
Criminal Investigation Task Force

By Chief Warrant Officer 4 L. J. “Jim” Powlen

One of the most unique organizations to emerge from the Military Police Corps as a result of the War on Terror is the Department of Defense (DOD) Criminal Investigation Task Force (CITF). Headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, with forward-deployed detachments in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; Iraq; and Afghanistan, this joint task force, established in February 2002 as the result of a Presidential military order, tackles the challenges of investigating accused terrorists in U.S. custody in Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere. It also builds criminal cases against accused terrorists for presentation in a judicial venue.

Early in the task force’s evolution, it was evident that its personnel needed a specialized knowledge base and skill set in order to be successful. The personnel learned most of those skills through “on-the-job” training that sometimes took as long as three months, until the CITF created the Agency Development Branch inside the Investigations Division in March 2005.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 L. J. “Jim” Powlen was tasked with developing, implementing, and institutionalizing a training program to provide all personnel assigned to the CITF—including special agents, analysts, attorneys, data managers, support personnel from all branches of the military, and DOD civilians and contractors—with the necessary knowledge and skills to reduce the learning curve to six weeks or less. Since the task force is a temporary organization with personnel assigned to it for periods of four months to two or three years, reducing the learning curve was essential to achieving maximum mission accomplishment.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Powlen, a special agent with the Army Criminal Investigation Command, initially developed a five-day, 50-hour entry level training (ELT) program. He formerly served as the commander of the CITF’s Afghanistan detachment and as the operations officer for CITF’s headquarters and its Cuba detachment.

Day one familiarized the attendees with the CITF’s mission, its evolution, and its structure down to the division level. Day two focused primarily on the Investigations Division down to the unit level

and on building a basic knowledge of the history, structure, events, and personalities that formed Al Qaeda. Day three covered the basics of Islam and the origins of Islamic extremist ideology, the psychology of how people from the Middle East and South Asia process information, and risk assessment methodology. Day four focused on intelligence tools and the case management system used in the task force. Day five completed the case management system training and focused on briefings regarding combat crime scene examinations, a case study presentation, and the CITF interview protocol. Nationally renowned experts were recruited to be part of the teaching cadre, including Dr. Max Gross, the former dean of the Joint Military Intelligence College.

As the ELT evolved, it grew from a five-day program to an eight-day program, based on feedback from students that more time was needed to process the flood of information. Today the first three days of training remain the same. Day four is dedicated entirely to teaching the use of various intelligence databases and tools. Day five is the capstone day with presentations on combat crime scenes, a case study, electronic media exploitation, and the interview protocol. The remaining three days are dedicated to teaching the case management system and ensuring that students have achieved an acceptable level of proficiency.

Personnel from numerous federal and DOD agencies—including the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the U.S. Secret Service; and the DOD Office for the Administrative Review of the Detention of

Enemy Combatants, which reviews the cases of all detainees held at the U.S. Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay—also send their personnel to the training classes on a regular basis.

In-service training consists of the following three subprograms:

- External courses. Personnel assigned to the CITF attend courses outside the task force that are relevant to the CITF’s mission.
- CITF library. The library contains books, compact discs, and digital versatile discs (DVDs), many produced by the CITF, that are fielded to forward-deployed elements and down to the unit level in the Investigations Division.
- Guest lecturer series. Nationally and internationally renowned experts in terrorism give lectures to the task force. The lectures are professionally recorded and DVDs are fielded to forward-deployed elements to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the information. Guest lecturers have included Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, author of “Inside Al Qaeda”; Hekmat Karzai, former first secretary of the Afghan Embassy to the U.S.;

and Brian Michael Jenkins from the Rand Corporation.

CITF also provides tailored training on several topics to allied organizations. Chief Warrant Officer 4 Powlen has been involved with the U.S. Army Intelligence Center and School at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, in developing curriculum for human intelligence collectors. CITF instructors also serve as adjunct faculty with the Defense Academy for Credibility Assessment, the Joint Counterintelligence Training Center, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Academy, and the U.S. Army Medical Command.

A complete list of CITF training materials and mobile training teams can be found on the CITF home page at <http://www.citf.army.smil.mil>. From the home page, select “Units,” and then “Agency Development.” The CITF has also published a “Counseling, Evaluating, and Mentoring Guide for the Joint Environment” and an “Educing Information Guide.” For copies of any of these products or training materials or for information about joining CITF, contact Chief Warrant Officer 4 Powlen at lester.powlen@belvoir.army.mil or lester.powlen@citf.army.smil.mil.