations, which have only recently began filtering into the country.

“The delay in having the NGOs start providing medical supplies and equipment wasn’t anticipated, but we have started to see more and more of them on the ground,” Thomas said.

Huebner said, “From the Army standpoint, we are assessing what the needs are and turning those assessments over to non-governmental organizations. We are not coming in here to replace their system. A few people think the Army brought all the medical technology of the United States here, but we can’t do that. They need mainly pediatric drugs and other things that just aren’t what the military brings on a deployment.”

The Army has resolved issues with security for the hospitals, fuel for emergency vehicles, food for patients and hospital staff, and money for staff. they’ve also been helping by transporting medical supplies from Baghdad.

There are 150 medical clinics and 12 hospitals in and around the Mosul area. Thomas said, “The patients of Mosul really don’t have to go far to get the care that they need.”

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to be let in. Soldiers of 2nd Bde., 101st Abn. Div. (AAslt.) and 431st Civil Affairs Battalion led them through in an orderly fashion, as to prevent chaos.

Lines stretched far down the road as vehicles lined up, some of them packed beyond capacity with people waiting to get in. Vehicles were searched for weapons as they neared the gate. Celebratory fire was not to be allowed.

The houses themselves had been looted and ransacked by the Kurds and Pashmirda when they left. The people were saddened and angered by the loss of some of their possessions, but were otherwise happy to be back home.

“This is the one thing I wanted to do before I left Mosul was to get these people back in their homes,” said Capt. (Joe) Hockmuth, 431st CA Bn. “This is a happy day for these people.”

After the people had gotten moved in, they were approached by a person representing ten Kurdish families. He explained that they were homeless and asked if they could move into some abandoned buildings.

The Domez village, after some talk, accepted the Kurds into their community and let the rebuilding process begin, according to Raymond.



Photo by Spc. Blake Kent

Above: Is that an Abercrombie ad or an MRE ad.
Below: A shoe maker gives a big smile to the people passing by while he sits outside his shop in Mosul.



Photo by Pfc. Mary Rose Xenikakis



Photo by Pfc. Mary Rose Xenikakis

Photos of Mosul

Left: Boys driving? -- a mule cart.

Below: A school boy from the Al Nahrawan primary school in Mosul.

Above: Onion salesman making a sale at the market.



Photo by Spc. Blake Kent



Photo by Pfc. Mary Rose Xenikakis