

## NCIS has distinct mission in Iraq's Al Anbar province



Photo by: Staff  
Sgt. Chad  
McMeen

Submitted by: 3rd Marine Aircraft, by Cpl. Joel A. Chaverri, AL ASAD, Iraq (Dec. 28, 2004)

Marines and Sailors deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom have a guardian angel: the Naval Criminal Investigative Service.

In charge of law enforcement and counterintelligence for the Navy & Marine Corps, NCIS's mission is to, "prevent and solve crimes that threaten the warfighting capability of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps."

NCIS agents in Al Anbar work hand-in-hand with the I Marine Expeditionary Force, protecting the service members from crimes such as terrorism, homicide, theft and more, making sure that threats against the military are eliminated and criminals are brought to justice.

Because of their role in counterintelligence and counterterrorism, the names of NCIS agents in theatre are kept secret for their personal protection.

"We have detachments all over Iraq," said a senior NCIS official visiting Al Asad, "because we want to do everything possible to get the job done."

The agents are trained as criminal investigators and are experienced in military affairs and federal law enforcement.

"Our agents are well trained," said the official. They are intelligent and dedicated to protecting our troops."

Protecting the troops means investigating suspicious incidents like medically unattended deaths (which may include vehicular deaths) and eliminating the possibility of criminal action.

"We want to rule out every possibility of foul play," said the official. "We have no desire to see crime, but if it's there, we'll find it."

"Although NCIS collects all of this information, it's not their job to prefer criminal charges.

"We play a 'fact finding' mission," said the official. "Things we discover we report to the command and they decide on the proper course of action."

On a base of primarily military personnel in an occupied country, there isn't as much outside influence as there would be on a base surrounded by civilians who had much greater access to the base (as in the United States or allied countries).

"The crime here isn't as significant as it could be," said the official. "Here on Al Asad we have a small population and we keep a close watch on the foreign national contractors." "Recently NCIS has been working on a number of crimes ranging from arson to identity theft.

"We'll send out emails to commands to make sure that everyone knows of the potential threats around base," said the official. "We want to stop criminal activity before it occurs."

While certain steps are taken to prevent activity, occasionally incidents do occur. When this happens, the agents jump into action as they did in the recent suicide bombing of a formation of Iraqi Police just outside the entrance to Al Asad.

"We collected fingerprints from the scene so that we could possibly identify the bomber," said one NCIS agent. "If we can identify him, we might be able to identify which terrorist network was behind the attack."

NCIS is also responsible for providing personal security for high-level officials, and other people who could be targets of a criminal or terrorist attack.

Along with all of these responsibilities, NCIS has also been able to add a few more missions under its belt.

"We have the ability to do finger printing, so we use the station for assisting those wanting to get their American citizenship," said the official. "Service members deployed to Iraq who are not yet American citizens usually have to wait to get back to the states to get their finger prints taken. But why wait when we can do it here?"

All of these undertakings and extra tasks are just more accomplishments that the NCIS can add to their repertoire of faithful service to the Navy/Marine Corps team.

"Over the past few years NCIS has evolved into a much more professional organization and has gained a lot more publicity," said the official. "Hey, we even have a TV show!" referring to CBS's "Navy NCIS."

Through its actions, the NCIS has proved their dedication to ensuring the security of on-base personnel.

"It all comes down to keeping Marines in combat as safe as possible when on their base," said the official.