

# Training Iraqi police officers

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Federal Agent Quigley's last day as instructor watching her students compete for best driver. Photo by Stephanie Harding, Chief of Driving School, Tactical Policing.

*“It is a typical hot, steamy tropical night on the island of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. I have been here a little over two weeks now and it seems like only yesterday that I was on the opposite side of the globe training Iraqi police officers. It was hot there too, but it was a dry heat. Some days it was close to 50 degrees Celsius; somehow the dry heat is more bearable than the steaming tropics.”*

My thoughts of the opposite side of the globe were triggered by the news that Yasser Arafat was dead and I pondered what impact it will have upon those I know in the Middle East.

My four months of teaching Iraqi police recruits at the Jordan International Police Training Centre (JIPTC) were extremely fulfilling. I was one of two Australians and as a female I was among only 20 out of more than 300 international police trainers. I find it difficult now to believe that so many people expressed concerns about being a woman teaching mainly Muslim men; I have always found that students, no matter what their cultural or religious beliefs, listen to those who establish their credibility and ability.

I thoroughly enjoyed my interaction with my Iraqi students. They liked me and I obviously did my work well; I could tell because students from other classes would stop me in the hallways and ask me to teach their class. What a compliment! Before long I was also



conducting workplace assessments for other international instructors and teaching them in train-the-trainers courses.

I found I had no problems when it came to talking to my classes on gender and policing, domestic violence, human rights, hate crimes and sexual offences, and found it ironic that some of my male counterparts seemed to struggle with some of that subject material. Perhaps standing there in front of my class I was a living example that women can do anything they put their minds to. My students had no problems with the sales pitch that women are necessary for effective community policing in all societies.

You cannot teach basic democratic policing principles without discussions on best practices and law. The meaning of democracy itself triggered long discussions about Saddam Hussein's reign and the future of their nation. Some classes were sometimes very difficult to teach and I learned quickly which subjects would perhaps bring emotional discussions.

Occasionally I would survey the room, asking how many of them had lost loved ones under the previous regime and inevitably my impromptu surveys would reveal on average half of every class had lost someone. One student broke down as he told the class about the horror of losing three brothers in one day. My student survived, but the back of his head bears the scars.

Teaching policing to people that come from a war zone had its challenges. I had to return to basic psychology 101; Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Make them feel safe, ensure their welfare needs were met, remove the blocks and we could reach self-actualisation and achieve learning outcomes!

I always endeavoured to find out what talents each of my students had. Every class had an artist, singer, dancer, poet, actor and a jester! Small things like buying some crayons and pencils would ensure that the artist could create a class poster; the singer and dancer could help to liven up the class after lunch and the actor and jester were useful for giving examples, scenarios and role playing. My students had fun, they learnt well and their exam results made me proud!

Graduation parades at JIPTC were something



to behold with class intakes averaging over 1000. I cried when my first class graduated because I was bursting with so much pride for 'my boys'! I actually had teaching input to five different classes – 200 students imprinted with my teaching methodologies in just four months. It is incredible to know that teaching another human being can be so powerful, humbling and fulfilling.

Teaching at JIPTC was also disturbing. I now know what it must feel like to have been a Vietnam War army instructor. You do your best to provide the competencies and skills for your students to do their job but some of them are going to die despite your best teaching efforts.

I take my hat off to those brave young Iraqi police officers who risked injury and death just by standing in a recruiting line so they can be part of policing in a democratic society. I cringe every time I open the internet and read about police officers dying in Iraq. I know that we as instructors at JIPTC have done the best we can and as they say in the Middle East, Enshallah (God willing) they will survive.

