

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

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### 'VANGUARDS' COMMANDER APPLAUDS IRAQI VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTION TO IMPROVED SECURITY, ECONOMY

By Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons

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**BAGHDAD, Iraq --** A U.S. Army, Europe battalion commander working directly with Iraqi Security Volunteers cited their efforts as one of the major factors in the economic revival of the Saydiyah, a southern neighborhood in the Iraqi capital.



MAJ KURT LUEDEKE

An Iraqi security volunteer talks to Andrew Passen of the U.S. State Department and Capt. Lee Showman, fire support officer for U.S. Army, Europe's 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry during a recent visit to a combined Iraqi security volunteer-Iraqi National police checkpoint in Saydiyah, Iraq.

Lt. Col. George Glaze, commander of the "Vanguards" of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division based in Schweinfurt, Germany, is responsible for the security of a large part of West Rashid that includes Saydiyah and Radwiniyah.

"When we put (the volunteers) in there were six shops along the main commercial street," Glaze said in an Oct. 19 interview.

"Within two days there were 24 shops and two days later

there were 54. It seemed that every two days the number of shops doubled. To me, that is an indicator of security."

"The economy began to immediately return once the ISVs were in sector," the "Vanguards" commander said.

Currently there are more than 300 Iraqis in the volunteer force and more are being hired every day. The volunteers bolster coalition and Iraqi efforts to bring stability to Baghdad by empowering citizens to protect their neighborhoods. Their presence also enables security forces to concentrate on rebuilding the nation's infrastructure.

Glaze said he feels prejudices have caused some to resort to violence out of fear, and that the only way to combat the problem is through communication.

He cited a recent example of dialogue when he broke fast during Ramadan outside the recently re-opened Saydiyah Mosque with local leaders and the ISV. The Sunni mosque had been closed for eight months but "immediately opened" when the ISV became a presence the town.

Glaze also said he and Lt. Col. Jabar, the Iraqi Army commander in Saydiyah, sat down recently with members of the volunteer force, Iraqi security forces and imams in the area to talk about ways to move forward. He added that he believes the current strategy of getting the volunteers and ISF working together is the main reason for the revival of Saydiyah.

The Vanguard commander said the level of violence has dropped drastically in his area of operations since citizens began volunteering.

"In Radwiniyah as well as in Saydiyah it has gone down significantly. The number of murders, direct fires and (improvised explosive devices) has reduced significantly. It went from every day, to every other day, to once a week," he said.



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