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## **Soldiers bring joy to Iraqi children**

By Capt. Natalia Mercedes-Williams

18<sup>TH</sup> CSSB

HABUR GATE, Iraq —Soldiers from the 18<sup>th</sup> Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade, visited the village of Tilkabar, located along the Turkey-Iraq border, in order to provide 600 Iraqi school children with gifts, school supplies and toys, Jan 29.

The gifts included T-shirts, radios, plush toys and comic books written in Arabic. Each humanitarian mission differs, based on factors such as geography, climate, the population being served, and the local infrastructure.

“The purpose of this Humanitarian mission was to win the 'hearts and minds' of the Northern Iraqi citizens,” said Chaplain (Cpt.) Gerald Woodford, chaplain, 18<sup>th</sup> CSSB.

“This meets the goal of enhancing their spiritual fitness.”

Soldiers of the Headquarter and Headquarters Co. out of Grafenwoehr, Germany, and Alpha Battery, 2-146<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, from the Washington National Guard, were able to interact with many residents of Tilkabar. The residents expressed their gratitude, while receiving gifts and personally interacting with all the Soldiers.

“The sixth humanitarian mission conducted by the 18th CSSB Religious Support Team and without a doubt, the most memorable,” said Woodford. “The people were so thankful for our presence and support, that it brought tears to my eyes to see lives transformed. There is a valid lesson to be learned from our experience. Personal fulfillment is not attained through acquiring as much as we can; but it is achieved by what we give.”

“It is a good opportunity to see the living conditions outside the wire and to be able to interact with the Iraqi citizens,” said Pvt. Jeremy Steelman, a 22-year old native of Slidell, Louisiana. “I appreciate being an American and a feel thankful for being part of a mission where I am able to see first-hand the good nature Iraqis hold towards coalition forces.”



Spc. Shane Carney, Alpha Battery 2-146<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 18<sup>th</sup> Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade, visits an Iraqi children school in the village

of Tilkabar, where the battalion conducted a humanitarian mission, Jan. 29. (Courtesy photo)