

East Rashid Goes to Voting Booth

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Voters from Southeast Rashid raise their hands in favor of a candidate during elections at Joint Security Station Doura in southern Baghdad, March 5. The elections were the first of their kind, providing the people with seven representatives to the Government of Iraq. Photo by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

BAGHDAD — In the United States, “Decision ‘08” is getting into full swing with political parties holding primaries and caucuses in states around the Nation. In southern Baghdad, the story is no different as the people of East Rashid held elections this week to determine who will represent them to the Government of Iraq.

The people voted on seven representative positions: chief, first vice, second vice, terrorist casualties, security, essential services, and a mediator for the people.

Brig. Gen. Saad, the executive officer for the 7th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division, said the neighborhoods having a security representative will help his shurta (police) better do their jobs.

“It will be easier for the people to contact us,” he said. “They’re going to be able to give us information and tips that we can use to guard them.”

On March 5, Southeast Rashid held its elections, and the 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 10th Iraqi Army Division Commander, Lt. Col. Hadar, had advice for the elected officials.

“Take care of your people and serve the people in your neighborhoods,” he said. “Today is a big step toward bringing reconciliation to everybody in the neighborhoods.”

Saad, whose unit is largely Shia operating in a Sunni area, said his police will now serve as an intermediary between the people and the Government of Iraq, which will help the

representative council.

“We will pass their information to the prime minister office,” he said. “They will provide whatever this council needs so they will have the ability to do their jobs.”

Even though the newly-appointed representatives were the winners of the elections and it is still a process in progress, Hadar told the people of his area they were the real winners.

“Today is a great day, and it does justice to the people living in the area. The Iraqi government, Iraqi security forces, Coalition forces, and the good people living here have already sat down together for reconciliation,” he said after the elections were complete. “This is a big victory for all of you because you will have the people from your area represent you and take your voice to the government. This gives you the power to solve your problems.”

(Story by Spc. Nathaniel Smith, 4th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs)