

COALITION



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Chairman

France  Brig. Gen. Gilles Lemoine

Chief of Coalition Public Affairs Team

Dominican Republic  LTC José D. Arias


Coalition Bulletin Staff

Senior Editor

Albania  Cpt. Dritor Papa

Editorial Staff

USA  LTC. Michel C. Escudie

Pakistan  Maj. Ghazanfar Iqbal

Jordan  CPT. Ehab El-Saheb

Qatar  CPT. Hamad Al Kuwari

Editor's Note

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Cover Photo: Italian Pumas outside Kabul, Afghanistan.
Picture, Courtesy of: militaryphotos.net

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Design:

Cpt. Dritor Papa

EDITORIAL



In May of this year 2009, I was informed by the SNR of my Country, the Dominican Republic, Lt Col Freddy Soto, that I was selected to be the Deputy Director of Civil Public for the Coalition Partner Nations, I have to confess, with all sincerity, that it stunned me and that even though this selection was a great honor for my and my country, it gave me mixed feelings.

I was happy for being back to the United States, a country which has a very special place in my heart and that of my family, happy because being part of the Coalition gave me the chance to submerge my mind in that world of military excellence, fascinating technology, surprising new features and the possibility of putting the knowledge acquired during my time out of the Armed Forces to the service of the war against terrorism.

Almost at the same time, the usual questions arose. Would this mission be too difficult for me? Would the challenge that it represented, completely different from my previous experiences in the Army, overwhelming? Would I be able to well represent my country among all these extremely well prepared officers from all around the world? Those and some others came to my mind. After realizing that all those questions, motivated to me, instead of disturbing me, I accepted to come here and be part of one of the most resounding successes of the military history.

One of the responsibilities of the position is this magazine, we at Coalition Public Affairs Team, with the direction of Cpt. Dritor Papa, the Senior Editor, are immersed already in the task of taking ahead our magazine, and I want to share with you, some aspects related to it. In the first place, we are convinced that the magazine must continue with the present profile: "the success is untouchable" and even less in time of transition. Second we need the cooperation of all the members of the coalition, through our ideas, contributions, promotion of the magazine and everything that help us to continue with the success of the previous CPAT.

With respect to the content, in this edition we bring you information about the conference of Chief of Defense, celebrated in Washington, D.C. from June 21st to the 23rd, with the objective of promoting regional military cooperation, we have a very interesting contribution from the French Army Public Affairs about the French Tactical Battle Group deployed in the Kapisa province of Afghanistan, we also bring you other stories, that reflect the good work that the Coalition is performing around the world.

LTC José D. Arias
Dominican Republic
Chief of Coalition Public Affairs Team

Rotation of the Deputy Director Coalition Public Affairs Team (CPAT)

*By Captain Dritor Papa
Senior Editor of Coalition*

The Coalition Public Affairs Team bid farewell to the outgoing deputy director CPAT, LTC Muhammad Arif, from Pakistan, after having served in this office for two years.

During his tenure, LTC Arif made significant and very valuable contribution in organizing and managing the Public Affairs Office. He played a vital role in promoting and highlighting the contribution of the Coalition in the ongoing fight against terrorism.

LTC Arif will be remembered in our team for his good interpersonal skills, his ability to cooperate, his positive attitude and sense of humor that permitted him to have an excellent relationship with the team members and at the same time creating a good working environment.

His successor is LTC José Arias from the Dominican Republic. He holds an MBA in International Marketing from Fordham University and a Master in Military Art and Science from the United States Army War College, where he also completed the Command and General Staff Course.

He is married to Yolanda Taveras and have four children; Daryl, Sebastian, Paloma and Derek.

During his time in the armed forces he has served in different positions, among them as Director of Haiti Affairs for the Dominican Armed Forces, as sub-Director of Doctrine for the Dominican Army, Chief of Operations of the J-2 and Personal Assistant to the Director of Intelligence of the Dominican Armed Forces. He also, has been Director of Public Relations and Director of Marketing for various civilian companies.

CHIEFS OF DEFENSE CONFERENCE

Story and Pictures by
Gunnery Sgt. Nathaniel Garcia

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Commander of U.S. Central Command, Gen. David Petraeus, hosted the Gulf States Chiefs of Defense Conference from June 21-23. Senior defense officials from participating countries were there to foster regional military-to-military cooperation and increase high-level dialogue.

Senior leaders from USCENTCOM, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Iraq, Pakistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Oman, Jordan, Lebanon, U.A.E. and Yemen participated in country presentations, one on one meeting, and group discussions. Speakers and discussions examined current challenges to maintaining and strengthening security and stability in the Gulf States region. Some specific issues on the agenda include methods to enhance interoperability and military modernization, combating transnational terrorism and regional cooperative measures to enhance security.

“We all have a huge interest in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the missile technologies that can deliver them, efforts that have been ongoing by Iran,” said Gen. Petraeus. “Also efforts to deter further aggressive actions by Iran, who’s provocative action in continuing to arm, train, equip and fund Shia extremist groups that are active in Iraq, Lebanon, Gaza, Western Afghanistan and some other countries present. While the current situation in Iran may not lead to an immediate end to that kind of activity one might hope that over time the change that is ongoing there, perhaps, could lead to a reduction in that kind of destabilizing activity.”

“In response to that we have the very active effort to build partnerships together. We have bilateral relationships, the United States, with all of the countries in the Gulf region and the greater Arabian Peninsula and many of those are broadening into multilateral partnerships.”

In particular the partnership with Iraq Forces has resulted in the draw down of US Forces in major Iraqi cities.

“By the end of this month our combat bases will have been removed from all of the cities, leaving only those elements that work directly with the Iraqi Security forces the military and the police and a handful of coordination centers,” said Gen. Petraeus. “We believe this is the right thing to do not just because of



the US/Iraq Security Agreement but also the Iraqi Forces are already performing these missions. They are ready.”

The number of attacks is down in Iraq to about 10 to 15 a day now compared to 160 per day back in June of 2007, and the number of civilian deaths has been reduced to the lowest levels since 2003. U.S. and Coalition Forces in Iraq will focus on the belts around the major cities on the border areas, in partnership with Iraqi forces, added Gen. Petraeus.

Gen. Petraeus also encouraged the Gulf States to support Pakistan’s efforts in combating extremism and other threats.

“In Pakistan there is considerably greater effort and unity of effort by the people who reject the Taliban just as the people in Iraq came to reject Al Qaida in Iraq,” said Petraeus. “This is Pakistani Forces fighting for their country. This is the Pakistanis fighting against an extremist threat that poses a threat to Pakistan’s very existence.”

However Pakistan isn’t the only countries being threatened by extremist groups. More troops are deploying to Afghanistan to help eliminate the threat in that country.

“We are deploying 38,000 additional US Forces that will take us from about 30 or 31,000 at the beginning of this year to over 68,000 by this fall,” said Gen. Petraeus. “NATO and other partner nations are providing another 5 or more thousand.”

However, the dangers lie far beyond the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan, according to Dr. Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense. He also

encouraged countries from the Gulf Region to work together to bring stability and security.

To establish an environment of cooperation and regional cooperation, the conference offered military to military meetings held between countries.

During these military-to-military discussions, representatives from each of the countries were able to exchange ideas, build new relationships and reaffirm current partnerships as with Memorandums of Understanding. One such agreement was reaffirmed between Lt. Gen. John Allen, Deputy Commander of CENTCOM and Maj. Gen. Hamad Bin Ali Al-Attiyah, the Chief of Staff for the Qatari Armed Forces.

The Memorandum of Understanding establishes the terms and conditions of the partnering countries military.



the different countries is key to achieving security and stability in the region.

“The eight presidents that I have been privileged to serve all recognize that our security and prosperity



Maj. Gen. Ali Al-Attiyah added that signing the MOU was not necessary and more of a formality for U.S.’s and Qatar’s already long standing and mutually beneficial partnership.

Whether it was military presentations, one-on-one meetings, or Memorandum’s of Agreement, the building of relationships and cooperation among

are closely tied to the security and prosperity of the Middle East,” said Gates. “As we look ahead let’s pledge to keep these efforts strong and make them event stronger, forging ever-closer ties between your militaries and U.S. Central Command and with each other. All of this will bring a better and brighter future for all of our peoples.”

Albania sends 120 additional troops in Afghanistan

*By Captain Dritor Papa
Senior Editor of Coalition*

On 11 of August 2009, the additional contingent of the Albanian Armed Forces left the country in a ceremony held on this occasion.

In this ceremony were present the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania Prof. Dr. Sali Berisha, the Minister of Defense Mr. Gazmend Oketa, the Chief of Defense, Brigadier General Maksim Malaj and other distinguished guests from the foreign embassies accredited in Tirana, local authorities and family members of outgoing contingent.

During his speech, the Prime Minister Berisha stated: "As a NATO member we promised to increase our presence in Afghanistan, and today we are sending these additional 120 troops to Afghanistan".

These additional troops will be in Afghanistan in a very important time, just a few days ahead of the presidential elections. In this regard, this unit will deploy in RC West, Herat where they will join the Albanian troops already deployed there under ISAF, as part of the contingent led by Italy.

Prior to this contingent, Albania, after successfully pulling out from Iraq last December, was contributing to the Coalition with about 140 personnel that are engaged in three different NATO/ISAF missions in Afghanistan.

Most of the personnel are part of the Rapid Reaction Brigade; the leading unit of the Albanian Armed Forces, whose experience and professionalism makes them compatible with any other unit part of the Coalition.

- The first unit, a platoon of 22 personnel is currently the 13th Albanian contingent since 2002. This platoon is attached to a Turkish unit in Kabul, accomplishing sustainment and support tasks.

- The second unit, a medical element, attached to a Joint Medical Team in the framework of US-Adriatic Charter, has been operational since August 2005. Albanian AF contributes with 4 medics to the team deployed at the Kabul International Airport. Besides the medical element, the Albanian Armed Forces have 5 more military personnel working under the CSTC A (Combined Security Transformation Command – Afghanistan) and two other military personnel part of OMLT (Operational Mentor and Liaison Team) in the northern Afghanistan, under the German Command.
- The third unit, an infantry company consisting of 112 personnel is currently contributing as the third rotation since June 2007 together with an Italian unit. Speaking for the Coalition, the Albanian contingent Commander in Herat, Maj. Ferdinand Ziu would list some of the main duties that they are going through in the Forward Support Base where they are located, like providing security for the base personnel and patrolling. "We are very motivated because we know that is essential to accomplish our mission, to contribute to the peace and security in the world", Maj. Ziu said.

All units have a rotation based on a six month period. High level officials in Albania have stated that the Albanian Armed Forces` units will stay in Afghanistan as long as Coalition and NATO will stay there, in order to better contribute to its democracy, peace and stability.



Prime Minister Berisha during the ceremony



Albanian Officers in Afghanistan



Picture of the 4th Albanian contingent prior departure to Herat, Afghanistan

Central and South Asian States Promote Regional Cooperation

Story and Picture, Courtesy of: dushanbe.usembassy.gov

The Ministry of Defense of Tajikistan held a Media Day on August 5 to demonstrate the success of an ongoing Regional Cooperation 2009 exercise, which was taking place July 31 – August 9 in Dushanbe.

The exercise was part of the U.S. Central Command effort to promote regional cooperation hosted by the Ministry of Defense as part of ongoing Tajik-U.S. military cooperation.

and civilian organizations that would need to unite in the event of a disaster. RC 09 consisted of three days of preparation training, a five-day computer-assisted coordination exercise and a facilitated after-action review.

Computer-driven scenarios called upon participants to address natural and manmade disaster response,



U.S. and Tajik officers during the exercise

The purpose of Regional Cooperation 2009 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, was to strengthen coordination and response among the four participating countries of Central and South Asia to address regional disaster preparedness and security cooperation. The exercise's main themes included counterterrorism, crisis response and consequence management.

The exercise aimed to improve planning and coordination among national and international, military

border security and counterterrorism.

Central and South Asian states and the U.S. have been involved in the RC exercise series since 2001. This year marks the first time that Tajikistan has hosted the exercise. Around 240 military personnel from five participating countries—Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and the U.S.—plus observers from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan attended the event.

The French Tactical Battle Group Kapisa and the joint operation

AFTER THE RAIN

Story and Pictures Courtesy of the French Army Public Affairs

French Battle Group Task Force Kapisa ('Groupement Tactique InterArmes Kapisa' = GTIA Kapisa) is deployed in Regional Command - East, in the Kapisa province.

GTIA KAPISA has a joint component of a great diversity: a command and support group based at FOB TAGAB, with armored engineer and support modules. Infantry, engineer, artillery, cavalry and army aviation (ALAT) troupes are finely managed together to achieve a maximum efficiency.

The main equipment is 3 AMX 10 RC (reconnaissance light tanks), 113 VAB (armored



personnel carriers), 57 VBL (light armored vehicles) and 2 MPG (multi purpose engineer vehicles).

In cooperation with the Afghan National Army and other allies engaged the KAPISA battle group also called TF TIGER by the American RC-E command, was quite successful in taking control of the valleys, which allowed the establishment of the Coalition's permanent bases, inflicted a severe reverse to the insurgents and brought back safety for to the local population.

This victory also gave the opportunity to launch operation AFTER THE RAIN, carried out jointly by TF TIGER and one ANA battalion with the objective of occupying the ground and renew contact with the population.

OPERATION AFTER THE RAIN Departure time and progression

The first convoys moved forward to the heart of the Alasai valley, a quick glance overhead ensured the troops that they were not moving on their own: two helicopters KIOWA were maintaining a continuous protection, investigating on possible enemy positions, with the ability to engage them with dissuasive armament.

In the Northern beam of the Alasai valley, the infantrymen and sappers were performing reconnaissance mission along a routing to Dandawac then Sultankhel villages.

While using the metal detectors, the sappers are constantly exposed to ambushes. Their slow progress, due to the nature of this work, is done in a religious silence and a rigor without fail. The danger is permanent; a lack of vigilance would endanger sections of the engineer or infantry.

Interrupted by frequent investigations during which everyone retains his breath, the progression continues and is completed under a declining sun at Dandawac.

Night camp

While the night camp was about to be laid out, all APCs were settled in order to ensure a full 360 degrees monitoring, two 81MM mortars were facing the mountains. Remaining equipments were even more deterrent, with the 120MM mortars and the armored platoon, ready to engage. During this preliminary phase for the night, there was no place for relaxation; everyone knew that insurgents' attacks usually take place at the beginning of the night.



AMX 10 RC

Back on track and the contact with the civil population

The mission of the previous day was to open a way for ANA Weapons Company. The next day the Genie performed reconnaissance mission onto Sultankhel, in support of the ANA which progressed upstream. Monastic silence of rigor, blazing sun and permanent tension prevailed in this part of the valley never still penetrated.

The progress continued to the indicated village.

The KAPISA battle group, under the impulse of its commander, always tried simultaneously to carry out coercive and CIMIC action, explaining to the villagers the reasons of their presence, in order to have a better support from the population.

After having discussed with the chief of an open sky school, a CIMIC action was decided, for which was essential to remain in the background from ANA. Later, back to the camp TF TIGER enjoyed the success of this new mission in Alasai valley. But the occupation of the ground must be daily and tomorrow they will set out again patrol or operation to reinvestigate each recess of the valley. "These successful operations should not make us forget that the ground is hostile and how dangerous each operation is. The flags in Bern point it out painfully to us" testifies an alpine.



U.S. Kiowa helicopter



Sappers ahead VAB Infantry Platoon

New Courthouses Promote Rule of Law in Afghanistan

By Army 1st Lt. Lory Stevens
Special to American Forces Press Service
Courtesy of: defenselink.mil

The Army's top judge gathered with other U.S. and Afghan leaders in Bagram district July 11 to celebrate the groundbreaking of the first in a series of new courthouses slated to further the rule of law within Afghanistan's provinces.

"This courthouse is only a building, but what it stands for is justice," said Lt. Gen. Scott C. Black, judge advocate general of the U.S. Army, who travelled to the district in Parwan province to attend the ceremony.

People will be able to come to this place and solve their disputes peacefully, he said.

Abdul Ghafar Saeym, provincial chief judge; Abdul Basheer Yaqobi, chief prosecutor of Parwan; and members of Combined Joint Task Force 82 and Task Force Warrior gathered near the Bagram district center to lay foundation stones for the new district courthouse.

They also acknowledged the hard work and efforts of provincial and district government and justice officials.

"This courthouse will enable the people of Bagram district to resolve conflicts through and with their government," said Army Lt. Col. Jeffrey Hagler, staff judge advocate for Combined Joint Task Force 82.

It is impossible for the Afghan government to maintain legitimacy without a functioning justice system, noted Army Capt. Bruce Tyler, command judge advocate for Task Force Warrior.

A system of checks and balances is needed to eliminate crime and corruption, provide suspects a fair and just trial, prosecute criminals, and establish correctional facilities, not only to house convicted criminals, but also to rehabilitate those capable of reintegrating back into society, he said.

"As businesses start to thrive in Afghanistan, a system to handle property rights and disputes is needed or else businesses will not develop," Tyler said. He stressed the importance of a legal system to support Afghan National Police as the force works to secure the population.

Over the past year, the Commander's Emergency Response Program funded projects to stock district and provincial

courts in Kapisa, Parwan, Panjshir and Bamyán provinces with office supplies, Afghan constitutions, more than 30,000 rule-of-law comic books, 300 Qaza magazine sets, 500 judicial reference sets, 800 Afghan civics guides and 10 legal library sets.

Other efforts included the facilitation of radio broadcasts dedicated to rule-of-law issues and legal research courses for Kapisa and Parwan judges.

The task force's command judge advocate developed and produced two iterations of the Rule of Law Training and Evaluation Program, where district justice officials received training and mentoring concerning the entire justice process, from suspicion of a crime to trial.

With only one registered defense attorney in Kapisa and Parwan provinces, a pro bono clinic — in coordination with Albironi University Law School and the Afghan Bar Association — was initiated, allowing more Afghans to be represented by qualified defense counsel when accused of a crime.

In addition, five national attorneys were hired to move throughout the provinces to conduct training for judges, lawyers and tribal elders regarding ethics, criminal procedures and human rights.



Lt. Gen. Scott C. Black, judge advocate general of the U.S. Army, greets, Abdul Basheer Yaqobi, chief prosecutor of Parwan province, at the Bagram district center prior to a groundbreaking for a new courthouse in Afghanistan's Parwan province, July 11, 2009. U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Lory Stevens

COOPERATION

the Key to Success Along Afghan Border

*By Army Sgt. Matthew C. Moeller
Special to American Forces Press Service
Courtesy of: defenselink.mil*

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Since the fall of the Taliban in late 2001, Pakistan and Afghanistan not only have shared a border, but also a common threat. Using early breakdowns in communication along that border to their advantage, insurgents often would attack in one country, only to flee into the other with little or no resistance.

To prevent this, both countries, along with members of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, established regular border meetings, such as one held at Nawa Pass here July 5.

Taking place on the Afghan side of the border, the high mountain pass separating Afghanistan's Kunar

the area around the Nawa Pass historically was a safe haven for insurgents and smugglers. The area now serves as a crucial example of how cooperation among the three parties can lead to success along the border.

"The place is really a measuring stick of the success of what can happen when you have each side sharing security, sharing intelligence, and really understanding what the other is doing," Harrison said.

The success in security has allowed success in development, with the completion of a road improvement project funded by the province's provincial reconstruction



U.S. Army Capt. Michael Harrison, speaks with Pakistani army Capt. Fahad at Nawa Pass in Afghanistan's Kunar province, July 5, 2009. Pakistani, Afghan and U.S. military members met to discuss continued cooperation and information sharing along the mountainous pass. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Matthew C. Moeller

province and Pakistan's federally administered tribal areas is far removed from the metropolitan capitals of Islamabad and Kabul. Here, the three parties sit across from each other outside, talking of family, shared culture and, most importantly, security.

"We are fighting the same enemy," said Pakistani army Capt. Fahad. "They attack on one side and flee to the other."

"That's why we need to work together to stop them," said U.S. Army Capt. Michael Harrison, commander of 10th Mountain Division's A Company, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment.

Separated by only a waist-high barbed wire fence,

team. The project has opened the remote region to the rest of the province, Harrison said.

"The ability to do road construction is a direct result of that increased security," he noted.

Although Harrison admits not every border pass has reached the same level of cooperation as the two checkpoints along the Nawa Pass, he said there has been progress.

"Overall they've been very receptive," he said. "We've seen a great improvement over the past six months we've been here, and if we continue to have leaders like we do in the Nawa Pass, we'll continue to improve."

Key Taliban Leaders Captured, Attacks on Election Preparations Disrupted

Story and Pictures,
Courtesy of: defence.gov.au

Afghan National Security Forces and Australian-led coalition elements have successfully targeted and disrupted Taliban insurgent efforts to conduct attacks utilizing improvised explosive devices within central and eastern Oruzgan.

Improvised explosive devices pose a significant threat to election security in the province.

In a carefully conducted operation the first days of August, four Taliban leaders were captured in a major cordon and sweep operation



Special Operations Task Group members conduct interdiction and disruption tasks deep in Taliban territory with the aim to target their command and control networks and degrade their ability to facilitate the laying of improvised explosive devices.

in the Muzazai and Kushkel districts, near Tarin Kowt.

The first phase of the operation was swiftly executed and no shots were fired. The second phase resulted in several small skirmishes but there were no Afghan or coalition forces wounded during the engagement. Overall, Afghanistan and coalition security forces successfully executed a well coordinated operation that demonstrated the commitment and ability to provide security for the local population.

The Chief of Joint Operations, Lieutenant General Mark Evans said the capture of the four Taliban insurgent leaders would have a significant impact on the Taliban's ability to conduct attacks against Afghan and coalition forces leading up the 20th of August Presidential and Provincial elections.

"The operation has achieved a significant effect for the people in central and eastern Oruzgan province by removing dissident elements and this will assist in facilitating the conduct of peaceful elections. The psychological impact of the loss of these leaders on the Taliban network is also not to be understated," LTGEN Evans said.

"The four insurgents were active improvised explosive device facilitators and disruption to their actions in laying road-side bombs will be positive for the Afghan people."

There were no civilians injured as part of the operation.

The Taliban leaders and a number of insurgent support personnel have been processed and handed over to the Afghan authorities.

LTGEN Evans said the operation also discovered ammunition and IED components.

"Afghan and coalition forces have seized hand-grenades, Rocket Propelled Grenade rounds and launchers, magazines and ammunition, radios, batteries and IED components. Some have been recovered for further investigation while weapons and ammunition have been destroyed.

"The combined operation has undoubtedly had an impact on insurgent activities and plans to conduct attacks during the election. The protection of the people of Oruzgan has been aided by the actions taken. Insurgent leaders will continue to be targeted to ensure the safe conduct of elections."

The security operation has come after members of the Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force have been confronted with multiple explosive devices in the past week. There is a high threat of road-side bombs in Oruzgan province and Afghan and coalition forces remain on alert for a continuation of attacks leading up the election.



Combined Maritime Forces Issues

Piracy Warning to Mariners

*Story and Picture,
Courtesy of: navy.mil*

Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) warned mariners of an anticipated increase in piracy incidents when the southwest monsoon ends in the coming weeks, and reiterated that merchant mariners must continue to take proactive action to help prevent piracy attacks.

High sea states over the past few weeks in the Somali Basin have resulted in fewer attacks on vessels transiting the area but mariners must continue to remain vigilant.

“The prior preparation and vigilance of merchant mariners at all times of day and night is more important now than ever,” said Turkish Rear Adm. Caner Bener, commander, Combined Task Force (CTF) 151. “CTF 151 and other multinational maritime forces deployed to the region are successfully coordinating counter piracy efforts. While our ability to deter and disrupt attacks has improved over time, we are constantly adapting the way we do our business as the pirates adapt and modify their tactics.”

Using the internationally recognized transit corridor in the Gulf of Aden, reporting to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Organization and the European Union’s Maritime Security Center before transits, keeping a constant lookout, and embarking security teams are all recommended actions that will help reduce the risk of a successful attack.

Naval forces from CTF 151, EU, NATO and a number of other nations continue to coordinate their activities in an international effort to deter piracy and reassure the maritime community that every effort is being made to ensure the safe and lawful passage of maritime traffic throughout the region.

However, while more than 30 ships and aircraft from 16 nations continue to patrol the waters off the Somali coast, the closest military ship or aircraft may not be close enough to render assistance to a vessel under attack.

Bener recently met with task force commanders from NATO and the European Union to discuss coalition counter piracy operations

off the coast of Somalia. The task force commanders meeting was held at sea and focused on new strategies and future plans were development to more effectively and efficiently track down suspected pirates and to protect sea lines of communication.

“In this environment, the importance of merchant mariners as first line defenders against pirates is absolutely vital,” said Commodore Tim Lowe, deputy commander, Combined Maritime Forces. “The crews of those merchant vessels that have employed evasive maneuvering and other defensive measures to protect their ships and their cargoes have proven to be more successful at evading attack.”

Analysis continues to show that vessels travelling at slow speeds with low freeboard, failing to employ adequate lookouts particularly during periods of heightened risk, are ships that continue to be pirated off the Somali coast.

International naval forces will continue to patrol the waters off the Somali coast in an effort to deter, disrupt, and interdict pirates and help ensure lawful maritime order.



Members of the visit, board, search and seizure team and U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment 409 from the guided-missile cruiser USS Gettysburg (CG 64) respond to a Yemeni dhow that had been drifting at sea for two days due to engine problems. Gettysburg is part of Combined Task Force (CTF) 151, a multinational task force established to conduct counter-piracy operations. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Eric L. Beauregard/Released)

Coalition Transfers Maysan Base to Iraqi Army

Story and Picture,
Courtesy of: mnf-iraq.com

Coalition forces recently transferred a military base to Iraqi Security Forces near Majaar Al Kabir in a ceremony attended by key U.S. and Iraqi leaders in the Maysan province.

“This is a historic event for the citizens of the Maysan province and for all Soldiers operating in Iraq,” said Lt. Col. William Walski, commander, 2nd Squadron, 13th Cavalry Regiment. “We are proud of the relationships we have built with the Iraqi Security Forces and are confident of their ability to protect the citizens of Maysan province.”

During the ceremony, remarks were given by Muhammad Shia, governor of the Maysan province, and Maj. Gen. Richard Nash, commanding general, Multi-National Division - South.

A combined statement by the Iraqi governor and the U.S. general said, “Our two great sovereign nations have made excellent progress in completing the plan to build a stable and democratic Iraq. In accordance with the Security Agreement, Iraqi Security Forces have command and control of the security in Maysan, and U.S. combat forces will not stay in cities.”

The ceremony in southern Maysan, one of many National Sovereignty Day celebrations, was held at the Majaar Al Kabir sugar factory. More than 70 guests attended, including provincial government leaders, U.S. State Department Maysan Provincial Government Team members, local shaykhs, ISF and U.S. Army leaders from the 4th Brigade, 1st Armored Division “Highlanders.”

U.S. Soldiers stationed at the base, commonly referred to as the “Sugar Shack,” will now operate from Forward Operating Base Hunter in Maysan province.

There, they will continue to advise and assist ISF.

“The type of training we are doing has advanced from marching and marksmanship to staff training, intelligence and operations synchronization, advanced live-fire, crime scene management and site exploitation training,” said Maj. Lance Varney, brigade operations officer, 4th Bde., 1st Armd. Div.

A combined press conference with Governor Muhammad, Col. Peter Newell, commander, 4th Bde, 1st Armd. Div.; Staff Maj. Gen. Habib, commander, 10th IA Div.; and Staff Maj. Gen. Saad, Maysan province director of Police, completed the event.

“Participation by the governor, 10th IA commander and province Police leaders should give the people of Majaar Al Kabir confidence that their government is



U.S. Army Soldiers and Iraqi dignitaries celebrate the transfer of Combat Outpost MAK, commonly known as the Sugar Shack.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Brendan Stephens, 1st Armored Division.

focused on their safety and well-being,” said Varney.

Soldiers of the 3rd Bn., 41st IA Bde. will occupy the Majaar Al Kabir sugar factory, a sprawling industrial facility covering more than five acres.

In addition to housing the Iraqi Soldiers, the facility is a potential anchor for economic growth in the Maysan province.

In upcoming weeks engineers will conduct a formal site survey and upon completion, the lands will be transferred to the Iraqi receivership secretariat.

Humanitarian Help From the Hellenic (Greek) Composite Battalion in Afghanistan to Kabul's Deaf-Mute School

*By LTC Evangelos Anogeianakis
Senior National Representative of Greece in
USCENTCOM*

The humanitarian help contribution from the Hellenic Composite Battalion in Afghanistan to Kabul's deaf-mute school started on March 2009. 250 children are attending the school which is located in the center of Kabul. On a weekly basis (every Saturday) a number of approximately 10 students, some representatives and some professors are hosted by the Battalion. During the visits lunch is provided to the Afghan kids and their chaperons who have the opportunity to enjoy video projects about geographic, historical and civilization information with the Battalion personnel. Afghan kids have fun with the Battalion's entertainment means playing soccer, ping-pong, board games etc. School gifts are presented to the kids and commemorative presents to their teachers. On May 19th 2009, Greek Battalion's Commander and some officers visited the aforementioned school where they donated 21 marker boards, soccer balls and they provided food goods for the coverage of school needs.



Greek officers of the Hellenic Composite Battalion with Afghan children during a visit to Kabul 's deaf-mute school.





A child's smile to the Greek lieutenant absolutely proves the significance of the humanitarian aid. Picture from the Greek Office in USCENTCOM