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Iraqi Police, U.S. forces work together for safer Kirkuk

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1/30/2008 - **KIRKUK REGIONAL AIR BASE, Iraq** -- --
Thirty police chiefs from across the Kirkuk province recently returned here after attending a ground-breaking, four-week training course designed to improve security throughout the region.

The Senior Law Enforcement Staff Management course, conducted at Camp Dublin, Baghdad, taught the region's upper echelon of Iraqi Police how to better defend against insurgent efforts in the Kirkuk province.

The training was the first of its kind for police throughout Iraq, and provides a promising outlook for future stability and security in Kirkuk, said Marlon Cobar, Kirkuk's Provisional Reconstruction Team rule of law coordinator.



Thirty of Kirkuk's police chiefs walk off an Air Force C-130 onto the runway after recently returning from the Senior Law Enforcement Management course at Camp Dublin, Baghdad. The course trained police chiefs from throughout the Kirkuk province how to better defend against insurgent efforts in the area. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman SerMae Lampkin)

"This is the first time any Iraqi province made a concerted effort to train its top police management in one location," said Cobar, who attended and helped organize the course. "It took a considerable amount of time, effort and willingness among top Iraqi Police leadership to send this many leaders on one trip.

"Fortunately, the PRT, U.S. Army and Air Force have historically forged strong ties to the Iraqi leadership in Kirkuk, so they trust us with their top police chiefs," he added. "While there is no magic bullet, we certainly feel this is an important step to improving security in Kirkuk."

Provincial Reconstruction Teams are units combining U.S. military and civilian entities to help embolden local Iraqi governments in their efforts to sustain security and economic growth. Kirkuk's PRT partnered with the Civilian Police Assistance Team, part of the Multi-National Force - Iraq, to conduct the training.

The course's material focused on three overarching goals: develop increased levels of leadership in police stations throughout Kirkuk, reinforce rule of law principles pertaining to counter-insurgency efforts, and foster communication between the various stations.

The curriculum incorporated classroom and field exercises, and specific lessons included human resources management, morale building, decision making, logistics, and use of force.

Unity was also a common theme during the training, as the police chiefs slept in the same quarters, ate together, and were encouraged to interact in both the classroom and field, said Cobar.

"A main by-product of this course is having these top Iraqi Police leaders work together, even though they are from different geographic stations throughout the province," he said.

The trainees said the course would help future endeavors throughout the province by teaching standardized procedures, said Brig. Gen. Adel ZainAl-Abdeen Ibrahim, a course attendee.

"We got a chance to learn more about international police laws and some of the techniques Americans use," he said. "We also made friends with coalition forces and (other station chiefs), which is very important to the whole organization."

Returning from Baghdad, the police chiefs were met with praise from several local leaders from Kirkuk AB, and

the Iraqi Police and military.

"I'm very happy such a large number of Kirkuk police chiefs could be trained by coalition forces," said Maj. Gen. Jamal Taher Bakir, top police chief for the city of Kirkuk. "Our intentions are for these chiefs to teach their police officers the information they learned so the whole force benefits."

"I thank all the coalition forces for working with us to receive this training to make Kirkuk's police better; they work with us like brothers," the general added. "Security is much-improved here, and we hope these training sessions will help keep the people of Kirkuk safe in 2008."

Cobar said the trainees gave overwhelmingly positive feedback so far, and he plans to pitch the course as a model for other Iraqi Police units to follow. He is currently working to arrange an additional staff management course for more of Kirkuk's Iraqi Police leaders.

"While any new experience takes some initial adjustment time, I've received great reviews from both instructors and students," he said. "We gave briefs about the course to top civilian and military leadership at the embassy, and they are very supportive. I have no doubt they would want to explore this for Iraqi Police in other provinces. The PRT leadership feels this helps the Iraqi Police, and anything that can help strengthen security in Kirkuk is a worthwhile effort."

Cobar also praised the Air Forces' vital support to accomplishing this mission. Without the efforts of Airmen, these critical steps toward peace and stability in the region could not take place, he said.

"The Air Force has an extremely important role in this historic event," he said. "It is doubtful any of these police chiefs would ride all the way to Baghdad because of inherent security risks. The Airmen make the mission-essential task of airlift possible for us. From logistics management to security, this has been a true partnership with the Air Force, and we've been very fortunate to receive this level of support."