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1st Armored Division Soldiers discuss election security, ongoing projects with Iraqi leaders

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

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- Soldiers from the "Iron Brigade" -- the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division -- participated in a Mada'in Qada combined targeting meeting with military and community leaders of the Qada at the Wahida government center, Jan. 22.

The purpose of the meeting was to inform local leaders of security measures for upcoming provincial election, as well as provide an update on several development initiatives involving brigade forces operating in the Mada'in Qada. The gathering was just one session senior brigade and Multi-National



LT COL WAYNE MAROTTO

Division - Baghdad members have had with local leaders regarding the election in recent days.

"I think this is a very important day for the

Qada. It has been a very long time since we had this many important leaders from the Qada in the same room," said Col. Pat White, commander of the 2nd BCT. "I think the mayor (Mayor Abu Buhar) hit it on the head. This is about taking care of the citizens in the Qada, and you have the leaders and the decision-makers in the room today to do that."

Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, commander of Multi-National Division - Baghdad and the 4th Infantry Division (second from left), Iraqi Staff Maj. Gen. Ali, commander, 17th Iraqi Army Division (right), and Col. Pat White, commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division (left), discuss the 17th's security plan for upcoming provincial elections, at Patrol Base Deason in Mahmudiyah, Iraq, Jan. 25. The meeting was just one MND-B and 2nd BCT leaders have had with Iraqi civil and military officials in recent days regarding the elections.

During the assembly, Dick Hawkins, the embedded provincial reconstruction team leader for the Qada, provided a brief explanation of a memorandum of understanding recently signed by Baghdad mayor Saber al-Essawi and Maj. Gen. Jeffery Hammond, commander of MND-B and the 4th Infantry Division. The 9th Iraqi Army's civil affairs officer gave an overview of civil programs in progress and solicited feedback from the leaders of the Mada'in.

The upcoming elections were the key topic of discussions during the meeting. Maj. Gen. Qassim, commander of the 9th Iraqi Army Division, adamantly declared there would be no rumors of tampering.

“The only people in the polling stations will be the polling workers. My soldiers will not be allowed in the election building,” he said, unless needed to provide security.

To further reduce the chance or appearance of tampering or signs of coercion, special provisions have been made to allow Iraqi security forces to vote Jan. 28, said Qassim.

Members of the 2nd BCT also briefed attendees on the status of current and future projects in the region.

Maj. Jason Joose, executive officer for the brigade's Task Force 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry, said the task force's focus has shifted from community structural resources such as hospitals and parks, to natural resources.

“This year, our focus has shifted to a vital resource, and that vital resource is water, both drinking water and irrigation water,” he said.

A major step forward in those projects kicked off Jan. 18 when task force officials participated in a groundbreaking ceremony marking the widening of the Bawi Canal in the Salman Pak region southeast of Baghdad.

Maj. David Raugh, executive officer for the brigade's Task Force 1st Battalion, 35th Armor, said the two current projects in his task force's area of responsibility had been requested, approved and implemented by local government agencies and contractors. He said his MND-B team served primarily as facilitators.

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

