



## Face of Defense: Squad Leader's Idea Helps Afghan Police

By Spc. Nathan W. Hutchison, USA  
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FIREBASE NAWA, Afghanistan, Feb. 19, 2008 – Police and other law enforcement officers in the United States are regarded as well-trained professionals and role models by the public.

Army Sgt. Ronald K. Burke, a squad leader for the 82nd Airborne Division's 3rd Platoon, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, sought the same respect for the Afghan National Police in the Nawa district of Afghanistan's Ghazni province.

With the approval of his platoon leader, Burke came up with a training program to increase tactical and technical competence in the Afghan police by incorporating reading and writing courses with essential police training.

"Being able to read and write will increase these guys' ability in so many ways," said Burke, a Cape Corral, Fla., native. "We are teaching both English and Pashto, so they are better able to communicate with villagers and us."

Burke said all the Afghan police were eager to begin the training, but it was a difficult task to incorporate into his schedule.

"I'm over here pretty much all day trying to teach them when I need to be training my guys," Burke said. "As a solution, I started involving my guys in the training. They are able to brush up on their training in some areas and also learn about different weapon systems, languages and religions."

Burke's soldiers assist in all facets of the training, with assistance from interpreters when teaching reading and writing.



*Army Sgt. Ronald K. Burke, a squad leader for 3rd Platoon, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, practices clearing rooms with fellow noncommissioned officers before going through the training with his soldiers and Afghan National Police officers in Nawa, Afghanistan. Photo by Spc. Nathan W. Hutchison, USA*

“Everyone has been very cooperative during this training,” Burke said. “As a soldier, you are expected to be proficient in certain areas, but being a teacher is quite a challenge.”

Burke and his soldiers start the day off with English, having the Afghan policemen work on letter sounds and writing short phrases.

The next class is Pashto, where Burke and his soldiers become students as well, allowing the interpreters to lead the classroom.

One of Burke’s goals is that the Afghan National Police officers will be able to pass some of their knowledge on to the villagers as the training progresses.

“Because of the location out here, there are no teachers and doctors available to the villages,” Burke said. “I hope to reach a point where the ANP can go out on patrol, and while they’re in the towns they can teach classes on reading and writing along with some basic first aid.”

Burke is not the only one who is hopeful for the success of this training.

“These classes are good for my soldiers,” said Sayed Amanudin Agha, Afghan Nation Police chief for Nawa district. “The villagers need to trust and respect their police, and this training will help.”

Agha said he is impressed with Burke’s willingness to help his police and finds promise in his men’s eagerness to learn.

Most of the time is spent on language training, but other training includes weapons systems, first aid, map reading, tactical driving and reflexive fire, essential for close-quarter encounters.

“Sergeant Burke came to me with some ideas to help the ANP,” said Army 1st Lt. Mordechai D. Sorkin, 3rd Platoon leader. “These guys haven’t had a chance to go to the police training, so it was a long list of necessary training.”

Sorkin said it was Burke’s idea to add the reading and writing to the curriculum.

“Burke has always been someone willing to take that extra step to help someone else,” Sorkin said. “He understands that education is one of the keys to prosperity in this country and took the initiative to do his part here in Nawa.”

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