

Iraqi Judges get Automated

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Spc. Wallis Lacey, Rule of Law paralegal, G9, 3rd Infantry Division (shown standing) instructs Iraqi judges on how to use customized laptops and specialized judicial software. U.S. Army courtesy photo.

BAGHDAD — Under Saddam Hussein, Iraq’s legal system suffered from neglect, abuse and stagnation for nearly 30 years.

Now, through a joint initiative by the United Nations, the U.S. State Department and the 3rd Infantry Division, the courts are being drawn into the 21st century with training on laptops and CD-ROMs loaded with ninety years of Iraqi case law.

The technology will give Iraqi judges the tools they need to effectively and efficiently process through the country’s backlog of criminal cases. The software gives them access to the Iraqi legal code from 1917 through 2006.

The software was made available to all the Iraqi courts in 3rd Inf. Div.’s area of operation through the efforts of the division’s “Rule of Law” team.

The team directed their paralegal, Spc. Wallis Lacey, a 21-year-old from Columbia, S.C., to copy the Iraqi Code of Law onto CD-ROMs. Lacey then loaded the data onto 250 customized laptop computers, for distribution to 250 judges and law professors throughout its area of operation. Lacey also worked with the office’s cultural adviser to configure and load other relevant legal and security software tools.

Together Lacey and the adviser traveled throughout the AO - an area equal in size to West Virginia - meeting nearly every judge in the system. They instructed the judges on the use and benefits of the technology. For many of the judges it was their first time using a computer.

According to the Rule of Law team, the project harks back to Iraq's history as the cradle of codified law, recorded as the Code of Hammurabi.

Lt. Col. Chris Royer, the director of the Rule of Law unit, 3rd Inf. Div., noted, "Hammurabi has been joined by a super laptop, courtesy of Task Force Marne.

"Lacey's installation, project management and subsequent instruction resulted in a better educated and informed Iraqi judiciary, now equipped to interpret laws accurately," Royer said. "We want to make certain these courts have the resources they need to effectively prosecute insurgents and criminals."