

# U.S. Soldiers Partner With Iraqis to Build Outpost in Troubled Area

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**U.S. Army Soldiers from Killer Troop, 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, pull security at the entrance to a combat outpost being built in one of Mosul's most dangerous neighborhoods, Jan. 23. Once Combat Outpost Killer is complete, Iraqi and U.S. security forces will be housed there to provide security in an area which sees higher levels of insurgent activity than other parts of the city. Photo by Sgt. Patrick Lair, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.**

**MOSUL** — Piles of concrete rubble, rows of rusted vehicles, busted water lines and local snipers are just a few of the obstacles U.S. and Iraqi Soldiers are overcoming to build a combat outpost in one of Mosul's most dangerous neighborhoods.

U.S. Army Soldiers from Killer Troop, 3rd Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, based out of Ft. Hood, Texas, and members of the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army (IA) Division teamed up Jan. 19 with the U.S. Army's 43rd Combat Engineer Company and 77th Engineer Company to build Combat Outpost Killer, also known as COP "Rabiya," which means "springtime" in Arabic.

"Security is the word," said Capt. Peter Norris, commanding officer of Killer Troop. "Up until now this part of town has had little to no coverage. We're looking to increase the Coalition presence here."

As part of the ongoing counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq, the U.S. military has sought to partner with Iraqi security forces and move off the larger bases into smaller outposts in local neighborhoods. The close proximity not only decreases response time to emergency situations but allows the Coalition more opportunities to interact with the local population, Soldiers said.

“This intersection and this whole little neighborhood has been a hotbed of SIGACTS,” said Sgt. 1st Class Ronald Corella, using the military abbreviation for significant actions, a term given to all critical incidents which need to be reported. “What we’re trying to do is close the gap between some of our other COPs, put some Soldiers in here and catch the bad guys.”

The northern Iraqi city of Mosul, home to around 1.7 million people, is the country’s third-largest city and the capital of Ninewah province. It is thought that more insurgents have moved into the city as recent “surge” efforts in Baghdad and Diyala province to the south have squeezed enemy fighters from their hiding places.

COP Killer is located in east Mosul, between the downtown and Al-Jededa sections of the city, in an area which Norris and others referred to as “highly contentious.”

“You could call this area the most dangerous neighborhood of Mosul,” said a local interpreter, who withholds his name for security reasons. “This place where we’re building COP Rabiya used to be a building where insurgents hid their weapons and took sniper shots at people.”

“I describe this area as battle-torn,” Corella said. “The insurgency has made it a brutal place to live.”

The interpreter said that insurgents have intimidated many locals into cooperating with them. However, many residents he talked to also expressed appreciation that Coalition forces were moving in, he said.

For the first four days of construction, Killer Troop Soldiers patrolled the area, sleeping inside their vehicles or on the hoods with the engine running to stay warm at night, as engineers worked to clear the area of rubble and erect protective barriers around the premises.

“On day one the insurgents realized what we’re building and they’ve been taking shots at us to slow us down,” Corella said. “Every day we get hit with something- RPG’s, small arms fire- but we haven’t had any casualties.”

“The other day I bent down to tie my boot or something just as two shots whizzed by,” said Spc. Jessica Larsen, a medic with Killer Troop. “There are lots of rooftops around here and they seem to be trying to shoot down into the compound.”

The troops receive additional protection from aviation units which routinely fly helicopter missions over the neighborhood to deter enemy activity.

Once the outpost is finished, it will house a large number of Iraqi Army troops with a smaller number of U.S. troops there to provide support.

“This really fits in with what we’re trying to do all over,” Corella said. “The IA gathers the intel, leads the raids and patrols the area while we provide security and help them with things they can’t do.”

Corella said the hope is to take back the neighborhood from insurgents and make it a habitable place again for the residents who’ve fled the violence.

“If we can get the people to move back and the insurgents to go away, that’s just one more little piece of Mosul that’s secure.”

(Story by Sgt. Patrick Lair, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)