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U.S. MILITARY POLICE JOIN THEIR IRAQI COUNTERPARTS IN BOLSTERING COMMUNITY FAITH IN POLICE FORCES

By Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger

18th Military Police Brigade Public Affairs Office

CAMP VICTORY, Baghdad, Iraq -- When Iraqi Police and coalition forces arrived at the Zainab Girls' School in Hurriyah June 12, they were met by the smiling faces of more than 50 children and their caretakers.



SGT DANIEL BLOTTENBERGER

Staff Sgt. Joseph Reinsburrow of the 64th Military Police Company holds an Iraqi child during a joint MP and Iraqi Police mission to hand out toys and school supplies at a girls' school in Hurriyah, Iraq, June 12. The 64th, based at Fort Hood, Texas, is currently operating in Iraq as part of U.S. Army Europe's 18th MP Brigade.

"This makes it all worthwhile," said 1st Sgt. Thomas Gray of the 64th Military Police Company, after the police officers handed out boxes of school supplies and toys to the students, many of whom are orphans.

The Hurriyah IP brought the backpacks, school supplies and soccer balls to help show families in the area the IP are here to help protect and serve the community.

"This event gives the IP an opportunity to interact with the people other than (during) neighborhood patrols and checkpoint operations," said Staff Sgt. Joseph Reinsburrow, a 64th MP squad leader.

Reinsburrow and his squad have been conducting Police Transition Team operations with the Hurriyah IP for 11 months now. The PTT Soldiers are coalition military police who train and advise IP personnel from local police officers, or "shurta," to senior leaders such as the provincial police commander, as they conduct their day-to-day missions.

The girls' school mission was one of the group's more pleasant duties.

"It is always a good feeling when you can make an Iraqi kid smile," said 1st Lt. Geneva Arnold, a platoon leader with the 64th MP Co.

"The citizens of Hurriyah are not afraid to come and talk to the IP," said the 64th's Sgt. Angel Villegas. "On normal operation days at the station, there are lines out the door of people coming to get assistance from the IP."

Reinsburrow said he believes Hurriyah citizens recognize local IP officers as a force dedicated to bring the rule of law to the community.

"The citizens see the IP are just out there doing their jobs," he said.

Other PTT members said over the past year they have seen the IP grow and gain recognition as a force for law and order in the community.

"When we got here, the IP were just getting a foothold in the area," said Villegas. "Now they are a force capable of operating on their own."

The Hurriyah IP officers proved that ability to protect their community during an uprising by criminal groups in Baghdad, PTT members said.

"The IP stayed at their posts and manned the checkpoints during the uprising," said Reinsburrow.

Police officials say violence has decreased in the area, and now the IP can focus on building better relationships within their communities.

"The IP are making a positive impact on their citizens' lives," said Arnold.

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