



Coalition forces keep streets of Iraq safe

By Spc. George Welcome
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YUSUFIYAH, Iraq (Army News Service, Dec. 9, 2005) – Soldiers from Task Force Baghdad, alongside Iraqi forces, constantly search the streets and alleyways of Baghdad and surrounding communities for weapons, insurgents and anti-coalition propaganda. The searches are thorough, yet the Soldiers still respect people's rights and property.

“I feel that our patrols make a difference,” said Sgt. Kenneth Casica. “I guess the patrols make the insurgents nervous because they know...we'll push them out of this area to make the people feel safe.”

When Task Force Baghdad Soldiers get ready for a mission, a lot of things take place before the sun comes up. Soldiers are mobilized, ammunition is loaded, vehicles are prepped, briefings are conducted, maps are studied, and energy drinks are consumed.

Taking streets back

These are a few of the many things the Soldiers of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division did to get ready for their patrol of the Mulla Fayyad area of Yusufiyah Dec. 2. This was a critical patrol for the Soldiers, as it would allow them to continue to establish their presence in the area that was rarely patrolled prior to their arrival.

Dogs barked incessantly as Soldiers from B Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment and elements of 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division began their patrol of their sector of Mulla Fayyad. This early in the morning, the Soldiers and the dogs were the only ones awake.

Humvees tactically dispersed and cordoned off the area to provide the Soldiers with security from anyone who might be trying to access the sector during the cordon-and-knock mission.

“Today’s mission was to see if we could apprehend insurgents who may have been in the area,” said Sgt. Kenneth Casica, a team leader in 1st Platoon. “We want [the citizens] to realize that we are here to help them.”

Iraqi citizens, Soldiers work together

In order to stabilize the area, the Soldiers and the citizens have established a basic trust, which is why during patrols U.S. troops take care in searching people’s homes.

“This was nothing like a big raid,” Casica said. “We just asked people to open cabinets and looked around in their things.”

Even though Soldiers of B Co. did not find any weapons or terrorists, they know their presence helps reduce the chance of the insurgency gaining a stronghold in the city.

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After nearly 13 hours on the streets of Mulla Fayyad, B Co. Soldiers cleared the last house in their sector. Although they considered this just a “routine operation,” their effort was far from typical. It was a long successful day for the Soldiers but they knew more patrols awaited them the next day.

When responsible for maintaining the peace of a city and reducing the effectiveness of the insurgency, there is no such thing as a day off.

(Editor’s note: Spc. George Welcome serves with the 2/101st Airborne Division PAO.)