

Bringing Iraq to the U.S.

Story by SNPA James Judge, D7 Public Affairs

MIAMI – His face was chiseled, cold and stern with the look of determination as his piercing eyes stared hard into the distance. It was as if he could still hear the explosions echoing halfway across the world in his native country which has been torn apart by sectarian violence.

Iraqi Gen. Babakir Baderakhan Zibari, the commanding general and chief of staff Iraqi joint forces, a former Kurdish commander who strongly opposed former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and the Arab Socialist Baath Party, made his way to South Florida on a very overcast Jan. 24, afternoon.

Much has been debated as to whether the U.S. should continue this war and recently President Bush gave the final word. Though no official deadline has been established, according to the president, achieving success is the more portentous issue.

“I say that it's important to succeed, and that failure in Iraq will cause chaos. And chaos in the Middle East is exactly what an enemy that wants to harm the American people hopes for, because out of chaos will come the ability to recruit, the ability to have safe haven from which to attack, the ability to gain new resources and capabilities. And what I would hope is, is that anybody in public office says, we want to succeed, and let's have a strategy for success,” President George W. Bush said.

In the wake of the President's recent decisions for more troops and more U.S. support, Coast Guard Base Miami Beach was chosen by the Pentagon to be the prime example Zibari and his staff would visit. They would see first hand just how the Coast Guard conducts counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics and illegal migration interdiction missions and would discuss how the Iraqi military can duplicate the Coast Guard's effort.

Capt. Karl L. Schultz, commander of Coast Guard Sector Miami was chosen for the important task. As commanding officer he is also Captain of the Port for two of the busiest sea ports in the U.S.; Miami, and Port Everglades, Fla.

Zibari was given an in-depth tour of Base Miami Beach by Schultz and a special maritime tour of the Port of Miami from the 87-foot Cutter Dolphin. During his visit he was provided an extensive briefing on day-to-day missions, responsibilities and challenges the Coast Guard faces.

This is not the first time the Coast Guard and Iraqi military leaders have teamed up to work together and share operational knowledge. Currently there are six Coast Guard cutters deployed with coalition forces in Iraq.

With Iraq's Al Faw peninsula jutting south into the Northern Arabian Gulf and the sides of the country bordered by the Shaat al Arab River to the West and the Khawar Abd

Allah River to the East, the Iraqi Coastal Defense Force, the U.S. Coast Guard and coalition forces face the complicated task of protecting Iraq's interests on the water.

The ICDF also receives hands-on training from the U.S. Coast Guard as well as other coalition forces while they all work together to keep Iraq's maritime interests like the port of Umm Qasr and the two main oil terminals, Kwar al Amaya and Al Basrah, safe.

As for the visit as a whole it was viewed as a substantial success. "The visiting senior Iraqi military delegation was extremely appreciative of their visit with the Coast Guard here in Miami noting many parallels between our port and border security missions and the maritime challenges they face now and in the future with their navy," said Schultz.

USCG