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## Suicide Bomber Solidifies Sol's Resolve

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### Suicide bomber solidifies Sol's resolve in Hawijah, Iraq

April 10, 2008

By Staff Sgt. Margaret C. Nelson, 115th MPAD

Hawijah, Iraq (Multi-National Corps – Iraq) – Khalaf Ibrahim Ali had just finished checking up on his fellow Sons of Iraq around the city. It was April 2. The day was turning out to be another hot one in Hawijah, located approximately 60 miles south of Kirkuk City in the Kirkuk Province. He had just sat down to cool-off with an ice cream when a young man he did not recognize approached. In a blink-of-an-eye, Ali would be wrestling with a suicide bomber bent on killing him.

"I heard him ask someone if I was Abuna," Ali, 54, said. Abuna (Arabic for our father), is Ali's nickname. And then Ali noticed how nervous this person appeared, sweat visible on his face and clothing, and how one half of his body did not appear normal... "much larger and bumpy," is how he described it. "I looked into his eyes, and saw fear." Ali's gut told him to react to a threat. "I saw his arm moving by his side and his hand was squeezing something." What Ali saw was the suicide bomber's failed attempts to trigger an improvised explosive device strapped to his upper body. It malfunctioned. This opportunity allowed Ali to fire a round from his weapon into the attacker's chest. At the conclusion of this encounter, a suicide bomber and an innocent bystander would be killed.

Ali was back to work the next day. Undaunted by this and other failed attempts on his life in recent months... these attacks and those against other Sol's in the area, seem to fuel his determination further. "If those that try to kill me think that I am afraid... they are wrong," the father of 11 children said. He believes it is the extremists that fear the Sol's who number over 7,000 in Hawijah.

"They are trying to stop Sahwah efforts here. They will not," he said. Sahwah is what the locals refer to reconciliation efforts here, also known as Musalaha elsewhere. "When the cowards kill us, they give us more reasons to go forward."

He is confident that Sahwah will succeed and he encourages anyone who may be undecided to "give up their arms and join their brothers in their efforts to take their villages, towns, and cities back from terrorists who, kill us, our wives, our children, our dreams and our future," he said.

While his men consider him a hero, Ali considers his coalition brothers the heroes, referring to Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division whose area of operation includes the city of Hawijah. "Lt. Col. Vanek and Capt. Eddy are the heroes. Their Soldiers continue to risk their lives to help us establish peace here and are always doing good for our people and assisting in their efforts to rebuild... we owe them so much... they are the true heroes," he said.

The heroes Ali credits are; Lt. Col. Christopher Vanek commander of 1-87, and Capt. Quinn Eddy, commander, Bravo Company, 1-87.

Since Sahwah's inception in December 2007, overall violence in this Sunni-Arab dominated portion of northeastern Iraq, has experienced nearly an 80 percent drop in activity... Sons of Iraq continue to sign up throughout the Kirkuk Province numbering over 9,000 to-date, according to Maj. Sean Wilson, 1-10th Mtn. Div., Public Affairs Officer.



Hawijah's Sons of Iraq members mingle with shoppers at a local shop. Their leader nicknamed Abuna (Arabic for our father); Khalaf Ibrahim Ali shot and mortally wounded a suicide bomber, April 2, who was trying to kill him. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Margaret C. Nelson, 115th MPAD)

## Article Opinions

No comments yet

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