

MAJOR DAVID BURSAC

As the Infantry Headquarters Company Commander of during a 2005 to 2006 deployment to Iraq, U.S. Army Major David Bursac spent much of his time in the field working with the Iraqi Police in the town of Hawijah, located near Kirkuk in Northern Iraq.

"We were primarily responsible for being out there, providing security for the locals in the area, training up the Iraqi Security Forces", as well as conducting Counter Insurgency operations, Bursac said, taking a positive spin on a challenging job.

The battalion's mission, said Bursac, "was to provide a secure environment within the Hawijah area, while simultaneously developing the capabilities of the local Iraqi Security Forces [Army and Police] so that the ISF could assume full responsibility for the securing their own area of operations."

Daily operations, said Bursac, included dealing with "IEDs, daily enemy contact, securing check points, helping the Iraqi Security Forces, and targeting insurgent forces in the area."

When he wasn't supervising Iraqi police on patrol in the field, Bursac focused on headquarters activities, such as training Iraqi Army Soldiers, and Iraqi Army Police on the forward operating base (FOB).

It was a job which was a "combination of frustrating at times, and rewarding at times," he said.

"It was certainly a challenging task," he said, but it was ultimately satisfying "to see the progress we made in building up the Iraqi Security forces, and knowing we helped the Iraqis."

Another one of the smaller challenges of the position, Bursac said, came from the language barrier between the American and Iraqi Soldiers, he said. While there were many interpreters on hand to translate and communicate, it got complicated when a third language was introduced: military terminology.

Working with and getting to know the Iraqi Army Soldiers and Police was interesting, said Bursac, who was commissioned in 1999.

"It was interesting considering that it was a diverse cross section of Iraq," he said. "Some of them had been enlisted in the former army in the former regime...Some were the same forces that we were fighting 2003. But some were just regular guys looking to feed their families and make their country better."

At the end of the day, Bursac said, he found they were alike in many more ways than he had thought.



Florissant, MO
The Bronze Star

"Once we were able to put the Iraqi Soldiers and Police in the lead and empower them with more responsibility, they were able to take that and go from there. That was the key overall...Holding them accountable for securing their own country gave them a sense of ownership in the job they were doing," he said.

Being away from home, said Bursac, was the biggest challenge of the deployment.

"The hardest thing about any deployment is the separation from family and friends," he said, but cited how improved internet access, telephones and other Army support systems helped to mitigate that hardship.

"Overall, keeping everyone focused on the mission and not letting feelings of being separated get in the way of staying focused," is what's important, he said.

"The most important thing," he said, "is to get the job done."

Bursac earned a Bronze Star for his service during the deployment.