



Armenian Contingent finishes mission in Iraq

Story and Photos by
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The 8th Armenian Contingent conducted an end-of-mission ceremony at the Joint Visitor Bureau on Camp Victory Oct. 6.

The 46-member contingent worked in support of the Polish Brigade, Multi-National Division – Central South, as medical staff, transportation and explosive ordnance disposal personnel.

“The Armenian peace-keeping and humanitarian mission in Iraq began in January 2005,” said U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Paul Lefebvre, dep-

uty commanding general, Multi-National Corps – Iraq. “Since that time, the Armenian armed forces have rotated 380 personnel through Iraq and have provided first-class support to Operation Iraq Freedom in the areas of transportation, engineering and medicine.”

The Armenian transport component successfully executed more than 60 convoys, while the engineering component removed more than 9,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance and cleared more than 130,000 square miles of terrain. In addition, the Armenian medical component performed more than 300 surgeries and



Brig. Gen. Mihai Chirita, deputy director, Multi-National Force - Iraq CJ5 Coalition, Romanian Army accepts a wooden totem from Capt. Papyan Ruben Gregor, commander, eighth Armenian Contingent, at the Joint Visitor Bureau, Camp Victory Oct. 6. The wooden totem symbolizes the Armenians' gratitude for MNF-I support.

provided ambulatory healthcare to more than 450 military personnel and 700 civilians, thus bolstering ties between the nation of Iraq and coalition forces.

“It has been our honor to serve under your command and to know and to work with you in the filtering of peace and democracy in Iraq,” said Capt. Ruben Papyan, eighth Armenian Contingent commander and Armenian senior national representative. “On behalf of the Armenian Contingent, I would like to take the opportunity to offer you all

our gratitude”

Brig. Gen. Mihai Chirita, Romanian army, deputy director, MNF-I CJ5 Coalition, presented each soldier with a certificate of appreciation for their outstanding service and support to the coalition and Operation Iraq Freedom.

“Never forget what you have accomplished here,” Lefebvre said. “You will be able to look back and know that you were part of something great; something that shaped the world for future generations. You have represented your country to the highest degree.”



U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Paul Lefebvre, deputy commanding general, Multi-National Corps – Iraq gives a speech at the 8th Armenian Contingent during their end-of-mission ceremony at the Joint Visitor Bureau, Camp Victory Oct. 6.

U.S. forces improve Iraqi logistics capabilities

Story by
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Perhaps the most vital component of any army is its logistics capability. Without a solid logistics plan, a force cannot properly supply and sustain its fight.

Over the last eight months, since the arrival of XVIII Airborne Corps in February, U.S. forces have partnered with Iraqi security forces – primarily the Iraqi army – to improve their logistics systems and help them better equip their own forces.

“Partnering is an initiative that’s now

working from the tactical level to the strategic, and that’s important,” said Col. Edward Dorman, C4, Multi-National Corps – Iraq.

“At the strategic level, we are engaging the Ministry of Defense and his staff, joint staff and J4 [senior logistician] so they have the right assistance in developing the programs required to sustain the equipment and get it down to the force,” Dorman said. “At the operations level, they are focusing on planning.”

Dorman said he and his staff interact with the Iraqi Ground Forces Command senior logistician and his staff about twice a week to work on a concept for sustaining Iraqi forces’ logistics.

In regards to operational partnership, large steps have been taken in helping the Iraqi army independently support itself.

A few of the things Soldiers – primarily from brigade support battalions – are doing include teaching combat lifesaver skills to the Iraqi security forces and holding monthly maintenance meetings with them, which, some thought last year were inconceivable, Dorman said.

The partnership has gone from zero to now having about 65 Logistics Training and Advisory Teams dispersed throughout the country working side by side with Iraqi army logistics units, said Col. Ronald Pulignani, G4 advisor, Military Transition Team, Iraqi Ground Forces Command. The LTATs work with IA logistics units on how to maintain equipment, sustain their force and help train them on all types of logistics systems such as fuel, maintenance and supply operations.

MiTT and LTATs have assisted significantly with the development of IA logistics capabilities and have seen the Iraqi army’s self-reliance progressively increase over past months.

“The Iraqis are starting to take responsibility for their own logistics systems,” Pulignani said. “They have been able to sustain themselves, most notably in recent operations in Diyala.”

Over the past eight months, the Iraqi army’s ability to sustain its fight has largely improved due to lessons learned with each new operation.

See Logistic, page 4



Photo by Spc. Samuel J. Phillips, MNC-I PAO

Col. Edward F. Dorman, assistant chief of staff for logistics, Multi-National Corps – Iraq, talks with Maj. Jim Huber, executive officer, 22 Brigade, 6 Iraqi Army Division Military Transition Team, about the improvements taking place on the Iraqi Army facilities in front of a newly constructed fuel point on Camp Justice, Iraq June 30.



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Soldiers brave new heights for communications

Story and photo by
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Soldiers are showing bravery in various ways supporting the Global War on Terrorism. While not all are in a direct fight with the enemy, Soldiers deployed with combat support units also display courage setting up military infrastructures in Iraq.

The 44th Expeditionary Signal Battalion is showing its support by recently installing satellites in three forward operating bases to provide Internet Protocol Radio relays. This effort is part of the battalion's overall mission to provide world-class communications support to troops in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The setup will provide the FOBs with a new way to enable connectivity between internet protocol connections, which are primarily used for communication between FOBs, with radio frequency communications that are normally used off post. "Once the satellites are in place, the radios work just as well as any regular Voice over Internet Protocol system," said Sgt. Joseph R. Chavis, 44th ESB.

The first part of the team's mission was setting up a four-foot parabolic dish on top of a 150-foot tower at Joint Base Balad. This required the Soldiers to climb the tower while carrying equipment.

"When you look at a tower, it just looks like a ladder, but it will work you out. I was sore for the first couple of days the first time I climbed," said Spc. Adam Spoerle, 44th ESB. "You get blisters on your fingers and on your hands. It's pretty difficult."

"The physical aspects are pretty tough, although the hardest part is getting the heavier equipment on the ground up to one that's 200 feet," said Chavis.

The climbing presented a set of dangers that took personal courage to overcome.

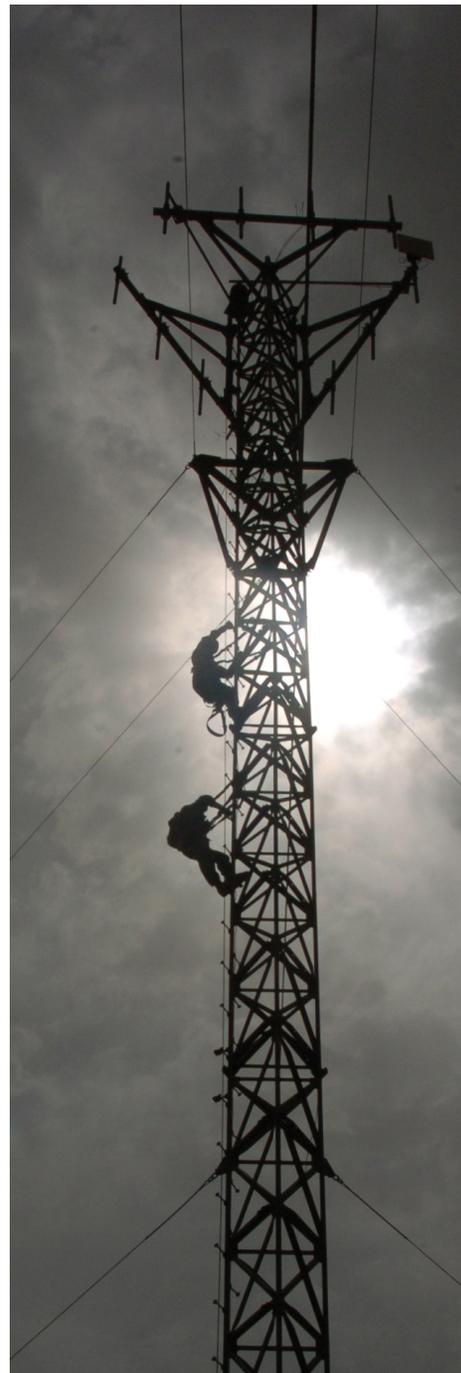
"There are different dangers climbing up and down those towers," Spoerle said. "You could get muscle failure and fall off, and while at the top, you have to watch out for helicopters and airplanes, because the strong winds they produce can blow you off."

Prior to the mission, the team prepared physically and mentally for its task. The team received classroom instruction and performed physical training.

"The Soldiers are extremely brave. Within their first day of training, they climbed a 110 feet after learning the fundamentals in a classroom environment," said Master Sgt. Angelia Hunter, 44th ESB.

"We did a lot of dry runs and went through phases of everyday climbing and training that made everybody's body adjust to what needed to be done and how it was to be done," Chavis said. "This ensured everyone had a strong working knowledge of what needed to happen once we got on site."

Chavis and Spoerle made the ascent with a pulley and one end of a rope. "We get the pulley ready, and then we just hand feed the rope down to the ground crew," Spoerle said. At the ground, the Soldiers hook the rope tied to the satellite up



Pvt. Justin Hill, Company A, 44th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, climbs the training tower on Camp Victory, Iraq, for a familiarization climb, while his supervisor Sgt. Joseph R. Chavis, Company C, waits above Aug. 23. Hill and Chavis are part of a cable team training to install Internet Protocol Radio satellites on top of towers to improve military communications in the Iraqi theater of operations.

See **Communication**, page 4

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Logistic, From Page 2

“We continue to see improvement with each operation because the Iraqi logisticians take the lessons learned and apply them in the next operation,” Pulignani said.

Pulignani explained that the Iraqi army has been able to support itself logistically during operations in Diyala, Amarah and Mosul, whereas eight months ago, during operations in Basrah, it relied on U.S. and coalition forces for some of its logistics support.

“[The Iraqi army] was caught off guard and had not prepositions, equipment or supplies, and in some cases, was close to losing that battle because the lack of logistics,” Dorman said. “They took the lessons learned and have applied them as they came full

circle into Mosul, Sadr City, Amarah and ultimately into Diyala where they are fighting now.”

One noteworthy indication of the IA’s logistical progress lies in the recent establishment of a national supply depot in Taji and ammunition depot in Bayji.

These are two big sources to provide ammunition, supplies and maintenance to the entire Iraqi army, Pulignani said. The depots are mostly Iraqi-run, with any needed assistance provided by U.S. and coalition forces logistics units.

The depots are just one of many signs that showcase the IA’s improvement.

Dorman noted that during the start of operations in Amarah, the IA was able to move

a mechanized force roughly 400 miles from Baghdad to Amarah on its own.

“Once they got [the force] there, they were quickly able to open stores and provide fuel with their own assets,” Dorman said. “They were able to conduct distribution and then house their soldiers, and they didn’t need any support from us at all.”

As the development of Iraqi army becomes more and more evident with each operation, there is still much to do in future months.

U.S. forces will continue to partner with the IA, but also with the National Police, Iraqi Police Service and Department of Border Enforcement, Dorman said.

“As we improve units, and

they are improving every day, we then begin to shift our focus and help those units who are not as far along,” Dorman said.

Logistics is quite possibly the heart of a fighting force, and the heart of Iraq’s force is growing stronger every day, much like the relationships and trust being garnered between U.S. and Iraqi forces.

“[American Soldiers] want to go out, accomplish the mission and get it done,” Dorman said, “but sometimes things move a little slower. You can’t just go in and want to talk about business; you have to drink a little tea and develop that relationship, and if you do that, I think that you can accomplish just about anything.”

Communication, From Page 3

to a mechanical pulley. “They have one person controlling a rope pulling the tower up, and the other person pulling a rope attached to the dish away from the tower, so that the dish doesn’t touch the tower,” Spoerle said.

“Once the satellite reaches the top, we put the mounting brackets on and we mount it up, install the cable, then we adjust it to where the shot is perfect,” Spoerle said. The setup for the shot is considered a direct line of sight, which must be aimed directly at the receiving satellite which is located on a nearby forward operating base.”

The low legacy shot is provided by a redline antennae in the dish on Balad and is being relayed from one FOB to another. “The parabolic

antenna is a lot easier than previous systems, you don’t need any manpower,” Hunter said. “You put them in and they sit, you don’t have to take Soldiers from other missions in order to monitor this link.”

The Soldiers have taken more from this experience than physical training. “It is really intense being a climber, it’s a good work out, and it makes you appreciate things a lot more when you’re looking down,” Spoerle said.

“The best and greatest in technological advances are improving the communication infrastructure here in Iraq, but no improvements can be made until brave and courageous Soldiers safely climb a tower and install the radio system,” said Maj. John Harris, 44th ESB executive officer.



Pvt. Justin Hill, Company A., 44th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, begins his ascent of a training tower on Camp Victory, Iraq, Aug. 23, while his supervisor Sgt. Joseph R. Chavis, Company C, waits above.