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## V CORPS TASK FORCE HELPS REOPEN THIRD SCHOOL IN BALAD AREA WHILE PLANNING WORK ON EIGHT MORE

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**BALAD, Iraq** — Soldiers from Bravo Company of Task Force 1st Battalion, 77th

Armor of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division participated in a grand opening ceremony at the Gatafan Primary School here September 1.

The school opening is the most recent event in Operation Tiger Cub, Task Force 1-77's effort to repair or rebuild local schools. Gatafan School is attended by nearly 200 students from the surrounding neighborhood, and employs eight teachers and one headmistress.

The school, built in the early 1980s, had become severely damaged after two decades of neglect. The roof was collapsing in many places; the sewage system was inoperable, and there was no clean, safe place for the students to play. These poor conditions led the Balad City Council and Task Force 1-77 to identify repairing the school as a priority project.

The grand opening ceremony was attended by members of the Balad City Council, Soldiers from Bravo Company, and dozens of local residents and children, many of whom will be students there when school starts in the coming weeks.

1st Lt. John Martin, executive officer of Bravo Company, addressed the gathering, thanking those who have offered continued support in the area. "This project was made possible through the hard work of the local community. The children who benefit from this new school will grow up to one day be the leaders of a brighter Iraq," stated Martin.

Following a ceremonial ribbon-cutting, guests were given refreshments and took a tour of the new school.

Renovations included replacing the roof, completely rebuilding the restrooms and septic system, adding a new wall around the school, and building several courts for the children to safely play on. The project cost more than \$31,000.

"Repairing Gatafan School is a tremendous gift to the people of Balad. The children and teachers thank everyone very much for their help," said the school's headmistress.

The children who attended the event were given an additional treat when Soldiers handed out toys, stuffed animals and school supplies. The supplies, donated by friends and family members of Soldiers in the task force, were received with wild enthusiasm by the children.

"It really makes these kids' day when we are able to give them things like this," said Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Wyatt. "These supplies show the compassion and generosity of the American people, who continue to support the Soldiers over here through countless care packages."

The grand opening was the second in the Task Force 1-77 area in the last two weeks. To date, Operation Tiger Cub has supported three new area schools, with work expected to begin on another eight in the coming weeks. To date the Task Force has spent more than \$250,000 in efforts to improve area schools.

