



# DISPATCH

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## Task Force Liberty Helps Iraqi Children in Need

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FORWARD OPERATING BASE DANGER, Tikrit, Iraq- "We're learning how to build a nation one small child at a time," said Capt. Christopher Ortega, Civil Affairs Officer for 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry, Task Force Liberty. "These children are starting to see us as allies, as friends."

The civil affairs Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team are working with the Tikrit Disability Children's Organization, which gives disadvantaged children a better chance at life.

Ortega said the organization takes in handicapped children with abnormalities, or deformities who may not have the same chances in a local school.

"The facility was not much of a place at first," said Ortega. "Sometimes there was teaching

done there, but nothing regular."

He added that his predecessor from the 411th Civil Affairs Battalion discovered the organization and started giving them money and supplies; helping them to "get on their feet."

The Soldiers visit the facility several times a week, checking on the children often bringing with them toys and much needed supplies and medical attention.

"Now our civil affairs team has adopted them," Ortega said. "This is something where we would like to give as much help as possible and that we're very proud of."

The Iraqi children are not the only ones benefiting from these civil affairs missions. The Soldiers find benefits in helping the children as well.

"It's a nice change from being in the infantry,"

said Spc. Daniel Sterett, an infantryman from the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry, Pennsylvania National Guard, Task Force Liberty. It feels good to give the kids toys and to see the joy and happiness on their faces.

Ortega said it is more rewarding to learn how to help the Iraqis at this level than to worry about the fighting that is going on around them.

"It's very comforting knowing that they are accepting us," he added. "They wave hands, ask us questions and are very friendly."

The unit understands the importance of support for such an organization that helps children who cannot help themselves.

"We give them school supplies and money," Ortega said. "We're trying to help build this organization into a strong one, making a better foundation for the future of Iraq."

"It's very rewarding," he added.



Iraqi children smile with gifts in hand. Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry delivered stuffed animals, color pencils, construction paper, soccer balls and toys to children in Tikrit, Iraq. The supplies were donated by school children and Soldiers' family members in the United States. (Photo by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson/22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

## Task Force Liberty Soldiers Conduct Knock and Greet Operation

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Duane M. Brown, 22nd MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, KIRKUK, Iraq – Task Force Liberty Soldiers and the Iraqi police (IP) work together in the village of Dugmat 1, near Kirkuk conducting “KnockandGreet” missions—searching for material used by insurgent forces.

On these types of missions, Company B, 3rd Battalion, 116th Brigade Combat Team Soldiers and the IP build relations with the Iraqi people to eliminate potential insurgent hot spots.

During this operation, the 116th was present to pull security while the IP search for insurgents, weapons caches and any type of literature or graffiti pertaining to Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces. As a security element, Coalition troops set up an outer cordon to make sure no one comes in the village and an inner cordon to keep anyone from leaving.

An Iraqi law states that each Iraqi citizen is authorized to possess one AK-47 assault rifle with one magazine or one pistol, for self-defense, but under no circumstances are they to have rocket-propelled grenades, extra ammunition, or explosive material.

When items are confiscated, they are given a receipt so they can get it back, if the situation warrants.

“If anything is found that is beyond reason, we confiscate it and detain the individual, said Lt. John Paul Thew, platoon leader.

The 116th BCT realizes Iraqi culture is very different to that of the U.S. To make the villagers comfortable with the operation, they get the Muktar, a highly respected member of the community, and have him politely ask people if they can search their homes.



Staff Sgt. Johnny Palmer, a squad leader with Company B, 3/116th Brigade Comat Team takes the time during the mission to speak with the locals about any suspicious activity in the village of Dugmat 1, near Kirkuk, Iraq.

“We don’t like to come into a village kicking in doors,” said Lt. Jeffrey D. Clements, Company B executive officer, 116th BCT, and native of Hermiston, Ore. “We just knock on the door and ask if we can come in and look for contraband.”

Local villagers are usually peaceful and very helpful, Clements added.

“We try and respect their belongings as much as we can and not just bust in and tear up their homes,” said Staff Sgt. Johnny Palmer, Company B squad leader, and native of Buhe Valley, Calif.

Interpreters also accompany Soldiers to help keep villagers informed of what is going on.

We keep in mind that not everyone is against what we are doing here, and that many realize

that we are here for their safety, Palmer said.

Iraqi police and the 116th Soldiers always give villagers a chance to be honest.

“When we find stuff they said wasn’t there, they are obviously lying,” Thew said. “Because of this type of behavior, we become more aggressive in our search procedures.”

When a village is searched and nothing was found, it doesn’t mean the mission was a waste of time.

“Even with no arrests or unauthorized items, the mission was still a success,” Thew said. “We now know nobody in this town has improvised explosive device material and we can focus our resources somewhere else.”

## Soldiers Treat Over 100 Villagers in Medical Aid Visit

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, Iraq – Soldiers from the 116th Brigade Combat Team’s Task Force 1-163 Infantry delivered medical care to the village of Husseinia, Iraq, August 1.

The medical assistance visit (MAV) was done at the remote village because of the lack of availability of medical care. Many smaller villages in the western portion of Kirkuk Province are far from hospitals and medical clinics.

“The visit was intended to be a mini-MAV but it turned out to be a full-blown MAV,” said Capt. Jeff Westfall, the TF 1-163 Infantry officer. “We were expecting maybe 30 patients, but we ended up with over 100.”

According to TF 1-163 Infantry, some villagers may not see health care professionals for years at a time, making it tough on the community and particularly the young. The Task Force

also credits the success of the visit to the improved security provided by an ever-growing number of Iraqi security forces in the area.

Helping bring critical services to Iraqis in the Province of Kirkuk is part of the 116th Brigade Combat Team’s mission while deployed in north central Iraq. The unit’s mission also includes assisting Iraq’s new government, supporting economic development, facilitating communications and improving security.

