

Iraqi Language and Cultural Training



Background

The primary role of the British Royal Air Force (RAF) is to safeguard UK airspace. With world-class personnel, equipment, surveillance and intelligence, plus the capacity for rapid response to any situation, the RAF plays a key role in UK's overseas missions. In 2006 4 Flight Protection Wing from RAF Lyneham was charged with providing security and ground support to the airbase near Basra, in southern Iraq.

To prepare personnel for their deployment, language and cultural training were required that would raise awareness of crucial cultural sensitivities and provide tools for more effective communication with the civilian population.

Training Objectives

The key requirements of the programme were to provide RAF personnel with:

- A clear understanding of Iraqi culture
- Key tips and strategies for RAF personnel in contact with Iraqi citizens
- A basic understanding of Arabic including script and key phrases in Iraqi dialect

Challenges

The main challenges were seen as:

- Training a group of personnel of mixed ranks from corporals, aircraftsmen, sergeants to flight lieutenants, squadron leaders and the wing commander
- Providing effective and stimulating sessions to groups of delegates with varied backgrounds and experience in Iraq
- Delivering targeted training with clear and practical applications in a short period of time

Training Approach

To ensure that the training was tailored to the specific requirements of the RAF, delegates completed a detailed questionnaire regarding their prior experience and knowledge of Iraq. In addition, key personnel were interviewed and information on individual job functions was collated and analysed.

This information enabled Communicaid's Culture and Communication team to design a programme in conjunction with Iraqi language and cultural experts. Language training was delivered in two small groups according to prior exposure and cultural awareness training was delivered to the plenary group of fourteen participants.

The programme was delivered by a team of two cultural experts and two native Iraqi Arabic trainers, one male and one female in each group. The team worked closely together to ensure that the different elements of the training were integrated and developed throughout the week.

The training was highly interactive and included role-plays, simulations and discussion of case studies and critical incidents to allow practice and consolidation of acquired knowledge.



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Proposed Solutions

Communicaid designed a one-week blended language and cultural training programme which comprised:

- Essential information about Iraq, including historical overview, current political and economic situation, the role of religion, key ethnic groups and the importance of tribal and family connections
- Practical advice on working with Iraqis such as basic etiquette, participating in meetings with local military personnel and organisations and visiting homes
- Essential communication skills in Iraqi Arabic including greetings, introductions, names, titles, military ranks, directions, times etc.

Results

As a result of this blended cultural and language training programmes personnel were more confident and better prepared for their deployment to Basra. They mastered key language and communication skills to engage with the local population and became more aware of cultural backgrounds and sensitivities to help them work more effectively in the region.

Contact Details

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Client Feedback

“Really very useful”

Wing Commander

RAF Lyneham

“What a phenomenal trainer!”

Flight Lieutenant

RAF Lyneham

