

# Some Do Care

*Major General Jerry Cannon and Brigadier General David Phillips*

The sounds of rocket impacts caused the buildings on Phoenix Base, Baghdad, Iraq, to rumble and shake on a hot day in April 2008. This time, the impacts were much closer than those of the previous volley. The damage was determined within a few moments of the barrage: two killed and eighteen wounded in action. All of the casualties were members of the Multinational Security Transition Command–Iraq, and several of the seriously wounded were assigned to the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team.

Within an hour of the attack, I was outside the back entrance of the emergency room (ER) at the combat support hospital located near Phoenix Base, within the secured confines of the International (Green) Zone. I leaned up against a wall—the same place I had stood following countless ER trips during Operation Iraqi Freedom II. Frustration at the carnage was taking its toll. I was physically, mentally, and emotionally drained. But just when I was closing my eyes to reflect on the smiling faces I had seen in the dining facility the previous night, I heard the distinctive “whoop, whoop, whoop” of two medical evacuation helicopters. They were coming in fast and at a steep angle—a sure sign that wounded were onboard. Dust flew up from the landing zone; and Lieutenant Colonel John Bogdan, commander of the 95th Military Police Battalion, jumped out of the first bird and raced alongside a litter bearing one of his wounded warriors. Thirty minutes later, he was next to me, leaning against the same wall outside the ER. We were quiet, engrossed in our own thoughts of the Soldiers we lost that spring day in Baghdad.

In the days following the multiple unit memorials that I attended for our fallen Soldiers, I reflected on the handful of Iraqi police that I had seen in attendance at these and other equally solemn ceremonies. Albeit sometimes in small numbers, Iraqi police are almost always present at these memorials. “Some care,” I thought. “Some do, in fact, respect the sacrifices of our Soldiers.”

*—Brigadier General Phillips*

The new expansion of the Erbil Police Academy, Erbil, Iraq, was opened and signed over to the Iraqi government in October 2008. This event was of particular note, as it was unlike any previously witnessed in Iraq; the ceremony included the dedication of a bronze bust in honor of First Lieutenant Ashley Henderson-Huff of the U.S. Army Military Police Corps. First Lieutenant Henderson-Huff, who supported the Erbil Police Academy as a member of the Erbil Police Transition Team, tragically died of injuries she suffered when a suicide, vehicle-borne, improvised explosive device exploded next to her humvee near Mosul, Iraq, in September 2006. To recognize First Lieutenant Henderson-Huff’s phenomenal contributions and sacrifice, the Kurdish police leadership had a memorial built in her honor. A prominent location within the Erbil Police Academy grounds was selected for the memorial. Mr. Karim Sinjari, the Kurdish government’s Minister of Interior, invited First Lieutenant Henderson-Huff’s father to the dedication ceremony. Through their actions, the Iraqi Kurds of Erbil demonstrated their appreciation for the extreme sacrifice of this young officer.

*—Major General Cannon*



In October 2008, Deputy Minister Ayden Khalid Qadir (Deputy Minister of Interior for Iraq) and Lieutenant General Hussein al-Awadi (commanding general of the Iraqi National Police) visited the home of the Regiment—Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Their visit was the culmination of numerous conversations and planning sessions to establish an Iraqi police exchange program with the U.S. Army Military Police School and initiate invitations to Iraqi National Police captains to attend the Military Police Captains Career Course. These senior Iraqi police leaders had a unique request; they wanted to lay a wreath at Memorial Grove in tribute to the fallen military police Soldiers who were lost in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

On a bright afternoon, with the leaves in full color, Deputy Minister Ayden and Lieutenant General al-Awadi slowly carried a green wreath with golden flowers under the large, bronze, crossed pistols at the entrance to Memorial Grove. They proceeded to the center platform in front of a myriad of individual military police unit plaques. The ceremony was simple, yet moving. They positioned themselves on either side of the wreath, slowly lifted it, moved forward toward the wall, emplaced the wreath, prayed, placed two Iraqi police patches on the wreath, and saluted. With those few steps, we knew that the Iraqis had answered a question asked by so many of our Soldiers: Yes, they do appreciate our sacrifices for their country and the cause of freedom. Yes, they do care.

—*Brigadier General Phillips*



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## **U.S. Military Police Soldier Honored at Iraqi Police Academy**

*By Lieutenant Colonel Michael Indovina*

First Lieutenant Henderson-Huff was instrumental in the development of plans for the Erbil Police Academy. She worked closely with the Kurdish Minister of Interior, Mr. Karim Sinjari, and the provincial Director of Police; their work had a strategic impact on the Erbil province.

During the October 2008 dedication ceremony, keynote speaker Mr. Gary York said, “This Erbil Police Academy did not just happen. It was a dream and hope of many people, and one of them was First Lieutenant Ashley Henderson-Huff.”

“This is truly a tremendous moment for the Military Police Corps. She was a tremendous officer. She moved people,” said Colonel Mark Spindler, commander of the 18th Military Police Brigade.

“What a profound thing that has happened here—when the Iraqis dedicate a monument to a U.S. Soldier on Iraqi soil. This demonstrates the partnership between Iraqi police and U.S. military police . . . during this time of development of the [Iraqi police],” Spindler said. “It also shows change is happening in Iraq—positive change.”

“You know, [the Iraqi police] did not have to do this,” added Spindler. “The Iraqi Police did this totally on their own; a great day for our [military police] and the U.S. Army.”

At the time of her death, First Lieutenant Henderson-Huff was assigned to the 549th Military Police Company, Fort Stewart, Georgia. She was under the command and control of the 709th Military Police Battalion in the Multinational Division–North area of operation. Henderson-Huff was one of three military police lieutenants tasked to partner with a Kurdish provincial director of police to help build a legitimate police force.

Today, military police transition teams continue to help expand, develop, and partner with Iraqi police—just as they did in 2006.

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