

# Thousands Endure Sandstorm to Become Iraqi Police

By Sergeant Daniel Blottenberger

*As a sandstorm blanketed Baghdad, Iraq, on 17 June 2008, an estimated 2,000 Iraqi citizens endured the elements to become Iraqi police at the Furat Iraqi Police Training Facility.*

Iraqi police officials and military police Soldiers with the 18th Military Police Brigade, Multinational Division–Baghdad, conducted a four-day recruiting drive at the Furat training facility in an attempt to reach their goal of 1,300 new recruits for basic recruit training en route to becoming Iraqi Police.

“A little over 2,000 civilians showed up today,” said the officer in charge of the Furat Iraqi Police Training Facility. “We can process about 400 recruits a day with a total of 1,300 recruits in four days,” he added. The police transition team was ecstatic about the number of civilians who braved the weather to become Iraqi police. “The benefit of having so many people show up today means we have a lot of hope. We see the benefit of so many people showing up despite the sandstorm,” said a training facility officer. “They are trying to get a job and take care of their communities and families.”

The increase in the number of Iraqi police is part of a continuing expansion program intended to strengthen the overall security of Baghdad. The program was aimed at training more than 25,000 Iraqi police recruits by 2008. As of June 2008, more than 22,000 police had been deployed in the Iraqi capital as part of the first phase of expansion. “We are getting the job done,” said a training facility officer. “We are providing . . . Iraqi security forces to provide a stable Baghdad.”

During the recruiting, individuals put their names on a list. They then completed an in-processing packet, which included a literacy test, physical fitness test, and medical examination. The packets were stamped by an Iraqi police official and sent to higher headquarters. Once approved, the recruits received orders to return for police training.

“The Iraqis are collecting the packets and information. They are the ones really making this day successful,” said a training facility officer during the Iraqi-led recruiting operation. The officer had been working with Iraqi police in Baghdad for several months and said that he has seen a great improvement in the Iraqi police force since arriving. “They are taking whatever we teach them, and they are running with it. And they are doing a great job,” he said.

Regarding the improvements in Iraqi police operations and the Iraqi way of life since their last deployments, a training facility officer said, “It’s amazing to see the difference in quality-of-life improvements for

the Iraqi people. They have electricity—sometimes all day now—and water, and they have established a strong infrastructure since the last time I was here. They are doing everything they can to rebuild for themselves.”

The military police have a mission to assist and mentor the Iraqi police force. They do this by helping them develop and execute police competencies and operating systems so that Iraq can continue building a police force which is capable and stands ready to protect and serve the citizens of Iraq. “This is a totally different mission. We are here in more of a support role for the Iraqi people. Basically, we are just assisting them as they take control of their hometowns,” said a training facility officer.

As the second day of the four-day recruiting effort came to a close, another 400 recruits received orders and began preparing themselves for basic recruit training, which they would attend in the upcoming months. “We are succeeding, and we will be successful,” concluded an officer at the training facility.

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**Iraqi police commanders write down names of police recruits at the Furat Iraqi Police Training Facility during a four-day recruiting drive sponsored by Iraqi Police officials and Multinational Division–Baghdad Soldiers.**