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'SCHOOL OF THE TROOPER' FILLS NEW U.S. ARMY EUROPE STRYKER SOLDIER WITH INFORMATION, PRIDE

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CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq -- A new Soldier arrives with bags in hand and waits patiently for a representative from his unit come integrate him into a new unit and a new home away from home here. Hours go by and he begins to wonder if anyone even knows he's here.



SGT 1ST CLASS KAP KIM
Spc. Jenny Etheridge, a medic with U.S. Army Europe's 6th Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, demonstrates the proper way to insert a nasopharyngeal airway with the help of new "Dragoon" Spc. David Bailey of the 2nd's 4th Squadron, at Camp Liberty, Iraq during the unit's "School of the Trooper" welcome for new Soldiers.

The doubtful first impression of a unit left in the mind of such a Soldier is one U.S. Army Europe's 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment -- an organization with a history of welcoming Soldiers with open arms -- works hard to avoid.

The 2nd SCR "Dragoons" take pride in a long-standing tradition known as the "School of the Trooper" aimed at properly greeting and integrating new Soldiers. The program dates back more than 170 years -- to 1836 -- and continues in Iraq.

"Once (new Soldiers) get here everyone is a 'Dragoon,'" said Lt. Col. Bryan Denny, 2nd SCR deputy commander. "This is just our way of integrating new troops into the regiment.

While the Soldiers come from different places -- geographically and career-wise -- but everyone is given the same hardy welcome and introduction.

"Most Soldiers come straight out of (Advanced Individual Training) and a lot of NCOs have never been in a Stryker regiment before," said Denny.

The three-day program covers a variety of instructions and information all Soldiers in the unit need to know.

“It’s a lot of stuff (Soldiers) need to know, but a lot of it is unit history,” said Denny. “It instills a ‘can-do’ attitude that comes with being a part of a Stryker regiment.”

On the first day of the program new Soldiers are checked to make sure they have all the equipment they need; go to the firing range, and get welcome briefings from the 2nd SCR commander and command sergeant major that include some of the history of the Stryker regiment. The following days new “Dragoons” attend briefings from organizations such as the unit's chaplain and legal experts; classes on topics such as escalation of force and counter-improvised explosive device skills, and an in-depth first responder’s course.

By the time Soldiers complete the school and are taken to their specific units within the 2nd SCR, the regiment's leadership hopes they have gained a positive first impression and can begin functioning as fully mission-capable “Dragoons” right from the start.

“What we have here is very rare,” said Plano, Texas native Command Sgt. Maj. Brian Hamm. “We want curbside service for every Soldier that comes to our unit.”

The unit recently received a commanding general’s retention award, Hamm said, and that recognition is partially due to the sense of pride that comes from being in the unit that starts the day the new Soldiers arrive.

“Stetsons and spurs go a long way,” Hamm said, referring to the horse cavalry accoutrements still proudly worn by today's troopers. “There’s a lot of pride that comes with being a Stryker.”



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