

IP Recruitment Drive in Arab Jabour Aims to Maintain Security Gains

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A Sons of Iraq member and candidate for the Iraqi Police Academy, strains to complete a pull-up during the first-ever IP recruitment drive at Patrol Base Hawks in Arab Jabour March 11. Photo by Sgt. Luis Delgadillo.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE KALSU — Iraqi Police from the Rashid District and Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, hosted an IP recruitment drive March 10-13 at Patrol Base Hawks, Iraq.

The recruitment drive is the first chance for citizens of the region to establish their own long-term security.

Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, jumpstarted efforts to recruit 300 Arab Jabour men for IP Academy training.

The event ushered in an era of transition for some Sons of Iraq, who with the assistance from IPs of the Rashid District, will one day patrol their neighborhoods and maintain their hard-earned safety.

Lt. Col. Ken Adgie, commander of the 1-30th Inf. Regt., said the event marks a significant step toward linking the Government of Iraq, which has not had a presence in the region for more than five years, to the people of Arab Jabour and its neighboring communities.

While more than 800 men attended the event and successfully applied for the IP Academy over the four-day event, just a week prior to the recruitment drive it was in serious jeopardy of not taking place.

The IP leader in Rashid District, Lt. Col. Muhammed, had misgivings about the location of the drive due to his misperceptions about Arab Jabour.

He told Adgie he would not be taking his IPs into the region because it was not secure. Adgie said he wanted to show the IP commander the area was safe, so he took him on a walking tour through the streets to see the transformation firsthand.

Instead of being greeted by angry mobs or al-Qaeda insurgents, Adgie said the IP commander and his security detachment were greeted by smiling businessmen and curious children who had never before seen an IP car.

Later, the two leaders met with Arab Jabour community leaders and Muhammed decided the area was safe enough to allow his policemen to follow through with the event.

While the partnership between Coalition forces and the Sol has proven effective at rooting out insurgent fighters, the program was never considered a sustainable security solution.

Instead of being splintered militias opposed to the GoI, the Sol program has grown to symbolize positive change.

“It’s safe now. Our challenge is to keep the security going and allow the Iraqi Security Forces to build that capacity in the area,” said Adgie, a native of National Park, N.J. “Nobody wants peace more than the people here.”

As proof of their willingness to see lasting security in their community, Sol and men from the region showed up at the gates of Patrol Base Hawks each day of the drive, up to three hours before the day’s recruitment activities began.

Each morning of the recruitment drive, Soldiers standing guard at the gates were surprised at the crowds of more than 300 men who gathered, eagerly awaiting the opportunity to apply.

“I believe as soon as they go to the IP Academy and they release them saying that they’re qualified IPs, they’ll be able to come back here and protect the streets of Arab Jabour, hopefully make it a safer place and continue what they’ve been doing as Sol,” said 1st Lt. Derrick M. Anderson, platoon leader with 1st platoon, Company B, 1-30th Inf. Regt.

While pleased with the outcome, Anderson, of Fredericksburg, Va., said it was even more rewarding to see many of the Sol, whom he had come to know while on patrol, come through the recruitment drive and make a concerted effort to become Iraqi lawmen.

Taking recruits through the process of applying for the academy were Soldiers of the 153rd Military Police Company, out of Wilmington, Del.

“We’ve had an opportunity to observe several recruiting events before putting this one on and they (applicants) are definitely organized; they come with the proper documents and they want to be here,” said Staff Sgt. John French, a military policeman and squad leader with 153rd MP Co.

Soldiers and IPs worked together at each of the five stations, taking recruits through the application process.

The first station involved organizing paperwork and checking identification. Once applicants cleared station one they moved on to a quick background check where they were vetted through a database of known insurgents.

Applicants were then taken through a health screening process where combat medics of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-30th Inf. Regt., assisted Iraqi doctors with health screenings.

After completing their literacy test at station four, the candidates went on to the final phase of their screening process, a test of their physical abilities. Applicants labored through pull-ups, push-ups, a 200-meter sprint and finally, a sit-up event.

Once completing the five stations the men’s contact information was taken and they were told that notification of their ‘pass or fail’ would arrive in the coming weeks.

“Most won’t make it because there aren’t slots for everyone but they all want the opportunity and that’s what they’re getting today,” said Adgie. Even knowing this, he said their efforts are not in vain.

Coalition forces are working at establishing long-term work programs for citizens of the area as well as education and vocational programs, which will curb unemployment when the Sol programs have run their course.

Nonetheless, the high turnout for the event signals a new day for the men of Arab Jabour.

“The Sons of Iraq are motivated, they want to be police, they want to be part of the government, they want to be part of the security system that takes care of their neighborhoods,” Adgie said. “They are patriotic men and they should be given that opportunity ... that’s what’s wonderful to see.”

