

Iraqi commander visits Marines and Iraqi soldiers in Haditha

Submitted by: 2nd Marine Division

Story by: Computed Name: *Cpl. Adam C. Schnell*

Story Identification #: 20051027235024

HADITHA, Iraq (Oct. 12, 2005) -- The commander of Iraqi ground forces met with the Iraqi troops and leaders of 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, here Oct. 12 to discuss joint successes during Operation River Gate.

Lieutenant Gen. Abdul Qader, the commander of all Iraqi infantry forces, stepped off a helicopter in the city of Haditha with a mission to talk with leaders and spend time with troops in the area.

After arriving, he met with Lt. Col. Jeffrey R. Chessani, commanding officer of 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines, and other Marine leaders to talk about the recent operation and other issues within the city. Qader's biggest concern was how the people dealt with having the Marines inside the city.

"Even though the city isn't back to normal yet, the Marines always tell them they can come out of their homes and live normal lives," commented Chessani, a Meeker, Colo., native.

The Iraqi commander then learned of the many successes the Iraqi soldiers had had while working with Marines during the recent operation. The commander was briefed on their success in everything from finding weapons caches to detaining suspected insurgent operatives.

"He told us we were doing a great job capturing bad guys and weapons in Haditha," said Lt. Col. Mahdi, a company commander of Iraqi troops in the area. "It was also nice to see him and it showed the troops he cares about them."

Being successful in places like Haditha is not a new thing for many of the Iraqi soldiers stationed here. Most of them fought alongside the Marines of 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines in Fallujah.

"My troops have been all over the country working with Marines," commented Mahdi. "In places like Fallujah, Najaf, and Abu Ghraib."

While in the area, Chessani and other Marines escorted the Iraqi general to areas in the city where Iraqi troops were stationed alongside Marines. As he visited one company of Iraqi infantrymen, his troops conducted a welcome dance.

"He was coming from south Iraq, so it is tradition that the troops welcome him with singing and dancing," said Mahdi. "It is a traditional song that excites the troops and lets the general know that we are here and ready to fight."

After taking time with troops, the Iraqi commander sat down with leaders of both the Marines and Iraqi troops in Haditha. The meeting consisted of the planning and coordination for the future of the Iraqi troops.

"I let him know the troops here are strong but needed supplies like food, parts for the vehicles and other equipment," commented Mahdi.

Before he left, the troops were given advice by their commander for the upcoming days as they occupy the former insurgency-controlled city.

"He told us to be careful and not trust the streets as they become busier," commented Mahdi. "He also told us that the people here are good people and that we should help them anyway we can."