Operation Annie a strategic success

Soldiers' joint mission: Provide Iraqi orphans a clean place to sleep

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The air was thick with the scent of urine and the floors were lightly covered with dirt at Dinah's Orphanage for mentally and physically handicapped children in Baghdad. Each night, the 70 children shared mattresses spread across the floor, due to lack of room and furniture.

Soldiers from Special Troops Battalion, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, Australian Contingent-Iraq, and 1st Cavalry Division worked together to bring new furniture to the orphanage June 12 in a mission billed Operation Annie.

"The Australian mission here is ending, and we've had a lot of soldiers come through Baghdad," Australian Col. Marcus Fielding, Camp Victory said. "The facilities that we've been using have to be closed down. So, we decided rather than just let all the furniture be put in the trash we would make arrangements to have it delivered here to the orphanage."

After Australian soldiers contacted MNC-I Special Troops Battalion the Soldiers got to work organizing transportation, security and unloading the furniture.

After walking through the hallway where most of the children sleep at night, Pfc. Shaun Baba, Allenstown, Pa., hoped for a positive result from the donation.

Photo by Pfc. Karin A. Leach, 114th Public Affairs Detachment

Soldiers from Special Troops Battalion, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, Australian Contigent-Iraq, and 1st Cavalry Division worked together to bring new furniture to Dinah's Orphanage for mentally and physically handicapped children in Baghdad June 12.

"If anything I hope that dropping off this furniture makes some kids smile," Baba, multi-channel transmission systems operator-maintainer, Company C, Special Troops Battalion, MNC-I, said.

The owner, Dinah, puts all of her money toward caring for the children, but doesn't have the money to add furniture to her small collection.

"I feel good doing this," Sgt. 1st Class Julio Burgado, Company C, Special Troops Battalion, said.

"Their current living situation is very bad. All of their stuff inside is old and the furniture we are providing to them is much newer and in better condition. It's a feeling of joy being able to do this for these children."

Like Burgado many Servicemember's morale was boosted after making the trip.

"It's nice to be able to do something charitable for this country," Fielding said. "There's a lot of hardship and suffering which these people have endured. It's nice to be able to spend a couple of hours and make the effort to put some furniture to good use."

After unloading more than 40 mattresses, putting together bunk beds and carrying drawers in the orphanage, Servicemembers headed back to Camp Victory.

"If people get the chance to do something like this, to give back to the less fortunate, they should always do it," said Burgado. "They should do it because it's the right thing to do."