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LATIFIYAH RAID BY TROOPS OF V CORPS' 1ST ARMORED DIVISION NETS ANTI-COALITION SUSPECTS, EVIDENCE

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LATIFIYAH, Iraq – Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team of V Corps' Task Force 1st Armored Division recently joined with Iraqi Civil Defense Corps members in an offensive against suspected insurgents here, picking up six targets in 2nd BCT's area of responsibility.

The "Gators" of the division's 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry dispatched two companies of Soldiers here to stake out and raid up to 15 targets that intelligence reports identified as active in anti-coalition efforts.



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One of the targeted buildings was a mosque, so 2/6th leaders made sure to treat the sacred structure

Lt. Col. T.C. Williams, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry of V Corps' 1st Armored Division (right) and Capt. Andrew L. Chenoweth, the 2/6th intelligence officer, examine items in an imam's home for evidence of anti-coalition activities during a recent raid in Latafiya, Iraq.

with respect. The Iraqi troops were the only ones to enter the mosque, wearing plastic coverings over their boots to ensure they did not desecrate the holy site. Soldiers and

ICDC troops searched the imam's house next to the mosque and discovered documents detailing anti-coalition activity.

"I think what we found at the mosque helped to confirm information that we had, and gave us new indications of future planned activities that we'll look into," said Lt. Col. T.C. Williams, the 2/6th commander. "We took a good chunk out of the guys responsible for the majority of enemy activity in Mahmoudiya and Latifiyah."

A local sheik was also informed about the raid and observed the ICDC and coalition Soldiers in action.

"The ICDC performed superbly," said Williams. "They were systematic in their entry to the mosque and in their search techniques. Bringing the sheik and ICDC to the mosque should avoid any misinformation that could be spread by the enemy."

The Gators, stationed at Forward Operating Base St. Michel, south of Baghdad, carefully planned the operation to capture the targets simultaneously to take full advantage of the element of surprise.

The raid went off without a hitch.

"Every one of these missions that's quiet is a good one," Williams said. "You go in with plenty of combat power, which certainly discourages the 'bad guys' from doing anything."

Part of the search included dog handlers from a civilian contractor, who brought explosives-detecting dogs to various raid sites to sniff out bomb-making materials.

The battalion's civil affairs team helped control reaction by local citizens to the searches by providing information to the community.

"Tonight we're here to ensure that the Iraqis understand the reason why we had to search the mosque," said Sgt. Kevin R. Sattler, civil affairs specialist with the 425th Civil Affairs Battalion. "We want them to understand why the mosque loses its protected status when (the enemy) use it for military operations."

"More than just letting them know why, though, we want people in the community to understand it's their responsibility not to let the mosque be used in that manner," he added.

Since anti-coalition materials were taken from the target sites – including the mosque – the citizens of the towns should take it upon themselves to ensure the safety of their homes by not allowing insurgent activity to take place in their "back yards," Sattler continued.

The raid did not net all the fish the Gators were trying to catch, Williams said, but the battalion did hook nine suspects: six of the targeted individuals, plus three others who tested positive for having been involved with explosives.

"Now (having more insurgents off the streets) gives us the opportunity to do projects in a more secure environment," said Williams.

The raid certainly wasn't the first performed by the 2/6th. But after more than a year in Iraq, the Soldiers remain focused on their mission, Williams said.

"The Soldiers still approach every one of these missions with the same attention to detail -- the same intensity -- as the first ones," Williams said. "That kind of (stuff) makes a commander proud."

