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Partnership between Iraqi, 1st Armored Division Soldiers helps keep provincial elections safe

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- No serious violent incidents marred Jan. 31's Iraqi provincial elections, said officials with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division who worked in concert with Iraqi security forces to keep the polling in their areas of operations safe.

The 17th Iraqi Army Division and Iraqi police were responsible for the security operations in the Mahmudiyah Qada area with 2nd BCT and other Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers in a supporting role.

Iraqi Staff Maj. Gen. Ali, commander of the 17th, and Col. Pat White, 2nd BCT commander, conducted a joint tour of the Mahmudiyah Qada polling stations on election day.



PFC EVAN LOYD

Iraqi Staff Maj. Gen. Ali, commander of the 17th Iraqi Army Division (right), discusses security procedures for a polling site in Yusifiyah, Iraq with Col. Pat White, commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division (second from left), and other 2nd BCT Soldiers, during Iraqi provincial elections, Jan. 31.

Ali checked each site's security from the outside perimeter, watching Iraqi Soldiers screen people entering the polling stations with handheld metal detectors provided by coalition forces. He offered words of encouragement and guidance to the troops as they worked.

“You are doing a great service to the people of our country by making it safe for them to come and vote,” said Ali. “Try to make sure it is as easy as possible for the people to get their say in the vote.”

Everywhere he went Ali was greeted by Iraqi citizens with giant smiles and the ink-stained fingers that showed they had marked their ballots.

“I am proud to have had the chance to vote for my leaders,” said one man as he showed off his purple fingertip.

In the Mada'in Qada, citizens voted in the first election in the largely agrarian region in four years, with 2nd BCT troops again in support of Iraqi forces, MND-B officials said.

Iraqi Staff Maj. Gen. Qassim, commander of the 9th Iraqi Army Division, toured the area's polling sites to inspect Soldiers and security. At one site he was joined by 2nd BCT Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Eyer in talking with troops and ensuring the polling was continuing smoothly.

The successful election followed several weeks of planning, rehearsals and site checks by the Iraqi and MND-B Soldiers, brigade officials said, and illustrate Iraqi security forces's increased professionalism and the confidence Iraqi citizens have in the ISF.

"These elections are a significant step in the process of rebuilding Iraq and the people look forward to a better future as the government of Iraq provides the citizens an environment to vote for new leaders," said Staff Sgt. Joel Townsend with the 2nd BCT's Striker K-9 unit.

“It is really a very democratic demonstration,” said Saad Tuaima. “The Americans had the gratitude of laying down the democracy in Iraq.”

Across the country, MND-B officials said, more than 14,000 candidates vied for 440 seats in 14 of 18 Iraq's provinces. Those elected to provincial councils work to manage budgets and employment within their regions.

(This article was compiled from reports from Pfc. Evan Loyd of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division Public Affairs Office and Multi-National Division – Baghdad releases.)

