

# Coalition Bulletin

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**Iraqi Soldiers Serve for  
Country, Family**




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#### Editor's Note

By the generous permission of our NATO partners, the *Coalition Bulletin* is pleased to bring you stories covering the activities of the International Security Assistance Force. As ISAF and the Coalition are separate entities, ISAF stories will be denoted by the NATO logo at the top of each page when they appear.

**Cover photo:** An Iraqi army soldier from 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division during Operation Tiger Hammer, a combined cordon and search mission in Baghdad Adhamiyah District June 7. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Michael Pryor.

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## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

***This is not an easy mission here, and you know that better than I do. But the goal of the joint multi-national forces is to help bring peace and democracy to Iraq. I have seen your focus and commitment to that goal...***

***Estonian Minister of Defense Jaak Aaviksoo addressing his troops in Iraq***

# Editorial

Like always, the 42<sup>nd</sup> Coalition Bulletin brings with it an overview of the activities from the AOR. An evaluation of these reported activities will amply signify the commitment, dedication and direction of the ongoing activities. These and many more are the positive developments taking place in Iraq and Afghanistan, which unfortunately do not get noticed and reported. It is abundantly evident that the populace in these countries is desperately looking for measures, which can bring back normalcy in their life. It is now up to the commitment of political leadership of these countries to rise above the political expediencies, seize the moment and achieve a better future for their future generations.

As expected, insurgents are gradually moving to outskirts of Baghdad in the wake of increasing effectiveness of security forces in the Capitol. Notwithstanding these disturbing occurrences, situation in Iraq has lately offered some promising developments as well, where support base of extremists has been seriously eroded. This has provided a unique opportunity to engage with majority of Sunni's and to incorporate them into the governance. Political pro-activeness is therefore earnestly required in Iraq at this juncture, meriting political adjustments to work towards a sustainable peace effort.

Although increasing engagements of NATO/ISAF in Afghanistan is indicative of its improving effectiveness, yet the negative impact of collateral damage is something which Coalition can ill-afford. Usage of human shields by the insurgents is well known, there is therefore a need to exercise more restraint and rely less on the human intelligence. While the security challenges are expected to increase in the coming days, the answer lies in increasing the developmental effort and improved engagement with the locals.

The situation in Africa is one of typical uneasy peace, which must not be ignored as it retains the potential to amplify with serious ramifications. While the raising of AFRICOM is in its advance stages, increasing reliance on UN and regional security mechanism may provide a more broad based and intrinsic arrangement.

Bulletin contains a spectrum of activities in AOR relevant to the efforts men and women of Coalition are galvanizing to meet the political and military objectives.

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



## Iraqi Troops Lead Security Searches



*Story and photo courtesy of  
Multi-National Division-Baghdad PAO*

BAGHDAD — Iraqi Army troops and Coalition Soldiers conducted a joint security operation in the Hor Al Bosh neighborhood of Baghdad on June 20.

Iraqi Army Soldiers with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 9<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) teamed up with Soldiers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> “Stallion” Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment to perform a large, Iraqi-led combined cordon and search operation in an effort to clear the streets of extremists.

Coalition Soldiers observed the Iraqi troops as they conducted the searches. The Iraqi troops went from house



**Iraqi Army troops from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 9<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army Division and Soldiers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment patrol the streets of Hor Al Bosh during a joint cordon and search operation. Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team.**

to house checking for weapons caches and meeting with the people of each neighborhood. The troops handed out tip cards to locals for information on any extremists who might be operating in the area. Coalition Soldiers only assisted the Iraqi troops when needed.

“They’re (the Iraqi troops) pretty comfortable with everything and taking it slowly and deliberately as they go about their searches,” said U.S. Army 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Ben Melton, a platoon leader for Company D, 2-8<sup>th</sup> Cav Regt. “They’re really doing an excellent job flushing out the bad guys.”

Soldiers from the Stallion Battalion have been helping train the Iraqi troops in advanced infantry tactics and other aspects of military training in the last few months. It has been only recently that members of the 2-8<sup>th</sup> Cav Regt. have been able to conduct joint operations with their Iraqi counterparts.

“When we go on missions with them, we haven’t had to give them any pointers; they’re pretty much already on it,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Marcus Canseco, a squad leader for Company D, 2-8<sup>th</sup> Cav Regt.

Iraqi troops arrested 17 suspects and confiscated several illegal weapons through the course of the day.

The day’s success is a testament to the Iraqi Army troops and U.S. Soldiers working together to gain the trust of locals, Canseco said.



# Iraqi Soldiers Serve

*Story and photos by Sgt. Michael Tuttle  
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

KIRKUK, Iraq – Looking out the window of his family’s single-story house in central Iraq, the lean and slightly mustachioed Iraqi soldier said he was surprised to see the American Apache helicopters flying overhead during the initial invasion in April 2003. Despite being a second-year soldier in the old Iraqi army, Pvt. Najah Hassan Kathim and his fellow troops had no idea that they may be attacked. He deserted the army during the invasion.

Nine weeks ago Kathim resumed his military career in the new Iraqi army, eager to fight for his country and his family. But this time he knew from the first day of basic training that he would be a part of a new brigade whose mission would be to protect the 60-mile stretch from Baghdad to Samarra.

The 1,895 soldiers of the ‘Samarra brigade’ trained together during basic training, graduating April 19, and will soon begin training with their brigade officers and noncommissioned officers before formally standing up as the 4th Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division in late May.

“These guys are close to my heart, more than my own brothers,” Kathim said about his fellow basic trainees on the morning of their graduation ceremony. “We’ve had enough time to train together, we know each other and we’ll go to battle together.”

The jondis, or new Iraqi army soldiers, were informed at the start of their basic training in February that they were going to form the foundation of a new brigade in Samarra, according to Lt. Col. Gerald Snell, Coalition Military Assistance Transition Team officer incharge. Soldiers were given the choice to stay with the brigade or return later to begin basic training and be assigned to a different area.



An Iraqi army noncommissioned officer shifts his soldiers to straighten up their formation during basic training at the Regional Training Center. A group of 1,895 new Iraqi army soldiers graduated April 19 from basic training.

The CMATT advises the Iraqi army leadership at the Regional Training Center in Kirkuk. They have helped to standardize the RTC’s training curriculum and guide them during the transition from the old Iraqi army to the new Iraqi army.



Iraqi army soldiers react to a simulated improvised explosive device during convoy training at the Regional Training Center in Kirkuk. The soldiers will stay together after basic training to help form a new Iraqi army brigade.

The Samarra brigade marks the first time that Iraqi soldiers have completed basic training as a unit to then go on to train with their brigade leaders before officially standing up.

“Because of that, the soldiers’ enthusiasm has been greater than normal and we’ve seen a lot better training evolve from this,” Snell said. “By training the whole brigade together ... when they leave here they’ll have developed friendships, developed bonds and they will fight that much better.”

The Samarra brigade soldiers come from all over Iraq, including the officers and NCOs. Many spent time in the old army during Saddam Hussein’s regime and will have to adjust to the ways of the new Iraqi army, said Iraqi Command Sgt. Maj. Mubrad Sarheed Abed, RTC command sergeant major.

# for Country, Family



Pvt. Najah Hassan Kathim waits in the rain for the chance to qualify on his AK-47 at the Regional Training Center in Kirkuk. Kathim graduated basic training April 19 with 1,894 other new Iraqi soldiers.

“The old army was built on many bad things including torture and unfair treatment of soldiers,” Abed said. “The food was bad and the training and equipment was poor. Now you can see a big difference because there is respect and we treat soldiers as human beings.”

The Iraqi army that Kathim was in for two years is vastly different than the one he’s in now.

“There was no training on weapons,” Kathim said through an interpreter. “When we got to our units, they gave us AK-47s and just told us to shoot.”

He also talked about traveling long distances in broken trucks and eating meals out of their helmets. He said he was afraid of his superiors and couldn’t ask what was going on.

“The basic training here now is first class. The equipment is new and the training is new,” Kathim said.

Basic training was extended from five to eight weeks for the Samarra brigade. The extra time afforded the jondis additional training including checkpoint, cordon and search, and convoy training.

Having to find a way to support his family, the 24 year-old Kathim said the army was his best option.

“My family was living in harsh conditions and the army provides money,” Kathim said.

His family supported his decision to join the army and Kathim traveled the 700 kilometers north to Kirkuk on his own, mostly by bus, to begin basic training at the RTC.

The difficulty of finding work to support their families is a large reason many soldiers join the Iraqi army. Still, a strong sense of service to their country pervades the ranks. Many soldiers don’t distinguish between serving in the army to support their families and serving their country.



An Iraqi soldier sprints to a rally point as part of a tactical demonstration during a basic training graduation ceremony, April 19, for 1,895 new Iraqi army soldiers. Basic training was nine weeks long at the K-1 Iraqi Army Base’s Regional Training Center in Kirkuk.

“My family and the people of Iraq don’t need to see trucks blowing up and their countrymen being killed,” said Pvt. Fadel Ali Kadem. Kadem is an infantryman and has a wife and two-month-old daughter in Baghdad. “Terrorists hurt students and people trying to work. We need to protect Iraq and stop people from doing these things.”

Pvt. Muhamed Bakr Muhamed also had trouble finding a job but needed to support his family in Diwaniyah, including a sick relative. He said that he and his fellow brigade soldiers have come together during their eight weeks of basic training.

“We feel together and we look like one person,” Muhamed said. “We are all just a bunch of soldiers. There is no Shia, no Sunni, no Kurd. All of us serve this country.”



# Estonian Minister of Defense Visits “Stone Platoon” at Camp Taji



The Estonian Minister of Defense Jaak Aaviksoo addresses the Estonian platoon (ESTPLA) on Camp Taji, Iraq June 8 during a visit by the minister to the base camp.

*Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp  
1st Brigade Combat Team,  
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs*

**CAMP TAJI** — For more than six months, an Estonian platoon known as the “Stone Platoon,” has been working with troops from the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division conducting combat operations together in the village of Sab Al Bor, Iraq.

These partners shared a rare opportunity to meet the Estonian Minister of Defense Jaak Aaviksoo here June 8.

During the visit, Aaviksoo talked with Estonian troops and Soldiers from Troop B, 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment – who work alongside the Estonian soldiers every day. Aaviksoo also exchanged gifts with senior leadership in the 1<sup>st</sup> BCT.

“The traditional earning of the spurs comes with service in the cavalry as the organization goes to war,” said Lt. Col. Kevin MacWatters, upon presenting the spurs to the Estonians. “Wear these spurs with honor.”

“You can definitely see a good interaction between our two countries, and this is very important to our nation,” said Estonian Army Col. Neeme Vali, the chief of the general staff for the Estonian Army, who presented Estonian Distinguished Service Medals to Soldiers in Garryowen. “Now it’s time for the Estonians to thank the U.S.”

Following the ceremony and a briefing on the Estonian and Garryowen mission in Sab Al Bor, the minister took the opportunity to speak to those in attendance.

“We’re not very many and our country is not very large, but we suffered under totalitarianism for 50 years and we

don’t want that to ever be repeated,” said Aaviksoo during his opening comments. “The modern world is getting smaller all the time and the ideals of democracy are just as important to us as they are to the local Iraqi people here”.

“This is not an easy mission here, and you know that better than I do,” added Aaviksoo addressing his troops and the



Killeen, Texas native Sgt. Nicholas Anderson discusses U.S. Army combat equipment with Estonian Minister of Defense Jaak Aaviksoo at Camp Taji.

Soldiers from the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment. “But the goal of the joint multi-national forces is to help bring peace and democracy to Iraq. I have seen your focus and commitment to that goal.”

In cordon and search, mounted and dismounted patrols and other joint operations with U.S. troops and Iraqi security forces, the Estonian troops have assisted in the detaining of more than 37 insurgents. They also assisted in the conducting of convoy operations and traffic control checkpoints along with the finding of many weapons caches and improvised explosive device-making materials. In all, they have been on 148 patrols, some of which were up to 48 hours long.



# Korean Engineer Group Completes K-Span Construction Project



*Story and photos by  
Army 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Ashley A. Dellavalle  
TF Rugged Public Affairs Office*

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Korean engineers placed the finishing touches on a construction project here on June 2.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Company, 100<sup>th</sup> Korean Engineer Group, finished building the last of three K-span (hanger-type) buildings to be used as maintenance and administrative facilities for Bravo Company, 122<sup>nd</sup> Aviation Support Battalion.

The building construction included pouring cement slabs, using a specialized piece of machinery to erect the dome shaped metal buildings and putting end walls and doors on the buildings.

“My thanks to the Korean engineers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Construction Company, these outstanding Soldiers erected three new K-Span buildings for us, which will definitely improve our shop and office operations,” said Army Maj. Raymond Meadows, of Tampa, Fla., commander of B Coy, 122<sup>nd</sup> ASB from Fort Bragg, N.C. “Bravo Company, 122<sup>nd</sup> Aviation Support Battalion has been operating out of old, plywood B-huts since our arrival. These new buildings are a welcomed addition to our area and will greatly benefit our unit and future U.S. forces for many years to come.”

“Korea and the Korean Army are honored to support International Security Assistance Forces efforts to build a



**Army Maj. Raymond Meadows, thanks Republic of Korea Army Capt. Dong Seong, Seo, Commander of 2<sup>nd</sup> Company, 100<sup>th</sup> Korean Engineer Group for his Soldiers’ hard work on the building.**

brighter future for Afghanistan,” said Republic of Korea Army Col. Jang Soo Jeong, commander of the 100<sup>th</sup> Korean Engineer Group. These projects will contribute to the war-fighting capacity of our fellow Coalition partners. We are working together to make Afghanistan a safer place for its people.”



**The 2<sup>nd</sup> Company, 100<sup>th</sup> Korean Engineer Group finished building the last of three K-spans to be used as maintenance and administrative facilities for Bravo Company, 122<sup>nd</sup> Aviation Support Battalion.**



# ANA Continues to Train, Lead With Support of Soldiers



**Story by Army Sgt. LeeAnn Lloyd  
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

CAMP TOMBSTONE, Afghanistan (31 May) - Making sure the Afghan National Army is properly equipped with the logistics and supplies it needs to conduct operations throughout the country can be a difficult task, but a team from the 205th Regional Security Assistance Command is up to the challenge.

The 3rd Brigade Logistics Support Team works day in and day out to make sure the ANA's 3rd Kandak, 205th "Hero" Corps, is taken care of so they can go out and take care of their own. The LST also serves as background support to British Operational Mentoring Liaison Team, whose direct mission is to teach and mentor ANA Soldiers about Western doctrine.

"Essentially our mission is to provide the ANA [with] what they need supply wise, and to ensure the British are teaching them American doctrine," Army Capt. Matthew Blackwelder, supply officer with the 3-205th said.

Blackwelder said the thought strikes many as odd that British soldiers would teach American doctrine to the Afghan Army. The answer is simply that the Global War on Terrorism remains a multinational effort as Afghanistan moves toward a state of peace and prosperity.



**Medics with the Afghan National Army look on as Army Maj. Marc Daniels, operations officer with the 3rd Brigade, 205th Regional Security Assistance Command Logistics Support Team, administers a field IV to prevent a heat casualty at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Helmand Province.**

Maintaining doctrinal continuity is a vital part of providing solid mentorship to the ANA, according to Army Maj. Marc Daniels, the 3-205th operations officer.

"The ANA have subscribed to our doctrine. What that means is you can't teach them one type of doctrine down here in the 205th, and then be able to go back up to the 207th or the 209th and teach those soldiers different doctrine.

We are trying to establish continuity across the board, so the ANA can function with any kandak (similar to U.S. company size) throughout the country and the same standards still apply, regardless of the location of the Soldier," he said.

The willingness to learn, coupled with the tenacity of Afghan soldiers, never ceases to amaze Blackwelder.

"Tactically, they know how to fight, and they're not afraid to fight. They are tough. They are very willing to go out and do what needs to get done," Blackwelder said.

Daniels recalled a recent event when their 3-205 LST supply convoy was hit with an IED, and the ANA were right there to help move supplies out of the damaged vehicle. They also proved themselves during that event when an escalation of enemy forces in the area attacked with indirect fire. Daniels said the ANA dismounted their vehicles and charged into fields without



**Two Soldiers with the Afghan National Army help Soldiers fix a tire after the vehicle was struck by an Improvised Explosive Device in Helmand Province. Photo by Capt. David Kline**

"By and large, the British way of doing things is much like [ours]. Their standing operating procedures do not differ dramatically from ours, but the terminology is different ... So sometimes you just have to cut through the different vernacular to get to where you're going," Blackwelder noted.

hesitation. The ANA were successful in detaining eight insurgents that day, even after one of their own vehicles hit a mine and was disabled.

"The ANA, reacted very well. They reacted exactly as they were supposed to in a situation like that," he noted.





# Regional Cooperation 2007



Story and photos courtesy of  
*Regional Cooperation 07 Public Affairs*

RC 07 is a national level exercise hosted by the Kazakhstan Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Emergency Situations

in cooperation with CENTCOM and USJFCOM's Joint Warfighting Center (JWFC). It is designed to build and strengthen relations among the participating nations in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from the effects of a natural or manmade disaster, by promoting the establishment of a Regional Cooperation Center (RCC).

"This year's exercise focused on regional response to a natural disaster, but it also included relevant issues relating to the Global War on Terror, counter narcotics, border security, illegal migration, and human trafficking," said retired U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Ron Christmas, senior mentor from U.S. Joint Forces Command, on behalf of CENTCOM Commander Adm. William J.



**Valery Victorovich Petrov, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Emergency Situations addresses the media following opening ceremonies for Exercise Regional Cooperation 2007. U.S. Joint Forces Command photo by LCDR Lila J. Bakke.**

Regional Cooperation 2007, a U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM)

Fallon. "This exercise is designed to illuminate the importance of effective information sharing, interoperability, and coordination in answer to a disaster requiring a regional response effort."

During this computer distributed exercise, the Kazakhstan Ministry of Emergency Situations exercised its National



**LTC Daniel J. W. King, Chief, Strategic Plans and Media Operations, USCENTCOM Public Affairs presents World News Network's "Road to Crisis" video at the opening ceremonies. U.S. Joint Forces Command photo by LCDR Lila J. Bakke.**

multinational crisis response exercise started in Kazakhstan on June 12.

It is a national-level exercise designed to strengthen relations among participating nations, involving Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and the United States.

Approximately 230 military and civilian personnel from participating countries and the United Nations took part in the disaster response exercise.



**A view of the military and civilian participants working gathered at the Ministry of Emergency Situations for the Opening Ceremonies for Exercise Regional Cooperation 2007. U.S. Joint Forces Command photo by LCDR Lila J. Bakke.**

Crisis Management Center in Astana. Participating nations staffed national response cells in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

The JWFC provided operational and technical support to the exercise sites in Astana, Kazakhstan and the national operations center in Bishkek.



## Printing Press Gives Panjshir Province Its Own Voice



*By Senior Airman Dilia DeGrego  
Combined Joint Task Force-82 Public Affairs*

PANJSHIR PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Dating back to the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the people of Panjshir province have come to be known for their great



**Air Force Brig. Gen. James Hyatt, 455<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing commander, presents Panjshir province Gov. Bahlol Bahij with one of his coins after the ribbon cutting ceremony opening the province's own printing press. U.S. Air Force photo by: Senior Airman Dilia DeGrego**

strength and will to succeed. Since being recognized as a province in 2004, the people have continued to work together to add to their rich history, completing a micro-hydro plant for electricity generation, new roads for commerce, bridges, wells, schools, radio station, new public-works building and most recently a printing press.

Panjshir province officials and the Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the valley's first printing press on May 26.

"Today is a great day for the people of Panjshir," said Panjshir Gov. Bahlol Bahij. "The people of Panjshir are working hard to make their country strong. Through this printing press we will be able to share the story of our people and all of the great things being done here."

Air Force Brig. Gen. James Hyatt, commander of the 455<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing, agreed.

"This is a wonderful day," Hyatt said. "I am proud to be here and proud of the PRT and all those who assisted in making this printing press possible. It will allow for better means to share and wide-spread information. It will also better the future of the children of Panjshir."

The project broke ground in March 2007 through the Provincial Reconstruction Program. Now complete, the Panjshir Provincial Printing Press will be used to distribute

Panjshir Valley news and other information as far away as Kabul.

"The printing press will print a newspaper on a weekly basis, providing a unified message from the governor and other provincial leadership," said Air Force 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. John

Griffin, Panjshir PRT executive officer. "It will serve as a legitimate source of news and historical documents for the people of the Panjshir Valley."

The building housing the printing press was a previously built structure that was renovated. The refurbishment of the building cost approximately \$35,000. The late-model Solna Offset Printing Press, on which the newspaper will be printed, cost approximately \$30,000.

"When we look at it today, it looks like a new building," said Air Force Lt. Col. Chris Luedtke, Panjshir PRT commander. "However, it is far more than just a building and far more than just a printing press. This building ties directly to the schools, the radio towers, television towers and the rest of the world. This printing press is a part of Massoud's great legacy, and is a part of this greater system of education and democracy Afghanistan is pursuing."



**Panjshir Provincial Printing Press engineers display the late-model Solna Offset printing press which will be used to print a weekly newspaper in Panjshir province. U.S. Air Force photo by: Senior Airman Dilia DeGrego**

"This printing press brings the real word to Panjshir," added Luedtke. "Panjshirees will write the truth with this press and Kabul will hear their words. No longer will the information only flow from Kabul to Panjshir. Now it will flow from Panjshir to Kabul and from the people of Kabul to the rest of Afghanistan, then to the rest of the world. We understand the history and soon so will the rest of the world."



# New UK Commander Tells Iraqis “We will stand by you”



*Story and photos  
courtesy of UK MoD*

Brigadier Bashall, of Tidworth-based 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Brigade, joined forces with Brigadier Akeel of the Iraqi Army 10<sup>th</sup> Division at a joint press conference, the first since his recent arrival in Basra when he took over from Brigadier Tim Evans, commander of the 19<sup>th</sup> Light Brigade.

1<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Brigade officially took control of the Brigade Headquarters on June 1, 2007. With the exception of a few units, the Brigade is now fully operational in southern Iraq and an important component of Multinational Division South East (MND(SE)).

Brigadier Bashall was keen to reassure the local people that he intends to build on the excellent work achieved by his predecessors in 19<sup>th</sup> Light Brigade during the last six months.

And his message was simple: that he and the rest of the UK personnel in southern Iraq had the best interests of the Iraqi people at heart. He said that there would be no let-up in operations against the terrorists and criminals who continue to pose a threat to the people of Basra and the surrounding area:

“This is my third tour of duty here and I would hope that I have learned many valuable lessons that will assist me during this tenure,” he explained. “I intend to put my previous experience to good use.”

Bashall went on to confirm 2007 as the year of transition and that Iraqi Security Forces were making significant movements in order to ensure the transition to Provincial Iraqi Control. He also said that the training and support of the Iraqi Security Forces is his top priority and that he will do everything he can in order to assist them:

“You would have heard many times that 2007 is the year of transition and there has been much talk of British troops

withdrawing. This is simply not the case. The Prime Minister did announce a reduction in our force levels in Iraq but this is because the Iraqi Security Forces are growing both in confidence and capability.



**Commander 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Brigade, Brigadier James Bashall, right of picture, holds his first press conference with Brigadier Akeel, Commander 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 10<sup>th</sup> Division, Iraqi Army at Basrah International Airport. Photo by: Cpl Dan Harmer RLC**

“As the Iraqi Security Forces increasingly take the lead for security, the Multi National Force will adjust its force posture so that we can help with the crucial task of building Iraqi capacity while retaining the ability to intervene in support of the Iraqi forces should the situation demand it.

“Your security is of great importance. The training of your Security Forces is my top priority and I have soldiers dedicated to this task. Your military, the Police Service and the Department of Border Enforcement have achieved a great deal in the past year. We must build on this and continue to enhance your security. Improvements to the security situation will encourage investment in Al Basrah and your economy to grow as a result.”

Bashall added that attacks against multinational forces are an attack against the ordinary citizens of Iraq:

“Criminals and terrorists hamper our efforts to assist you as well as causing injuries and damage. Whilst my priority is to train and mentor your security forces, I will continue to defend my forces against militia attacks and target those who are responsible.

“I would be grateful if you could take away the message that my Brigade is here to offer you support and we will stand by you. There are many challenges ahead, but it is in all our interests that we succeed. Only you, the Iraqi people will provide the lasting solution.”



**Brigadier Tim Evans 19<sup>th</sup> Light Brigade, far right, hands over command in Basra to Brigadier James Bashall 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Brigade. Photo by: Cpl Dan Harmer RLC**



# Flights' Masters



**Story by Capt Mihai Marius  
812<sup>th</sup> Infantry battalion**

It is not very probable that simply reading the group of letters “PZ” one can realize the correct signification of it. At FOB LAGMAN, when you hear “PZ”, that means nothing else than “helicopter landing/ pick-up zone,” and is closely linked with the diverse team working there – Romanians and U.S. soldiers, who, by their determination and hard-work, have received the admiration and appreciation of allied helicopter crews – American, Australian, New Zealander and British.

## Perfect Coordination

The Air Planning Officer, Romanian Capt. Alexandru Kis, tells us how, after he arrived in the theater, the job of Air Planning Officer was unusual for him. Trained as an infantryman, his new job has taken some getting used to. After five months of constant air traffic, everything has become routine, even when his e-mailbox is permanently full with air movement requests and his office phones or radio are calling all the time.

“The secret is to properly meet the priorities, as directed by RC South Aviation, and to prioritize everything, as air assets are limited. I closely work with my U.S. counterpart,



**The Romanian service members upload a helicopter cargo at FOB LANGMAN, Afghanistan. Romanian Army photo by Capt. Alexandru Kis**

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Keith Wei – now replaced by another young U.S. lieutenant, Jason Cunningham.”

The team is organizing its schedule during daylight or night, in accordance with the helicopters flying schedule. There are situations when up to 10 helicopters of different sorts – Chinooks, Blackhawks, Apaches or even MI-8 – occupy the PZ, and the work is done under severe time constraints. Due to whole team effort, depending on perfect coordination of accomplishing their tasks, and other variables – such as



**The PZ team's main tasks are to prepare and build up cargo pallets and sling loads, as well as supporting the helicopters download, upload and refueling. Romanian Army photo by Capt. Alexandru Kis.**

weather conditions or technical issues – affect the time frame. This is critically important as all remote forward operating bases depend on re-supplies performed through air transportation assets.

## We are a Family

The PZ team includes, on the Romanian side, Master Sgt. Costica Zaharia, Sgt., 1<sup>st</sup> Class Iulian Cical and corporals Adrian Harosa, Vasile Pop and Macedon Buhaiu. Their U.S. comrades are Staff Sgt. John Herbert and Sgt. Kevan Johnson.

The team's main tasks are to prepare and build up cargo pallets and sling loads, as well as supporting the helicopters downloading, uploading and refueling. But the first thing the Romanians learned was the specific English terminology for all these new tasks. While Romanian – English dictionaries are getting dusty on the shelf, they are focused to do anything with care and perfect quality. They – Romanians and U.S. soldiers – are complementing each other as a team.

“We get satisfaction when we succeed to send anything – cargo (water, food, ammunition, and other equipments) and personnel to the desired destination,” said Capt. Kis. The most spectacular operations are the slingloads, regarding the transportation of fuel blivets, special containers or other assets, which are mainly performed by specialized US personnel. These slingloads are rigged with special chains and ropes, allowing very large and heavy objects to be attached to the bottom of a Chinook helicopter while it hovers. The Chinook then flies off with the load, dangling from underneath.

The work on PZ is not easy, especially when mechanical assets get broken and the repair tasks must be accomplished through intensive physical work. But the good technical skills of Romanians make up for the lack of spare parts and defective items.

Written on one of the control tower doors: “We are a family.” That says more than anything else.



# Panjshir Opens Teachers' Training College



*Story courtesy of  
Combined press information center*

PANJSHIR, Afghanistan – Education across Afghanistan, specifically in Panjshir province, received a boost on June 10 with the opening of the Panjshir Teachers' Training College.

“As the five rivers of Panjshir come together to create one big river, so do the teachers from across Afghanistan come together to create the education system for the future of this country,” said Ives.

Construction on the Teachers' Training Center began in January and includes separate male and female dormitories, a cafeteria and latrine facilities.



**Army Col. Jonathan Ives, Task Force Cincinnatus Commander, cuts the ribbon dedicating the Teachers' Training College in Panjshir June 10. U.S. Army photo by: Pfc. Chris Shin**

The Afghan National Minister of Education, Haseef Atmar, spoke of the importance of a nationally-supported education system, with quality teachers, for the future of Afghanistan.

“Without teachers this country will go nowhere, and we can't have teachers without a teachers' training college,” said Atmar.

Cheers erupted from the crowd of nearly 400 that included Panjshir Gov. Bahlol Bajig when the minister spoke of support for education at the provincial level.

“Both the governor and the provincial director of education have spoken to me about the importance of education in this province,” continued Atmar. “I will not forget the things they've asked for.”

Among the minister's comments were his desires to increase teachers' salaries, build libraries in the province and add to the number of schools.

The importance of the training college, a \$130,000 facility dedicated to the future of Afghanistan, was noted by Army Col. Jonathan Ives, Task Force Cincinnatus Commander.

One of the keynote speakers during the ribbon-cutting ceremony said the training center is a step in the right direction that indicated the national government continually works to improve the education system.

“We've built schools, but now we need qualified teachers,” said Haji Zalmeed Shaheed, provincial director of education. “The teachers we have need transportation, better pay and more supplies. Minister Atmar's visit here is the first step in this process of having national attention on our needs.”

Bahlol thanked the minister for working with provincial leaders to get the center built.

“We appreciate the work that Minister Atmar has done for us,” said Bahlol.

“We worked together to establish this training college that will add more jobs, better education and a future for our children and country.”

Before returning to Kabul, Atmar joined Bahlol, Shaheed, and other provincial leaders for a traditional “palau” lunch and conversation.



**More than 400 people listen to the Afghan National Minister of Education, Haseef Atmar; dedicate the Teachers' Training College in Panjshir June 10. U.S. Army photo by: Pfc. Chris Shin**

## *SNR Lunch with Admiral William J. Fallon*



## *Coalition Ladies Morning Tea*



*The French Frigate La Fayette visits the Port of Tampa*



*General Bismullah Khan Army Chief of the General Staff  
Afghanistan National Army visits U.S. CENTCOM*





An Iraq army soldier takes a break from basic training for an afternoon prayer at the Regional Training Center in Kirkuk. Photo by: Sgt. Michael Tuttle



Staff Sgt. Robin Johnson, with Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, during Operation Tiger Hammer in Baghdad Adhamiyah District. U.S. Photo by Sgt. Michael Pryor.