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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ordnance Soldiers learn Iraqi culture

CULTURE

By Staff Sgt. Adam V. Shaw
16th SB Public Affairs

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — When searching Iraqi nationals entering a forward operating base, or meeting with local leaders, or just interacting with Iraqis on a day-to-day basis, it is important for Soldiers to understand cultural differences.

So on this day, Soldiers from the 23rd Ordnance Company, 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, learned a few tips that could help them avoid creating an international incident or hurting America's image in the region during a cultural awareness class at the Tower Theater here Feb. 29.

"We're here to give the Soldiers a bit of culture," said Chief Warrant Officer Charles Hillyer, maintenance technician, 23rd OD Co.

Hillyer gave a one-hour class on Iraqi culture as part of the ordnance company's training day, which also included equal opportunity training, sexual assault prevention and drivers' training.

The culture class covered a variety of areas, including the differences among the region's religions, the Muslim family dynamic and the local dress.

"Soldiers get to see the diversity of people and customs," said 1st Sgt. Partricio

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Cardona, 23rd OD Co.

Soldiers learned not to shake hands with their left hand, not to talk about women or pets, not to tell jokes, not to show the bottom of their boots to Iraqis, and other unique cultural traits.

Cardona said that the things his Soldiers learn in the class will help them on the battlefield.

The class also discussed common factors between Americans and Iraqis.

“Iraqi’s are similar in many ways,” said Hillyer, a three-time Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran. “It’s very important for the head-of-household to provide for their families and we can all understand that.”

Even with the similarities, it was the differences that stuck out in one Soldier’s mind.

“I knew some of the stuff before, but some of the gestures that could be offensive were new to me,” said Pvt. Amber Booth, ammunition specialist, 23rd OD Co. “I don’t want to offend anyone.”

During the training, many of the Soldiers talked about their experiences working with the Iraqi people during previous deployments, and the importance of understanding the cultural differences.

“Prior knowledge of the type of people we will be working with will help us harness a working relationship,” said Cardona.

Cardona also said that if Soldiers use what they have learned, the Iraqi’s will return the same respect.

(Photos by Staff Sgt. Adam V. Shaw)

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Chief Warrant Officer Charles Hillyer, maintenance technician, 23rd Ordnance Company, 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, Grafenwoher, Germany, teaches ordnance Soldiers a bit of Iraqi culture at the Tower Theater in Grafenwoher, Feb. 29.