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## Iraqi, U.S. Navys partner to bolster Iraq's maritime security

MORGAN CITY, La. - Through a partnership with the U.S. Navy and the U.S. industry to help bolster Iraq's maritime security, the first group of 50 Iraqi sailors receiving training at the Swiftships Shipbuilding facility in Morgan City, La. will graduate July 15. News media are invited to attend the event.

The Iraq government is preparing to take possession of the first of 15 35-meter Patrol Boat's (PB). The next class of 50 sailors is expected to start training July 26.

The sailors arrived for training in mid-April and are being trained to operate, maintain and deploy their newly purchased 15 man PB's. During their training they live at Swiftships' training village, adjacent to the shipyard.

Prior to graduating, the students will complete a 90-day blended training program which consists of instructor-led classroom training, integrated scenario-based simulator training, and underway familiarization aboard a 35-meter PB.

"We didn't come up with a blended solution by accident. The Navy has been studying blended training for several years. We used to teach using a lot of PowerPoint presentations and reading. I call it knowledge by absorption," said Rear Adm. Jeffery "Scott" Jones, director of the Coalition Naval Advisory Transition

Team Mission. "We discovered it isn't the most effective way to train. Today we use a balanced blend of classroom, simulator and hands-on training."

Classroom instruction includes core fundamentals, boat systems, navigation, and integrated watch standing. Interpreters help to alleviate any language barriers. Three simulator and two trainers re-enforce the classroom instruction through hands-on experience and provide the crew with basic ship-handling skills.

"The Iraqi sailors receive the identical type of training that a U.S. Navy Sailor would receive, including the nuts and bolts of how to maintain and operate a 35-meter boat," said instructor Chris Meyers. "When they arrived, they had never seen or been on the boat. By the time they leave, the aim is for them to go back to Iraq, take over the boat and go into full operations."

The full mission bridge, engine room control, and 30 millimeter gun fire control simulators replicate the PB shipboard systems, while the firefighting and small arms trainers teach the sailors basic shipboard skill requirements.

The integrated training incorporates multiple simulators to provide realistic underway scenarios and helps to further develop the crew's proficiency aboard the boat.

"The patrol boat was built in consideration of the type of waterways, the oil platforms and close in support and security requirements of the Iraqi forces," said Capt Ed "Junior" Turner, commanding officer, Naval Education and Training Security Assistance Field Activity (NETSAFA). "It's the right size to support the river security and big enough to go out and provide protection for their oil platforms in the Persian Gulf."

The capstone event is the underway familiarization portion of the training, which consists of 32-hours of at-sea shipboard evolutions. The underway period is intended to build on the knowledge and skills gained in the classroom and simulators. It focuses on the ship's operations, damage control, and ridged hull inflatable boat operations.

The first boat team is scheduled to get underway June 25.

A review of the curriculum led by Jones concluded June 17. He met with staff members from NETSAFA, the Iraqi Security Assistance Mission (ISAM), Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems Division (NAWCTSD), Navy International Program Office (NIPO), Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), Swiftships Shipbuilding, and Iraqi navy senior officers.

They evaluated the mid-term of the first training class including the curriculum and how it supports the core training required to operate and employ the new boats.

"The Iraqi sailors are very professional. Some have maritime experience, either commercial or in the Iraqi navy, while some are new to being sailors but have the aptitude to be good enough to come over with the first group of top-notch sailors," said Turner. "They are professional, motivated and learn very quickly."

The training also supports the evolving state of continual maritime readiness across the globe by the U.S. Navy and its international partners, meeting Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Gary Roughead's goal of the Navy cooperating effectively with navies around the world.

"Our partnership with the Iraqi navy is critical," said Jones. "They are a vital part of their national security. We're training them to protect their economy, which is dependent on their waterways."

"The Maritime Strategy piece of building cooperative partners isn't just in Iraq, but throughout the Arabian gulf," Jones explained. "If we don't build on a partner's capacity, and they're one of our coalition partners, it will require more of our assets to support them if they're not as strong as they need to be to protect their water ways."

According to Turner, training enables the successful execution of the Maritime Strategy.

"The training is a part of Iraq transitioning from U.S. government control to Iraqi government control," said Turner. "The desired effect of the training is to support the building of Iraq's maritime capability, its capacity as a U.S. partner to help support the Maritime Strategy, and is designed to foster partnerships, and relationships well into the 21st century."

The course isn't taught entirely at the training village. Aside from the classroom, simulator training, and underway familiarization, the students are given the opportunity to learn more about the United States and the American way of life by taking field trips to local museums, restaurants, sport venues, malls and cultural spots.

"We have what is known as the field studies program. Our goal is to not only provide the best professional maritime training in the world, but we also want to expose them to our culture," said Turner. "It provides an appreciation for their culture and ours"

The 35-meter PB training program was developed, in coordination with Naval Education and Training Security Assistance Field Activity, Naval Air Warfare Center

Training Systems Division, Naval Sea Systems Command, and Swiftships Shipbuilding.

“The boat is very nice. I’ve never served on such a new and modern boat,” said a senior Iraqi Navy official. “The training we are receiving from the U.S. Navy will make us a better navy. Having the patrol boats will help to create stronger partnerships with our neighbors in the region.”

For media interested in attending the July 15 graduation, contact Naval Education and Training Command Public Affairs Office.

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For information on Naval Education and Training Security Assistance Field Activity (NETSAFA) visit, <https://www.netsafa.navy.mil/> .

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