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ARMOR SOLDIERS JOIN IRAQI COMRADES FOR PEACEFUL 'RAID' ON VILLAGE

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE HAMMER, Iraq -- The mission was simple: conduct a raid to gather information on extremists in the area, search for weapons caches and do "human-terrain mapping."



PFC MICHAEL SCHUCH

Sgt. Jonathon Gregoire, team leader for Company A, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor, takes a picture of an Iraqi citizen's iris with a HIIDE system during combined operations with Iraqi National Police in al Batta, Iraq.

The day was still young when Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor, along with shurta (policemen) from the 3rd Battalion, 1st Iraqi National Police Division, made final preparations for a raid on the village of al Batta, Iraq.

The team stepped from their vehicles into the early morning heat and looked at the village ahead. Families were just beginning to stir in their homes as the mission started.

The raid came to a halt after three peaceful hours. The Soldiers and shurta searched nearly 30 buildings, talked to citizens, and combed farmland and fields.

A middle-aged man in the first house they approached the team, introduced himself as the leader of the Sons of Iraq checkpoint outside the village and offered to walk with the

Soldiers and shurta through the village, pointing out key structures and ensuring the cooperation of other residents.

Sgt. Jonathon Gregoire, a 1-35th team leader, logged every military-aged male in a device known as a Hand-Held, Inter-agency identification equipment system. The HIIDE system, which resembles a digital camera, allows a Soldier to scan a person's iris and fingerprints; to take a picture of the person; and to input any known information, from name and village to occupation and aliases. The information is then readily available to coalition forces throughout Iraq and Afghanistan.

The mission allowed Soldiers to obtain information about living conditions and people in the area.

"I believe (the mission) made the villagers feel a lot safer," said Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Etheridge. "They know now that we are actively working to keep extremists out of the region."

Company A Soldiers said they operate with the 3-1st routinely, teaching their Iraqi colleagues tactics and methods while integrating them into a leading role that should allow the shurta to perform these missions independently in the future.

"It was good working with the national police again," Etheridge said. "It shows that we have a good working relationship with the Iraqis, and prepares them even more for taking over control of the area."

The 1-35th is part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, a U.S. Army Europe unit based in Baumholder, Germany.



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