



Police Academy—Tikrit

Military Police, Civilian Officers Teach Tactics to Tikrit Police

By Sergeant First Class Kevin Doheny

Saladin (the 12th-century, Tikrit-born, Kurdish political and military leader for whom the Salah ad Din province, Iraq, is named) is renowned for leading a Muslim resistance against foreign fighters and recapturing territories which were crucial to the people of the Arab world. He is an admired figure within the Muslim culture.

Nine centuries later, the police of Tikrit, the capital of the Salah ad Din province, also battle an enemy. And today, the citizens of Tikrit again have a chance to reclaim territory—by joining the local police force.

It has been five years since the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime. In Hussein's hometown of Tikrit (located in the northern portion of the volatile Sunni Triangle, about 140 kilometers northwest of Baghdad), Iraqi police are beginning to lead their own operations to improve the security of the city. They are using their own information sources and planning the operations themselves. They are patrolling the streets and trying to maintain law and order by working with the local populace—most of which still revere the deceased dictator. To some, it has been an uphill struggle to keep peace within the streets. However, it seems that the more trained and professional the police who serve in the neighborhoods of Tikrit, the safer the environment.

Transforming the Iraqi police into a more proficient security force is one of the goals of the 56th Military Police Company, attached to the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). These military police fall under the command of the battlespace owners in Tikrit—the 1st Special Troops

Battalion. The 56th Military Police try to ensure that the Iraqi police within their area of operations have all the tools necessary to validate the proficiency of their stations to coalition forces.

During their time in Iraq, the 56th Military Police had the opportunity to evaluate the activity and proficiency of Iraqi police within the area of operations; it was apparent that a training program was needed. Based on their own personal military police experience and training, members of the 56th Military Police Company developed the concept of a five-day course. There is an old American saying that “practice makes perfect.” This philosophy was evident in the course developed and delivered by the company. The daily classes and practical exercises provide the Iraqi police with a solid background in police work.

During the first day of the course, the role of the Iraqi Police was described and the importance of community policing was explained. Instructors also discussed values, leadership, and communication. In addition, they touched on some of the new Iraqi constitutional laws, highlighting actions that do and do not constitute crimes and explaining how to tell the difference.

The first day culminated with a crash course on defense methods. Since most confrontations end up on the ground, the instructors introduced a small portion of the Modern Army Combatives Program–Skill Level I.¹

Patrol procedures were covered on the second day. Soldiers learned to prepare for missions through precombat checks and inspections on equipment and weapons. The proper methods for conducting foot patrols, finding cover and concealment, reacting to snipers, and responding to roadside bombs were also discussed and demonstrated. Procedures for obtaining information to assist in the apprehension of improvised explosive device emplacements were also presented.

The highlight of the second day was the presentation of proper building entry and clearing procedures by an Iraqi special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team element. The goal was to provide a framework in which Iraqi police could instruct other Iraqi police. “It was amazing to see one Iraqi police force teach another for a common goal,” said one noncommissioned officer (NCO). “Iraqi SWAT is an elite unit, so they have a ton to offer as far as teaching the IPs [Iraqi police]. I have a goal that in eight weeks, when this training cycle is complete, to have this course completely Iraqi-taught.” The Iraqi police also participated in practical training exercises designed to encourage them to think for themselves.

The focus of the third day was on individual-assigned weapons, with the goal being familiarization rather than actual proficiency.

On the morning of the fourth day, medical personnel from the company distributed bandages and dressings and instructed the Iraqi police in self and buddy first aid. The handling of detainees was also discussed on the fourth day.

Once the classroom instruction was complete, the Iraqi police participated in challenging scenarios that involved speaking with locals, entering and clearing a building, dealing with an improvised explosive device emplacement, engaging an enemy, and treating a casualty.

On the fifth and final day, military police administered a written test and a final scenario to gauge the knowledge acquired by the Iraqi police. The culminating event was a giant celebration of the course completion.

Before the start of training, Iraqi police at the Qadeceya station were reluctant to go outside. “Now they are conducting foot patrols and are very involved in the community and schools. The IPs are beginning to understand [that] they are here to protect the community and that talking with the populace will only assist in gaining their trust,” said the NCO.

The NCO also indicated that he was impressed with the number of Iraqi police who attended the course, citing high attendance as evidence of the willingness of station chiefs to ensure better training.

The training officer for the Qadeceya police station agrees that the course was important to the development of the Iraqi police. “The training was very valuable, and I like to see my IPs working with the MPs [military police],” he said. “I like the fact [that] it came from U.S. Soldiers. Sometimes, being human, we have a tendency to forget things, so this was better for us than just a refresher course. My IPs will act better on the streets because of the course material. This is much better for them than any other training we could have provided ourselves.”

Because the training of all Iraqi police in the city was scheduled to take eight weeks, the NCO indicated that he did not know whether the goal of completely turning the program over to the Iraqi police themselves could be achieved right away, but that the Iraqi police who had been trained could go back to their respective communities and make a difference. “I just want to see these guys take over this training program,” he said. “I want them to be proactive instead of reactive. When this happens, I truly believe the communities will be safer. This is a small step, I know, but even if they take away one or two things from this course, like clearing a room or block[ing] streets on a foot patrol effectively, then we have made them better than what they were.”

Endnote:

¹The Modern Army Combatives Program, which began with the 2d Ranger Battalion in 1995, is now being introduced to the Army as a whole. The Skill Level I class is designed to provide Soldiers with knowledge about fighting tactics so that they can return to their units and provide instruction to Soldiers at the platoon level. (Source: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/pao/training_closeup/090603.htm>, accessed on 29 May 2008.)

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