



U.S. EMBASSY - BAGHDAD

2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

-Changing of the Guard in Iraq's Muthanna Province-

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June 22, 2008

Muthanna Province, Iraq - The leadership of the 2nd Battalion 12th Cavalry Regiment (2-12 CAV) greeted provincial and tribal leaders in a style befitting local custom as the unit undertook security responsibilities in the province from the outgoing Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division.



Deputy Adel Fadel (center tan jacket) and military and Iraqi counterparts dine in traditional manner in a "Mudhif" built by the team for official gatherings.

In one of their first forays into their newly inherited area of operations (AO) the cavalry unit hosted an Iraqi meal in a traditional reed guest house called a "Mudhif." Their co-host was the Muthanna Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) that built the guest house for use as a meeting place.

The State Department-led PRTs work hand-in-hand with their U.S. military counterparts on reconstruction and stabilization projects in all 18 of Iraq's provinces. More than 800 civilian and military volunteers now man the teams whose aim is capacity-building in the areas of agriculture, governance, rule of law and budget execution.

The Muthanna PRT consists of 12 civilians including experts from the Department of Commerce, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The team leader, Paul O'Friel, is a career foreign service officer and a Lieutenant Colonel in the Marine Corps Reserves. A former engineer on the team was a graduate of the Military Academy at West Point.

Local mayors, members of town and provincial councils, and more than a dozen tribal sheikhs graciously accepted the luncheon invitation to welcome the 2-12 CAV and thank departing members of the 82nd Airborne on behalf of the citizens of the province.

The soldiers from the 2-12 CAV looked very much at home standing shoulder-to-shoulder with their counterparts from the 82nd as well as members of the PRT. They greeted local guests with an Arabic welcome, sipped tea in the local way, and shared communal plates of boiled sheep and rice with their guests.

In welcoming the guests Lieutenant Colonel Scott Kendrick, the Battalion Commander for the 2-12 CAV, spoke of his “admiration” for the strength of the relationship between the 82nd and the local community. “We look forward to continuing to develop the relationship” with members of the local community, he said.

LTC Kendrick explained that his soldiers will focus on addressing “key problems” in the province while “working side-by-side with Iraqi citizens, the Iraqi government, the Provincial Council and the PRT” to achieve its objectives.

Lieutenant Colonel Drummond, the 82nd Airborne Battalion Commander, provided a strong endorsement for the newcomers. “Although we are sad to leave,” he explained, “we know we are leaving you in excellent hands with the 2-12 CAV—a storied unit in the U.S. military.”

Abu Jaffat, a leading sheikh from the local community, had kind words of welcome for his new American friends in the province. “We are brothers in work and in security. The people of Muthanna would like to cooperate with you and work hand-in-hand. They wish for this partnership to continue.”

In the spirit of helping Iraqis help themselves, LTC Drummond suggested to his guests that when they head to the polls for the upcoming provincial elections this fall, they “should cast a ballot for a candidate that cares deeply about the future of Muthanna.”

Mayor Majed of the nearby town of Warka expressed his gratitude for the efforts of the 82nd. “We built a relationship founded on friendship,” he said, “and we worked together to improve Muthanna’s security and reconstruction.”