

# Boy Scouts of Iraq: The 571st Military Police Company Lends a Hand

*By First Lieutenant Aaron D. Fairman*

As we begin to draw down forces in Iraq, there are many programs that are still in the process of being reestablished. One of those programs is the Boy Scouts.

On 10 December 2009, service members from the International Zone, including Soldiers of the 571st Military Police Company, participated in a day camp designed to help facilitate the rebuilding of the Iraqi Boy Scout program. The day camp, which was attended by more than 130 boys ranging in age from 8 to 16, consisted of 10 stations (including stations on fire safety, tent erection, compass and land navigation, knot tying, first aid, and good sportsmanship games such as soccer).

Whether the participating service members had previously been involved with Boy Scouts for just a couple of months or had attained the rank of Eagle Scout, they realized the positive influence that scouting had on them. Consequently, they eagerly volunteered their very limited spare time to help with the camp.

Soldiers of the 571st Military Police Company manned the knot-tying station, where two knots—the square knot and the bowline—were taught. The volunteer instructors avoided language barrier issues by demonstrating how to tie the knots step by step. This allowed for less verbal communication and more practical exercise. One of the instructors stated, “The language barrier was difficult for me to tell them how to work and how to do things. But, I was very surprised at their extreme amount of teamwork and dedication to learning new things. I’m proud to know things are looking up here for them by starting to prepare the future leaders of Iraq.” Another instructor added, “I was eager to help out with the Boy Scouts here in Iraq. It was a good opportunity to show them some of the skills we use back in the [United States]. I hope that the skills we showed them help them out in the future.”



**Iraqi Boy Scouts learn knot-tying techniques.**

The scouting program in Iraq, which was one of the first Arab countries to join the scouting movement, began in 1921 and has struggled ever since. Although numbers grew during the early 1930s, they dwindled a decade later. In the 1940s, scouting started to pick up and, with the assistance of the British Royal Air Force, sporadic movements were initiated. Unfortunately, because Saddam Hussein was using scouting for corrupt military means, the World Scouting Organization council disbanded scouting in Iraq during his regime. In 2004, Mr. Chip Beck (a former Navy commander, Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] operative, and assistant commissioner for Venture Scouting) decided to reinstate the program. He created the Green Zone Council—an organization comprised of U.S. and Iraqi military and government officials—to encourage the rejuvenation of scouting in Iraq. The Green Zone Council created a legal, fully recognized scouting program in Iraq. The program extended to Victory Base Complex in 2008 and has begun to grow throughout Baghdad. The Iraqi Boy Scout program is now operated exclusively by Iraqis and is open to boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds.

With scouting currently on the rise, it is great to see the positive influence that events such as the day camp have on young Iraqi children. The kids enjoyed themselves, and they and the volunteers left the camp with a shared sense of accomplishment.

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