

IRAQI DESTINY

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Mission: Redeployment



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101st helps celebrate Iraqi Army birthday

by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson
101st Abn. Div. (AAslt.) PAO

Leaders from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and members of the Mosul Interim Government met Tuesday in Mosul to activate Iraqi soldiers and celebrate the Iraqi Army's 83rd birthday.

Two Iraqi Civil Defense Corps Battalions and one Iraqi Border Police Battalion were activated in a ceremony at Camp Claiborne, in front of a crowd of Coalition soldiers and former Iraqi soldiers.

The ceremony kicked off with comments by Lt. Col. Donald Fryc, commander, 2nd Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). Fryc's soldiers trained the troops of the ICDC and IBP.

"It's is our intent that you will witness firsthand today the incredible strides forward taken by both the 101st and our partners in the (ICDC) and (IBP) toward a shared destiny that shows us a past of promises fulfilled, and gives us cause to place even more hope in a strong, prosperous and secure future," Fryc told the crowd.

The activation took place when Fryc handed off each battalion's flag (called colors), to the unit leaders.

That was followed by words from Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander of the 101st, who spoke about the tradition of the Iraqi military.

"The Iraqi Army has a long, rich history," Petraeus said.

"Iraqi soldiers are reestablishing traditions of selfless service to the nation and to all Iraqis; helping secure Iraq's borders and sovereignty and helping defend against terrorists trying to disrupt the great progress achieved in the new Iraq since liberation," he said.

After the ceremony, everybody assembled and ate cake to celebrate the Iraqi Army's birthday.



Spc. Joshua Hutcheson

Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Ghamin Al Basso, governor, Ninevah Province, cut the cake at a ceremony where two Iraqi Civil Defense Corps battalions, and one Iraqi Border Police battalion were activated and the 83rd birthday of the Iraqi Army was celebrated.

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On the cover: A team of soldiers from 8th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) fold the rotor blades back and secure them to the tail of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from the 6th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, at a port in Kuwait. The helicopter will then be shrink wrapped with plastic to protect it while it is shipped home. Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Swart.

101st tackles logistics of historic redeployment

by Pfc. Thomas Day
40th PAD

CAMP DOHA, Kuwait -- The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), which landed in theatre in February of 2003, is beginning its 10,500 mile, three-month odyssey back home to Fort Campbell, Ky., with a massive transfer of troops and equipment by air and land.

Brig. Gen. Jeffery Schloesser, 101st Airborne Division assistant division commander (support), has overseen the division's redeployment operations in Kuwait, which serves as the primary staging area for all equipment and personnel returning to the U.S. The 101st Airborne Division's first redeployment convoys arrived shortly after the beginning of the new year and are currently washing their equipment, vehicles and just a few of the division's 200-plus aircrafts that will be shrink-wrapped and sent back to Fort

Campbell.

"This is the largest operational move of soldiers, Marines and Coalition forces that anyone really remembers, and that goes all the way back to Normandy in World War II," said Schloesser, who arrived in Kuwait from Iraq in late December.

Roughly 20,000 soldiers with or attached to the 101st Airborne Division are scheduled to be sent home by early March. Approximately 4,000 "Screaming Eagles" who aren't essential to the redeployment of equipment through Kuwait will fly directly back to the United States from Iraq, with a stop in Incirlik, Turkey.

The next homes for the majority of the 101st Airborne, albeit briefly, will be Camps Doha, Udairi and Arifjan in Kuwait.

Around 6,000 vehicles and 1,600 containers will pass through the bases from the division. There the battle-tested soldiers are readying their vehicles and equipment for U.S. Customs inspections.

"If anybody could be prepared, we are

prepared," Schloesser remarked. "The Kuwaitis on post have bent over backwards for this. They have allowed us to reopen camps that were only open for the first part of the war back in the March-April time frame.

"They have allowed us to take a good amount of the commercial shipping port facilities that they have and dedicated them for our military and the same thing goes for their airports."

Soldiers who think they are approaching the finish line will find one last steep mountain to climb. No vehicle can board the ship destined for Fort Campbell via Jacksonville, Fla., without having been thoroughly washed, a process that can take around six hours a vehicle.

"I've spent a lot of time on wash racks, on aircraft parking positions as well as on the base camps and there is not a Screaming Eagle down here who is not motivated," Schloesser said. "Its natural as

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Staff Sgt. Mark Swart

Pfc. Sasha Bolt, 8th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) applies padding to the side of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from the 6th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, in Kuwait. The helicopter will then be shrink wrapped with plastic to protect it during shipping.

Slingload operations get units on their way home

by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson
101st Abn. Div. (AAst.) PAO

On a remote mountaintop in Northern Iraq, 10 miles east of the town of Tallafar, soldiers are getting ready to leave their outpost and join fellow soldiers in Mosul, and they're doing it the way soldiers in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) have been doing it for years: by air.

Soldiers from both B Company and Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 501st Signal Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) set up a retransmission site eight months ago on a mountain close to Highway One to boost communications between convoys and units headquarters, said Sgt. Lyle Follmer, radio team chief, HHC, 501st Sig. Bn.

Due to the nature of their job, the soldiers

had to find the area with the best reception. That area ended up being on a mountain that's almost inaccessible by driven vehicles, said Capt. Brian North, commander, B Co. 501st Sig. Bn.

Many convoys were coming under attack from ambushes and Improvised Explosive Devices. By setting up the retrans site as an FM radio relay to extend the division's communications abilities, the soldiers of the 501st Sig. Bn. were able to keep vital lines of communication open between soldiers on the road and reinforcements at bases, thereby saving lives.

"The attacks (on soldiers) continued, but the deaths ceased," Follmer said. "Not another soldier has died since we've been out here."

After eight months of living on a barren, rocky mountain, the soldiers' mission ended. So they packed up and left. But leaving wasn't as easy as loading up the back of a Humvee and driving away.

That's where two CH-47 Chinook helicopters came in. In three trips the large helicopters were able to carry four Humvees, two with Remote Access Units attached to them, a generator, and fuel and water containers, from hooks attached to the underbelly of the helicopters. Smaller items such as a refrigerator, large-screen TV, air conditioning unit and boxes of Meals, Ready to Eat were loaded inside the birds.

"(The Chinooks carried) everything the soldiers required to live up here for seven or eight months," North said.

A team of eight soldiers from the 501st arrived at the retrans site the night before the move. They worked together to prepare and rig the loads for transportation. They had to place nets underneath all the heavy equipment and vehicles and make sure that the ropes that would allow the

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Spc. Joshua Hutcheson

Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company and B Company, 501st Signal Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) prepare to hook a humvee up to a CH-47 Chinook helicopter. The 501st slingloaded equipment from a remote outpost on top of a mountain in preparation for redeployment.

Soldiers' city building efforts culminate in city hall opening

by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson
101st Abn. Div. (AAslt.) PAO

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held Monday in the town of Tal Kayf, honoring the opening of its new city hall. The ceremony was attended by soldiers from B Company, 3rd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), and the 502nd Inf. Rgt. including the 2nd Brigade commander, Col. Joseph Anderson.

The ceremony marked the culmination of effort the soldiers of B Company put in to build the town up and help it grow, said Capt. Kevin Williams, the company's commander.

Since arriving in May, the soldiers have spent \$100,000 on projects around the town.

Among the projects, they funded the repair of six schools, the police station, and sewer system, worked on water projects to bring fresh water to the population of 20,000, and began to refurbish existing medical clinics.

Their original mission didn't include anything beyond security patrols in the town, but the need to help the local governing body quickly became apparent. The soldiers of B Company had a chance to help the town residents and they took it, Williams said.

"We came out here initially to provide security," Williams said. "Now, basically we're trying to make sure their government and infrastructure can stand on its own. This city hall symbolizes the final step. It's a capstone to all we've done here."

Besides helping repair buildings in Tal Kayf, the soldiers also helped with town elections. They organized the process as well as the weekly meetings held by the city council and leaders of Bravo Company, said 2nd Lt. Jacob Moulin, the company's civil military operations officer.

"This town has come a long way," he said.

After helping organize the town council, the soldiers took the final step of setting up a place for the council to operate out of.

Using \$25,000 supplied by the Coalition Provisional Authority, the soldiers helped turn an old fire truck parking garage into the city hall in two months.

"It was really just an abandoned building, we basically built it from the ground up," Williams said.

"It was pretty much gutted, torn up and useless," agreed Moulin.

The walls were unfinished, the windows were broken, and there was no furniture, water or electricity, Williams said.

A local contractor was hired by the 101st Civil Military Operations Center to work on the project. The workers added windows, tiles for the floor, finished the walls, built a garage and added furniture.

The contractor worked with the soldiers and the local government to facilitate the project and made sure that everything ran smoothly, even when conditions such as weather and on-site problems affected the operation.

"It was a good working relationship," he said. "I'm definitely satisfied, especially considering all the obstacles (the contractor) had to defeat."

The next project for the soldiers of B Company is to focus more on the town's medical clinics. They want to get more beds, medicine and provide better conditions for the patients and workers, Moulin said.



Spc. Joshua Hutcheson

Capt. Kevin Williams, commander, B Company, 3rd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Wathah Gorgiss Elliass, mayor of Tal Kayf, cut the ribbon symbolizing the opening of the town's city hall, while Col. Joseph Anderson, commander, 502nd Inf. Rgt. looks on. Rebuilding and refurbishing the abandoned fire station and turning it into the town's seat of power took two months and almost \$25,000 and was supervised by soldiers from B Company.

Screaming Eagles rebuild village school in Kanash

By Pfc. Chris Jones
40th PAD

KANASH, Iraq -- They came, they saw, they Air Assaulted, they fixed a school.

Soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) began reconstruction efforts Nov. 17 at a school in Kanash, a small village outside Mosul. The project followed a November Air Assault on Kanash by 101st soldiers.

The raid on the village turned out no signs of illegal activity, but 101st commander Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, who had joined his troops on the raid, met with the local sheik and learned the local school was in poor condition, a prime target for Coalition help. Petraeus agreed to help renovate the school -- and so an operation that once began with M-4 rifles and M-249 machine guns became a mission of goodwill to offer Iraqi children a more comfortable school, conducive to learning.

Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 502nd, led reconstruction efforts on the school. Capt. Scott Todd, HHC commander, hired the Al Hasaka Company to head reconstruction efforts. Together, soldiers and the Iraqi contractors spent more than four weeks working on the school.

Rebuilding efforts were split into four categories -- construction, sanitation, electrical and furnishings. By late December, the facility's walls had been rebuilt and repainted. The windows were replaced, sewage systems were refurbished -- new toilets, sinks, heaters, fans, desks, light fixtures and chalkboards were purchased and installed. Altogether, the project cost just shy of \$10,000, Todd said.

Wednesday morning, these renovations were presented to Petraeus in a ribbon-cutting ceremony in front of the school. A swarm of bright-eyed children enclosed Petraeus as he cut the ribbon, signifying the genesis of the new Kanash School System.

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loads to be carried by the helicopters, (called sling legs) would be able to support the weight of the loads.

"It wasn't a hard job because I had plenty of time and squared away people to help me out," said Staff Sgt. David Burnam, extension section sergeant, B Co. 501st Sig. Bn.

To slingload the equipment soldiers had to hook up the equipment using rings connected to the sling legs. The helicopters slowly lowered to within a few feet of the ground allowing the soldiers to make the attachment as quickly as they could. Then the birds took off eastward.

Once they arrived at the Mosul Airfield, soldiers called line-of-sight operators, would signal to the pilots where

to release the loads and land.

"I pretty much ground guide them in just like you would a Humvee," said Spc. Jason Cubero, line of sight operator team chief, B Co. 501st Sig. Bn.

Once all the soldiers and equipment landed at the airfield, the operation was complete.

"This is one of those great things we get to do in an air assault division," North said of the operation. "There's (noncommissioned officers) taking charge and soldiers doing their jobs."

The soldiers are satisfied with the job they've done while here in Iraq, but they're ready to return to their friends and family.

"The mission's over and we're getting ready to redeploy," Follmer said. "I've got loved ones to be with again."



Spc. Joshua Hutcheson

Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company and Bravo Company, 501st Signal Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) prepare to hook a humvee up to a CH-47 Chinook helicopter. The 501st slingloaded equipment from a remote outpost on top of a mountain in preparation for redeployment.

Communications conference reaches out and touches Iraq

by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson
101st Abn. Div. (AAslt.) PAO

Members of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) participated in a two-day conference in the Kurdish region of Northern Iraq Monday to set up a telephone network centered on the city of Mosul.

The birth of a communication network would connect more people in Iraq. Prior to the war, about three percent of the houses in Iraq had telephones; current levels are at about eight percent, said Master Sgt. James Price, division radio noncommissioned officer in charge, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

Without a proper network many people couldn't call people outside of their villages.

"If you think of a hotel where you can call everybody within the hotel, but nobody else outside the hotel, it'd be similar to that," Price said. "That's why we're working on this infrastructure, connecting all the switches together."

The phone companies in Iraq are government owned and operated. Prices are low and it often takes a while for things to be repaired.

"It's almost as if it's not a for profit organization. It normally costs \$150 for a line, and it costs less than a dinar a minute to talk so you're looking at 750 minutes to equal one dollar of revenue," Price said.

To establish a communication infrastructure, members of telephone companies in Mosul, Erbil, Dohuk, Al-Sulaimanya, Kirkuk, and employees of the Coalition Provisional Authority met along with people from the Iraqi Ministry of Communication and the 101st to figure out the best way to set the network up.

"The conference was a 'who's-who' of the phone company in Northern Iraq," Price said.

To begin the process the committee decided to first start off with a microwave line-of-site system between all the major and minor switches in Northern Iraq. They mapped out the best configura-

tion that would allow maximum communication between the major city switches of Mosul, Erbil, and Dohuk and link many of the smaller towns and villages in between.

"What they did was take the basic outline, played with it a little bit until we had what we want," Price said.

Creating the network will require towns to build or repair communications towers, and purchase power generators. The representatives from the cities will have to supply a list of what equipment they need and the money amounts to the 101st.

"Once everybody gives us their requirements, we put that into a project request, send it to CPA, and they will assist with financing," Price said.

The microwave network will cost between \$4.5 and \$5 million to build. Funding will come from the \$87 billion approved by Congress to use in the reconstruction of the country, and other countries, Price said.

"In a year we will have made a lot of progress, it's going to be pretty exciting watching the country grow," Price said.

After the microwave system is in place, the next step the committee will take, is to install a fiber-optic cable connection. That connection will be slower and harder to put in place, Price said.

The role of the 101st in this on-going operation is to provide technical support, act as a liaison between the Iraqis and representatives from CPA, and supply transportation when necessary. Soldiers from the division communications section also provided any help in repairing equipment or communications machinery.

Plans are in place to smooth the transition of this project into the hands of the next group of soldiers who will take over operations in Northern Iraq once the 101st leaves.

"Our goal is to transition with Stryker Brigade so that there's no loss of support to the local community," Price said.

The Monday meeting was the second of what's scheduled to be a monthly event for the infrastructure committee.

"(The meeting) was very worth while, we got more out of it than we expected," Price said. "This leads up to what we expect to be an even better meeting on Jan. 7."



Members of local Kurdish and Ninevah government, people in the communication industry and Master Sgt. James Price, division radio noncommissioned officer in charge, and Maj. Jim Enicks, G6, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) met at the Sulaimani Hotel to discuss setting up a proper telephone and microwave system in Northern Iraq. Photo by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson.



Spc. Joshua M. Risner

(Above) A soldier with 1st Battalion, 377th Artillery Regiment, sprays off his M198 Howitzer in preparation for redeployment. (Below) A line of shrink-wrapped OH-58 Kiowas await the ships that will carry them back to the U.S.

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you come down and start washing things and cleaning up that actually you would start to lose a little bit of motivation. I have not yet seen that.”

In addition to washing out all foreign soil from U.S. equipment, helicopters must undergo a special “shrink wrap” process to protect their sensitive equipment from the ocean environment.

“The aircraft that are going to go home through the port on the ships can be exposed to salt water.” The division’s aviation units wrap their aircraft in the cocoon-like plastic wrap and suck the air out, giving the helicopters a protective plastic covering.

“It goes all around the aircraft, protects it from the salt water which could cause corrosion. If it’s going home via the ship – and a large number of our aircraft are, some two hundred – they’re going to be shrink-wrapped,” Schloesser said.

Aircrafts severely damaged in combat, considered a bio hazard, will be properly disposed of in theatre and will not go back to Fort Campbell, according to Schloesser.

One issue that has been resolved is what the division will do with the makeshift armor and “Dohuk” weapon mounts the 101st soldiers have utilized to reinforce their vehicles in Iraq. The “Dohuk” mounts, named after the Iraqi town the division had contracted to manufacture the M249 stands, will be staying in theatre to support the next rotation of Operation Iraqi Freedom units. Any protective armor welded onto the vehicles will go back to Fort Campbell, otherwise it will stay in Iraq.



Staff Sgt. Mark Swart