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COALITION



**US Military Commanders
Visit Pakistan**

COALITION BULLETIN
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Volume 54

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Accession for Albania
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***Always Prepared
TO HEAL***

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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: Romanian and US medical personnel train together for First Aid Procedures - Camp Cropper, Iraq.

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An Iraqi Soldier stands watch as his Commander visits traffic checkpoint El Gadeer, to inspect roadside checkpoints on a major city road in Muthana Zayuna district of New Baghdad.

U.S. Army photo by SSgt. Brian D Lehnhardt

EDITORIAL

Afghanistan has witnessed renewed violence over recent months resulting in a rise in civilian casualties. This has prompted fears of Taliban resurgence by military commanders, diplomats and



politicians. They see the situation in Afghanistan as more critical than Iraq. Militants, who were seen to have lost ground, suddenly seem to have reorganized themselves. They are conducting bold operations not only within the country, but in the neighbouring areas as well. In spite of coalition presence, total military domination and committed support from the neighbours who are providing these militants the logistic support to sustain their effort. Hopefully Afghanistan does not become a battle ground for the proxy war of various players each fighting for its own interests. This will not be good for the coalition. Hence, there is a need to have a fresh look at the coalition strategy in Afghanistan and to analyze why after seven years we have not been able to win the hearts and minds of the population in spite of military victory and continued coalition support.

It is very clearly understood the military alone can not bring a lasting solution to wining the population. US military is in the process of formulating a **Joint Operating Concept** for the nature of future war. With total domination in the conventional field, Irregular warfare (IW) is seen to most likely be the nature of future war. Winning hearts and minds of the population is the cornerstone of the concept of IW as it is defined as, "A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and approaches over the relevant populations.....". Lessons learned from Afghanistan and Iraq are being dovetailed in the concept. However, the challenges being faced now need immediate resolution as conceptualization of the doctrine and its operationalization may take a very long time. Marked improvement has taken place in Iraq due to the implementation of 'Golden Nuggets'. The same needs to be adopted enthusiastically and evenly all across Afghanistan even in those areas where security situation may not be very stable. Internal weakness and lack of inter-agency coordination should not become a reason to blame external factors.

This publication of the Coalition Bulletin highlights the projects undertaken to improve the economic well being of the population and hopefully these efforts bear fruit to bring lasting peace in both of the theatres.

NEWS IN BRIEF

ANSE, Coalition Forces Provide Medical, Humanitarian Assistance in Helmand Province.

Afghan National Security Forces and Coalition forces' medical personnel, under the Medical Civil Action Program, provided humanitarian assistance in Nahr Surkh District, Helmand province.

A large number of humanitarian assistance supplies were handed out including 245 medical, dental and hygiene kits; 176 sets of clothing and shoes, 135 bags of food, 26 school backpacks, and five cooking stoves.

Approximately 400 people received medical treatment.

NATO Secretary General Visits Afghanistan

NATO Sec. Gen. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, accompanied by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Bantz J. Craddock, paid a three-day visit to Afghanistan on 23-25 July with the purpose of addressing the security situation on the ground.

Brigadier General (Romania) Gabriel Gabor, Completed His Tour in Afghanistan.



Deputy Chief of the Multinational Operation Corps Iraq, Bg.Gen. Gabriel Gabor, Romania's national senior commander in Iraq, completed his tour of duty. For his outstanding achievement he was awarded the Legion of Merit medal. Gen. David H Petraeus presented the award on June 1st 2008.

"I want to dedicate this medal to all the Romanian soldiers who have bravely served in Iraq", Bg.Gen. Gabor said.

Establishment of Border Coordination Center

Three officers and three NCO's of Pakistan Army have joined the Border Coordination Centre at Torkham, Afghanistan on Jul 21, 2008. The Officers from Afghanistan National Army and ISAF had already joined the centre. The aim of this coordination centre is to expedite the information sharing system against the illegal cross border movement on Pak – Afghan border.

US Military Commanders Visit Pakistan



General David McKiernan, Commander ISAF and Lieutenant General Martin E. Dempsey Acting Commander US CENTCOM, called on Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), General Tariq Majid during their visits to Pakistan.

Discussions focused on matters of mutual interest between the two countries and other avenues of military cooperation. The military commanders also discussed current security environment in the region with a focus on situation in Frontier Regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

General Tariq reiterated Pakistan's commitment and support to international efforts in Afghanistan and stressed on the need to develop trust based relations at all levels amongst the coalition partners and to understand the prevailing dynamics.

Expressing concern over repeated cross border missile attacks / firing by Coalition and Afghan Forces, General Tariq said that our sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected, any violation in this regard could be detrimental to multilateral relations. He also reemphasised that Pakistan Armed Forces are capable of handling any challenges to our security.

General David McKiernan expressed condolence on the death of 11 Pakistani soldiers due to the coalition firing from across the border and regretted the incident.



General David McKiernan, Commander ISAF, called on General Tariq Majid, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Pakistan.



Lieutenant General Martin E. Dempsey, Acting Commander US CENTCOM, called on General Tariq Majid, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Pakistan.

At the End of the Mission

Story and pictures Courtesy of
Major Daniel Burlacu, RO PIO, Iraq



The Romanian military- medical team, who have been participating in TO (Theater of Operation) in Iraq completed their mission at the end of June '08. LTC Cecilia Bărbulescu, Commander of the Romanian Medical Staff at Camp Cropper Iraq, shared with us her experiences.

Reporter (R): Do you consider it an interesting experience to work alongside the American medical teams? Why do you think so?

LTC Barbulescu (LTC): By coming here, we expected something new and we were prepared to face the unknown. When we left our country my oldest daughter, Diana, told me, "Any journey is an initiatory experience". And it was, indeed, quite a unique experience and very interesting. It was not like a walk in a park, but a risky mission in a real operational environment. Each and everyone in the medical staff shared their own impressions from those months in the mission. They all concurred that the whole experience was more or less different from what they did back home.

SFC Laura Burchea shared these after her first MASCAL (Mass Casualty): "It was like what you would see in the movies. It requires perfect coordination and strict discipline". LT Dusmanu Tudor, FSG Osoianu Lacramioara, SSG Bujoreanu Loredana, SFC Dragoi Sorin and Burlacu Sorin agreed that it was a tremendous experience. SFC. Hulea Laura and I participated in an important mission which required us to prepare 600 blood units to sustain the operation in Basra. The hospital commander recognised the efforts of all our medical colleagues involved and both Laura and I received merit medals.

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(R): How is the Romanian medical staff seen by the US medical partners?

(LTC): This question is best answered by an e-mail received from an American Colonel, a member of hospital staff where we worked:

"Again, you and your Romanian contingent have certainly set the mark in terms of team spirit, great adaptation to the mission and executing your various missions with professionalism and excellence. I am certainly glad to meet you and see Romanian medical professionals in action. Again, thanks for all that you and your team have done here. You all have behaved yourselves with honour and excellence"

(R): Any last thoughts for the Romanian soldiers who remain in the TO in Iraq, your team and your successor?

(LTC): To my colleague who will replace me, Mr. (Dr) Daniel Preoteasa, I wish him to

collaborate well with the American medical staff in these missions and I am sure he and his team will show as much commitment as all previous teams already did.

To the medical staff in TO, I suggest them to focus on this work for the next 6 months because it is a unique experience in their lives.

After this mission we go back home changed, having a different perspective of life. But the most important thing is this: no matter what language we speak and what country we represent, the objective is common in these missions. The language becomes the same. Helping people is the only thing that matters.

I am so honoured that in these 6 months I have been the commander of these wonderful people, here in Camp Cropper.



NATO Allies Signs Accession for Albania and Croatia



Allies signed this month, the Accession Protocols with Albania and Croatia, opening the way for the full NATO membership of these two countries. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania, H.E. Mr. Lulzim Basha and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Croatia, H.E. Mr. Gordan Jandrokovic participated in the ceremony in the NATO Headquarters.

During the ceremony, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said: *“This is an historical achievement for these two countries and for the entire Atlantic community of nations. Both our new Allies come from a region that, not long ago saw the first operational deployment of the Alliance and a region that has witnessed the first major conflict on European soil since the end of World War Two.”*

Following the signature, each of the NATO countries’ Parliaments will begin the ratification of the Accession Protocols. As soon as the process is completed within the countries that are already members of the Alliance, Albania and Croatia will be invited to ratify the accession in their own Parliaments.

Thereafter, the instruments of ratification will be deposited at the State Department in Washington - the depository of Washington Treaty – and Albania and Croatia become full members of the Alliance.

As of today, and throughout the period leading up to full accession, NATO will involve the invited countries in Alliance activities to the greatest possible extent and will continue to provide support and assistance to their reform efforts, including through the Membership Action Plan (MAP).



Determined Battle Group Rids Compounds of Enemy

*Story Courtesy of Staff Sgt. Matt Meadows
4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division*



Weapons Detachment Commander, MCpl Ryan Rumball, directs his men in a sea of poppy stems following an engagement with the enemy.

During the month of June, soldiers from Canadian Force Base (CFB) Shilo and Edmonton, members of Charlie Company (C Coy), 2nd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (2 PPCLI) Battle Group participated in Operation NOLAI, in ZHARI District, Kandahar Province.

With artillery fire support from Charlie and Delta Troops, of B Battery, 1st Royal Canadian Horse Artillery (RCHA), C Coy soldiers and an Afghan National Army company conducted a three-day dismounted clearance operation of suspected insurgent areas. With daytime temperatures reaching mid-40 degrees Celsius and movement on foot severely restricted through complex grape fields, the mission was a test of physical stamina and determination.

2 PPCLI's Reconnaissance Platoon was tasked with finding a route from the nearest paved road, nearly three kilometres away, to the start of the first objective. Following their path, C Coy moved under the cover of darkness in order to begin the operation as the sun came up. The lead platoon, working hand-in-hand with their Afghan allies, quickly cleared the numerous compounds that made up the first portion of the abandoned village. With little direction from their Canadian counterparts, the Afghan soldiers demonstrated excellent tactical techniques as they cleared their portions of the objective area.

The initial lack of enemy resistance did not last long as the company came under fire from

the enemy from numerous locations simultaneously. Throughout the following two days, the seasoned and extensively well practiced combined arms team of 2 PPCLI and 1 RCHA was put on display. The M777 Howitzers accurately engaged the enemy positions allowing soldiers on the ground to continue their advance. By day three, the soldiers of C Coy had adopted a formation that harkened back to wars of the past. Long irrigation ditches doubled as a perfect army-style trench.

After completing the clearance of their objectives, the soldiers of C Company stocked up on water and began the long march back to the welcomed air conditioning of their LAV III vehicles. Spirits were high; the mission achieved success, significantly inflicting damage to the enemy and bringing stability to the volatile region.



Section Commander, Sgt Martin Tolton, awaits the order to clear a compound as the Company occupies a long trench system.



Platoon Commander, Lt Alex Duncan (Left), calls in an artillery fire mission on an enemy position alongside his signaler, Cpl Sean Power.

Engineers Survey Afghanistan's High Ground

It doesn't seem like much, just a small and rather steep looking hill outside Combat Outpost Zerok. It's not until you get close to the hill named after a major league baseball team, that you get a true appreciation for just how challenging the grade really is.

For the small survey team from Task Force Castle's 420th Engineer Brigade, the hill was the objective for an early morning topographical survey. Maneuver forces needed a new observation post and they called the Castle team in to survey potential candidates.

The engineers were eager to get started, Zerok's cool mountain mornings give way quickly and are replaced by a dry heat that makes Soldier's feel like they're only a short distance from the sun itself, said a team member. Survey gear packed and protective gear on, the team ate a hurried breakfast and performed last-minute checks of their rucks, ensuring they had all the gear they needed, and that they packed enough water to last through the walk up the hill and the survey mission to follow.

For Master Sgt. Esley Gustafson, CTF Castle's Construction Management NCOIC, and the team leader of the survey mission, the walk up was more than just a test of endurance, it was a litmus test for future missions in the region.

"It's important we learn everything we can from this first survey," he said. "We learn a lot from the smaller jobs we do, we can take those lessons on to larger projects. Today's mission is perfect, it's a small hill with a relatively small footprint on top, not too bad."

His team members, Sgt. Peter Wislowski and Pfc. Jose Perez, shouldered their packs and cast looks toward their team leader. Each of them was loaded down with 35-40 pounds of survey gear in addition to body armor, water and ammunition. The weight of it all together hovered uncomfortably close to 100 pounds.

"Yeah – not too bad," Wislowski said confidently, then slowly backed up until he could rest his bulging rucksack against the fender of an up armored Humvee.

The Task Force Castle Team included a small detachment of engineers from the Organ-E based 68th Combat Support Equipment Company as well. The 68th CSE team was lead by Capt. Ezekiel Moreno and included several surveyors. The 68th's mission was twofold; they were there to assist with the survey and to recon the terrain on top of the hill.

"We're the folks that are going to build the OP, so we need to see the ground we're working on," said Moreno.

The ground they worked on was in a word – steep. After linking up with their security element, a platoon of paratroopers from Charlie Company, 173rd Airborne Brigade, the engineers and infantry Soldiers moved out in a tactical formation and started the slow and steady ascent.

The paratroopers, used to moving up and down the rugged Afghan terrain were instantly able to pick out the fastest route up the tall, sandy hill. While the approach they chose was a quick blast up a long finger of red-brown earth that jutted out of the hill face, it was also a precarious and nerve-wracking climb. For the engineers, their packs stuffed with survey equipment and bristling with parachute cloth covered tripods, the desire to keep up with their security element was mitigated by the need to place each footstep carefully.

After about an hour of careful walking and even crawling up some of the steeper parts of the hill face, the first squads of the security element made the military crest of the hill and began to methodically clear the hilltop itself. Only after this was complete did the Castle engineers move forward and start to download their gear.

After catching their breath, Perez and Pfc. Kevin Macallister from the 68th CSE unlimbered their survey base station's tripod and began to put the highly-technical GPS receiver into action. Perez and Macallister worked quickly, but carefully, the bright yellow survey unit was extremely ruggedized and amazingly accurate – but it was also effectively

useless if one of its many cables is connected wrong. With the base station finally in place, Wislowski worked to ensure that the system was getting a satellite lock while Perez and Macallister turned their attention to the monopod mounted survey rover units. As his team worked to prepare the gear, Gustafson walked the terrain with Moreno and discussed potential routes they might bring heavy equipment up the hill in the future. The topographic survey of the hilltop they prepared for helped the follow-on construction teams make decisions about how to manage their work, Wislowski explained. “With the topo done, the guys moving earth will know what they need to cut and what they need to fill,” he said. With everything in place, the base station and rover units configured, the team split up and prepared to move out over the hilltop.

There was only one problem.

“We’re not getting a satellite lock,” Wislowski said with a frown. Gustafson moved in to check the settings on the base station while Perez and Wislowski started to go through a checklist to troubleshoot the rovers.

Nearby paratroopers eyed the high tech survey gear and it’s bright, almost neon yellow paint. Perez shook his head as he and Wislowski double check the rovers

software configurations.

“Tens of thousands of dollars worth of survey gear and you think the manufacturer would have painted it something tactical,” he said.

After a few tense minutes checking and rechecking the survey systems, Wislowski slapped the side of the base station and proclaimed, “Got it – we’ve got a lock.”

Eager to get started, two survey teams broke off, each taking a rover. Their job was to simply walk the curious-looking survey systems on a stick around the top of the hill. Every ten feet or so, they stopped, allowed the rover to get a position lock and then transmitted the location information back to the base station. Later, when the team returned to base, dumped the data points collected from their survey into one of their laptops and watched as their terrain software “drew” an accurate representation of the hilltops terrain.

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“I can remember when we did this the old fashioned way,” Gustafson said as his teams roamed over the hill top with the rovers. “Not only are the units we’re using more accurate, but the whole process is extremely fast.”

In less than an hour after summiting, the team converged back on the base station and compared the information they each gathered in their “topo” of the hill. When Gustafson was confident that they got what they came for, he motioned for his team to start breaking the gear down.

“That was fast,” one of the nearby paratroopers said, “I thought we’d be up here all day.”

Minutes later, the survey gear was secured and the Task Force Castle team was ready to head back down the hill and into the COP before the heat of the day truly hit the hilltop.

The walk back down was as hard as the walk up and their packs were no lighter. But for the members of Task Force Castle’s survey team, there was a great deal of satisfaction in knowing they’ve provided a solid start to ensuring future Soldiers safety.

“The better job we do up here, the better job the 68th will do building the OP,” said Gustafson. “The better the OP, the better protected our maneuver elements are.”



PRT Teaches CPR to Local Medical Providers

Story and pictures Courtesy of
Air Force Cpt. Jillian Torango Panjshir PRT, PA



Six Afghan medical providers learned basic lifesaving skills at a Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team Cardiopulmonary Respiratory (CPR) course held at the Rokha Clinic in Rokha, last month.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Janine Duschka, a PRT medical technician deployed from Andrews Air Force Base, Md., taught the course.

“It is important to teach the local medical providers because it gives them another tool to save lives,” said Duschka. “The tools they take home with them today are not ones they have to carry in their medical bags, and they’re not something that they have to spend their money on. They’re taking home knowledge that they can share with the rest of their staffs.”

The medical providers were from six different clinics and four of the province’s seven districts.

“This training is crucial because most of the province’s healthcare providers are in rural locations, so they need to be able to do this process [CPR] in order to get their critical patients to the hospital or to a better clinic,” said Dr. Shirdell, Panjshir Health and Medical Services officer.

The class is the one-day American Heart Association Healthcare Provider CPR course authorized by the Military Training Network in Bethesda, Md.

It covers not only CPR for patients of all ages, but how to handle someone who is choking and the proper use of an automated external defibrillator unit.

The course also focuses on how to assess a patient to see if CPR is even necessary, and Duschka sees patient assessment as one of the main tools taught by the course.

“Now the medical providers know how to assess the signs the patient is giving instead of just reacting to a patient when they arrive,” said Duschka.

“Many of the Afghan medical providers I’ve dealt with in

the past would have immediately started to give artificial breathing or CPR just because a patient’s eyes were closed or they were unconscious—even if the patients were breathing normally already.”

While some of the medical providers had learned prior forms of resuscitation, this course was new to most of them.

“They didn’t have a preconceived notion of what CPR should be, since they’ve never taken any of the older CPR courses, so it was actually easier for me to teach them than it is teaching American students. These providers all know how important this training is and they all came ready to learn.” Some of the basic questions asked were, “How many times can I give a patient artificial respiration,” “How long do I continue chest compressions,” and, “Is there a sign in the patient for when I should start or stop CPR?”

This is the first class out of a 15-class schedule, and I think it went very well and we all learned something from the class, said Duschka.

While Duschka taught her ‘students’ the requirements from the course, they taught her some creative ways they’ve come up with to handle some of the trickier everyday medical situations.

For example, if a pregnant woman were choking, the providers said they’d use a head-scarf to wrap around the woman if they couldn’t reach their arms around her. Their solution uses an item that every Afghan woman keeps with her.

“Even though we’re taught to use everything and anything that you have available to save the patient, using the scarf is an ingenious option that I never would have considered,” said Duschka. “Although using the scarf is not a treatment of choice, the solution shows the providers clearly think outside of the box to help their patients in any way they can.”

“If I came into their clinics I know they could assess me, understand what was happening and treat me properly,” said Duschka. “Hopefully they won’t ever have to use this course, but I’m happy to have been able to give the extra knowledge.”

Shirdell agreed with Duschka.

“Whether they need to use [CPR] or not, they are learning that they always need to be in touch with the patient and it is important to know what to do with a patient in any emergency situation,” said Shirdell.

The PRT’s CPR training program will continue throughout the year, and Duschka hopes to get out to different clinics in each of the province’s seven districts.

Hawijah's Literacy Program Gains National Attention in Iraq

Story Courtesy of Staff Sgt. Margaret C. Nelson
1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division



In the month which marked the birth of the United States of America and the liberation of other nations, July 5, will be remembered in Hawijah, Iraq, as the day its country's deputy minister of education Nehad Al-Juburi and the prime minister's education advisor Zaid Chaid paid a historic visit to bring national attention to a pilot literacy program underway here.

Five-hundred School of Infantry (SoI) members in four of the sub-districts of Hawijah, Iraq - Zaab, Abassi, Riyadh and Hawijah city - are currently participating in this program, which teaches students up to a 3rd to 4th grade reading level.

"Education is the foundation to rebuilding," Dr. Nehad told the audience, which included close to 100 of Hawijah's SoI students in the program in Hawijah. "You should be proud of what you are accomplishing here and know that you are setting the example for your country to follow," he said.

According to its Ministry of Education, 5.6 million Iraqis are illiterate —30 percent of the population in Hawijah falls into that category.

The pilot program was envisioned by Gen. David Petraeus, the commanding general of the Multi-National Force – Iraq, and is being facilitated by Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 87th

Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division. Its initial design is to prepare SoI members for transition into the Iraqi security forces. The application process for both the Iraqi police and its army requires applicants to be literate.

The program kicked off in Hawijah, June 15, and is already fulfilling the dreams of some participants.

"I do not have the words to explain this great feeling I have when I was able to write and show my family my name for the first time," Abdulkarem Khalif Faris, 24, said. "It was like flying. I want to thank God and my government for this chance."

Faris had to quit at the elementary school level to help his family farm in this agricultural based economy. He hopes to apply to the Iraqi Police Academy in Kirkuk City when the 4-month program ends.

Hawijah Mayor Sabah Khalaf Ali praised the combined efforts of the CF and ISF for the security gains measuring around a 90 percent reduction in violent attacks against CF, ISF and its citizens in this region which "will now allow us to focus our efforts on jobs and education," he said.

Iraqi Police Deliver Food to Zuwarijat

*Story and photos Courtesy of
Sgt. Daniel T. West, 41st Fire Brigade, PA Office*

Iraqi Police distributed bulk food products to citizens of the Zuwarijat district of al Kut as part of an outreach program to increase confidence in Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) July 3.

Supplies distributed at the event included rice, packets of noodles, canned goods and shelf-stable milk.

“The overall purpose of the humanitarian aid drop is to show that Iraqi Police (IP) are improving relationships with the community by distributing food that some cannot afford to purchase themselves,” said Staff Sgt. Matthew Martinez of the 511th Military Police Co., from Fort Drum, N.Y. “It helps with improving the trust of the people in their ISF.”

The event built on gains the ISF made with the populace since first operating in the area in late April. Security gains were evident immediately after occupying three security stations in the district.

“The security of the area has improved tremendously,” said Martinez. “There has not been a lot of activity from the area since the integration of IPs and Iraqi Army (IA) in April.”

This move into Zuwarijat marked the first time the ISF in Wasit province established a lasting presence in a district. Zuwarijat was chosen because it had historically been a Jaysh al Mahdi stronghold.

Just days after the occupation, people of the district began bringing food and water to the stations, and the ISF began to see an increase in tips from the populace, said IP captain, Hayder Adnan Ali Al-Saidy.

The progress was immediate, and the cooperation between the Iraqi army and IP continues to contribute to build security, said Martinez.

“Instead of working as two separate units they are functioning as one, which has helped improve the neighborhood a lot,” he said. After the food distribution, elements of the 511th, which helped provide security for the event, visited the three security sites in the district to evaluate the needs of the ISF members and assess the state of the stations. The people in the district did raise concerns about the delays they encounter at security checkpoints.

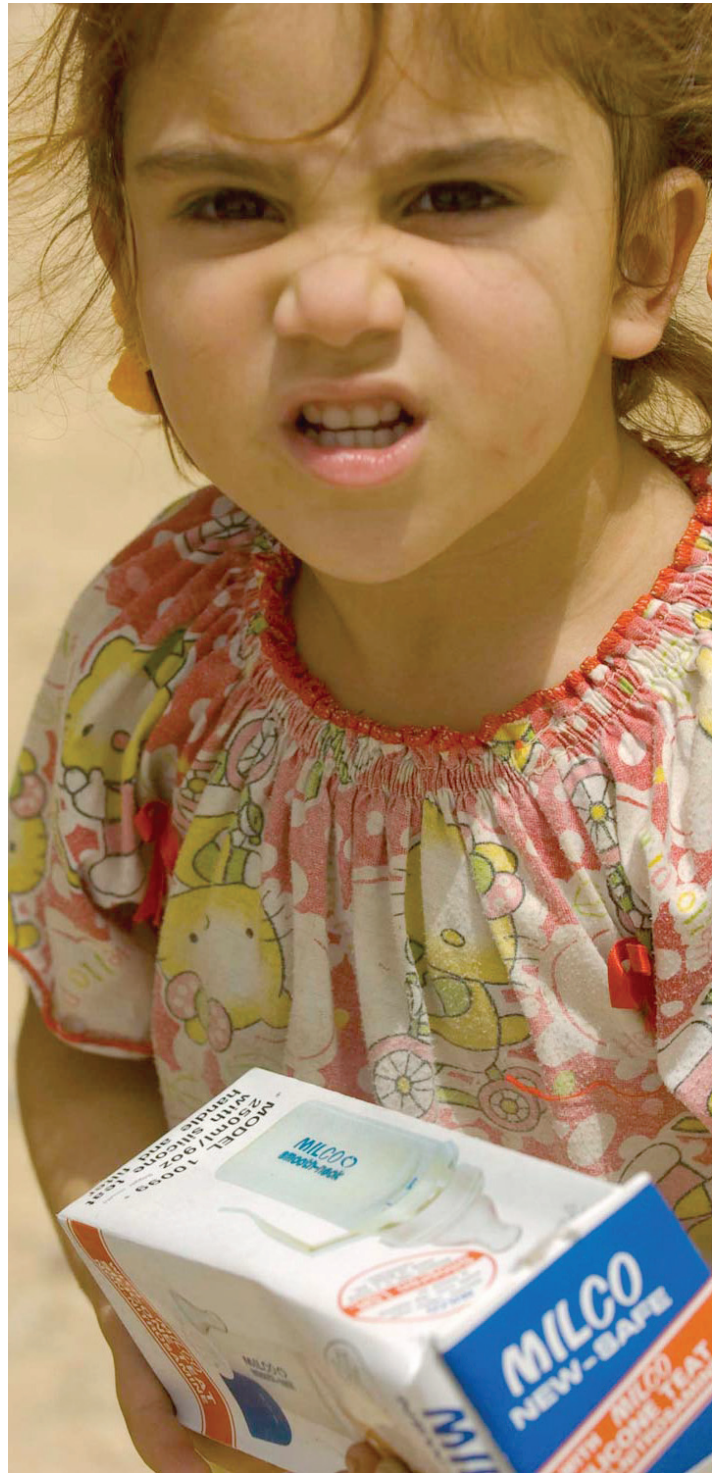
Staff Sgt. Erik Golden, of the 511th MP Co., emphasized the need to remain professional and for the police to work as a team to 1st Lt. Oday, commander of station 14 in Zuwarijat.

“We tell them ‘we’re here to save you and for your protection,’” Oday said. “Some are happy with our help, some are still angry. We can’t satisfy everyone.”

He remained positive about the lasting presence in Zuwarijat.

“There’s a good kind of people here,” he said. “Some are angry, many are nervous, and others are very confident when they deal with us ... Some are happy we are here to help protect them.

“We’ll do our jobs,” he said.



A girl clutches the milk she received from a humanitarian assistance drop performed by Iraqi police in the Zuwarijat district of Al Kut, Iraq.

Soccer Tournament Celebrates Sunni and Shia Unity in Yethrib

Story and pictures Courtesy of
1st LT Jonthan J. Springer,
1st Bde Combat Team, 101 Airborne Division



Shouket Ahmed Rahman, Mayor of Yethrib, Iraq, shakes the hand of a soccer player from Albu Faras during the opening ceremonies of the Yethrib nahi'a soccer tournament. For the first time since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, the Yethrib District is holding a multi-village soccer tournament to commemorate the substantial progress that has been made in regards to security and stability in the Salah ad Din province.

For the people of Yethrib, Iraq, it has been a long five years. For over half a decade, the Balad and Yethrib areas have been plagued with sectarian violence that has pitted rival Shiite Muslims and Sunni Arabs against one another.

The bloodshed between tribes, at times, had turned into all out warfare that was waged in palm groves and fields near the Tigris River.

In 2007, the conflict between the Muslim sects had reached a boiling point and many throughout Iraq, described the situation as having elements of civil war.

But since then, things have drastically changed.

Over the course of 2007, the "tribal awakening" began to spread throughout all of Iraq.

This awakening saw many high profile Iraqi sheiks turn their backs against the brutality of foreign led fighters and stand up, along with the coalition forces and Iraqi security forces, to take back the streets of their homeland.

Because of this dedicated partnership, the sectarian violence that once gripped the Balad and Yethrib region is

almost non-existent now, and attacks are down in almost all parts of the area.

With security improving, local citizens have begun taking

full advantage of the much improved stability in the country, and many have restarted the political process in their neighborhoods, villages and cities.

The heated sectarian strife that once played itself out on the streets of Balad, is now playing out on a modest soccer pitch.

On June 30th, teams from al Jamiah and Albu Faras, both small villages near Joint Base Balad, squared off on the soccer field to begin a two-week-long district soccer tournament aimed at promoting unity in the area. The soccer tournament is a first of its kind in an area of roughly 60,000 people. The tournament is expected to

run nightly through July 12th, and will pit over 24 teams from the district in sporting competition against each other for the coveted championship trophy.

Shouket, who was born and raised in Yethrib, said this soccer tournament marks a dramatic turning point for the local villagers in the district. He said this tournament is momentous because it brings various groups of people together, both Shia and Sunni, to rejoice and commemorate the substantial progress that has been made in the Salah ad Din province.

"This soccer tournament is all about unity," Shouket added. "In the past, many of these men were fighting each other with weapons ... but now, they are battling each other on the soccer field." To locals in the area, this soccer tournament is more than just a game. They say it is significant because it celebrates their return to normalcy.

"Right now, security is the best it's been in years ... this tournament is all about celebrating that," said Ahmed Dawud Suwod, a 38-year old villager from Albu Hishma, speaking through an interpreter.

COALITION COORDINATION

MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa



Canada National Day



CENCTOM Command Run



Pakistan Country Presentation at Exchange Club, Tampa



Singapore Chief of Defense Visiting CENTCOM



ION CENTER ACTIVITIES



France 'Fete National' Celebration



Operation Helping Hand



MOAA Lunch



C-17 Familiarization Flight





Afghan students cut lumber needed for a tool shed. The construction workshop is funded by the Commander's Emergency Response Program to develop construction skills among Afghan residents.

Students from the workshop learn how to use a circular saw.



Students at the Orgun-E construction workshop build wooden sheds as one of their hands-on projects.

