

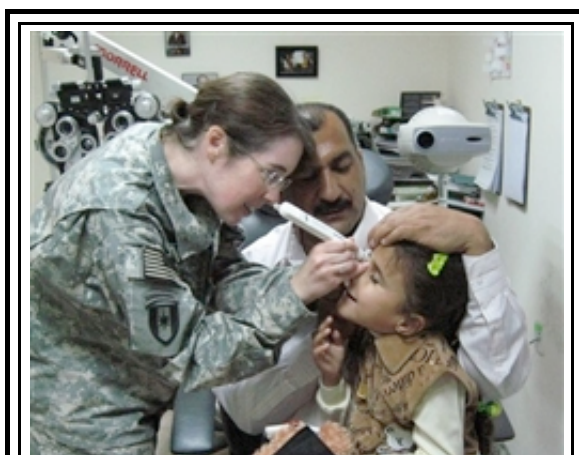


## AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE **NEWS ARTICLES**

### Coalition Forces Help Iraqi Child Needing Surgery

American Forces Press Service

FORWARD OPERATING BASE KALSU, Iraq, March 20, 2008 – An Iraqi girl and her family, as well as soldiers here, are anxiously awaiting a decision from an organization in Los Angeles that will determine the fate of her eyesight.



Army Capt. (Dr.) Angie M. Pruitt, 86th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad, examines the eyes of 5-year-old Noor Taha Najee on March 14, 2008. Soldiers of Company D, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, escorted Noor to the hospital for the exam and are assisting with the process of getting Noor surgery to correct her blindness. U.S. Army photo (Click photo for screen-resolution image); [high-resolution image](#) available.

Soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division's Company D, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, escorted 5-year-old Noor to the 86th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad on March 14 so an optometrist could evaluate her eyes.

The medical evaluation will give doctors almost 8,000 miles away the information they need to determine whether they'll perform corneal transplant surgery that might save the girl's sight.

The initial diagnosis by Lt. Col. (Dr.) Hee-Choon Lee, battalion surgeon for the 3rd Infantry Division's 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, found that Noor is blind due to a birth defect that resulted in poorly developed corneas in both of her eyes. Her 32-year-old uncle Mustafa also suffers from the same defect.

Doctors from the Eye Defects Research Foundation, a nongovernmental organization in Los Angeles, are evaluating the information from Noor's medical appointment and will decide whether she is a viable candidate for surgery and, if she is, where the surgery would take place.

Lee said if representatives from the foundation can find other patients to operate on in Iraq, then a trip could be organized. If not, then coalition forces would work to have the girl and her family taken to Los Angeles for the surgery.

Noor's uncle also is being evaluated as a candidate for surgery, but his case requires

more caution because he is an adult, and his eyes might not heal as easily as those of his young niece, Lee said.

"I think Noor's left eye has a lot of hope," the doctor said. "Her right eye may not be a good candidate, because it is too small. All the (ultrasound) pictures were sent up, and we're waiting."

But even if she gets the surgery, Lee cautioned, it's quite possible Noor's sight can't be saved. An Emory University study of corneal transplant success in pediatric patients showed the success rate in the best of circumstances was only 50 percent.

"We are all working toward getting this young girl the gift of sight," Lee said.

(From a Multinational Division Center news release.)

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*Blind since birth, Noor Taha Najee, 5, sits with her father, Taha, in their home in Buaytha, Iraq, south of Baghdad, Feb. 10, 2008. Soldiers of Company D, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, escorted Noor to the 86th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad on March 14 to have her eyes evaluated by an optometrist. U.S. Army photo*

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*Blind since birth, Noor Taha Najee, 5, stands with her father, Taha, and two siblings in their home in Buaytha, Iraq, south of Baghdad, Feb. 10, 2008. Soldiers of Company D, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, escorted Noor to the 86th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad on March 14 to have her eyes evaluated by an optometrist. U.S. Army photo*

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