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Troops hand out clothes, toys donated at thrift shop in Germany at school in Iraqi village

By Sgt. Daniel Nichols

U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Smiles filled the faces of more than 50 widows and their children at a small school in Abu Jabour here as Iraqi troops handed out clothes and toys March 13 that came to the Iraqi village after being donated to the community thrift shop in Baumholder, Germany.

Troops of the 1st Battalion, 55th Brigade, 17th Iraqi Army Division coordinated the humanitarian project with U.S. Soldiers of the Baumholder-based 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division.

Arab Jabour was once an al-Qaeda in Iraq stronghold known for suicide bombers and roads heavily mined with improvised explosive devices; farmland that was once the badlands of insurgents.



SGT DANIEL NICHOLS

Iraqi children share their enthusiasm with Staff Sgt. Jorge Cornejo of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, as they wait behind school gates for their turns to receive donated clothes and toys in Arab Jabour, Iraq, March 13. The donations came from the community thrift shop at the brigade's home base in Baumholder, Germany as the result of cooperation between the brigade and Iraqi Army forces.

In the past year, violence has decreased and the area is returning to normal, with farmers coming back to till the land and quality of life improving for the people.

“This is a great thing,” said Iraqi Army Capt. Ahmed Farhaan A’abaas, commander of the 17th’s 4th Company, 1st Battalion. “Distributing such humanitarian aids will help to build a close relationship between the [Iraqi Army] and the citizens who live here.”

The clothes and toys came to Iraq as the result of coordination between Iraqi forces and the leadership of the 2nd BCT.

“The clothes and toys were donated to the thrift store back at our base in Baumholder, Germany,” said 2nd BCT Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Eyer. “We managed to get them over here from the thrift store to me, since my wife became the point of contact for this [shipment] that came over.”

“We want the Iraqi people here to see the Iraqi forces are working for them,” Eyer said.

Soldiers from the 2nd BCT's 1st Battalion, 35th Armor helped provide security while Iraqi troops helped the widows sort through more than 20 boxes filled with clothes, shoes and toys for their children.

“We feel very happy today,” said Usamma, a smiling young recipient of the donations. “The coalition forces help us a lot, and they brought a lot of gifts for us.”

Most of the widows went back to their homes in the neighborhood around the school with as much as they could carry.

“I think it’s great that we can help, and I hope that we can do more in the future,” said Eyer.

(Sgt. Daniel Nichols of the U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office is currently deployed to Iraq with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division.)



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