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## 3rd ACR Rebuilds Iraq, But Many Challenges Remain

By Sgt. 1st Class Gary L. Qualls Jr., USA

*TO OUR READERS: We asked officials with Fort Carson's 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment to e-mail weekly updates on the soldiers' activities to The Gazette. This story has been edited for style and length.*

AL ANBAR PROVINCE, IRAQ -- The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment made strides in helping stabilize and rebuild Iraq in recent weeks, but the death of three soldiers and a police chief reminds troopers there's still much to be done.

First Squadron conducted a highly successful operation recently, detaining more than 100 enemy personnel including several terrorist cell leaders and a major general in the former regime's army.

Meanwhile, 2nd Squadron soldiers enjoyed a different environment than they have been used to in the city of Nukhayb, near the border with Saudi Arabia. After enduring intense, dangerous combat operations in Fallujah and Ramadi, they are engaged in a new kind of mission in Nukhayb — humanitarian projects such as renovating schools and hospitals. The soldiers talk about how welcome they feel in Nukhayb, a refreshing change for the war-weary soldiers.

These successes follow other positive signs, such as Iraqi police finding homemade bombs and reporting the locations to coalition forces and the return of children to school throughout Iraq.

The 3rd ACR and other units have conducted many joint guard operations with Iraqi security personnel, and the regiment is training the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps to help with security missions and to guard the border — all steps toward an independent, self-sufficient Iraq.

Amid the successes, the regiment suffered losses.

Spec. Tamarra Ramos succumbed to cancer Oct. 1. Pfc. Karol Spencer, 571st Long Range Surveillance Company in Germany, died on a mission to observe enemy activity Oct. 6. Pvt. Benjamin Freeman drowned in the Euphrates River on Oct. 13. Col. Rasheed El We Abed, the former police chief of Qaim, was assassinated Oct. 10.

"These deaths punctuate the fact that we still have a long way to go in our mission over here," regimental battle Capt. Brian Kleager said.

The combat intensity also is picking up on the Syrian border, according to 1st Squadron reports.

Western Iraq still is regarded as the "Wild, Wild West," and, like in the days of Indian raids and stagecoach robberies in America, it won't be tamed overnight.