

A message from the 71st Colonel of the Regiment

Over the past month, the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen conducted Operation Restoring Rights alongside the Iraqi Army's 3rd Division in Tal Afar, Iraq. The Regiment, with our Iraqi partners, freed the city from the terrorists and returned it to the Iraqi people.

While conducting this operation, the Regiment maintained security across Western Ninewa Province. Thunder Squadron secured South Baghdad and severely disrupted the enemy there during very effective operations.

Operation Restoring Rights was a tremendous victory for the Iraqi people and the people of Tal Afar. The Operation lifted fear from the people so life could return to the city.

I am very proud of what our soldiers accomplished under the toughest conditions of combat against an enemy who demonstrates a complete lack of respect for human life.

The purpose of Operation Restoring Rights was to secure the population of Tal Afar from these terrorists who established a support base and conducted a campaign of terror to protect it.

It was necessary to defeat the enemy so economic and political development could proceed and Iraqi Security Forces could establish permanent security for the people of Tal Afar.

The enemy was drawn to Tal Afar for a number of reasons. Tal Afar is positioned along routes that lead from Mosul into Syria.



Photo by Spc. Nasir Adams

Col. H.R. McMaster, 71st Regimental Commander, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, assists a displaced Tal Afar family during their return home after citizens were allowed back in the city following Operation Restoring Rights.

Members of the Iraqi Army patrol the streets in Tal Afar, Iraq on Sept. 15, 2005 as part of Operation Restoring Rights. Soldiers of the 3rd Iraqi Army Division took part in huge operation alongside with troopers of 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, rid Tal Afar of terrorists and find and destroy enemy weapon caches.



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. James L. Harper Jr.

It was important to the enemy to control the city so they could access external support from Syria.

Also, this area is important to Al Qaeda in Iraq to foment ethnic and sectarian violence. The terrorists want Iraq to fail and descend into civil war.

Tal Afar is vulnerable in that connection because it is composed of an ethnic minority – the Turkmen.

The Turkmen are further divided between a majority of Turkmen Sunna and a minority of Turkmen Shi'ia.

The city also lies in an area that includes other ethnic and sectarian groups, including Sunni Arabs, Yezedis, and Kurds. Tal Afar was an ideal terrorist support base because of its dense-urban terrain.

The enemy used the area to train, organize, and equip terrorist cells for employment in Tal Afar, across the region, and potentially throughout the country.

To protect this valuable base, the enemy waged a brutal and murderous campaign against the people of Tal Afar.

Terrorist organizations across the city consisted of a direct action cells

of about 100 fighters each.

They also had kidnapping and murder cells, propaganda cells, mortar cells, and sniper cells. They removed all the imams from the mosques and replaced them with Islamic extremist laymen.

They removed all the teachers from the schools and replaced them with people who had a fifth-grade

wounding innocent civilians, including scores of children.

This enemy did the most horrible things one can imagine – in one case murdering a child, placing a booby trap within the child's body, waiting for the parent to come recover the body of their child, and exploding it to kill the parent.

All the while, they were also

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education and who preached hatred and intolerance. They kidnapped and murdered large numbers of innocent people, both Sunni and Shia.

In recent months, a Sunni Turkmen imam was kidnapped and murdered. A respected city councilman was pulled out of his car in front of his children and his wife and shot repeatedly in the head.

Many people were kidnapped and beheaded. The enemy conducted indiscriminate mortar attacks against populated areas, killing and

brainwashing the youth of the city and attempting to turn them into hate-filled murderers. This is the enemy that the Regiment and Iraqi Army Forces defeated in Tal Afar.

People across the city have expressed their thanks for removing these terrorists from their neighborhoods.

Operation Restoring Rights was a continuation of our efforts since arriving in Western Ninewa Province. Since May, Sabre conducted aggressive offensive and reconnais-



Photo by Photographer's Mate First Class Alan D. Monyelle

Soldiers from the 3rd Armory Cavalry Regiment conduct a routine security patrol. Iraqi Army Security Forces with assistance from the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and 82nd Airborne unit are providing security for the region of Tal Afar in order to disrupt insurgent safe havens and to clear weapons cache sights in the area of operation.

sance operations in the city.

Initially, the enemy engaged in pitched battles during which they committed 200 fighters. In each of these engagements, Sabre and Iraqi Army forces killed scores of the enemy.

The enemy realized that this tactic would not work and fell back on harassment attacks, including roadside bombs, mortar attacks, and sniper attacks.

But our Troopers aggressively pursued the enemy in these engagements and our courageous aviators tracked the enemy while our aggressive troopers maneuvered to kill and capture them.

Because we took the fight to the enemy that was terrorizing the population, we developed a good relationship with the local population that led to extremely effective intelligence.

In one raid in the beginning of June, we were able to capture 26 targeted individuals within a 30 minute period – these included some of the worst people here in the city.

The enemy began to realize that they could not hide behind the good

people of Tal Afar.

To counter our growing network of informants, the enemy levied a horrific campaign of intimidation against the people. They began to attack the local population with mortars and snipers.

In response, Sabre Squadron killed four mortar teams and captured two. The Regiment killed

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twelve sniper teams. We relentlessly pursued the enemy and limited their ability to attack and intimidate the local population.

The Regiment also conducted operations in the outlying communities to identify fighters attempting to hide from our very effective operations.

Simultaneous with Sabre's operations in Tal Afar, Tiger Squadron established security along the Syrian border and in the cities of Rabiya, Sinjar, and Bijaj.

Sabre, Tiger, and Muleskinner operated in other outlying communities leading up to the operation, reduced enemy caches, and captured enemy attempting to hide in these communities.

The town of Avgani, north of Tal Afar, has been a notable success for the Iraqi Army. Sabre and Tiger Squadrons both conducted opera-

tions in the town of Avgani leading up to the operation and captured more than 150 suspected terrorists over the course of three operations.

An Iraqi Army Battalion conducted the final operation with assistance from Special Forces.

Following this operation, the Iraqi Army established permanent security in the town that allowed for the re-introduction of police into this city.

The new Avgani Police Force, recruited and trained by the Regi-

A member of Iraqi Army ties the hands of a suspected member of the Anti-Iraqi Force apprehended in the streets of Tal Afar, Iraq on Sept. 15, 2005 as part of Operation Restoring Rights.



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. James L. Harper Jr.

ment and our Special Forces brothers, has completed its training and is operating alongside the Army.

I recently had the opportunity to walk through Avgani with the new Western Ninewa Province Chief of Police – the people were happy and the city was vibrant.

Finding it increasingly difficult to hide outside the city, many of the enemy resolved to defend their safe haven in Tal Afar.

Captured enemy propaganda exhorted them to defend Tal Afar at all costs.

To divert our attention from the stronghold in the Sarai neighborhood; the enemy moved into other neighborhoods throughout the city, evicted families, and staged attacks on Sabre and Tiger Squadron.

As Sabre was isolating the Sarai District, Tiger Squadron encountered the enemy in well-organized, layered, defensive strong-points.

Homes were ringed by RPG and machine gun positions; surrounding those positions, other homes were rigged to explode as U.S. and Iraqi soldiers entered them.

An outer ring employed bombs

buried under the roads.

Tiger, Sabre, and Longknife Squadrons, along with the Iraqi Army, defeated these complex defenses with a combination of aggressive action and intelligence.

Based on informants, the Regiment exploded IEDs with attack helicopter fire or detonated them with our engineers.

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Our ground forces attacked into the enemy’s strong-points with tanks and Bradleys, supported by Iraqi Army Infantry.

Our armored vehicles absorbed the energy from the rocket-propelled grenades and machine guns and continued the assault into these safe havens with the Iraqi Infantry clearing the complex urban terrain.

Simultaneously, our aviators destroyed the leadership in their command and control houses and reduced enemy defenses with hellfire

missiles.

From Sept. 2-6, the Regiment killed more than 200 enemy fighters and captured more than 300 insurgents trying to escape the fighting.

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In Sarai, however, the enemy prepared an elaborate defense in the old city. Here, as in Western Tal Afar, the defenses included buildings rigged for demolition, machine gun positions, sniper positions, and mortar positions.

Again, human intelligence allowed us to target these defenses and destroy them with a variety of means including missiles, tank and Bradley fire, attack and scout helicopters, and sniper fire.

Tiger defeated the enemy’s plan



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. James L. Harper Jr.

Iraqi children pose for a photo during a Coalition Forces-led humanitarian mission in Tal Afar, Iraq, Sept. 24, 2005 as part of Operation Restoring Rights. The citizens celebrated the removal of terrorists who made the city into a safe haven to conduct extensive terrorist operations and intimidate the populace.

to draw us west as Sabre, reinforced with additional Iraqi Infantry, bore into the Sarai district.

Sabre had already engaged in heavy fighting Sept. 5-6, killing more than 100 of the enemy in their forward defensive positions.

The enemy realized the futility of their defensive efforts. The cowards who had kidnapped and murdered so many defenseless civilians abandoned their positions and tried to run.

They did everything they could to blend in with the civilians who were evacuating from this dense urban area. Some dressed as women; others forced children to walk with them.

Due to our close integration with the people, the Iraqi Army, and the Iraqi Police, we were able to identify the enemy.

In one day, the Regiment captured 104 of the enemy attempting to flee the city. Throughout the operation, the Regiment captured more than 800 insurgents.

During the second day of operations in Sarai, the 2nd Battalion of

the 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division – Known as the White Falcons – joined the Regiment.

They cleared the rest of the neighborhood of the enemy and identified abandoned enemy IEDs and weapons caches.

They also found the vestiges of an extensive terrorist training net-

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work throughout the Sarai district: they found classrooms, complete with chalkboards and diagrams, full of training manuals on weapons systems, chemical weapons, and Jihadist tactics.

The White Falcons have secured what was once one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in any Iraqi city, restoring the confidence of the people and defeating enemy attempts to return.

Throughout the operation, Sup-

port Squadron played a critical role in sustaining the Regiment across all of Western Ninewa Province.

Additionally, Muleskinner conducted combat operations in outlying villages to detain terrorists who attempted to flee the city.

They captured over 150 of the enemy with the assistance of the Iraqi police.

Muleskinner also ran a displaced civilian screening site and a humanitarian assistance site.

They truly made history with their extraordinary versatility and professionalism throughout the operation.

Longknife Squadron also made history by conducting extremely effective reconnaissance, attack, and lift missions throughout the operation.

The tactics that Longknife em-

Spc. Lucas Anderson of Sutherland, Neb., plays “patty-cake” with a local Iraqi boy. Anderson is assigned to Fox Troop, Second Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment.



Photo by Photographer's Mate First Class Alan D. Monyelle

ployed will become the model for future air-ground operations across our Army.

The Squadron provided early warning of suspicious activity, maintained contact with the enemy, and destroyed countless IEDs, defensive positions, and houses rigged to explode.

The Squadron had a dramatic psychological as well as physical effect on the enemy.

Quickstrike Troop, acting as the Regimental reserve, gave the Regiment tremendous flexibility and performed with great distinction.

As the Regiment focused in Tal Afar, the remainder of Tiger Squadron, reinforced with Nomad Troop and platoons from Sapper, continued to secure the western area of operations and the area along the Syrian border with a greatly reduced force.

Because of what forces outside of Tal Afar accomplished, the enemy had no opportunity to strike in other areas.

In South Baghdad, Thunder Squadron continued effective opera-

tions in the most critical area in the country.

As the Regiment has in Western Ninewa Province, Thunder integrated Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police units into successful operations against the enemy.

Thunder discovered IEDs before the enemy could use them and delivered a severe blow to the enemy

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during an intense firefight.

An Iraqi police commando unit was ambushed and Thunder immediately responded, overwhelming the enemy with air and ground fires, killing more than 25 terrorists and capturing more than 70 more.

The Squadron also identified and reduced several large caches consisting of IED-making material.

The Regiment's success against the enemy did not come without sacrifice. Cpl. Joseph Martinez of Eagle

Troop, Sabre Squadron, was killed on Aug. 27.

2nd Lt. Charles Rubado of Crazy Troop, Tiger Squadron, and Chief Warrant Officer Dennis Hay of Pegasus Troop, Longknife Squadron, died on Aug. 29.

Cpl. Jeffrey Williams of Medical Troop, Support Squadron, and the Regimental Commander's secu-

rity detachment, was killed on Sept. 5.

These brave and respected Troopers and their families will remain foremost in our thoughts and prayers. They will continue to inspire us as we honor them with our deeds.

Cpl. Martinez, 2nd Lt. Rubado, Chief Warrant Officer Hay, and Cpl. Williams gave their lives to free the people of Tal Afar from the terrorists and murderers who demon-



Photo by Photographer's Mate First Class Alan D. Monyelle

An Iraqi boy sells a soda to Soldiers of 3rd Armory Cavalry Regiment in Tal Afar after the main offensive of Operation Restoring Rights. Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces remain committed to bringing security and restoring the city's infrastructure after the operation.

strated their complete disregard for humanity.

Their sacrifice will help ensure that our children can continue to live free from the violence, fear, and hatred that these terrorist have inflicted on the good people of Iraq.

The Regiment is fully engaged with improving the city with projects to improve basic services and reduce unemployment.

The Regiment has seen its efforts with the Iraqi Army pay off as our Iraqi brothers performed with distinction during Operation Restoring Rights – we will continue to develop the Iraqi Army, Police, and Border Police capabilities.

The terrorists want to incite fear,

but they have been now fully introduced to the Brave Rifles, and they are the ones who are afraid.

The Iraqi Army is confident, and determined, and the Iraqi Police demonstrated during the referendum that they will not be intimidated.

The Chain of Command and I are very proud of what our Regimental Team has accomplished.

All of us are grateful for the privilege of serving with the finest Soldiers and the finest people in the world.

We are also grateful for our wonderful families, without whose support we could not fulfill our duties to our nation and each other.

Brave Rifles!

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**Col. H.R. McMaster,
71st Colonel of the
Regiment**