



Photo by Sergeant Heather Hilton

An instructor practices proper handcuff techniques with Iraqi Police Academy students.

Creating a Standard for the Iraqi Police Academy

By Sergeant Heather Hilton

The 156th Military Police Detachment (Law and Order), West Virginia Army National Guard, is not just setting a standard for the Iraqi police force—they are creating it. At the Iraqi Police Academy, Iraqi policemen are gaining knowledge and receiving proper training—training they have lacked for many decades—through interaction with their American counterparts.

The 156th is currently attached to the 503d Military Police Battalion, 16th Military Police Brigade, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The 45-member unit, consisting of mostly state and federal law enforcement officers, is making a difference in a country where there is much turmoil. The 156th, working hand in hand with Iraqi police, has created a curriculum and environment to lead the way for future Iraqi police operations.

Taught with the help of interpreters, the 3-week class is designed to teach internationally recognized law enforcement procedures to former Iraqi policemen and military personnel. Consisting of civilian and military training, the curriculum covers defense tactics, ethics, religious tolerance, Iraqi law, hostage procedures, domestic-dispute procedures, standard police duties, police reports, and physical training.

The academy's first class consisted of 74 students between the ages of 16 and 40. By the second class, all 120 available seats were filled. The top 4 students from the first class were chosen to help teach the second class, and 8 students were selected from that class to help with the third. The training program is designed so that it can easily be taken over and taught by course graduates, and selecting the best students from each class is the first step in this process.

As the academy continues to expand, so must its training facility. Due to the increased student load and the incorporation of a new 12-week program, the academy moved to a larger facility. The original 3-week program and corrections officer and security force training are still available to students, but the expanded program was necessary to provide

additional training to students having no prior experience in law enforcement.

Clad in new light blue uniforms, which distinguish them from the old regime, new academy graduates will hit the streets of the community ready to serve. The old regime instilled fear, but the newly trained force will institute improved community relations—giving to the community instead of taking away. Raising community awareness—through Iraqi television and newspaper reports—about the academy and the functions of the newly trained force is vital to the overall success of the program and its integration into Iraqi society.

The support of the Mosul Police Department, in addition to that provided by the 101st Airborne Division and the 503d Military Police Battalion, has been tremendous. In the beginning, there was mistrust between U.S. and Iraqi personnel, but the 156th has come a long way toward building rapport. Interpreters and former law enforcement officers are coming out of exile and retirement to help with the mission. They are smart and dedicated people. They have seen what went on under the old regime, and they are anxious to create a new democracy.