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PRESS RELEASE

A BIG THANKS FOR ASHFORD FROM IRAQ

TOYS, shoes and food donated by generous families in Ashford have been gratefully received by one of the neediest schools in the Iraqi city of Basrah – thanks to the Royal Regiment of Wales.

Sergeant Richard Cousins, a soldier from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers attached to the RRW, launched an appeal in his home town of Ashford asking for donations.

So far about 40 boxes of aid have been sent to Basrah. The city was terribly neglected during Saddam's regime, as he despised the area's Shiite majority. The area was widely fought over during the Iran / Iraq war.

The first contingent of boxes was handed over to the Al Mujahed School and community centre in the city's Subkhat al Arab area by Sgt Cousins and a team from the RRW.

"These presents will go a long way to help improve the lives of many children in Basra, many of whom don't even have a pair of shoes," Sgt Cousins said.

"I would like to thank everyone who has donated anything to the appeal and helped to make it such a success. Their generosity has touched the lives of many people, and they are truly grateful."

ENDS

Images are available from Reuters or AFP. Also, the website www.operations.mod.uk/telic contains a library of images that you can download free of charge.