

## U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil  
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815  
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



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### **1st Armored Division Soldiers, civilians participate in Baghdad seminar on women's issues**

**By Staff Sgt. Scott Wolfe**

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division Public Affairs Office

**BAGHDAD, Iraq --** Soldiers and civilians from the women's affairs team of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, participated in a women's initiatives seminar hosted by Multi-National Corps - Iraq at the Joint Visitors Bureau Hotel on Camp Victory here, Jan. 17-18.



STAFF SGT SCOTT WOLFE

Members of the women's affairs team for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, pose for a photo during the first women's initiatives seminar at the Joint Visitors Bureau Hotel on Camp Victory in Baghdad, Iraq, Jan. 17. During the seminar representatives from across Multi-National Corps - Iraq, Public Reconstruction Team leaders and members of the Iraqi government discussed ideas and solutions to issues facing women in Iraq.

The seminar was attended by representatives from each of MNC-I's four divisions, as well as Public Reconstruction Team leaders and three members of the Iraqi government.

The 2nd BCT participants were headed by Lt. Col. Anne Resty, the "Iron Brigade" physical therapist and women's affairs team leader.

"This seminar is the first time the brigades in the division have met each other face to face," Resty said. "We are using this

seminar to meet the heads of the other MND-B brigades and comparing the Iron Brigade's efforts with theirs to see where we stand."

The first day of the seminar included briefings by the Iraqi government participants, Dr. Nawal al-Samarraie, Minister of State for Women's Affairs; Dr. Sallama Al Khafajii, advisor for Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih; and Dr. Sameerah al-Mowsawi, a member of the Council of Representatives for Women, Family and Children. Each spoke at length about the current difficulties and obstacles women face in Iraq and the steps their organizations and the Iraqi government are taking to alleviate some of those conditions.

During the second day of the seminar representatives of each of the divisions -- North, West, Center and Baghdad -- split into their respective areas of responsibility to share information and discuss progress, programs and ideas with their division teammates.

Maj. Clayton White, who serves as a civil affairs team chief attached to the brigade's 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery at Combat Outpost Meade in Mahmudiyah, shared his insights on a bazaar and the successes of Iraqi widows who have received micro-grants to jump-start small businesses. Those women's achievements are significant because they were no longer supported by their husbands and now have a means of taking care of themselves, White said.

One of the biggest hurdles Iraqi women in the 2nd BCT area face is a high rate of illiteracy, Resty said. It is an issue her team is attempting to help overcome.

"Getting the government of Iraq to buy into programs is the hardest part," said Resty.

"We can do starter programs and get nongovernmental organizations involved, but the Ministry of Education needs to make these plans sustainable in order for them to work."

The seminar was a valuable experience, she added, because it provided her team with an opportunity to put faces with the names of those capable of helping come up with new ideas and solutions to address women's issues in Iraq.

"The idea," said al-Mosawi, "is to make all the people in Iraq want to have this women's initiative succeed."

The 2nd BCT, 1st Armored Division is based in Baumholder, Germany.



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