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Iraqi Veterans Agency announces new outreach and pension plan

From MNSTC-I Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq - The Iraqi Veterans Agency first established by the Minister of Defense April 26 announced plans Sept. 20 to establish regional administration offices in 15 Iraqi governates and will eventually cover all 18. The regional outreach plan will make the agency more accessible to Iraqi veterans.

"Our mission is to provide support to Iraqi veterans, in the form of retirement pensions or stipends," said Nabil Kalil Al Abaidi, the director of the Iraqi Veterans Affairs office. "But more importantly we aim to assist veterans in accessing vocational and educational training to help them find work and reintegrate back into civil society, for the benefit of themselves and the community."



Iraqi soldiers stand at parade rest at a recent graduation ceremony in An Numaniyah. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Iraqi officials are working together to develop a pension plan for Iraqi veterans. Photo by Navy Chief Journalist Joe Kane

The agency will support members of the former Iraqi military and those former militia or resistance fighters who were still on active duty as of April 16, 2003, and

who agreed to disband and disarm their forces in accordance with the government's transition and reintegration

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Kirkuk police officers rescue child

By Navy Chief Journalist Joe Kane, MNSTC-I Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraqi police announced the capture of five kidnappers Sept. 16 in the city of Magdad.

According to Tim Kerr, who works with the

Kirkuk Province International Police Liaison Officer Unit, 10 Iraqi police officers were in a residential neighborhood to perform a foot patrol when one of the Magdad officers was contacted by radio.

"Officers at the local police academy had observed

men entering a dwelling near the academy carrying what appeared to be rifles," Kerr said. "They were requesting assistance to respond to the house. We were then advised Iraqi police had surrounded

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Understanding the significance of casting your vote

By Sgt. Maj. Claudio Brown

Every four years, the United States conducts a peaceful, organized process called a presidential election. This is, in fact, a way of conducting a revolution, in that a revolution is simply a way of exchanging one government for another.

Democratic nations use elections to enable the people to express their pleasure or displeasure with the policies of those in power. This peaceful process of changing governments without rioting, without bloodshed, is rooted in the western liberal tradition, and as important today as it was 2,500 years ago, when democracy first started.

Early forms of democracy took root in ancient Greece, and were developed to break the hold of kings and aristocrats on the will of the people.

Cleisthenes introduced popular voting in 510 B.C., as a way of determining which citizens would be exiled from Athens for 10 years. Athenian voters placed their votes on ostraka (broken pots), hence the present word "ostracize".

The Enlightenment questioned the nature of the relationship between rulers and their subjects. It profoundly influenced the Founding Fathers and their writings, including the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

Among other important ideas, the Enlightenment said that the people and the government had a 'social contract' by which each side had certain rights and responsibilities.

People had the right of

self-determination, and the obligation to exercise that right by participating in the process of government. One way to do this is by participating in elections, by voting.

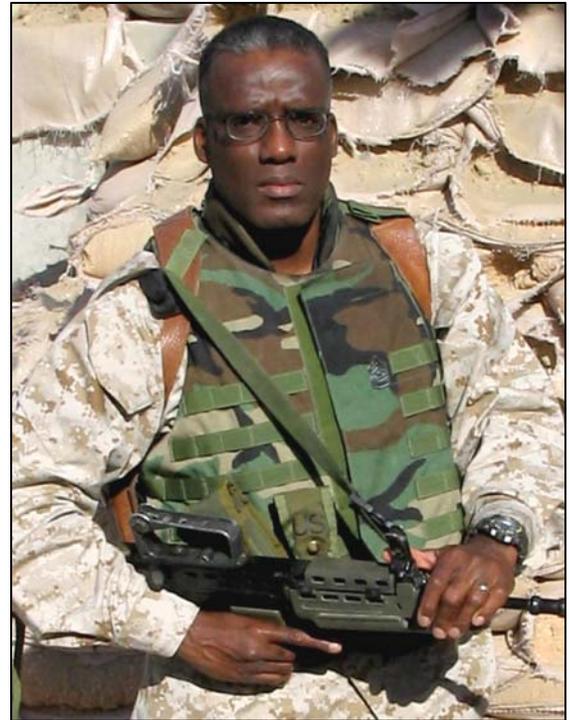
The citizens of the United States have had the popular vote (called "the franchise") in one form or another since the beginning of the nation.

As the country matured, the franchise was extended from only men with a certain level of income to all citizens above the age of 18.

As Soldiers, Marines, Sailors and Airmen, we perform our military duties each day. But we also have a civil duty to vote in elections, and to pay attention to what the candidates are saying. Many of us believe that our vote does not count, and this is wrong. In many elections (local, state and national) the fate of the candidates hangs on a few hundred (or less) votes.

Many elections see less than one-half of the eligible voters actually casting ballots. If you don't vote, you are letting someone else decide the election, and the way your town, city, state, or nation is run.

Voting is a very important tool we can use to voice our concerns to the elected officials at all levels of government. We will all be affected by



the decisions, large and small, that elected officials make. Many of their decisions will have far reaching implications.

Voting, as a fundamental privilege, is perceived as more of a burden for some of our young Soldiers than an exercise in civil liberties.

Yet, as you look around you in Iraq, think about how the lives of the Iraqis would have been different if they had the same right we enjoy; the right to express their opinion about how the government is doing its job, peacefully and safely, and to change that government if it did not meet their needs.

Since you have the franchise to vote, why don't you? Go ahead and request your absentee ballot if you already have not done so. Do not let this opportunity slip away.

"The margin is narrow, but the responsibility is clear."
— John F. Kennedy

"Those who stay away from the election think that one vote will do no good: 'Tis but one step more to think one vote will do no harm"

- Ralph Waldo



"Early forms of democracy took root in Ancient Greece, and were developed to break the hold of kings and aristocrats on the will of the people."

- Sgt. Maj. Brown

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program. Also included on the stipends list are the families of those personnel who were killed, disabled, or are still missing in action as a result of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The agency will also initiate mechanisms to provide support to veterans of the new Iraqi Armed Forces and their families.

The IVA, an independent agency under the Ministry of Defense, took over responsibility for administering the stipends program June 28 that had been established under the Coalition Provisional Authority. The stipends program delivers financial support to Iraqi veterans on a quarterly basis.

“There are more than 310,000 people registered on the stipends database provided to the Veterans Agency by the CPA. We are committed to assisting all of these veterans,” Al Abaidi said. “The current

payment cycle, entirely managed by my agency for the first time, covers the August-September-October period. Stipends payments for the third annual cycle are currently being distributed by our major regional offices, through regional banking centers.

“The benefits distributed in the current cycle total more than 97 billion Iraqi dinar. The next cycle of payments, for the November-December-January period, will include an additional bonus for Ramadan and so we will be distributing almost 120 billion Iraqi dinar to the people.”

Al Abaidi states that the IVA plans to partner with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs met with Al Abaidi recently to discuss partnership initiatives to develop a health benefits strategy for Iraqi

veterans.

Former members of the Iraqi armed forces, and approved militia or resistance fighters, who were retired from active duty before April 16, 2003, are eligible for a veteran’s pension. These pensions are also administered by the IVA, but are separate from the stipends program.

Eligibility for veterans’ benefits is determined on the basis of proof of former good service. High ranking members of Iraq’s former Ba’ath Party, Intelligence or Special Republican Guard personnel, members of the Presidential Guard and members of the Olympic Committee are not eligible for veterans’ benefits. Those former military personnel known to be involved in criminal or terrorist activity are also not eligible.

Names in the database

“The benefits distributed in the current cycle total more than 97 billion Iraqi dinar. The next cycle of payments, will include an additional bonus for Ramadan”
- Al Abaidi

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Rescue Continued from Page 1

the house to contain the occupants.”

Kerr said that when they arrived at the residence to assist they were informed a gunfight had broken out between the occupants and Iraqi police.

“While on the scene there were repeated exchanges of gunfire between the occupants of the house and Iraqi police. We were informed that the gunmen had a small boy inside the house and he had been observed being held by a gunman with a knife to his throat.

“The Iraqi Police entered in force and were able to take four suspects into cus-

tody and remove the 6-year-old boy unharmed,” Kerr said.

According to reports the boy had been taken hostage by the men a few days earlier and was being held for ransom from his family. Kerr said a fifth suspect who had apparently fled the scene prior to his arrival was apprehended by the police academy police and returned to the scene after the incident.

“The Iraqi Police handled this incident and were able to control the situation,” Kerr said. “They took five suspects into custody and rescued the boy without anyone being injured.”



Kirkuk Province police stand with the boy they rescued from a group of five kidnappers in Magdad. Photo courtesy of Coalition Police Assistance Training Team

Law & Order comes to Phoenix Base



The Multi-national Security Transition Command - Iraq operations section show off the bats they received from NBC Sept. 23. NBC produces the "Law & Order" television show and donated hundreds of bats for the troops serving in Iraq. Photo by Navy Chief Journalist Joe Kane

Veterans

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are largely gathered from records kept by the former Iraqi military, plus those resistance fighters who have negotiated with the government to disband their forces.

“We determine eligibility in part on the basis of documentary evidence of good service. Good service includes those who may have been expelled from the military for disagreeing with the former regime,” Al Abaidi said. “We also conduct interviews with families and friends and are currently undertaking an audit and validation process of all listed benefit recipients.” he added.

According to Al Abaidi, former

resistance fighters are considered veterans and will receive the same kind of benefits as people in military service. If their time in the resistance forces meets the requirements for an Army pension, they will receive the same pension as someone in the Army.

“Their time in service will count towards eligibility for a pension should they wish to join one of the new Iraqi security forces; they are eligible for benefit programs such as preferences in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs’ job training and placement programs; and the widows and orphans of those

martyred in the fight against Saddam Hussein will receive the same survivor benefits as deceased Iraqi soldiers.

“Pensions for retired members of the Peshmerga forces are currently being managed by the Kurdish Regional offices as they have well maintained and accurate records of members,” Al Abaidi said.

“We are committed to establishing a responsive agency for all of the people who have fought hard for this country, but it takes time to do things right and we have much work yet to do,” Al Abaidi said.

Father and son reunite in Baghdad

By Navy Chief Journalist Joe Kane,
MNSTC- I Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq—The two Marines shouted and put their arms around each other. One, a battle hardened veteran from a unit that has been heavily engaged during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the other – newly arrived in Baghdad. As they drew back from the embrace, slapping each others' backs and smiling broadly the father and son Marines shook their heads at the strangeness of the situation – reuniting in Baghdad – in uniform – more than nine months since they had last seen each other in December.

The son, Lance Corporal Sam Rutledge has been in Iraq since February serving with the I Marine Expeditionary Force, 1st Marine Division, 2nd Battalion 4th Marines in Ramadi. His father, Gunnery Sgt. John Rutledge, arrived in Iraq in August and works at Phoenix Base for the Multi-national Security Transition Command – Iraq, operations section.

The father and son “Devil Dogs” crossed paths in Baghdad’s “International Zone” as a result of the efforts of Master Sgt. Roderic Welsh, who works with the elder Rutledge.

Welsh said the whole idea was to make the reunion a surprise.

“I met Gunny at Camp Lejeune the day we flew out,” said Welsh. “It didn’t take long before he revealed to me that his son was a Marine serving with Marines in Ramadi. The Gunny hoped at some point during his tour he would be able to visit his son. Once I got the five Ws about his son I then contacted the 2/4 sergeant major, Sgt. Maj. J.E. Booker and coordinated this surprise for both of them.”

Welsh said the hardest part about arranging the meeting was convincing Rutledge to be patient.

“I had no clue,” Gunny Rutledge said. “I was trying to get to see him, just two days before. I asked Master Sgt. Welsh if he had heard anything about my son’s unit and he said, ‘yeah it’s going to be a few weeks because they were heavily engaged.’ Everybody in the unit knew; and I had no clue. No one even tipped me off.”

While the logistics for the reunion were being worked Gunnery Sgt. Rutledge asked about convoying out to Ramadi so he could see his son.



Two generations of Marines reunite in Iraq. The father and son duo met up in Baghdad's International Zone after more than nine months of separation. The son, Lance Corporal Sam Rutledge has been in Iraq since February serving with the I Marine Expeditionary Force, 1st Marine Division, 2nd Battalion 4th Marines in Ramadi, and the father, Gunnery Sgt. John Rutledge, arrived in Iraq in August and works at Phoenix Base for the Multi-national Security Transition Command – Iraq, operations section. Photo by Navy Chief Journalist Joe Kane

“It was tough giving the Gunny the runaround about not being able to let him convoy up there,” said Welsh. “Then it all fell together in about three days ... we would be able to get Lance Cpl. Rutledge down here for a reunion with his Dad. What’s funny is Lance Cpl. Rutledge also did not know why he was being sent here. His unit did a great job telling him he had to go see the JAG officer at the Palace.”

“I was shocked they were able to arrange this,” said the younger Rutledge. “I joined the Marines because of my dad. I think he was a bit worried when I came over here with all of this [the war] going on, though.”

Gunnery Sgt. Rutledge said he encouraged Sam to take a look at all the services. “But he had already made up his mind, Rutledge said. “I told him that I would go with him to the recruiter ... but he was 18 and he came home and said Dad, I joined the Marines; I joined the infantry.”

Gunny says at first he had a lot of sleepless nights when

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Iraqi National Guard graduates new recruits in Tikrit

By Navy Chief Journalist Joe Kane,
MNSTC-I Public Affairs

TIKRIT, Iraq—The Iraqi National Guard added 358 troops to their ranks Sept. 16 as a class of ING recruits from the 201st, 202nd, 203rd and 205th ING battalions graduated from a three-week basic training course. The newest additions to the Iraqi National Guard cheered and waved their hats in the air after the ceremony, carrying their U.S. Army drill instructor on their shoulders and hugging each other in celebration.

The graduating soldiers completed a three-week basic training course designed by the U.S. Army's 1st Infantry Division that included rifle zeroing, rifle marksmanship, tactical checkpoints, squad drills, map reading, first aid, basic soldier skills, and values training among other things.

Lt. Gen. David Petraeus, commanding general of the Multi-national Security Transition Command – Iraq attended the ceremony along with Maj. Gen. J.R. Batiste, commander of the 1st Infantry Division and Task Force Danger, Brig. Gen. Abdul Qadr, deputy chief of staff, operations, Iraqi Joint Headquarters, 30th ING Brigade Commander Brig. Gen. Amid



An Iraqi soldier leads graduating recruits onto the parade ground in Tikrit Sept. 16. The class of 358 recruits completed a three-week basic training course. Photo by Navy Chief Journalist Joe Kane

Ahmad Salman and local sheiks and officials.

Brig Gen. Abdul Qadr, the guest speaker for the graduation, congratulated the students on behalf of the Minister of Defense for being part of the rebuilding of the new Iraqi forces and said the graduation was a cornerstone in building the new Army that is going to continue to grow and expand.

“The best advice I can offer you,” Qadr said to the graduates, “Is to be disciplined and obey orders, for an army without discipline and obedience is not an army.” He added that he would not offer the advice of loving one’s country and loving being a soldier, or being dedicated to both ideals, since those things live naturally in the blood of all Iraqis.

The second speaker at the graduation was Maj. Gen. Batiste. He thanked the American and Iraqi drill instructors for their work with the class, and said that the training they have provided will help to defeat the terrorists currently threatening the future of Iraq.

“Today Iraq’s national guard is making enormous contributions to security in Iraq. Every day, battalions such as the 201st ING



An Iraqi honor graduate holds up his certificate of achievement for physical training Sept. 16. Photo by Navy Chief Journalist Joe Kane

MNSTC-I By The Numbers

Here is a snapshot of supplies delivered to the Iraqi Security Forces this week:

- 1,730 weapons
- 926,000 rounds of ammo
- 2,350 sets of body armor
- 308 vehicles
- 341 radios
- 4,068 desert boots
- 2,400 PT shoes
- 300 bunk beds
- 1,260 footlockers
- 250 tables
- 119 desks
- 50 filing cabinets
- 100 chairs

Graduates
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“Just 10 weeks ago, Iraqis celebrated new found sovereignty and freedom. After 35 years of cruel tyranny, Iraq is free at last.” -

Maj. Gen. Batiste

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“Graduates” Page 7
battalion here in Tikrit, the 203rd in Balad, the 209th in Kirkuk, and the 205th in Muqadiyah assume more and more responsibility as we move closer to local control,” Batiste said. “Just 10 weeks ago, Iraqis celebrated new found sovereignty and freedom. After 35 years of cruel tyranny, Iraq is free at last. This freedom is not free and you are up to the challenge.”

Batiste concluded with the announcement that 198 of the graduating soldiers would join the ranks of the 202nd ING battalion in Samarra. This class included students from all four provinces in North-Central



Brig Gen. Abdul Qadr presents a graduation certificate. Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Journalist Joe Kane

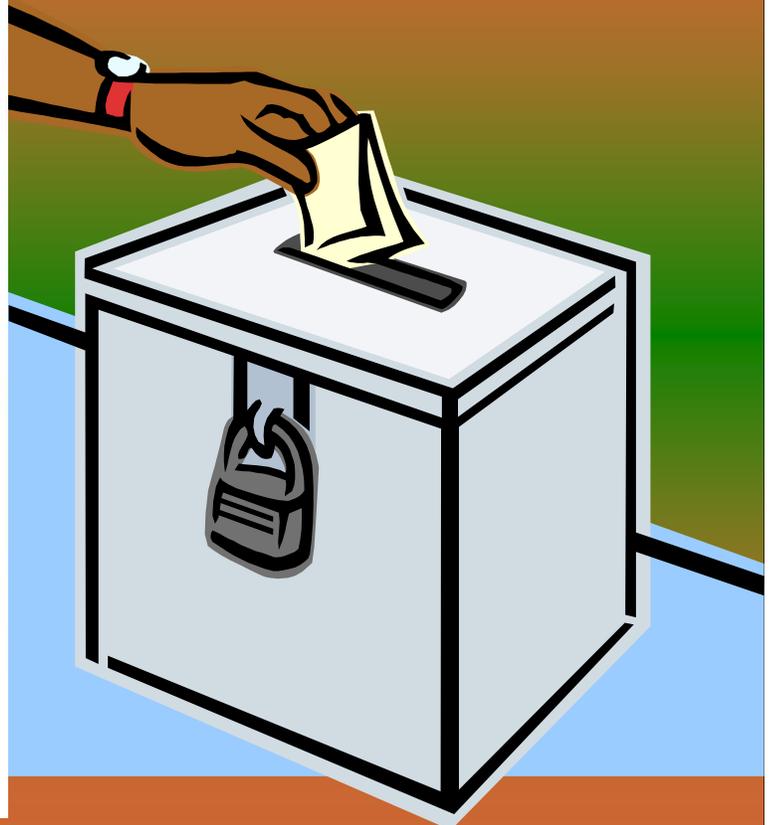
Iraq (Diyala, Salah a Din, at Tamim, and Sulaymaniyah) with members from all of Iraq’s eth-

nicities. The training also included lessons on how to treat people with dignity and respect

Don’t Trash the Vote... This week more than 450,000 of these posters were distributed in Iraq. These posters inform Iraqis about the upcoming voting process. In the past some members of the multi-national forces removed these posters thinking they may have been anti-Iraqi propaganda. Please don’t tear these down.



450,000 posters
Distributed nationwide



Reunion

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his son's unit deployed to Iraq and was being mentioned on television. And then, a couple of months later Gunny found out he would be going to Iraq as well.

"I was in the individual ready reserves and I got the call," said Rutledge. "I got called in May and Sam happened to call me from Iraq that same day that I got called up by the Marine Corps and I said, 'Sam I got a call from the Marines,' and he said 'No way,' So, I told him what happened and now, here we are."

The Rutledges got to spend about a week together in Baghdad while Sam waited for transportation back to his unit. Meanwhile, he had his first pizza in seven months, swam in the pool at the embassy and just hung out with his dad and enjoyed the comfort of an air conditioned trailer to sleep in.

"He's all battle hardened," said Gunny Rutledge. "He's turned into a man. He talks a lot more about his experiences - he's been in one of the most heavily engaged units over here and I'm proud of him, he's done a good job. He's proud of what they accomplished here.

"He's highly motivated, he loves the Marine Corps and loves what he's doing," Gunny Rutledge continued. "Sam told me the thing that struck him is that the people are actually warm towards us and don't like the insurgents, and, people are giving information to help us out.

"[Sam] told me his favorite thing about Iraq is the kids. He's always been really great with his younger nieces and nephews and stuff, and says that's what he loves the most about Iraq is the kids," said Gunny.

So, what is it like for the Rutledge family members back in the states?

MNSTC-I announces new command Web site

From MNSTC-I Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq—The Multi-national Security Transition Command – Iraq is using its Web site to reach out to the world using the power of the Internet. As a command with a central role in training, equipping and mentoring the Iraqi security forces MNSTC-I is playing a key role in events in Iraq.

According to U.S. Army Capt. Steve Alvarez, MNSTC-I public affairs officer, the site launched in the late August as a way for MNSTC-I to have a virtual presence.

"The MNSTC-I Web site is an extension of our outreach efforts," Alvarez said. "We want to encourage people to come back and come back regularly. The site is continuously updated with the latest news, press releases, and photos; the aim being to broadcast our messages to as many people as possible, using as many different mediums as possible, and the Web is just one piece of a multi-pronged delivery method."

The site, available at www.mnstci.iraq.centcom.mil currently features a wide range of information including the latest news and photos from MNSTC-I missions, feature stories, command leaders' biographies, mission statements, fact sheets, support pages and FAQ sections and more.

Mudd puppy...



Mudd, the unofficial mascot of Phoenix Base takes a break from her job as "chief rodent control officer" on the lawn at Phoenix Base. Photo by Navy Chief Journalist Joe Kane

"They are nervous back home," Gunny said. "When Sam got here we made phone calls back home to everybody so we got to talk to them at the same time, but they see things on TV and yeah, they are a little worried."

Sam will be leaving Iraq at the end of this month and his dad will be heading back to Boston in February. They both say they hope to take leave and get together for a family reunion when they are both safely back in the United States.

"In the corporate communications arena, Web sites are no longer a nice-to-have item, they are a necessity. It is an outstanding way to keep people informed," Alvarez said.

The Website was created by Tara Vaughn, who also has the job of updating and maintaining the site as well as adding new features as they become available.

"We have a very talented contractor who designed and continues to upgrade and refine the site," said Alvarez. "It was as if she read our minds. She knew what we wanted."

The ability to grow and adapt one feature Alvarez said was key when discussions about the Web site's design were being held. The option of adding content and continuing to improve the site's appearance and functionality was essential. The site also allows visitors to sign up for the command's weekly newsletter, *The Advisor*.

"Our site is a work in progress and we will have much more posted on the Web site in the future to improve the experience for our visitors, including video clips of our missions and personnel," said Alvarez. "Web sites are billboards on the information superhighway. If a Web site is good, you remember it."