
Empire State Military Police Partner in Safe Iraqi Election

By Sergeant Neil W. McCabe

As tens of thousands of residents of Basra, Iraq, voted in the 7 March 2010 national elections, Soldiers from the 206th Military Police Company (a New York National Guard unit based in Albany, New York, and deployed to Contingency Operating Base Basra, where they fall under the 203d Military Police Battalion, which is attached to the 17th Fires Brigade) joined their Iraqi security force partners at the Provincial Joint Coordination Center (PJCC) to monitor the elections that were taking place in the second largest city in the country.

The PJCC is a compound consisting of many facilities, including barracks, a jail, a modern crime lab, a criminal intelligence center, and administrative offices. The compound does not serve as a mission execution staging area; rather, it is a place where representatives from the Government of Iraq law enforcement, public safety, and military forces come together in a single command room to look at the same map, hear the same reports, and keep each other informed.

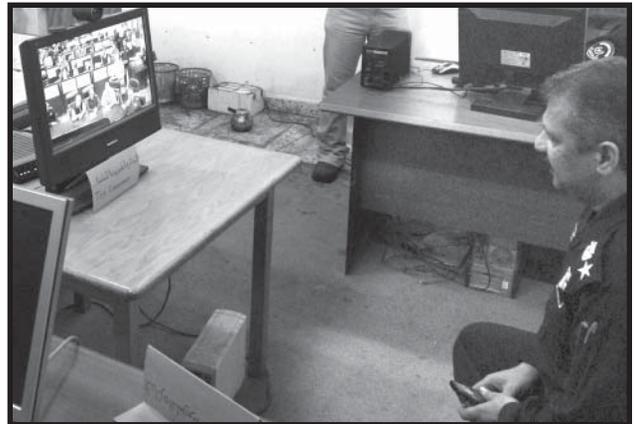
The commander of the 203d (an Alabama National Guard unit) spent about 8 hours at the PJCC on election day—in case any peace-breaking incidents should occur. To assist the Iraqis with tracking the movements of their military units and teams of election observers, the commander of the 203d brought postage stamp-sized pieces of paper with him, each of which was labeled with the name of a military element or election observer team. The tabs were placed on the large, high-resolution satellite image that had been laid out on the map table in the command room. As reports came in,

the commander often moved the tabs himself, using the updates as an opportunity to brief the PJCC shift commander.

Military police from the 206th were also available at the PJCC to answer the Iraqis' questions about the posture and missions of U.S. forces. This allowed the Iraqis to also keep track of U.S. military movements on election day. For example, after the polls closed, a report was received which indicated that an untracked U.S. military convoy was spotted just outside the Basra city limits. An Iraqi police commissioner plotted the reported location of the convoy on the map and—together with an Iraqi navy lieutenant commander, other Iraqi police, and U.S. military police—compared that location with the positions and movements of other U.S. forces that had already been delineated on the map. At the same time, other U.S. military police called to query their battalion tactical operations center. Within minutes of receiving the report, the police commissioner was able to inform the PJCC shift commander that the U.S.



Lieutenant Colonel Manaa and the commander of the 203d Military Police Battalion review a map of Basra.



Lieutenant Colonel Manaa participates in a video conference call with the national operations center in Baghdad.

military vehicles were part of an Iraqi team which was securing ballots from polling stations.

Throughout the day, the PJCC shift commander, Lieutenant Colonel Awooda Abdal Hafeel Manaa, conducted video conference calls with the national operations center in Baghdad, providing periodic updates regarding the security situation and public safety. Personnel in Baghdad repeatedly inquired about whether there were any reports of violence and, after consistently receiving negative responses, dubbed Basra the “white province,” referring to the lack of trouble or violence throughout the province. They said that Basra was the model for all other provinces.

After the polls closed, Lieutenant Colonel Manaa asked the commander of the 203d for an honest assessment of the day’s operation. The commander indicated that the Iraqi security force officers and patrolmen had carried

themselves with professionalism. He also stated that he was glad everything went well and that there were no accidents. Using the Iraqi police as the inner ring, with primacy in the city, while the Iraqi army provided security around the outer ring, worked out very well. He said, “I think you had a very good plan. Now we just have to work together to secure the ballots.”

For the voters, the day was over; but for the Iraqi security forces and their partners from New York, it was on to the next phase.

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