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MiTT validates future Iraqi Army trainers

Photo by Pfc. J. Princeville Lawrence

Chief Petty Officer Edward Telles watches Private Ahmed Jasim, a driver with the 14th Provisional Transport Regiment during an evaluation Oct. 15 in Camp Mirra. Telles, a medic with the Military Transition Team attached to the PTR, was an instuctor in a MiTT team program to teach IA Soldiers how to teach their peers. "It's a good feeling to educate these guys and say, 'hey, you're learning something that could save someone's life someday,'" Telles said.

By Pfc. J. Princeville Lawrence
MND-S

COB BASRA – Ten young men wearing tan and brown uniforms and red berets waited for their evaluation to begin. They were jundis, Soldiers of the Iraqi Army. Over the past three weeks in Camp Mirra, they learned how to apply a tourniquet, maintain a Humvee and assemble an M-16. But today, Oct. 15, the ten members of the 14th Provisional Transport Regiment would graduate the program and become validated to teach their peers.

First, however, they had to pass the evaluation.

The ten jundis were separated into teams and sent to three stations: combat first aid, weapons and vehicle maintenance. At each station, the jundis were expected be able know the subject well enough to teach it.

"It's a good feeling to educate these guys and say, 'hey, you're learning something that could save someone's life someday.'"

– Chief Petty Officer Edward Telles
14th Provisional Transport Regiment

"This is it," Chief Petty Officer Edward Telles told the jundis during the medical section of the evaluation. "You either know it or you don't."

One by one, the jundis talked their way through an imaginary scenario,

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explaining what they were doing to Telles, who sat and watched and evaluated them.

"Every treatment is pretty much standard," said Telles, team doctor for the Military Transition Team assigned to the 14th PTR. "Once it works, we try to filter that down to everybody. Whether it's stuff the medics know, the corpsmen know, the Soldiers need to know and the same thing we turn to the Iraqi army, saying, 'we know these things. We need to give them that knowledge, saying that this stuff works.'"

"What we know is what they know," Telles said.

Among the jundis was Private Wesame Mahmoud, who said he joined the IA because he wanted to imitate his father, who spoke English and Russian and was a colonel in the Iraqi navy during the Saddam years. Wesame, an administrative specialist, said he enjoyed the medical training most.

"The training is very good. We got a lot of information," said Wesame, citing the benefits of medical training and adding that he was able to use his medical training to help a friend who was injured during a soccer match.

Ahmed Jasim, a driver with the 14th PTR, excelled during the vehicle maintence section of the evaluation. Jasim, a tall, thin 19-year-old who loves driving around the country and seeing the sights, attacked his test with enthusiasm, explaining advanced automotive concepts and piping up with answer after answer.

Photos by Pfc. J. Princeville Lawrence

An Iraqi captain shows his knowledge of the M-16 by teaching a class Oct. 15 in Camp Mirra. Maj. Scott Virgil, a Bartlett, Ill., native and team chief of the 14th Provisional Transport Regimen Military Transition Team, organized a three-week program where his Soldiers teach their Iraqi Army counterparts to teach others. "We wanted to get some good material in the three areas of weapons, maintenance, and medical treatment," said Virgil, "but we also really put an added focus on their ability not just to know it and do it, but to be able to teach it."

"It's a good feeling to educate these guys and say, 'hey, you're learning something that could save someone's life someday,'" Telles said.

Occasionally, Maj. Scott Virgil, a Bartlett, Ill. native and 14th PTR MiTT team chief, would walk into the room to check on the progress of the proceedings. A month of planning and a month of training had led up to this point, and today Virgil's new approach to joint training would pay off.

"We wanted to get some good material in the three areas of weapons, maintenance, and medical treatment," said Virgil, "but we also really put an added focus on their ability not just to know it and do it, but to be able to teach it."

While the MiTT team had a new focus, the positive attitude of the jundis made the job simple, said Sgt. Darren Macomber, who was placed in charge of weapons training.

"They're real easy to teach. They're all energetic and they show up on time," said Macomber, a mechanic with the 308th Brigade Support Battalion. "They retained information fast and well, and they're pretty much able to repeat everything I told them."

Under Macomber's watchful eye, the jundis were called up to explain weapons safety and operation and how to assemble and disassemble a weapon.

"The most important thing we thought they learned from me was the safety aspect," said Macomber, a native of Arlington, Wash. "They pick up something, figure it out on their own, it seems like a lot of times. So I think it's good they're learning how to train each other on good habits."

The third section of the evaluation was the vehicle maintenance station, where Sgt. Ian Grant, a mechanic with 308th BSB. Grant, and a Clallan Bay, Wash., native, had been training the jundis on basic vehicle maintenance, "exactly what they're looking for as far as leaks, and the troubleshooting they can do."

Grant's evaluation consisted of taking the jundis around, in and under a Humvee and having them explain the vehicle, something in which Ahmed Jasim, a driver with the 14th PTR, excelled.

Jasim, a tall, thin 19-year-old who loves driving around the country and seeing the sights, attacked his test with

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enthusiasm, explaining advanced automotive concepts and piping up with answer after answer.

"I told Jasim that he knew too much, because he was answering every question I had," said Grant. "I wanted the rest of the class to be able to answer something."

"You taught us well," Jasim said. "You gave thoughts and time for us to practice."

"It makes me feel good that he was able to retain so much information and that I taught him so well," Grant said."

When the evaluation ended, the MiTT team members were pleased to find that all the jundis passed.

"They did excellent today," Grant said. "They picked up well on the training. In fact, I put out more information to them than I thought I did, and they all retained it really, really well."

Virgil addressed the graduates and said he now hoped they use their newfound knowledge to teach their peers.

"The doing and the teaching is what we're after," Virgil said, "and that's where, I think, long term, we'll have greater benefits. "

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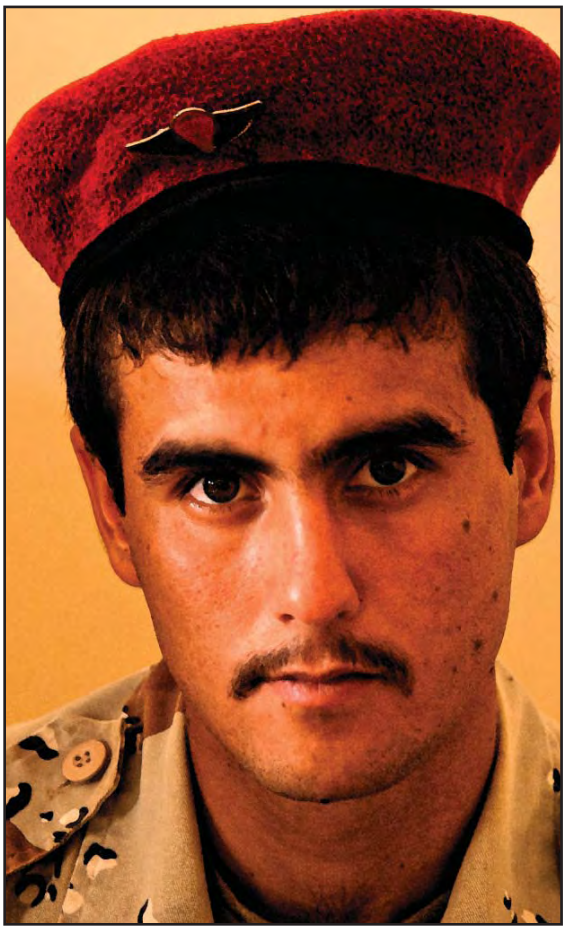

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The 14th Provisional Transport Regiment Military Transition Team validated ten Soldiers of the 14th PTR Oct. 15 in Camp Mirra. The Soldiers were trained in vehicle maintenance, combat first aid and weapons in a three-week course.