

Iraqi police to be trained in Jordan

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The puppet regime of the United States occupation in Iraq has agreed with King Abdullah II that tens of thousands of Iraqi police officers are to be trained in Jordan over the next 18 months. The deal was apparently sealed during talks between the king and George W. Bush in Washington in September.

Throughout October, Jordanian authorities have prepared facilities for the instruction of more than 30,000 officers, who will be trained in eight-week courses. Many of those to be trained will be new recruits that the US hopes to add to the 60,000-strong existing Iraqi police force. Both US and Jordanian staff will be involved in the running of the police academy.

With the Iraqi police under near constant attack in many areas, the US has had little option but to establish an Iraqi police academy outside of the country. However, the placement of the police training facilities in Jordan will provide little extra security for the operation. The majority of the country's inhabitants, and the large émigré Palestinian population in particular, are bitterly opposed to the US occupation of their neighbour. Most Jordanians are disgusted with their government's support for the US, with thousands protesting in the run-up to the invasion.

This latest act of collaboration with the US occupiers is likely to fuel popular resentment against the absolutist monarchy that governs Jordan. In August, a truck bomb exploded next to the Jordanian embassy compound in Baghdad, killing 12 people. Many Jordanians have reportedly volunteered to fight the US occupation in Iraq. Thirteen Arab men, most from Jordan, were put on trial in Amman in October, accused of plotting attacks on US targets in the country.

In a further sign of official worries about the deep resentment of Iraqis to their pro-US policies, Jordanian authorities have denied asylum to thousands of Iraqi refugees who are currently encamped on the border between the two countries.

King Abdullah expects recompense from Washington in exchange for the unpopular support his government has given the US invasion and occupation. In announcing the plan to train Iraqi police at the start of October, the king made clear that an economic quid-pro-quo was expected. *Agence France-Presse* reported him saying, "The Jordanian private sector has had a long and productive relationship with Iraqi companies. The knowledge and expertise that they bring can be tapped in the efforts aimed at reconstruction in Iraq. We would like a sustainable and mutually beneficial relationship to be established, underpinned by a strong private sector cooperation."

The US had originally planned for the police training centre to be established at the Taszar air base in Hungary. The former Soviet base has been used since 1995 by US forces as a logistical support centre for military operations in the Balkans. In the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq, the base at Taszar functioned as a training centre for exiled Iraqi oppositionists.

The Iraqis were supposedly only given lessons in "civil relations, interpreting and translating, and theoretical training for [the] military police." But the air base became a centre of controversy in Hungary amid suspicions that dissident Iraqis were being provided with military training and that the base was being used to interrogate less cooperative Iraqi exiles. Media reports claimed that high-profile former Iraqi chief-of-staff, General Nizar al-Khazraji, had been secretly detained at Taszar for questioning. Khazraji had mysteriously disappeared from Denmark where he was being held under house arrest while seeking asylum.

The Hungarian government has been an enthusiastic supporter of the invasion of Iraq—despite public opinion in Hungary being largely opposed to the war—and several months ago had offered the base as a training

centre for the Iraqi police. Just weeks before the announcement that the police force would be trained in Jordan, Bernard Kerik, the former New York City police commissioner now in charge of the Iraqi Interior ministry, asserted that “American officials had secured Hungarian government consent to the setting up of a large police academy inside an old Soviet military base.” However, the government in Budapest had become increasingly wary of the idea. Conscious of local suspicion regarding US activities at Tazsar and worried that accommodating large numbers of Iraqi police could make Hungary a target for terrorist recriminations, the Hungarian government backed away from its earlier offer. Peter Hedgyessy, Hungary’s prime minister, expressed concern at the proposed scale of operations, stating in September: “The American plan to train 25,000 to 30,000 Iraqis at the Tazsar Kapos base is out of the question.”

France and Germany have both expressed their willingness to train Iraqi police. German chancellor Schröder, speaking after his audience with Bush last month, said, “Germany is ready to help with the training of Iraqi police. Iraqi military could also be trained in our army colleges. And, of course, we would pay for this.” Washington’s response to the proposals of France and Germany was unenthusiastic, however. While officially welcoming their offer, the Bush administration is currently unwilling to hand over any substantial amount of control over Iraqi security to its European rivals.

The location of the Iraqi police academy in Jordan is likely to make the country a focus for the attention of Iraqi resistance, spreading the attacks against American forces and their collaborators out of Iraq and creating even more instability in the region.



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