

# Training Notes



## ESTABLISHING A TRAINING CENTER FOR DIYALA BORDER ENFORCEMENT

CAPTAIN JOSEPH WISE

The plan for reduction of U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq is for the Iraqi people to have enough trained personnel to maintain their own security and the security of their borders. The Iraqi government has established three major organizations to accomplish this: police, army, and border enforcement. These organizations had to be completely rebuilt from the ground up. The border enforcement along the Iranian border had no standardized training program since the fall of the last government. The 3rd Squadron, 278th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) selected a group of 16 Soldiers and an interpreter to set up a standardized training program for 1,500 men in two and a half months. This group included three NCOs and me.

Since arriving in northeastern Iraq in December 2004, 3rd Squadron had been tasked to train the Iraqi police and army. It

was also given the task of evaluating and monitoring the Diyala Border Enforcement (DBE), which is charged with securing Iraq's borders. This organization's members, sometimes referred to as border police, must secure the border against all threats short of an invasion and provide early warning if there is an invasion. This means that the organization must use military techniques and tactics to secure the border. However, the rules of engagement are a mix of the regular army and police rules. The DBE is located south of Kurdistan, along the Iranian border, and in the Diyala Province. The border is 193 kilometers long in their sector.

Regiment required reports on all the security forces at least twice a month from the squadron. The reports tracked competence of leadership, logistics shortcomings, and how many people were trained in different areas. I was responsible for making sure that squadron received the reports on the army and

فیرگه ی جهنگی به ریوه به رایه تی یاره وانی سنوری دیاله  
مدرسه قتال مدیریتة حرس حدود دیالی

DIYALA BORDER POLICE BATTLE SCHOOL

police from I Troop. I submitted reports to regiment from November 2004 until March 2004. In March 2004, a training team for the Iraqi Army was organized out of our squadron, and Major Keith Scott assumed responsibility for the reports about the army to send to regiment. Sergeant First Class Boswell assumed responsibility for the police reports for I Troop. The problems identified from the reports were addressed or fixed.

The squadron initially began working on training the local police. There was not a lot of guidance to the training wanted, and this guidance seemed to change regularly. Coalition forces were working with the government to establish academies throughout the country for their training. However, there was no continued training after the academy instruction.

Small groups of soldiers from each troop were initially selected to work with the local police organizations located in each troop's area of operations. These groups had some guidance, but the type and amount of training given by each troop varied greatly. Some troops documented this training well, and others did not. As time in country progressed, the focus was to send all of the police to the academies. Of course, that meant that coalition forces were tasked with escorting them out of sector to the academies. The academies were set up so that Iraqi instructors taught at the academy with advisors from the coalition. The instructors were not all policemen. The transition to training the police at the academies took some time. The transitions started before the regiment entered into the country, and we had finished the majority of the transition by the time that we redeployed in October 2005. The academies trained all the basic skills and rules that the police needed and was a good source for basic training. However, there was not much thought given to continue training after the police went to the academies. Sustaining training was primarily done at the department where the police worked and marksmanship was done on the range at the FOB.

There was a different approach taken to train the Iraqi Army. Due to the Iraqi Army's reorganization, the 3rd Squadron went from training two companies to training a battalion of soldiers. The 3rd Squadron assigned a platoon from each troop to train each Iraqi company and elements of the staff to train the Iraqi staff on a daily basis. The companies had some training from the previous unit in the area and from U.S. Special Forces before the 278th RCT entered the country. However, the battalion headquarters unit was brand new. The training for the battalion was very structured, requiring at least eight hours of training a day for approximately three months. The emphasis was on the Iraqi Army battalion staff, which had almost one-on-one training. FM 7-8, *Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*, was used as the primary reference (Major Keith Scott). The Iraqi Army was taught an operations order format that "was adopted as the standard across Theater" (MAJ Keith Scott). The major emphasis of Iraqi Army training was for them to be a self-sustaining organization. The training and results were tracked through reports on a daily basis and the training was considered successful. Even though the mission was a success, again, the issue of continued training was



Courtesy photos

*Diyala Border Enforcement students receive instruction.*

not really addressed.

Towards the end of April, Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Holmes, the squadron commander, and Major Barry Roberson, the S-3, decided that the DBE needed some attention. There were not enough training academies to train the border enforcement personnel in a timely manner, and it would take years for some of them to be able to attend a training academy. Everyone who signed up for the DBE had to go through a basic training course in Muntheria. Their basic training was only 14 days long and included teaching them how to march, issuing uniforms to them, and giving a limited amount of instruction on basic rules of what was expected of them. Basic training did not cover any small arms training or any other operational training. There was very little customs or legal training. After completing the 14-day basic training, the personnel were then assigned to work at a border castle along the border. The commander of each border castle was tasked with training them once they arrived, so there was no standard for this continuous training, and the commanders trained the personnel on what they considered was important with some guidance from their chain of command.

The guidance from 3rd Squadron was to focus on the key areas of training and logistics and to identify any other problems the DBE had so they could be addressed. This guidance was divided into two missions. The first mission was set up standardized training within the DBE so the DBE personnel could secure the Iraqi border more effectively. The second, and simultaneous, mission was to identify the logistics situation and address any problems that the DBE might have. Sixteen people were selected from I Troop to accomplish these multiple missions. I was put in charge of this group. I had three sharp NCOs — Staff Sergeants Robert Ditmore, Charles Newcomb, and Bruce Bailey — who figured out how to make all this happen. This group had just over two months to accomplish this mission, from May 1, 2004, to July 12, 2004.

How to accomplish these two missions was left up to me. I met with the NCOs, and we came up with a strategy. After looking at the other ways regiment had trained the other ISF (Iraqi Security

Forces) and because of the constraints of time, personnel, and equipment that was available, we decided that the best way to accomplish this mission was to set up a program to train the trainer. The plan was to train some sharp men within the DBE who could then begin teaching the rest of the border enforcement personnel. LTC Holmes agreed with the plan and gave his verbal approval. However, he said for that for this to be successful, the DBE commander, Brigadier General Nazim, would have to believe that this was his idea. The reasoning was that he would support it better and continue the training when the squadron's rotation was up. LTC Holmes also identified certain areas and tasks to train the DBE. Some of the areas identified to train the DBE on were basic rifle marksmanship, fixed site security, presence patrols, establish a hasty checkpoint, establish deliberate checkpoints, customs and courtesies, traffic control points, and vehicle searches (LTC Holmes and MNSTC). We refined our plan to include these areas and tasks. The refined training plan would be divided into four areas: marksmanship, common skills, security, and patrol and recon. The squadron commander was presented this refined plan, and he gave his approval. The group started researching the tasks during the first week of May. This research included either adopting other training plans that were found or by developing new ones in English, Arabic, and Kurdish. During this first week, several people, including LTC Holmes, SSG Newcomb, SSG Bailey, and me, talked to BG Nazim

about a way to train his soldiers. BG Nazim jumped at the idea of a training school. BG Nazim and I identified a couple of possible training sites and he chose COL Mohommed to be in charge of this plan.

COL Mohommed, his staff, and the three NCOs from our group began working on a training schedule. In addition to what those tasks which the squadron wanted the Army trained, COL Mohommed wanted to teach customs, professionalism, and law in the course. The training schedule would incorporate both 3rd Squadron and COL Mohommed's subjects.

By May 8, 2004, COL Mohommed had identified more than 20 soldiers who were smart, had combat experience, and had some sort of professional training. These soldiers were then interviewed and screened so the best could be picked to teach. COL Mohommed, the NCOs, and I decided on the best candidates to be instructors. We needed two instructors per class, a primary and alternate. The instructors were of mixed religion and race. There was a mix of Sunni, Shia, and a couple of Christians. The instructors were also Arabs and Kurds. Some of them could speak English, Arabic, and Kurdish. All of them could read in Arabic, but not all of them could speak the same language.

Through the rest of May, we developed the course curriculum, identified a training site, and planned the schedule for the course. Members of the group worked with COL Mohommed, staff, and instructors to gather information and books to teach the classes. Course material from previous military schools, material collected by the

group, and information from other ISF (Iraqi Security Force) schools were used to develop the curriculum. The different areas of expertise in the military and civilian careers of the 16 soldiers proved invaluable in putting the course together. The members of the group were medics, teachers, computer technicians, and policemen before being mobilized.

One of the concerns, while putting all this material into a teachable format, was the education level of the students. The material and testing had to be able to teach the lowest educated students. Some of them could not write or read. In addition to giving the instruction and tests in writing, they would also have to be given orally.

The only training sites that were available were border castles. There were eleven castles occupied along the border in the Diyala Province. Several castles were not occupied and in much need of repair. There was a contract in progress to renovate several castles and build six other new ones. BG Nazim and I tentatively identified a training site; the problem of developing and supplying it arose. However, before the problem of developing and supplying it was addressed, we realized that this site might not work. There was an Iranian border castle less than 1,200 meters away from the tentative training site, and minefields in the area would limit the ability to conduct practical exercises.

BG Nazim suggested a different training site. I evaluated the training site and agreed with BG Nazim. No landmines were near the castle and it was more secure because it was not directly on the border. Both BG Nazim and the squadron agreed to use this as the new training site. The training site was a border castle still under construction that was supposed to be completed by the end of June. There was a contract to construct several new border castles and renovate other castles.

At the end of May and the beginning of June, the focus and energy on the missions began to wane. The NCOs were rotating on leave, and the squadron was tasking the group to do other things. The squadron commander went on leave during this time also. The engineers could not build the range or vehicle search areas at the time due to other missions. The overall focus on the training was faltering.

In mid-June, the majority of the people



*Diyala Border Enforcement instructors pose for a photo with members of the DBE Assessment Team from the 3rd Squadron, 278th Regimental Combat Team.*



*Representatives from local television stations were present for the ceremony marking the opening of the DBE school.*

who were on leave returned, including LTC Holmes. I met with SSG Ditmore, SSG Bailey, and SSG Newcomb to discuss the situation. Reviewing all of the documentation and reports identified the accomplishments and needs. Mission success could still be attained if the group was not tasked to do any other things, and we needed an additional week. I drafted a memo to request this (MEMO to CPT Reed). Upon receipt of the memo, LTC Holmes told me to proceed with my plan and the new target date was July 19. Also, during this time, BG Nazim had gone to a meeting where he had briefed his boss in person about the plans for the school and had received his approval.

I coordinated with the engineers again to find that they had no other missions at the time and could support the group. The group escorted the engineers to the new training location site to build a small arms range, a vehicle search area, and a small berm around the castle. It took the engineers two days to accomplish this.

The supplies and equipment problem still needed to be solved. The DBE was able to come up with desks, signs, a computer, and a printer. Pens, pencils, and paper came from U.S. family members from the states. Silhouettes were constructed for the range from available wood. I found a large tent for the soldiers to live in while they were in class.

Even though the plan had to be adjusted, everything seemed to be progressing well. The projected completion of the castle was the end of June. By the end of June, it was still not completed. This meant that the DBE could not move in or bring any of the supplies and equipment into the castle. I had been working with the contractor and subcontractor throughout this whole time. The time of completion was going to come down to the last day. The

contractor allowed the DBE to move the supplies and equipment into the castle on July 17.

On July 18, one of the interpreters realized that the sign for the school had misspellings and had to be fixed. The subcontractor was complaining that he would have to work late and may not get done. The contractor and Corps of Engineers representative were not sure if the castle would be complete. Squadron wanted to know if everything was ready for the next day. The regimental commander, Colonel Dennis Adams, and many local VIPs were planning on coming to the castle on July 19.

The castle was completed early in the morning on July 19. There was a ceremony for the opening of the school, and the first of many castles that were to be constructed was complete. During the ceremony, BG Nazim was given full credit for all that the DBE had accomplished during the previous two and a half months. This was the first DBE school to be established in the Diyala Province that is run totally by the DBE. The regimental commander, Iraqi Army battalion commander, the mayor of Khanaqin, many other VIPs, and representatives from five newspapers and two local television stations were present at the ceremony in which I was the master of the ceremony.

By the end of the rotation, the DBE had graduated three classes, averaging 50 students per class. A fourth class was beginning. The classes last three weeks. Since the opening of the training school, COL Mohommed built an obstacle course for physical training. The students get weekends and holidays off during training. The schedule has a flexible schedule to accommodate for weather. The students rotate through the different courses during the three weeks. BG Nazim and COL Mohommed made sure that the school could accomplish everything that was wanted and give the students a little bit of a break from the border.

Part of the plan was to be able to expand the class up to one hundred students as soon as more permanent living accommodations for the students could be erected. BG Nazim's boss was so pleased that he expressed the desire to send border enforcement soldiers from other provinces to the school for training.

Because of the time constraints, the training mission did not allow for training down to the lowest level. Feedback from the soldiers did not come until after the first class. This school allows for standardized training throughout the province. Even if there became enough academies to train at, the training site could still be used to continue training. The training model can be duplicated in other provinces. The DBE soldiers will receive the same type of instruction and will be able to work collectively with more efficiency. Their survivability rate will go up. The ability to secure the borders from insurgents and enemies will increase due to training. The instructors can continually refine the classes for better instruction. Because the DBE was convinced that this was their idea, it is more likely that the training will continue for years after the 278th RCT has demobilized.

---

**Captain Joseph Wise** recently graduated from the Infantry Captains Career Course at Fort Benning, Ga., and is currently serving as the assistant S3 for the 3/278th Heavy Brigade Combat Team. Since graduating from Officer Candidate School in 1997, Wise has served with the 278th in a variety of positions including tank platoon leader, executive officer, and fire support officer.

---