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U.S. ARMY EUROPE STRYKER SOLDIERS HELP TEST, SCREEN IRAQI POLICE APPLICANTS

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BAGHDAD, Iraq -- Soldiers from U.S. Army Europe's 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment participated in a four-day Iraqi police recruitment drive in the Karkh Security District that attracted thousands of potential new police officers.



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Sgt. Brian McCain of U.S. Army Europe's Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, watches as a Karkh resident and aspiring Iraqi police officer does pull-ups during a physical fitness test that was part of a police recruitment drive in the area.

The Nov. 15-18 event was conducted in Sadimiyah the first day, then moved to the Olympic stadium complex in Salhiyah for the final three days.

"Part of the Baghdad (Iraqi police) expansion program is to hire 12,000 IPs across all of Baghdad, and every district is running its own recruiting drives,"

explained Maj. Kurt Ritterpusch, the provost marshal for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, the organization to which the

USAREUR Stryker troops are currently attached. "In Karkh, the goal is 415, but we're actually allowed to recruit up to 30 percent more than that, so about 540."

Capt. Keith Miller, assistant operations officer for the 2nd SCR's 4th Squadron, said the Stryker Soldiers were on hand to assist and provide security at the event.

More than 1,000 applicants were expected during the recruiting drive; Miller credited the much larger turnout in part to a major advertising campaign that included meetings with local leaders and Soldiers passing out handbills and applications while on patrol over the past several weeks.

“Every time we go out on patrol, we talk to individuals and tell them this is coming up, and a lot of them are very receptive,” Miller said.

Those hoping to become Iraqi police officers must be male and between the ages of 18 and 35. After applicants were checked in and cleared, they were moved through a series of test stations, beginning with a basic literacy test.

“As part of the recruiting drive they’re doing testing, and they’re putting a balanced and fair approach into the (Iraqi police) recruiting to remove anything that would otherwise influence the recruiting,” Ritterpusch explained. “Basic literacy is to be able to read to a paragraph out loud. The paragraphs are taken from the newspaper, which is at about a sixth-grade level. So they have to be able to read at about a sixth-grade level, and they have to be able to write a sentence that is given to them orally.”

Illiteracy proved to be the number-one disqualifier for the applicants.



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Under the gaze of an Iraqi police officer and Staff Sgt. Edmund Savedra of U.S. Army Europe's Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, an applicant performs push-ups as part of the physical fitness test given to Iraqi police applicants. The test was administered during a police recruitment drive in Baghdad's Karkh District.

“Unfortunately a lot of these guys can’t read or write, so they weren’t able to be used for the IPs, although they really wanted to be part of the police force,” Miller said.

Applicants able to demonstrate a sufficient reading level were then moved through a health assessment station, where both U.S. and Iraqi medical personnel checked them for disqualifying conditions such as irregular heartbeats, before the applicants moved outside to take a physical fitness

test.

They were tested on the number of pull-ups, sit-ups and push-ups they could perform, and timed on a 200-meter run.

“The physical fitness standards are not the same as the U.S. military standards, but they’re enough to demonstrate that they’re in good shape,” Ritterpusch explained.

“Sixty points is the maximum for the test, and there’s no extended skill. It’s two points per repetition for push-ups and sit-ups, and four for pull-ups. Anything below 30 would disqualify them, but everyone who has passed the physical has passed the physical fitness test.”

Ritterpusch said the standards were put in place by the Iraqi Ministry of Interior and are being used across Baghdad.

Potential recruits able to meet all requirements then moved on to the final step of the day, an interview with the police force’s district commander.

“When they walk up, he looks at their appearance (and) their confidence -- if they look like (a police officer) and if they carry themselves in such a manner that they’re able to have some type of authority,” Miller said.

An assessment of each applicant who makes the cut goes to a committee of Karkh Security District and Iraqi police leaders and coalition representatives who look over the applications and forward them to the Ministry of Interior, the captain added.

Ritterpusch said applicants selected by the MOI during the recruitment will be scheduled to attend five-and-a-half weeks of training at the police academy in Baghdad beginning in mid-January, and those who graduate will be put to work immediately.

Miller said applicants who are not chosen for the January class may be chosen for seats in a later class.

“We’ve really had a lot of interest with this recruitment drive, and the Iraqis have come out and surprised me quite a bit,” Miller said. “I believe we’re going to get some good Iraqi police out there.”



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