



Subject: 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment's letter from Iraqi Mayor of Tall 'Afar, Ninewa, Iraq

The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment has been serving in Iraq (its second deployment there) for the past year.

As the regiment prepares to come home, it has received the letter posted below. I believe many of you will find it an interesting counterpoise too much of what we read in the press.

From: Mayor of Tall 'Afar, Ninawa, Iraq

In the Name of God the Compassionate and Merciful

To the Courageous Men and Women of the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, who have changed the city of Tall' Afar from a ghost town, in which terrorists spread death and destruction, to a secure city flourishing with life.

To the lion-hearts who liberated our city from the grasp of terrorists who were beheading men, women and children in the streets for many months.

To those who spread smiles on the faces of our children, and gave us restored hope, through their personal sacrifice and brave fighting, and gave new life to the city after hopelessness darkened our days, and stole our confidence in our ability to reestablish our city.

Our city was the main base of operations for Abu Mousab Al Zarqawi. The city was completely held hostage in the hands of his henchmen. Our schools, governmental services, businesses and offices were closed. Our streets were silent, and no one dared to walk them. Our people were barricaded in their homes out of fear; death awaited them around every corner.

Terrorists occupied and controlled the only hospital in the city. Their savagery reached such a level that they stuffed the corpses of children with explosives and tossed them into the streets in order to kill grieving parents attempting to retrieve the bodies of their young. This was the situation of our city until God prepared and delivered unto them the courageous soldiers of the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, who liberated this city, ridding it of Zarqawi's followers after harsh fighting, killing many terrorists, and forcing the remaining butchers to flee the city like rats to the surrounding areas, where the bravery of other 3d ACR soldiers in Sinjar, Rabiah, Zumar and Avgani finally destroyed them.

I have met many soldiers of the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment; they are not only courageous men and women, but avenging angels sent by The God Himself to fight the evil of terrorism.

The leaders of this Regiment; COL McMaster, COL Armstrong, LTC Hickey, LTC Gibson, and LTC Reilly embody courage, strength, vision and wisdom.

Officers and soldiers alike bristle with the confidence and character of knights in a bygone era. The mission they have accomplished, by means of a unique military operation, stands among the finest military feats to date in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and truly deserves to be

studied in military science. This military operation was clean, with little collateral damage, despite the ferocity of the enemy. With the skill and precision of surgeons they dealt with the terrorist cancers in the city without causing unnecessary damage.

God bless this brave Regiment; God bless the families who dedicated these brave men and women. From the bottom of our hearts we thank the families. They have given us something we will never forget. To the families of those who have given their holy blood for our land, we all bow to you in reverence and to the souls of your loved ones. Their sacrifice was not in vain. They are not dead, but alive, and their souls hovering around us every second of every minute. They will never be forgotten for giving their precious lives. They have sacrificed that which is most valuable. We see them in the smile of every child, and in every flower growing in this land. Let America, their families, and the world be proud of their sacrifice for humanity and life.

Finally, no matter how much I write or speak about this brave Regiment, I haven't the words to describe the courage of its officers and soldiers. I pray to God to grant happiness and health to these legendary heroes and their brave families.

NAJIM ABDULLAH ABID AL-JIBOURI
Mayor of Tall 'Afar, Ninewa, Iraq

TALL 'AFAR



Tall 'Afar [Tallafar / Tal Afar] is primarily inhabited by Turkmen. It is located about 40 miles (60 kilometers) from the Syrian border.

On 16 May 2000 Iraqi forces threatened Operation Northern Watch (ONW) coalition aircraft again today. This time, the Iraqi forces fired anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) from sites near Bashiqa, Tall'Afar, and Mosul while ONW aircraft conducted routine enforcement of the Northern No-Fly Zone. Coalition aircraft responded to the Iraqi attacks by dropping ordnance on elements of the Iraqi integrated air defense system.

On 16 June 2001 a missile hit a soccer field in this town while a game was under way. The explosion killed 23 people. Determining what exactly happened on that Tuesday in Tall Afar is also made difficult by the fact that no reporters other than those from Iraqi TV were allowed on the site until about a week after the bombing. US military sources said an explosion said to have killed 23 people on a soccer field in northern Iraq was not due to a US-British airstrike, but an errant surface-to-air missile.

Members of the newly elected Tallafar city council took the oath of office 25 October 2003 at their city hall after one of only three truly democratic elections in the history of Iraq. The previous voting method used by coalition forces in Iraq was a stepping-stone toward democracy, officials said. Authorities would select a panel of nominees beforehand, then the nominees would vote amongst themselves. Then between Oct. 15 and Oct. 22, the 187th Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) teamed with Iraqi citizens to conduct the first democratic elections held in Iraq since coalition forces have been in the country. The cities of Tallafar, Zumar and Al-Eyaldia in northern Iraq now have the first popularly elected city councils in the country.

On September 9, 2004, Multi-National Forces and Iraqi Security forces initiated operations to restore control of Tal Afar. The operation came after MNF and Iraqi Security forces were repeatedly attacked and local Iraqi Security forces were displaced throughout the weeks prior. According to CENTCOM, the Ninevah Provincial governor, Duraid Kashmoula, had been working with sheikhs and local leaders in the area to bring about peace and stability to the city. But these attempts at a peaceful solution had failed, resulting in the decision by local Iraqi leaders to initiate military operations.

Over 50,000 people left the city before the operation began, which was an indication that something in Tal Afar was not right. More than 3,000 people returned safely to their homes in Tal Afar on 15 September 2004. Basic utilities had been restored to the city. Duraid Kashmoula, Ninevah Province Governor, and Ninevah Province provincial council members determined that the city was safe and allowed residents to begin returning to their homes. Iraqi security forces maintained security in the city. Multi-National Forces and Iraqi security forces continued to work with Iraqi Red Crescent to provide medical assistance and humanitarian aid to the citizens of Tal Afar.

The coordinated offensive operation by Multi-National Forces and Iraqi security troops chased the terrorists out of Tal Afar in northern Iraq, after six months of violence there. Houses were riddled with bullet holes along Route Santa Fe, a main highway running through the outskirts of Tal Afar, used by terrorists to attack Multi-National Forces and Iraqis in previous months.

By late September 2004 residents had returned to their city to begin the process of rebuilding the infrastructure, repairing houses where the terrorists were hiding, repairing electrical lines and reopening businesses, hoping the terrorists are gone for good so they can live in peace.

For the previous six months, civil affairs Soldiers had been restricted from helping the 250,000 residents of Tal Afar because of violence caused by terrorists. Now that the terrorists had left the city, the Soldiers moved in to assess damages and look for ways to aid the rebuilding.

The two focuses were to support the rebuilding of infrastructure that was damaged in the fighting and to improve upon the existing facilities in Tal Afar. Civil affairs Soldiers from the Stryker Brigade, along with Soldiers from the 416th Civil Affairs Battalion and engineers from the 133rd Engineer Battalion, toured sites in the city on Sept. 18 and 19 to determine the extent of damage. They visited electrical and water facilities, police stations and a grain silo to determine the most important projects to assist the people of Tal Afar.

During a visit to the electrical substation, the Soldiers found that much of the city's electrical problems could be fixed with minor repairs. Some of the power lines were brought down in the city and a few transformers were damaged. The local electrical department is already working to fix these problems. The primary concern is power. If they don't have power, the water pumps won't function and their refrigerators won't stay cold.

Many of the people who live on higher ground were not getting water because there was not enough pressure in the lines to reach all the neighborhoods in Tal Afar, a problem officials said existed in the city even before terrorists moved in. To immediately solve this problem, Multi-National Forces rented 20 water trucks to distribute water to the homes that are not receiving it. This was a high impact project we could do immediately to improve the water situation in the city.

To aid the city's policemen who responded to many of the recent attacks, the civil affairs Soldiers provided them with two new vehicles and 140 sets of body armor. Multi-National Forces also repaired the damage that was done to the police academy and one of the police stations during the recent fighting. Most of the damage was minor and the building structures were still intact. The Soldiers also took steps to immediately improve the unemployment rate in the city. About 75 percent of the city's population is unemployed. This poses a problem because terrorists will pay those who are willing to help them carry out attacks. The projects that the civil affairs Soldiers select were contracted to local firms, employing many people from the area. The Soldiers hoped that by giving people jobs they will be less likely to harbor or cooperate with Anti-Iraqi forces.

The absence of terrorists and the cooperation of the local residents will also allow humanitarian aid to be distributed. Before the terrorists left the city, the Soldiers were being attacked each time they tried to help in Tal Afar. At one point, terrorists attacked them as they were distributing aid to the local hospital.

The attack that forced the terrorists to leave and the return of control to the Iraqi security forces marks a new beginning for the people of Tal Afar. Multi-National Forces are working to improve the conditions for people who have been living in a violent atmosphere.

Tal Afar's police force disintegrated in the Fall of 2004 when insurgents overran the police stations. The city's 200 police remain behind the walls of the old Ottoman fortress used as its headquarters. The US military stationed about 500 troops in the area.

By early 2005 entire neighborhoods were in the grip of insurgents. Streets were deserted, vehicular traffic was almost nonexistent, and storefronts were shuttered.

American troops began arriving in April 2005, and nearly 4,000 were in place by mid-May 2005. An IED attack had killed four Task Force Freedom soldiers in Tal Afar on 28 April 2005. Two other Task Force Freedom soldiers were wounded in the Tal Afar IED attack; they were taken to a combat hospital for treatment. The US troops moved around only in Bradley Fighting Vehicles and tanks.

On 06 June 2005 soldiers from the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, along with hundreds of Iraqi Army soldiers, began moving door to door to capture or kill insurgents.