



Air Forces Unite over Baghdad

CAMP TAJI — In a show of partnership between the U.S. and Iraqi Air Force (IqAF), pilots from both countries recently flew personnel transport missions over Baghdad for the first time as a combined flight.

Lt. Col. Shamkky Abbas, IqAF 2nd Squadron training officer, led the combined aviation mission over the Iraqi capital, as the aircraft made stops at various Coalition force bases in the greater Baghdad area.

“The significance of this mission is the speed in which the [Iraqi] Air Force is progressing,” said Air Force Lt. Col. Michael McNerney, commander, 721st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron (AEAS).

“While the ground forces have received a large amount of resources and attention for over five years, the Air Force has received very little until about a year and a half ago,” McNerney continued. “The Iraqi rotary wing force has made great strides [during this time] and is ready to accept a much larger role in the counter-insurgency efforts.”

Obtaining these critical “resources” for

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U.S. and Iraqi Air Force Helicopters fly over Baghdad during the first-ever combined aviation mission here, Jan. 15, 2009. Iraqi Lt. Col. Shamkky Abbas led the combined aviation mission over the Iraqi capital. Photo by Sgt. Jason Dangel, 4th Infantry Division.

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BAGHDAD — Since security has improved in northwest Baghdad, the 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment has developed many engineering projects to advance the citizens' quality of life. Over the past year, two bilingual and bicultural advisors made sure those projects were done right.

In areas such as Ameriyah, Khandra, Adl, Jamiya, Washhash and Mansour, Iraqi-American civil engineers Nima Alsaiegh and Sami Bello worked with contractors to refurbish schools, medical clinics and much more to improve northwest Baghdad.

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Children smile for the camera in the village of Atshiyana, Iraq, Jan. 12, 2009. The children of the community were invited to a school opening in Kirkuk province. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian L. Short, 11th Public Affairs Detachment.

Elementary School Opens in Atshiyana

FOB WARRIOR — As the security situation in Iraq continues to improve, the number of infrastructure projects around Kirkuk province are on the rise.

Local village leaders, Sons of Iraq members, the school head master, teachers and future students, along with U.S. forces, celebrated one of them - the grand opening of a new elementary school in Atshiyana village, Jan. 12.

Overall, the ceremony was a great success, according to Hawijah council representative Amar Ali Al Hamdany. "Without a school, how can you educate yourself?" he asked. "We now have 240 students who can look forward to a better future because of this school."

Throughout the day of the ceremony, Sons of Iraq members distributed goods to the school and children. They passed out more than 400 pencils, 75 notebooks and 100 t-shirts.

U.S. Civil Affairs Soldiers joined the locals in the celebration. Having followed the project for more than three months, one Soldier expressed his joy for the newly opened school.

"I've been checking on the progress of this project since October," said Spc. Christopher Loflin, with Detachment 1, B Co., 490th Civil Affairs Battalion. "I'm glad to finally see that the children now have a place to learn and grow in an Iraqi community."

In the past two months, the province of Kirkuk has celebrated the opening of four brand new schools and renovated three others.

This school construction, a project under the Iraqi Commander's Emergency Relief Program, is part of many efforts to come for rebuilding and expanding the educational system all around the area.

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Iraq Opens New Military Hospital & Prosthetics Clinic

BAGHDAD — The Iraqi Ministry of Defense (MoD) took a giant leap forward in improving health care for its wounded warriors with the grand opening of the Military Hospital and Prosthetics Clinic in Muthana, Jan. 19.

The new hospital contains 50 ward beds, an ER/trauma bay in the core building, five ICU beds, three operating rooms, and laboratory, pharmacy and x-ray services in attached trailers.

The hospital staff numbers 130, consisting of four physicians, one dentist, 85 other health professionals and 40 medical administrative support personnel. The facility is equipped to provide care for medical conditions requiring hospitalization, emergency care, initial wound surgery, and post-operative treatment.

Before 2003, there were 31 hospitals, 3,000 physicians and 10,000 other health professionals in the Iraqi military. Since that time, all military hospitals either converted to civilian Ministry of Health facilities or were closed. Many physicians fled the country during the early stages of the war,

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Two Iraqi Soldiers take a break with local children in Sumer, Iraq, Jan. 20, 2009. Photo by Senior Airman Eric Harris



Sgts. Potes (left) and Anderson, Camp Bucca, Iraq, Jan. 15, 2009. Photo courtesy of 1st Sustainment Command.



Several Iraqi boys gather to play a game of chess in the Istaqlal Qada, Jan. 16, 2009. Photo by Brad Willeford.