

NEWS STORIES

5/7 Visits MOH Battle- site



Lieutenant Colonel Kirk Dorr, 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment commander, places a note and his squadron coin in a section of the wall where the April 4, 2003 battle took place Feb. 6.

Photo and Story By:

Spc. Jared S. Eastman

1st BCT-A, 3rd ID, USD-C

BAGHDAD — Soldiers of 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment visited the battle site where Sgt. 1st Class Paul R. Smith fought for his Soldiers by Baghdad International Airport, Feb. 6. The visit was meant to not only teach young officers the history of a fellow Dog-Faced Soldier, but to give them insight into how they should develop their own Army careers.

"To stand there in that very same

place," said Maj. Michael Sullivan, 5/7 Cavalry plans officer and the guide for the tour, "And it still looks very much like it did on that day in April 2003, you feel like you're in touch with these people, you can kind of feel what he did- his spirit is there. His story has played a special part in what I've done as an officer here, I always keep it in the back of my mind that he is the epitome of sacrifice and of what a Mame Soldier is."

The idea had been in the 5/7 Cavalry command group's minds since they landed in country this past January. They were trying to find a way to professionally develop leaders as well as develop their knowledge of the history of the area.

"One of the ideas that came up first from my perspective was that we were close to the Baghdad International Airport where a fellow Dog-Faced Soldier earned his Medal of Honor," said Maj. Sullivan. "I'm a huge history fan, and one of the great things about being in 3rd Infantry Division is its storied history. Sgt. 1st Class Smith was the 51st Medal of Honor winner for 3rd ID, his action are legendary, and the fact that he sacrificed himself to save so many of his Soldiers makes me hold him in great

regard. When he backed that M113 into the corner and got up into the turret, he knew that was it. To me, that epitomizes what a Mame Soldier is. You realize that he sacrificed himself for his Soldiers, but you also realize in the back of his mind there were thoughts of his Family too, and he must have realized when he did these actions that there was a chance he wasn't going to see them."

Although the battle site now has a road running through it as well as some recent construction, the tower and the broken gate hinges which Sgt. 1st Class Smith led a Bradley through are still there. A small plaque hangs on a broken wall describing the events that took place there.

"The towers and walls that still have bullet holes in them was very memorable," said Cpt. Erik McFarlane, 5/7 Squadron signal officer, "It cements it in your mind that something really did happen here. A lot of the site has new construction and has been glossed over, but the tower with its bullet holes really leaves an impact on you.

We led that charge up to Iraq," he said, "This is the fourth tour for the division. Just the American Soldier in general, it's that dog determination that 'I'm going to stay, I'm going to fight, and you're going to bring it and I'm going to fight you no matter what.'"



Major Michael Sullivan, 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment plans officer, plays 'Amazing Grace' during a moment of silence while visiting the Sgt. 1st Class Paul R. Smith battle site Feb. 6.



Dog Team, 5/7

Assist ISF

Photos and Story By:

Spc. Jared S. Eastman

1st BCT-A, 3rd ID, USD-C

BAGHDAD — The 'Dog-Faced Soldiers' of Apache Troop 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment led by Iraqi Security Forces conducted a ground patrol Feb. 1, through Muhalla 830 with a wagging tail in tow. Sergeant First Class Xanny, a four-year-old working dog followed by handler Staff Sgt. William Morton, the kennel master at Contingency Operating Station Falcon, joined the patrol to search for weapon caches.

"The dogs are phenomenal," said Cpt. Evan Davies, A Troop 5/7 Cavalry commander. "It is the first thing that the Iraqis request."

The ISF forces requested the dog team to not only aid them in searching for weapons caches, but to also check key locations that have been troublesome in the past.

"We're handing everything back over to the Iraqis so we are utilizing the dogs to search for weapons caches, IEDs and VBIEDs along the routes," said Staff Sgt. Morton. "Today we went out and they pointed out some key places where they have found stuff prior."

However, the dogs serve more than one purpose.

"Their presence out there," began Cpt. Davies. "Whether they are searching for something or not is important, the ISF understands why those dogs are out there, but the civilians just see an American dog out there and they know it's going to find something."

As the ISF and Soldiers patrolled the streets and held conversation with the

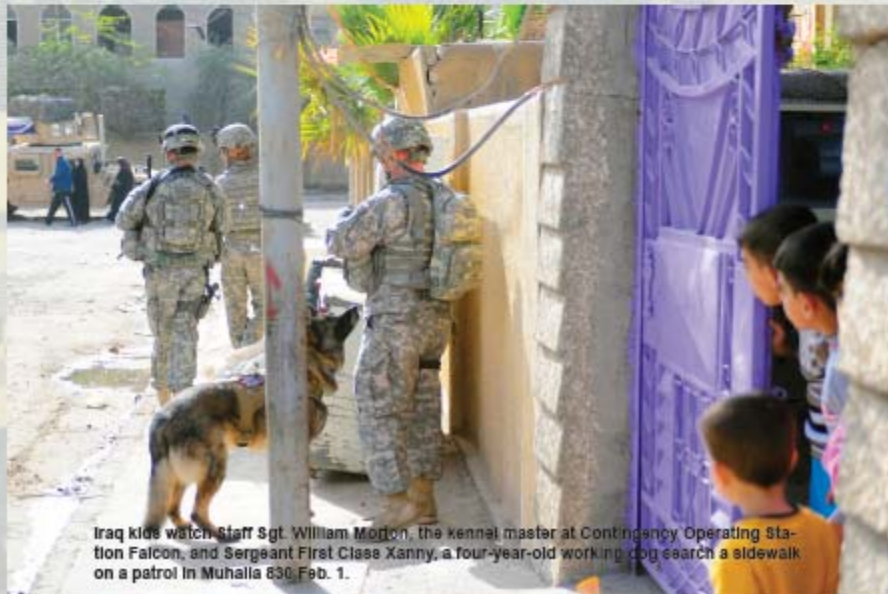
people of Iraq, the dog and handler are, as Staff Sgt. Morton would put it, playing.

"This is how they have fun and play," he said. "Every time we start to get our gear on they know it's time to go out and do something. The ISF think these dogs are the best thing in the world, they love how trained they are and how they listen very well."

However, Xanny is more than a tool to Staff Sgt. Morton, he's also a friend.

"Sometimes he can be hard-headed," Staff Sgt. Morton grinned. "But it's great having him around. He's someone that I can always count on, he listens to me and I can say whatever I want to and he doesn't say anything back. He's always there whenever you need someone to lean on or anything else. He's a great tool, a great asset, but a great friend at the same time."

Staff Sgt. William Morton, the kennel master at Contingency Operating Station Falcon, and Sergeant First Class Xanny, a four-year-old working dog search an abandoned building while on a patrol in Muhalla 830 Feb. 1.



Iraq kids watch Staff Sgt. William Morton, the kennel master at Contingency Operating Station Falcon, and Sergeant First Class Xanny, a four-year-old working dog search a sidewalk on a patrol in Muhalla 830 Feb. 1.

Humanitarian Aid Drop Brings Smiles to Sadiyah

Fifth Brigade, Second Federal Police Division policemen and a 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment Soldier pass off blankets during a humanitarian aid drop conducted in Sadiyah Feb. 10.



Photo and Story By:

Spc. Jared S. Eastman

1st BCT-A, 3rd ID, USD-C

BAGHDAD — Soldiers from 5th Brigade, 2nd Federal Police Division and 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment visited Sadiyah Feb. 10, to hand out food, blankets and heaters to citizens of Iraq. The joint operation, Operation Helping Hands, allowed the Iraqi Security Forces an opportunity to help the local community.

"We appreciate the help from the American Forces today for the operation," said Brig. Gen. Faisal Malikmhsen Al Zamili, 5/2 FP commander, "Especially when they are giving humanitarian aid to the Iraqi citizens. There are a

lot of poor Families that live here, and they really need the help. It proves that we are all one team, one family, and we are all working towards the same objective."

The ISF and 5/7 Cavalry asked the local shaykh to organize the poorest 100 citizens of Sadiyah to receive the humanitarian aid drop.

"Today we wanted to further our relationship with the 5/2 FP and do a joint humanitarian aid job right outside of COS Falcon," said 1st Lt. Michael Angeli, 721st Civil Affairs Team chief. "The best part of it is that you show the people of Iraq that don't have much that the coalition forces and ISF care about them still."

This is the first of many planned humanitarian aid drops for 1st Brigade Combat Team-Augmented.

"As the ISF takes over from the coalition forces we'll be doing more joint aid drops

and more joint operations with the ISF," said Angeli.

However, the most amazing part of the operation for Brig. Gen. Faisal was 5/7 Cavalry's ability to perform both assistance and protection.

"They are giving humanitarian aid with the friendly forces as well as full spectrum joint operations with Iraqi Forces on the battlefield," he said, "To present help for the citizens of Iraq, as well as protect them."

The benefits, 1st Lt. Angeli said, were substantial.

"I believe it strengthens their confidence in their young democracy they have," 1st Lt. Angeli continued. "It also gives them faith that the Iraqi Police are there to help them, not only as an acting force, arresting bad people, but a community police as well."



Elections Increase Confidence in ISF

Iraqi men wait in line to vote outside a polling site in Baghdad during the parliamentary elections March 7, despite multiple improvised explosive device attacks throughout the morning. Iraqi federal and local forces patrolled the area throughout the day to keep insurgent attempts from reaching the polling site.



Photos and Story By:

Pvt. Emily V. Knitter

1st BCTA, 3rd ID, USD-C

BAGHDAD — Hours before election sites opened March 7, Iraqi Security Forces and their U.S. military counterparts patrolled the streets in search of improvised explosive devices among the roadside trash and any evidence of enemy activity.

Insurgents attempted to disrupt the election process by planting more than 30 devices in the Baghdad area. Despite the attacks, more than 50

percent of registered voters still turned out, said Lt. Col. Kirk Dorr, 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry commander.

"I think it was a last-gasp attempt by these extremist groups to intimidate the populace," said Dorr. "They know, like our counterparts know, that this is really their last shot to interrupt the democratic roadmap for this country — and they failed."

The general elections were the

second in Iraqi history, and the first time Iraqi soldiers and police officers have had a large-scale opportunity to prove they are capable of protecting the citizens of Iraq without the help of U.S. forces. Throughout the day, ISF units responded to insurgent attacks and kept the polling sites secure.

"Every day, we have new training developments for the soldiers according to the changes in attack methods," said Brigadier General Faisal Malik Mohsin al Zamili, 5th Brigade Federal Police commander. "A lot of IEDs went off today in our sector, but

the polls opened in the morning. A family of seven was inside when the device went off, but all of them survived the blast and were pulled from the wreckage with only minor injuries by Iraqi firefighters and ISF first responders.

"Two civilians lost their lives as they were walking by on the street when [the building] exploded, but the family inside the building [was safe]," said al Zamili.

That the insurgents chose to attack a local home, instead of a more public location, is a direct credit to the security in place by federal and local Iraqi forces prior to and during the elections, said Dorr.

"Fifth brigade, 2nd Military Police created that bubble around the polling sites that allowed the citizens to cast their votes safely," said Dorr. "I think that's a huge compliment to the approach we took to create that security zone. I think the insurgents recognized that and decided to take another avenue; a very vicious avenue, which is to go directly to a residential location and detonate a device like that."

al Zamili said the first responders and firefighters were the reason the rescue of the trapped family was so successful. While the loss of life is tragic, he said the attack proved the terrorists only desire to harm the populace; reason enough for all citizens to cooperate with

"I think it's a proud day and that although we did see some loss of life, which is a tragic situation, it's not going to stop this country's march forward."

security forces in finding the terrorists.

The attacks, seen throughout the Baghdad area, were notably smaller and less devastating than attacks in past

years, said Dorr. "Predominately, the insurgents have transitioned to a lower scale, lower impact explosive device. They are smaller devices used, not so much to inflict casualties, but to intimidate, to cause fear among the populace," said Dorr. "I think we are seeing a turning point here because the insurgents' strength is diminishing over time. You can see it every day; you can see it as the Iraqi Security

they were all outside the polling site, which is a positive point for our forces and is also evidence that the security forces are holding ground and securing the polling sites as needed, if we compare how many IEDs exploded today and how many people got injured — just a couple were injured — which is a good thing."

Two people were killed during the largest attack inside al Zamili's area of operations. Attackers destroyed a house soon after

Iraqi Army and first responders work together to rescue a local family trapped inside their home, which was destroyed by an explosion that occurred during the Iraqi parliamentary elections March 7. Two victims outside the home were killed by the blast but because of the quick response by local and federal Iraqi forces, the entire family of seven was saved.



Forces are getting more powerful.

"The insurgent's capabilities of carrying out large scale attacks, with strategic impact, are getting less and less," he said.

As the day progressed, fewer and fewer explosions were heard throughout the city. As the afternoon continued, more and more people continued to fill the streets, enthusiastic about casting their votes.

Dorr gave some credit to the insurgents for the populace's decision to participate in the elections.

"When the Iraqi people see that kind of innocent suffering, and the targeting of innocent civilians, I think at this juncture they are tired of it," he said. "They are absolutely tired of it and they want another option. And they are going to stand up and vote for representatives for whom bringing back security is their number one priority."

The course of events didn't surprise al Zamili.

"It was just like we expected," he said. "The enemy tried their attacks in the morning, to bring the civilians' motivation down so they don't walk to the polling site and vote. But the enemy was not successful with that. That is why we saw groups of people walking to the polling

forward, and the freedom that this country enjoys now is directly a result of the blood and sweat of the Iraqi Security Forces," said Dorr. "At this point, not only are the Federal Police truly in the lead, the capability of this organization, compared to what it was, is absolutely phenomenal and they are prepared today to carry out this mission unilaterally.

"There are some enablers that they are working on to assist their forces, but for the most part they are standing on their own two feet," he said. "Today was a fine example of that."

sites."

To al Zamili, it doesn't matter which candidate wins or loses in the elections: March 7 represents a new future for Iraq.

"Change is not easy, it's difficult; but a slow pace is better," he said. "The government is better than it was before. The past elections created the government that is in power today, and these elections will improve the new government in the same way."

To Dorr, the big winners were the ISF and the Iraqi people.

"I think it's a proud day and that although we did see some loss of life, which is a tragic situation, it's not going to stop this country's march

As the elections drew to a close, the streets filled with children kicking soccer balls amongst the trash. On the buildings and fences surrounding them, campaign posters covered virtually every open space. Engrossed in their moment, the children ignored the collage of faces and slogans; a sea of images that one day could be replaced by their own to shape a new direction for Iraq.

Election Day Quick Facts

Around 6,200 candidates nominated by 86 political entities are vying for 325 seats in the Council of Representatives, up from 275 seats in the 2005 election. Among the total are 1,718 women running for 81 seats.

* 18.9 million registered voters in a nation of approximately 30 million people.

* 300,000 poll workers in more than 50,000 polling stations, each one serving up to 420 voters; 100,000 ballot boxes procured for the election.

* 16 countries hosting voting for Iraqis living abroad, estimated to number up to 2 million

* Iraq's security forces numbering 670,000 soldiers, police, and others, supported by 96,000 U.S. troops, are providing security for the elections.

* In the last parliamentary election in December 2005, the initial distribution of seats in the previous 275-seat chamber was as follows:

- United Iraqi Alliance (Shi'ite coalition) - 128 seats
- Kurdish Alliance (Two Kurdish parties) - 53 seats
- Iraq Accordance Front (biggest Sunni bloc) - 44 seats
- National Iraqi List (Iyad Allawi's group) - 25 seats
- National Dialogue Front (Saieh al-Mutraq) - 11 seats
- Kurdish Islamic Union - 5 seats
- All the rest - 9 seats

SOURCES: Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (HEC), United Nations
Photo By: Spc. Jared S. Eastman



Iraqi women leave a polling site in Baghdad after voting during the parliamentary elections March 7, despite multiple improvised explosive device attacks throughout the morning. Iraqi federal and local forces patrolled the area throughout the day to keep insurgent attempts from reaching polling sites.