



The Old Ironsides Report

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School's back in session in western Abu Ghraib

Story by Spc. Chad D. Wilkerson, 372nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq – For students in the United States, school has been in session for months now -- continuing on its regular seasonal schedule.

Many school children in Baghdad, who have been out of school since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, have needed the help of some of the Coalition's best and brightest to get their educations back on track.

Soldiers from the 414th Civil Affairs Battalion, an Army Reserve unit from Utica, N.Y. and 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Armored Division, traveled to Darweesh school in western Abu Ghraib for the school's grand opening.

Spc. Maynard Ainken, the 414th Civil Affairs Darweesh school team leader, has maintained oversight during the school's renovation and was given the honor of wielding the scissors at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The school had orchestrated and rehearsed a ceremony to show the soldiers their appreciation for the hard work they had done in the community, said Ainken.

"As we arrived, we saw that more than 500 children were lined up on the sides of the school courtyard singing songs about pride in their country," Ainken said. "Three girls brought the Iraqi national flag to the flagpole in the center of the courtyard, raised it and saluted it. All the soldiers there were standing at attention."

The principal of the school then read a speech to the students, thanking the soldiers for their dedication to the liberation and welfare of the Iraqi people, said Ainken.

Sgt. Louis Polsinelli, a team leader with the 414th, was also a part of the group which orchestrated the school's restoration. He said progress in the area has been steady, and he has seen the local residents' attitudes toward Coalition gradually improve during his time there.

"When we first started driving through the area, people would often throw rocks at us," Polsinelli said. "Now, after having opened a few schools and making real progress here, people want to come up to talk and interact with us. I think our work has really had an impact on the attitudes of the population."

Col. Vincent Taylor, commander of the 354th Civil Affairs Brigade, an Army Reserve unit out of Riverdale, Md., had nothing but positive things to say about the school work, and numerous other tasks that the 414th has undertaken during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"From my viewpoint, the (Coalition Provisional Authority) and the 1st Armored Division are looking at the macro level," said Taylor. "They do their job and keep



Students at Darweesh School in the western Abu Ghraib province of Baghdad raise the Iraqi flag while soldiers from the 414th Civil Affairs Battalion stand respectfully during the grand opening ceremony Nov. 10. Photo by Command Sgt. Maj. Arlindo Almeida, 354th CA.

watch over the forest, while we work on the individual trees."

Taylor said that it is teams like the 414th which make the reconstruction efforts possible, especially when it comes to schools.

Doing assessments, making funding proposals, contacting contractors, taking bids, and overseeing progress and quality of renovation and construction efforts are just a few of the items that the 414th has had to maintain oversight on during these projects, he said.

The mission of the 414th is not simply refurbishing school buildings or renovating public facilities, said Taylor. Rather, the mission is to be a liaison to the Iraqi people, and bridge the cultural and social gaps that stand in the way of progress.

When a civil affairs team accomplishes something like they have accomplished at Darweesh, they are not only refurbishing a school structure; they are building bridges for the future of Iraq, he said.

"For (civil affairs), schools are critical because we are not just fixing schools, we are educating the Iraqi leadership of tomorrow," Taylor said. "The hearts and minds involved in this project are infinitely more valuable than the school buildings themselves. Every child at that school will remember Coalition soldiers being there, helping them with their schools, and that American soldiers were there when they raised their flag on the opening day."

News

Turkey Terror Bombings Kill 27 People

ISTANBUL, Turkey (AP) - Suicide truck bombs exploded at a London-based bank and the British consulate Thursday, killing at least 27 people and wounding nearly 450. The worst terrorist bombings in Turkey's history coincided with President Bush's trip to Britain and were blamed on al-Qaida. Security forces were put on highest alert after the attacks at the high-rise headquarters of the HSBC bank and the British consulate occurred five minutes apart at about 11 a.m.

Thousands Protest Iraq War in London

LONDON (AP) - Tens of thousands demonstrators marched through the heart of London on Thursday, toppling a 17-foot tall papier mache statue of President Bush to show their anger for the Iraq war and Prime Minister Tony Blair's support of the invasion. As Bush and Blair vowed "not to flinch or give way or concede one inch" to terrorism in the wake of deadly bombings against British targets in Turkey, protesters said the close relationship between the two leaders made them deeply uneasy.

Police, Trade Protesters Clash in Miami

MIAMI (AP) - Officers and hundreds of demonstrators clashed Thursday near the site of talks to create a free trade zone for North and South America. Police blanketed downtown, remembering trade-related riots in other cities. Officers clad in riot gear used long batons to restrain protesters, some of whom wore surgical masks or bandannas across their mouths. Other demonstrators carried gas masks. Some tried to pull down restraining fences with large hooks.

Congress Studies Why Women Earn Less

WASHINGTON (AP) - Women's income is lower on average than that of men in part because they generally work less, leave the labor force for longer periods and tend to hold jobs that pay less, a congressional study found. But even after adjustments are made for those factors, women still earned an average of 20.3 percent less than men in 2000, investigators said Thursday.

Berlin to Get Trash Cans That Can Talk

BERLIN (AP) - Fed up with garbage-strewn streets? Berlin thinks it has found a solution - trash cans that say thank you. Starting next spring, the German capital's trash service will build electronics into a handful of the city's 20,000 street-side wastebaskets that will allow them to speak or sing to the public, a spokesman said Thursday.

Career Counselor's Corner

Welcome to the Career Counselor's Corner. It is our goal to keep all soldiers, leaders, and their families updated with the most recent updates and changes to the Army Retention Program. The Army is constantly changing to meet challenges all over the world, and we must keep our forces strong through the retention of only the most highly qualified soldiers.

The 1st Armored Division Retention team is pleased to introduce the new Command Career Counselor, SGM James Jaranowski. He is a recent graduate of Class 53 of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy and brings many years of experience and is very excited about his new challenge. He replaces SGM George Stapleton, who will assume the position as the Installation Command Career Counselor at Fort Carson, Colo.

As you know this has been an extremely busy year for everyone, and that's no different for the retention field. Soldiers are now preparing for permanent change of station (PCS) moves to assignments they reenlisted for prior to deploying. The retention team is fully aware that there are many questions and concerns about new arrival dates, rescheduling school dates, and the availability of current options. It is our goal to ensure that every soldier is serviced in a professional and timely manner.

We have Career Counselors at a variety of locations to service soldiers both in Germany and in Iraq. There are currently three 1st AD Career Counselors in Germany to service any soldier not deployed. SFC Mundell, DSN 337-4264 is located at the 1AD Retention Office at Wiesbaden Army Airfield. MSG Crespo, DSN 485-7441 is located in Baumholder, and SFC Austin, DSN 324-3835 is located in Friedberg. All other soldiers should see their servicing career counselor located throughout the command in Iraq.

The deployed 1AD Retention Cell is located in the Soldier Support Center on the Baghdad International Airport. It is our pleasure to serve our "Iron Soldiers."

Chaplain's thought for the day

Lost with God

My Lord, God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. and I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Thomas Merton