

Sending a Message to 9-11 Terrorists

By Specialist Kristopher Joseph

When the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center fell on 11 September 2001, it served as a wake-up call for not only Americans but for all the world to take a stand against terrorism.

Bernard Kerik, a retired New York police commissioner currently serving as the senior policy advisor for the Ministry of Interior in Iraq, knows all too well what "9-11" means. To share the meaning of the 11 September tragedy and remind V Corps soldiers of why they are in Iraq, Kerik invited deployed troops from the 18th Military Police Brigade to watch the documentary, *Twin Towers*, about those who gave their lives on that dark day.

Kerik spoke at length about the countless heroes of the tragedy. He said that one of the reasons America's military heroes are in Iraq and Afghanistan is so those who died on 11 September did not die in vain, stating that the terrible day happened because of America's principles on liberty and freedom—the very things that our enemies despise. He went on to say that it is now our job to send a message to those responsible for the terrorist attacks.

The film, which won an Oscar for best short story documentary, focused on police officer Joseph Vigiano, a member of the New York Police Department Emergency Service Unit—the equivalent of an Army Special Forces unit. The film portrayed Vigiano, a survivor of two separate gunshot incidents, as one of the best in his unit. The film spoke volumes on Vigiano's willingness and determination to put himself in harm's way to rid the city of crime and make it a safer place for his wife and three children. Vigiano was in one of the World Trade Center towers, trying to rescue victims, when it came crashing down. Sadly, his brother John, a fireman, also perished during rescue operations.

Kerik, a former military policeman, said that it takes special people to defend a city and a nation and that others won't always understand what you do or why you do it. The 18th Military Police Brigade commander echoed those sentiments, saying that what the unit is doing there has to matter—for the sake of those who died on 11 September.

As if to underscore those remarks, that same day soldiers from the 18th and Iraqi police conducted a successful joint raid on a mosque to search for illegal weapons and members of the former Iraqi regime wanted for questioning. That raid uncovered at least one automatic weapon.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Kerik thanked the brigade for the improvements it made with limited resources. He especially praised the unit for rebuilding 35 police stations in only 15 weeks.



A military police officer displays an AK-47 assault rifle found in a Baghdad mosque during a joint raid with Iraqi police.