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1ST INFANTRY DIVISION BRIGADE COMMANDER REPORTS LESS VIOLENCE, MORE GROWTH IN BAGHDAD SECTOR

Multi-National Division – Baghdad release

CAMP VICTORY, BAGHDAD Iraq -- A reduction in violence in neighborhoods on Baghdad's northwest side and an improved security situation are allowing reconstruction efforts and economic gains to flourish, said Col. J.B. Burton, commander of U.S. Army Europe's 2nd "Dagger" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

Burton, whose brigade has patrolled the area for nearly a year, met with members of the Pentagon press corps for a briefing via satellite Oct. 12 and highlighted the progress made in his area of operation, which spans most of northwestern Baghdad.

"In order to stop the cycle of violence, we set about to defeat sectarian expansion by Shia extremists while simultaneously defeating al-Qaeda and denying their access to the population," said Burton, "... we had to get out into the city, live among the citizens, fight alongside the (Iraqi security forces) and deny insurgents, criminals and extremists access to the population."

The implementation of the Baghdad Security Plan, Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon, allowed the Dagger Brigade to move into neighborhoods with a permanent presence, Burton added, with the end result being an 85 percent reduction in violence in the area since May.

"Of our 95 'mulhallas,' or neighborhoods, 58 of them are now considered under control; 33 remain in a clearing status with violence continuing to go down; and four remain in a



MASTER SGT DAVE LARSEN

Col. J.B. Burton, commander of U.S. Army Europe's 2nd "Dagger" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, conducts a press briefing with the Pentagon press corps from Camp Victory in western Baghdad, Oct. 12. Burton's Schweinfurt, Germany-based brigade has been responsible for security in 95 western Baghdad neighborhoods for the past year.

disrupt status," Burton noted. He said murders in the area, which a year ago occurred more than 150 times each week, are down to an average of five a week.

He said a major contributor to the improving security situation in northwestern Baghdad is the commitment of concerned citizens, who have stepped forward to aid coalition and Iraqi security forces provide safe neighborhoods and put a stop to sectarian violence and terrorist acts in their midst.

"These volunteers are actively providing security in partnership with our combined forces and concurrently increasing the citizens' confidence in the Iraqi security forces as a whole," Burton said. "To date, we have a total of 1,772 volunteers and recruits who are fully screened and ready to attend academy for integration into the ISF, with 500 scheduled to attend (the police) academy this month."

Burton said increased confidence in the security efforts has led to an increase in tips from residents to the 14 joint security stations in his area of operations. He said residents are also becoming more involved in the local governmental process, and addressing community issues together.

"Further, we are focused on extending the reach of the government by providing businesses access to financial capital and through the development of public works substations that employ locals in local areas to deliver essential services within their capacity," Burton told the media members. "Our Embedded Reconstruction Team and Joint Project Management Office are helping us achieve these effects."

Burton's brigade headquarters is slated to return to its home base in Schweinfurt, Germany, beginning next month. The colonel said he is pleased with the progress he's seen during his year in the Iraqi capital.

"We leave an area of operations that has shown significant improvement in terms of reduced violence; improved essential services; improvement in the task of daily governing; Iraqi security forces that get better each and every day," he said. "And most importantly we are seeing citizens who are rejecting extremist organizations and standing up and volunteering to help improve the security and well-being of their families and their neighbor's families."



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