


Coalition Bulletin


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Cover photo: U.S. Army Spc. Taryn Emery, with 2nd Battalion, 136th Infantry Regiment, holds an Iraqi child during a humanitarian assistance mission in Qaryat Al Majarrah, Iraq, Nov. 27, 2006.
(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Ryan Busse)

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"America treasures the relationship we have with our many Muslim friends, and we respect the vibrant faith of Islam which inspires countless individuals to lead lives of honesty, integrity, and morality. This year, may Eid also be a time in which we recognize the values of progress, pluralism, and acceptance that bind us together as a Nation and a global community. By working together to advance mutual understanding, we point the way to a brighter future for all."

George W.Bush
U.S. President

Editorial

This 37th Coalition Bulletin comes out at the end of year 2006 and marks yet another milestone with regards to commitment and dedication of all those participating in the ongoing war on terror. This had been an eventful and turbulent year with major developments taking place in the AOR, but more importantly during all these trying times the coalition remains committed to elimination of terrorism.

We all know too well that the coalition efforts are making its mark, be it Iraq or Afghanistan, maritime operations or humanitarian assistance in various parts of AOR, the operations and assistance initiatives are contributing towards relief and capacity building of the nations. These endeavors are actually rekindling hope among the people and it is in this regard that the coalition has to continue its efforts for ultimate victory, as has been so aptly put by Commander CENTCOM General Abizaid, 'hope remains the powerful antidote to the extremist's deadly ideology'.

While the ongoing internal strife and increased sectarian violence continues in Iraq, it is hoped that better political order will prevail in the coming times with a suitably adjusted strategic approach. Suffice to say that a unified Iraq under shia majority rule but attending to the sensitivities of the other two major groups (suni and kurds) is fundamental to the regional good order and stability. Towards this end, increased reliance on Iraqi Government to manage its affairs duly supported with capacity building measures will be a right approach, but with one pre-condition that suitable measures to dismantle the militias be undertaken sooner than later.

Like always the bulletin is representative of the coalition activities being undertaken by many countries in various regions. Accordingly, readers will find the efforts in hand with regards to training and capacity building of Iraqi and Afghan institutions, infrastructural development and humanitarian assistance in different parts of the AOR. They will also discover in these pages the impressions of those contributing towards the anti-terrorism effort and images of some silent contributors who are relentlessly working towards a noble cause. Readers will hopefully also find the brief news release of ISAF and an introductory article outlining the purpose and scope of recently launched initiative of SOCOM, 'Sovereign Challenge' interesting and worth following.

We would also like to take this opportunity to extend a very warm Merry Charismas and happy Eid-ul-Azha to all Christians and Muslims respectively, and wish a very happy and rewarding new year. As we move to 2007, the sense of pride the coalition has in terms of the task in hand is evident with an unwavering resolve amongst the participating nations, taking the good as well as the bad in stride and spirit, building a better future for generations to come.

Ahsan Mahmood
Brigadier-General, Pakistan
Chairman, Public Awareness Working Group



First Class Graduates From New IP Training Academy In Baqubah



Story by Maj. Raul E. Marquez

BAQUBAH, Iraq — About 125 Iraqi Police (IP) officers assigned to various units in the Baqubah area, graduated from the first Iraqi Police Training Academy in Baqubah, conducted under the guidance of coalition forces from Task Force Blue and the International Police Liaison Officers, Dec 24.


"Officers from the Emergency Ready Forces, the Quick Reaction Forces, and Baqubah Iraqi Police participated in this two-week long training academy," said Maj. John J. Herrman, Task Force Blue operations officer. "Those officers are now ready to assume their duties as the rule of law enforcers here in Baqubah."

The training for the IP officers was provided by their own Iraqi instructors and Special Weapons and Tactics team, otherwise known as SWAT, said Herrman.

"Instructors from the Tactical Iraqi Police Academy provided the classroom portion of the training; the range cadre taught weapons handling and maintenance, and SWAT members assisted with the hands-on portion of the training," said Herrman. "We provided oversight through the IPOs and our Military Police."

Even though the training was only two weeks, this training included classes on democratic policing, the Iraqi Constitution, rule of law, weapons safety, proper firing techniques for both AK-47 and pistols, shoot and maneuver, hands-on defensive techniques, dismounted patrolling as a member of a team, mounted patrols, react to improvised explosive devices, first aid, and entering and clearing a building, said Herrman.

"The training academy will continue providing classes every day through the end of January, and quarterly after that," Herrman said. "They expect to have at least 25 percent of the Baqubah police force trained by the end of the third training cycle."

Maj. Gen. Ghassan Adnan Awad Al-Bawi, the Diyala Chief of Police, attended the ceremony, and provided the graduates a motivational speech on the importance of training, regardless of their years of service as police officers .



An Iraqi Police officer receives his IP patch from Maj. Mason W. Crow, Task Force Blue executive officer, during the graduation ceremony.
Official U.S. Army photo



Navy Medical Officer Conducts Orthopedic Clinic for Yemen Surgeons



Story by Robert Palomares

CAMP LEMONIER, Djibouti – United States Navy Capt. (Dr.) Gerald Wilks, assigned to the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa, traveled to Yemen in mid-November to conduct a clinic on orthopedic surgery for Yemeni physicians.

After more than 25 years of practicing medicine, Wilks, a member of the Navy’s Medical Corps from Newport Beach, Calif., still is excited about undertaking surgery to help get people back on their feet.

“I got there Nov. 7 and conducted a clinic and two surgeries were undertaken,” Wilks said. “Two more were performed the next day and it went on like that until Nov. 17.”

“It was an interesting trip,” he said. “It was set up by the U.S. Embassy in Yemen and U.S. Agency for International Development. They wanted medical outreach to orthopedic surgeons at Yemen.”

The first day in Sana’a, the capital of Yemen, Wilks conducted a clinic, then he and his Yemeni colleagues saw patients to set up pre-operative appointments for the following day’s surgeries.

“The trip was like going back in a time machine for me,” he said. “We are several generations ahead in terms of tools, but the methods and procedures are the same and the quality of the surgeons is very high.”

Some of the surgeries were performed with unconventional instruments – some from the local hardware store.

“We put a plate on the humerus bone in the upper arm,” he said. “They pulled out a drill with a drill bit that looked six inches long. The screw was too long to place into the bone, but the nurse assured me that they would just cut the screw to fit the bone, so it wouldn’t protrude from the arm. It was definitely improvisational surgery.”



United States Navy Capt. (Dr.) Gerald Wilks, assigned to the Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa completes a procedure on a patient at a clinic in Sana'a (Courtesy Photo).

Eleven major orthopedic surgeries were performed in both the cities of Sana’a and Marib. Eight surgeons from the governorates, or provinces, of Marib, Shabwa, Sa’dah, al-Jawf and Amran participated in the course designed to improve the quality of health care services in underserved regions.

Dr. Abdorabo Muftah, Principal Health Officer in Marib Governorate, expressed to Wilks before he left of his gratitude for the ongoing, strong and successful U.S. support for the Yemeni health care system.

Dr. Fuad al Wahabi said that Yemeni health care providers hope to continue meeting with their U.S. counterparts. The U.S. team expressed its commitment to bringing more specialists to Yemen for conferences in these five governorates.



Iraqi Army Graduates 500 New Troops



Story and Photo by Sgt. Cheryl Cox

CAMP TAJI, Iraq– The open field was filled with hundreds of proud Iraqi Soldiers who had spent the past two months working toward this moment.



Iraqi soldiers celebrate Basic Training Graduation

As the Iraqi Army basic training graduation ceremony began, more than 500 Iraqi basic training graduates prepared to do their final pass in review. Not a twitch or wiggle came from the formations behind the steadfast Iraqi

color guard. Throughout the graduation, these new soldiers stood ready to defend their country and said they were proud to be the newest members of the 3rd Battalion, 9th Iraqi Army Division.

“I want to congratulate all the soldiers,” said Sgt. Maj. Hassin About Hassin, Iraqi basic training instructor.

After the entire graduating cycle had completed the hard work and training, their trainer said he was still there to help them grow as soldiers. “I will be here,” Hassin said. “I will continue to train more soldiers and fight the terrorists.”

Observing this event were several senior Iraqi and Coalition officers. U.S. Rep. Steve King (R, Iowa), also attended. King said he was encouraged to see the enthusiasm and excitement of the newest soldiers in the Iraqi Army.

“This is what happens when you see Iraqi troops stand up and defend Iraqis,” King said. “You can tell by the spirit here that they will be able to take over all security in this country one day.”

Once the ceremony was over, the celebration began. With dancing and singing, the soldiers showed everyone in attendance just how happy they were to finally graduate. “I am very pleased and happy to see these soldiers graduate today,” Hassin said. “These are the second teams of volunteer soldiers to graduate. I am very proud and can’t wait for the next class to join them in their new units.”



Thirty Seven Djibouti Army Soldiers Complete Counter-Terrorism Training



Story and Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Philip A. Fortnam

ARTA, Djibouti - Thirty-seven Djibouti Army Soldiers completed training with U.S. Army Soldiers at a graduation ceremony in Arta, Djibouti, Nov. 27. The soldiers completed their four-week training in counter-terrorism.

The officer in charge of the Arta training, 1st Lt. Arnold Arizala and U.S. Navy Capt. John Q. Dal Santo representing Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa spoke at the morning ceremony.

“This [the Horn of Africa] is a long overlooked area which can be easily exploited by terrorists,” said Arizala. “The training helps soldiers defend themselves, protect their borders, protect their ports, and their people.”

Arizala also spoke to the graduates and attendees about the positive actions of Djiboutian and U.S. soldiers training together and their part in a bigger picture of capacity building of partner nations.

“This military-to-military training is one piece of a bigger picture,” Arizala said.

“The Djiboutian soldiers do not get much recurrent training; they don’t have the resources or funds. With [Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa] being able to provide some resources, this kind of training absolutely helps both the Djibouti[an] Army and HOA’s mission here.”

The Djibouti Army soldiers-students were a specially selected group of students. The soldiers ranged from new recruits just out of basic training to an experienced platoon leader and platoon sergeant.



U.S. Army Captain John E. Hill, Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa, military to military training planner and Djibouti Army Sergeant Hassan debriefing after the counter-terrorism training course

“They should be proud of themselves,” Arizala said. “It was a lot of new material and they did really well. The Djibouti soldiers are good students. They were really motivated and wanted to learn.”

United States Army Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 294th Infantry Light, Charlie Company, Guam, led the CJTF-HOA-sponsored event.

“U.S. forces and Djibouti Army soldiers involved in the counter-terrorism training course clearly developed a close and very professional relationship,” Dal Santo said. “We hope military-to-military training between U.S. and Djiboutian forces continues to expand. After all, we have the same goal to protect our borders and people from terrorism.”



Farah PRT Donates 43 Motorcycles



Story and Photo by ISAF Public Information Office

FARAH, Afghanistan – The Farah Provincial Reconstruction Team recently donated 43 motorcycles to a variety of government departments.



The Caspian 125cc motorcycles, valued at \$410 apiece, were distributed to the governor and mayor’s office, the Provincial Council, the post office, Farah TV Station, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the Education Department, the Department of Economics, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Sports, the Department of Mullahs, Telecom Department, and the Department of Refugees. Engineer Mohammad Aslam Dana, from the Department of Agriculture, said the motorcycles would allow agricultural extension agents to visit outlying villages and maintain closer ties with the farmers.

“Before, when we wanted to see somebody it took two hours because we were on foot,” said Rahim Rahimi, a computer manager for the Provincial Council. “Now it will take 10 minutes because we are going to have motorbikes.”

In addition to the motorcycles, five truckloads of blankets, coats, sweaters and food were donated to the Department of Mullahs and the governor’s office. These supplies are part of the government’s disaster management plan. The items will be stored in preparation for future disasters in an effort to decrease response times.



CJTF- HOA Delivers Food and Aid to Flood Victims in Kenya



Story and Photos by CJTF-HOA Public Affairs the continuous rain has made the situation even more acute,”

he said. “That’s why it’s so important to get these supplies to the refugees as quickly as possible.”



Flood-relief supplies being dropped out of a C-130 aircraft flying over the Dadaab region of Kenya

“We received the UNHCR request for help about three weeks ago, and we began planning for an air drop of the supplies because the roads in the area were cut off,” said U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Phil Frieze, mission commander for the operation.

“About a week ago, we identified three possible drop zones in the area that we could use, depending on their condition,” Frieze said. The condition of each potential drop zone could be affected by the initial flooding and the continuing rain in the area.

“Responding to situations like this is part of our mission at CJTF-HOA, so we are fully capable of planning and executing this job,” Frieze said.

NAIROBI, Kenya – A team made up of U.S. Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force service members assigned to Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) worked throughout the night in early December to put together pallets of supplies for victims of severe flooding in rural Kenya.

Due to roads in the area being washed out by heavy floodwaters, the only way to deliver the supplies – comprised of shelters and mosquito nets – was by emergency airlift.

More than 150,000 victims of the flood were in dire need of the material, said Lars Sommerlund, head of the supply section for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the organization that requested the help.

“This area floods at least twice a year, but this year the flooding was particularly severe,” Sommerlund said. “And because the major roads were washed away, this air drop was the only way to get the needed help to the people in time.”

The emergency supplies amount to 150 metric tons of the shelters and the mosquito netting, Sommerlund said.

“Mosquito-spread malaria is an extreme danger in the area, and the standing water from the flooding and

The command assembled a group of riggers to put together the pallets, which would have to withstand the impact of being dropped from a moving aircraft without parachutes, without damaging the supplies or injuring anyone on the ground. Parachutes were not used because of the expense and there was no way to retrieve the parachutes after the drop, he said. Working with the U.S.

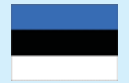


Tech. Sgt. Terreon Shirlee, an air transportation journeyman deployed to the 386th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron from Little Rock AFB, Ark., assists Capt. James King, commander of the Movement

Embassy in Kenya and the Government of Kenya, CJTF-HOA put the plan together in a short time because of the desperate need of the flood victims.



Brothers for Lifetime



Story by Lt.Col. Viktor Lääts (Estonia)

Photos courtesy of Ministry of Defense of Estonia

During summer of 2003 Estonia sent its troops to Iraq for the first time. The security situation was different then and like many others, Estonian troops found the idea of fighting terrorism new and undefined. At the end of 2006, the seventh rotation here is coming to an end. The new contingent will arrive before Christmas to give the old unit chance to get home after 6 months in Iraq.

Although Estonia is one of the smallest coalition members in Iraq with the entire population of roughly 1.5 million and size about 45,000 sq km, it's contribution per capita into the global war on terror is comparable to larger coalition partners. Estonia has contributed for the Operation Iraqi Freedom with one infantry platoon and wants to increase the number of soldiers in Afghanistan up to 120 next year. Estonian soldiers also take part in peacekeeping operations in Kosovo and Bosnia.

The Estonian platoon in Iraq is operating under Command of the 7-10 CAV, the 1st BCT of the 4th ID (Multi-National Division-Baghdad). They are located in Camp Taji near Baghdad.

leave their homes and find safer places to live. For last few months the main task of the Estonian platoon has been bringing the security level up to the degree that would enable people return to their homes.

To date, the operational focus of the Estonian platoon has been on small strike teams cordon and knock, and cordon and search operations. Since June 2006 Estonian platoon has detained more than 60 terrorists including foreign fighters from Sudan and Syria and members of armed militias like Jaysh al Mahdi. They have captured 8 weapons caches and confiscated large number of small arms and ammunition.



All soldiers in the Estonian contingent volunteered to support this mission. Five platoon members including all section leaders are in Iraq for the second time. Strong *esprit de corps* and teamwork are essential values for "The Stones" as the Estonian platoon is called by their American counterparts.

"The Stones" conduct their operations mostly in and around the city of Sab-al-Boor – a small town not far from Baghdad populated by both Sunni and Shia Muslims. The population varies from between 10 000 to 40 000 inhabitants. The difference is caused mostly by recent upsurge of sectarian violence that has forced people to

The cell phone of Estonian platoon leader 1st Lieutenant Meelis Jõemaa rings constantly – local informers are calling him to report on shootings or other suspicious activities in Sab-al-Boor. For Lt Jõemaa the information concerning criminal groups and their actions is vital, no matter if the provider is Sunni or Shia. Information provided by locals helps to find insurgents and make the life in the city safer. Respect earned from the locals, combined with good combat skills are qualities that have made Estonian platoon a valuable asset for their American and coalition partners. The 1st Brigade Combat Team Commander, Col. Pasquarette says: "The Estonian platoon soldiers are well trained light infantryman. I have never heard one bad thing about them and they are well received by the community. They are extremely professional and very effective in working the counter insurgency. I'd like to take them home with us." The Estonian military values the experience, soldiers and officers have gained from the mission in Iraq. It has greatly enhanced the training of forces, combat tactics, and logistics support. 



Sovereign Challenge



A Global Anti-Terrorism Project by SOCOM

Story by 1st Sgt. Marvin Baker

Thanks to Senior National Representatives (SNRs) from more than 50 countries, there's a new, proactive front on the global war on terror that is designed to protect any nation that believes its sovereignty has been challenged.

It's called **Sovereign Challenge** and it is a global anti-terrorism action project that continues to rapidly develop from its infancy of seeking to do more than offer a reward for the capture of Osama bin Laden.

"The SNRs were instrumental in getting this project started," said Stan Schragger, who heads up Sovereign Challenge at Special Operations Command. "It's global and strategic."

According to Schragger, the words anti-terrorism are now used instead of counter-terrorism because up until the first meeting of attaches in Washington, D.C., in October 2005, military units would "counter" a terrorist strike. Since that time, preventive measures have been going into place to stop terror strikes against military units and civilians before they happen, thus the words anti-terrorism.

"Nobody is really safe from this global threat," Schragger said. "We're trying to drive the point home that everyone is vulnerable to the threat."

Two examples in Europe stand out as reminders that Sovereign Challenge was created during a critical time in world history.

The first example is Al Qaida's launch of a Web site in Germany that has been set up as a recruiting tool to lure German Muslims into its ideology. It represents a shift of this ideology toward the western world. The second is in Great Britain where "home-grown" terrorists were responsible for a subway bombing more than a year ago. Schragger said this is actually the first global threat in history and a second generation of terrorists are now operating, following the Mujahedeen guerillas' fight against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

"There's no military solution to this ideology," Schragger said. "Part of the emphasis of Sovereign Challenge is dealing with this ideology. Look at what happened in London. They are home-grown terrorists."

And that ideology takes on many forms, according to Schragger, including the obvious of an attack on a sovereign nation. But many other methods are used to violate a nation's sovereignty including electronic transfer of funds, travel and communication, setting up safe havens for insurgents, training and recruiting.

"It's a virtual intrusion of a nation's sovereignty," Schragger said. "We have to have new laws to deal with this new phenomenon."

The original meeting more than a year ago, produced plenty of ideas that have helped build Sovereign Challenge from the ground up, according to Schragger.

He said participation of the SNRs during that original meeting was key because two things came out of it that would set the stage for what has since developed. First, nations that have been attacked, or believe they are vulnerable to attack, want to be respected by the United States and other nations fighting the global war on terror. Secondly, those nations wanted their sovereignty protected.

"What came out of this is terrorists violate sovereignty and out of this came Sovereign Challenge," Schragger said. "It's the next level of the global war on terror. Each nation is responsible for developing its own anti-terrorism program. Each country has its own responsibility to protect its own sovereignty."

Sovereign Challenge has become a real eye opener, according to Schragger. He said some of the nations involved in the anti-terror campaign might surprise people, but they all have their own legitimate concerns. They include Trinidad and Tobago and Chad.

"So, you take it out of the big powers and it speaks honestly," Schragger said. "There is no official U.S. government briefing. That's not what this is about."

What it involves beyond protecting the sovereignty of all nations, is focusing on themes to counter this global threat and engaging Muslims and getting to know Islam better.

"What we need to do is develop themes as powerful in nature," Schragger said. "We're not defending ourselves. This is a positive approach."

One of those themes is the launch of a Web site that Schragger said will hopefully create and continue dialogue for military officers of all nations concerned. In addition, he said he is looking for positive articles from U.S. and foreign publications to post to the new Web site (www.sovereignchallenge.org).

Schragger believes the initial meeting and its residual outcomes are so positive, he wants to have an annual meeting to make Sovereign Challenge more solid than it has already become. Schragger is already planning for the next meeting to be someplace outside the United States.

In the immediate future, Schragger is planning a seminar with SNRs in the next couple of months in which briefings and group discussions will highlight anti-terrorism. 



Al Noor Radio Station Opens Doors, Gives Chance For Free Speech



Story and Photo by Spc. Ryan Stroud

BALAD RUIZ, Iraq — In a city where there is no means for releasing information to its people, coalition forces have developed a project to give the people a chance at free speech.

The ribbon cutting ceremony for the Al Noor radio station, also known as the “The Light,” opened its doors to many with high hopes and happy faces from the Iraqi Army and police department as well as city officials of Balad Ruz and members of the 5-73 Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division.

“This is a great day for Balad Ruiz and its people,” said Mayor Mohammed Maroof Al-Hussein, city mayor. “I think this is a new stage for our city and a new way to serve our people.

“This is a free station,” he continued. “The people can say what they want, they can speak freely.”

With the help of the 5-73, civilians will now be able to hear news and get more information in their homes other than what terrorists want to put out, said the Mayor.

“I remember the first night we were here at Forward Operating Base Caldwell and hearing an Iranian broadcast in English to target American Soldiers,” said Capt. John Pratt, Company B, 404th Civil Affairs. “These terrorists were getting their message out, but the people here didn’t have a way to get their message out.”

“This is a pro-government radio station that counters what terrorists are saying,” said Pratt. “It also lets the people know what the coalition forces are doing in their area to help them.”

Pfc. Timothy Bramhall, a member of 5-73, said this mission was one of the most important missions he had been on. Not just for the coalition forces, but for the Iraqi people as well.

“This is a chance for the city and its officials to reach out to their people,” Bramhall said. “It’s also a chance for us to let them know we’re here to help them and to try and make Balad Ruz a better place.”

Primarily farm land, Balad Ruz is currently behind in technological progress. Pratt feels this is a big chance for the government to prove to its people changes in the economy are just waiting to happen.

“Even though this is mostly an agricultural community, this is proof that Balad Ruz’s new government is able to take the first technological step to bettering their



Balad Ruz Mayor Mohammed Maroof Al-Hussein cut the ribbon which opened the doors to free speech and the Al Noor radio station

economy,” said Pratt. “This means more jobs and growth for the community.”

Though hopes of progress are high, Balad Ruz government officials and the coalition forces primarily hope the radio station raises awareness and the morale of the Iraqi people.

“I hope this new service will encourage other cities to start stations to better serve their people,” said Al-Hussein.


Bramhall echoed the Mayor’s words: “I hope the Iraqi citizens feel good about this. I hope it gives them a chance to say what they want to say. I think it’s better for them to hear information from their own people than from us.”

“It also gives the people a chance to reflect their points of view,” he added. “It also lets listeners know they are not alone with their views.”

Bramhall said he hoped the Iraqi people would understand this freedom to say what they feel.

“Something we, as Americans, forget about at times - our right to freedom of speech,” he said. “They will now know what that’s like.”

“This radio station is for the people,” Pratt added. “It’s a way to put out information about what’s happening in their community to better serve the people.”

Employees of Al Noor are presently sending out flyers across the city to promote the station and begin its mission of informing the people. 



Unconditional Support From El Salvador



Story by Capt. Guillermo Jimenez (El Salvador)

Photo courtesy of Ministry of Defense of El Salvador and Capt. Manuel Matos



Capt. Guillermo Jimenez – El Salvador Senior National Representative to U.S. CENTCOM

El Salvador has been a member of the Multinational Coalition since August 2003 and in its status, is the only Latin American country with troops actively engaged in the GWOT.

There is one question that has been repeatedly asked of me in different places and normally during interviews with members of the media.

That question is....”Why is a little country like El Salvador participating in a conflict so far from Central American shores?”

Regarding this question I gather that there is a tendency to believe that the conflict in Iraq has nothing to do with countries like mine. No perception could be more distant from reality than that one.

The reader must be aware that during the 1980s El Salvador fought a prolonged war against terrorist organizations sponsored by the now-defunct Soviet Union through its proxy, Cuba. We prevailed as a country and our society now lives in democracy. But that achievement could not have been accomplished without the support of the international community and mainly of the United States.

For us, participating in Iraq is more than just pay back. Being in Iraq is a way of telling the Iraqi people, “It is possible to overcome; it is possible to rebuild your country even from the ashes and to procure a future for your children and generations to come.”

And that is why we are committed to helping rebuild Iraq. Yes it is true that El Salvador’s contribution within the political, military and economic context is very small, but it is by itself a good example of political will to help others to overcome and defeat terrorism.

El Salvador has a Light Infantry Battalion consisting of 380 troops.

The current Salvadoran contingent arrived in August 2006 and constitutes the VII (seventh) Rotation. So far El Salvador has deployed a total of 2660 troops to Iraq out of a military of 12,000 men. This is to say that 22 percent of my country’s military has already been deployed to Iraq (myself included) and we will continue.

The seven contingents have executed 195 humanitarian assistance projects, benefiting hundreds of thousands of Iraqi

families. Schools, hospitals, sewage plants, roads, government buildings and electric plants have been built and those assets are currently in the hands of the Iraqi people. But that is only the tangible part. The other part, which is more important, is demonstrating to Iraqi people that there is future, a future in democracy, a future without warlords and terrorists.

We lost 75,000 people killed as a result of a 12-year conflict. Colombia is still fighting a 40 year old conflict against the same type of enemy. Guatemala fought a 36 year conflict. Then, one question should necessarily arise... “What is a prolonged conflict? 3, 12, 40 years? There is no answer to that question!”

The present conflict which is the GWOT (and Iraq is only one battlefield) must be understood in terms of our objective: defeating terrorism around the world. But, I will take the liberty to rephrase this broad objective in more dramatic but certainly no less realistic terms: what we are trying to achieve is preventing terrorism from defeating us around the world.

Is the present conflict motivated by religious principles or causes? No! It is a conflict motivated by political goals: power, regional dominance and one final outcome: the terrorists dream of Caliphate with a total lack of democratic principles.

In order to win this war we must not establish a given timetable...not at all!!

Victory is based on military, political, economic and social gains; the present conflict is situation-based rather than time-line-based. So let’s move ahead. Let us maintain a positive attitude instead of falling into permanent and fruitless criticism that leads us nowhere.

El Salvador will remain committed to the GWOT in Iraq and anywhere our presence is needed to help the world live in peace and democracy. **CB**



Minister of Defense of El Salvador Maj. Gen. Otto Romero salutes his troops in Iraq



Romania – Five Years of Sustained Effort in the Global War on Terror



Story by Lt.Col. Alin Bodescu (Romania)

Photos Courtesy of Ministry of Defense of Romania and Capt. Manuel Matos

Romanian liaison team to U.S.CENTCOM celebrated two events during December 2006: the National Day and five years in the frontline of Global War on Terror (GWOT).

Dec. 1, 1918 which represents the National Day brought the Romanians dignity and the fulfillment of their national ideal: the union of all speaking the same language, undeserved separated over the centuries of history. The fulfillment of the Great Union’s ideal was possible through the joint vow of all Romanians, and also through the vision and greatness of people who led in that period the national energies, confident in the democratic modernity of a united country.

The second event was the fifth anniversary of a continuous and consistent presence in the GWOT in the U.S.CENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR).

Three months after the 9/11 odious attack on the U.S., Romania sent a liaison team to U.S.CENTCOM (liaison officers for operations, intelligence and logistics, and embedded personnel to Public Affairs Office and Combined Planning Group) to get close to the strategic command in the long struggle with the war on terror. On the battlefield in Afghanistan the pledges to fight shoulder to shoulder with the American forces were fulfilled in January 2002 by contributing an infantry battalion at Kandahar. Since then, through its military presence, Romania has demonstrated its constant, strong and reliable partnership.

Today Romanian troops in the CENTCOM AOR reach 1800 personnel.

In Afghanistan, as a contributor to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, Romania assists in training of Afghan National Army with an embedded Training Team and three Mobile Training Teams in eastern Afghanistan. Romania provides diversified staff personnel to almost all the headquarters.




Capt. Tudor-Sorin Nicolaescu – Romanian SNR to U.S.CENTCOM speaks during National Day celebration at MacDill AFB



Romanian and American soldiers in Afghanistan

As a member of NATO, Romania has taken the lead of a maneuver combined task force in the southern Afghanistan, integrating the U.S. infantry company into a Romanian infantry battalion. Also known as TF CALUGARENI, this maneuver battalion mission is to stabilize the ZABOL province and to secure an important mobility corridor which crosses the province, the Highway 1, denying the Taliban freedom of movement.

Since July 2003 the Romanian Armed Forces are represented in Iraq in stabilization and reconstruction activities under the auspices of operation “IRAQI FREEDOM”. The main contribution is represented by an Infantry Battalion over watching an important part of Dhi Qar province and making sure that the main crossing over Euphrates is safe, allowing freedom of movement for coalition forces.

With this important commitment, Romania has demonstrated its proactive approach to fighting terrorism beyond national borders and will continue to support the global effort as long as necessary. 



CTF 152 Change of Command



Story by Cmdr. Maurizio Loi (Italy)

Official U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Kathryn Whittenberger

In December 2006 Adm. Emilio Foltzer, Commander of Italian Naval Group (COMGRUPNAVIT) handed over command of Task Force 152 to Rear Adm. Allen G. Myers, Commander of Eisenhower Strike Group concluding a period of 158 days of naval operations contributing to the MSO in the Central Southern Arabian Sea carried out with an Italian Task Group composed of Italian ships ETNA (Flagship) and COMANDANTE FOSCARI (Escort unit).

On a non permanent base, the Coalition Force Maritime Component Commander assigned additional Coalitions Maritime assets in order to enhance the effectiveness of Maritime Security Operations (MSO).

Rear Adm. Foltzer exercised own command with the support of his Multinational Maritime Battle Staff. The Staff was composed of 33 people, including officers from PAKISTAN and USA.

In support of Admiral and his staff there have also been elements from: Italian NAVAL Aviation, Italian NAVY Marines, Italian NAVY Special Forces and Coast Guard. Medical and engineering specialists team and facilities have completed the logistic support available onboard flagship

During the execution of MSO:

- Several "passage" maritime exercise with Ships from BAHRAIN, U.A.E, SAUDI ARABIA, QATAR and KUWAIT Regional Navies were carried out according to the "International Cooperation Program" promoted by Italy and the "Theatre Security Cooperation Program" promoted by Coalition;
- Medical assistance was provided to several fishing and cargo dhows crew members minor injured; once a seriously injured crew member of a merchant vessel has




Deputy, Combined Forces Maritime Component Commander Royal Navy Commodore Keith Winstanley, center, officiates as Italian Rear Adm. Emilio Foltzer, left, turns over control to U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Allen G. Myers

been rescued and evacuated via helicopter;

- Technical assistance was given to several fishing and cargo dhows not able to prosecute the navigation in a safe way.

During a total of 158 days of operation:

- More than 1000 vessels (mainly fishing and cargo dhows) were controlled from Task Force 152 Units;
- Task Force Units patrolled for more than 15500 hours 



Back in Afghanistan



Story and photo by Cmdr. Maurizio Loi (Italy)


Nov. 27, 2006 Task Force "PANTERA", for the second time in the last two years, completely deployed in Kabul with three helicopters AB212 and 56 military personnel.

During the six month deployment, Task Force PANTERA will provide support to operation ISAF IX (International Security and Assistance Force).

Italian Navy already provided assets to the Afghan theater from July 2005 to May 2006 while Italy was leading ISAF VIII. Significant results were achieved during all deployment: 698 missions flown for a total of 715 flight hours in support of medical evacuation activities, tactical transport and humanitarian activities towards within the Civilian Military Cooperation (CIMIC).

The hand-over ceremony between Task Force "Seagull" (Italian Air Force) and "Pantera" (Italian Navy) took place on Dec. 1, inside the Kabul International Airport.

TF Force "Seagull" returned to its Homebase in Grosseto after an intense activity started last August and during which three AB 212 performed outstandingly 710 flights for a total of 705 flight hours under the command of RC-C in Kabul.

Within ISAF, the Italian Navy Helicopters will be carrying out tasks such as surveillance, patrol tactical support to convoys and personnel movement, deterrence and casualty evacuation. 



Task Force "PANTERA"



ISAF News Releases



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan– ISAF engineers operating in Orgun district completed three school projects in December worth \$185,000, further building the educational capacity for the children of Paktika province.

The 27th Engineer Battalion, known as Task Force Tiger, completed the three projects by building two new schools and by refurbishing one school.

The engineers also hosted a training course to teach Afghans working on the projects skills such as advanced masonry, carpentry and concrete techniques.

The two new schools will provide learning opportunities for the children of Rabat village in Sarobi district and Shaykan village in Orgun district, while the refurbished school will serve school-aged children in Sarobi village, Sarbobi district.

The Sarbobi school, which is a six-room schoolhouse strictly for girls, replaces the former girls school comprised of a shed roof with no walls. The project was supported by the local tribal and municipal leadership, and followed a similar design to the new Rabat school for boys.

These three school projects were financed by the U.S. Commander's Emergency Reconstruction Program, or CERP.

KABUL, Afghanistan – An ISAF and Coalition sponsored Medical Civil Affairs Programme (MEDCAP) recently treated more than 600 patients from Kabul Police District 9, the first event of this kind in this area.

Medical and security forces personnel from Task Force Phoenix, along with military personnel from Regional Command-Capital, conducted the MEDCAP at the Qabel Bay School. Doctors treated men, women and children suffering from malnutrition, gastric problems, joint pains and cold symptoms.

"This type of activity provides the local people with a service that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to get," said U.S. Army Maj. Mark Roper, a civil affairs officer who coordinated the event. "Medical care in Afghanistan is often poor at best. If we can help people, while showing them that we really do care, it becomes a win-win situation. This really is a 'hearts and minds' type of scenario."

As part of a joint security operation, the Afghanistan National Army (ANA) and Kabul City Police (KCP) assisted with security for the MEDCAP, allowing ISAF and Coalition personnel to focus on providing medical care. After patients were treated and provided with medicine, they were offered clothing, shoes and toys donated from various charity organizations in the U.S.

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan (December 28)– Afghan National Army (ANA) and ISAF forces conducted humanitarian, medical and veterinary assistance operations as part of Operation Baaz Tsuka in the Talukan, Zangabad and Sperwan Ghar area.

The ANA distributed humanitarian supplies to more than 350 local villagers, veterinarians provided medical care to more than 30 camels, and the medics provided medical care to more than 120 men, women, and children.

The ANA and ISAF forces as part of ongoing engagements with the local population conducted a Shura with more than 100 local villagers, in order to listen to their needs and concerns.

The villagers expressed their satisfaction with the improved security situation and the medical and humanitarian support provided by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and ISAF forces.

"Today's very successful civil and military assistance operations demonstrated the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's commitment to respond to the needs of the population in order to gain and maintain their support," said Maj. Dominic Whyte, ISAF spokesperson.

FARAH, Afghanistan (29 December) – Through funding and work by ISAF's Farah Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), the reconstruction of a sacred mosque in Farah City is expected to begin in January.

The PRT is donating \$60,000 in funding to repair the mosque, which is the spiritual heart of Farah City and the central meeting place for the towns people. The project is expected to take approximately two months to complete.

The PRT's engineers will remove the old bathrooms and build new ones, replace the water pump, water tower, and the plumbing leading to the ablution station, where visitors to the mosque wash their hands and feet prior to praying. The mosque will also receive a new septic tank, ablution drainage field and generator. Local Mullah Mowlawi Abdul Manan lobbied the PRT for improvements to the mosque. "This is the main mosque for the district. People travel long distances, 10 to 15 kilometres to pray on a Friday," he said. "It is important for people to be clean when offering prayers, and important to have clean water in the ablution area."

KABUL, Afghanistan, (30 December) – The Bagram Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) received a token of appreciation on Wednesday 27 Dec. from the governor of Parwan and the local leaders for its efforts in making Parwan Province one of the safest provinces in Afghanistan.

Abdul Jabar Taqua, governor of Parwan, and other parliament and district leaders congratulated members from the Bagram PRT for their contribution.

"Now that the people of Parwan have security in their area they can work together to accomplish a goal, and not only do we have security in Parwan we also have a lot of projects and we hope to continue to build in Parwan," said Governor Taqua at a conference held by the Afghan Women Skills Development Centre at the Intercontinental Hotel.

The Bagram PRT has built everything from schools to roads for the people of Parwan equalling over \$1.3 million and has another 20 projects currently under construction totalling over a further \$1.6 million.

KABUL, Afghanistan (28 December) – ISAF's Regional Command Capital (RC-C) Turkish medical team recently donated medical supplies and held several clinics for the people in Khaki Jabbar district. The medical team visited Maiwand village hospital's clinic, built by the Turkish Republic in 2005. During the visit, approximately \$310,000 worth of medicine was donated to Maiwand including 360 units of antibiotics. Dr. Mahmut Kodamani, chief of Maiwand hospital, accepted these supplies and many others during the month of December.



Coalition Spouses Club

Story by
Shabiha Ehtisham

Photos by
Capt. Manuel Matos



The first meeting of the Coalition Officers Spouses Club was held on Dec. 12, 2006 at Cafe Pane Rustica. A large group of ladies from Coalition countries of Canada, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Slovak Republic, Spain, Netherlands, Pakistan and others were there. Lorie Minetti welcomed everyone and took suggestions for the future social and cultural activities of the club. These coffee mornings will provide a platform for the Coalition spouses to get together and exchange ideas and pertinent information about life in Tampa, as well as knowledge about their own countries. It was certainly a lively and multicultural group.

Lorie gave everyone the U.S.CENTCOM welcome booklet which contains handy information about Tampa and MacDill AFB.

Janet volunteered to teach Spanish to anyone who is interested. It was decided that the group would meet every second Tuesday of the month. It was a well spent morning in getting to know the Coalition ladies from around the world gathered here at Tampa. We chatted about humdrum issues like kids and schools, shopping and spices, medical facilities at the base, driving etc. The coffee kept the chit chats flowing.

The participants wished happy holidays to each other and before departing did pray for the health of the wife of the Polish SNR who had a liver transplant. May the year 2007 bring happiness and tranquility to all. God bless the Coalition troops.



U.S. Naval Staff College Visit to CENTCOM



International Holiday Party



Romanian National Day



Afghan National Police commanders and officers perform a pass and review during the opening ceremony for a new District Police Training Center at Forward Operations Base Lighting in Gardez, Afghanistan (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Christopher S. Barnhart)