

‘Knowledge is Key’

XVIII Airborne Corps senior leaders attend 3-day seminar for deployment preparation

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Education was the watchword for senior leaders of the XVIII Airborne Corps as they took part in a three-day seminar Dec. 4 – 6 at the Holiday Inn Bordeaux in Fayetteville – thus taking one step closer in preparation for a 2008 deployment as the Multi-National Corps – Iraq Headquarters.

The seminar was conducted by members of the Leader Development and Education for Sustained Peace program and provided senior officers and noncommissioned officers of the corps a chance to glean knowledge in areas they will mostly like see and deal with during their Iraq deployment.

The design of LDESP, ultimately, is to shorten the learning curve of Soldiers going downrange, said retired Army Col. Bob Tomasovic, LDESP originator and program manager.

“If we shorten that learning curve we become more effective sooner, which means we are effective longer during our tours there.” Tomasovic said.

This process was done for the XVIII Abn. Corps by providing numerous subject matter experts in order to help shed light on the current situation in Iraq.

Instructor/speakers such as Dr. Jon Alterman from the Center for Strategic and International Studies spoke on reconciliation between Sunni, Shia and Kurds of Iraq, whereas Dr. Richard Temsch, president of “Missing Link International” spoke on economics, entitled “The Transition from Saddam Hussein to a Market Economy.” Other instructors included various professionals and doctorate level professors of universities such as Michigan and Arizona. All of whom taught graduate level material to the corps’ leadership, explained retired Army Gen. Bill W. Crouch, the program’s senior retired officer and mentor..

“The basics the corps’ already knows,” he said.

Instead of a block of instruction teaching about the government of Iraq, for example, the instruction was on the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of Iraq’s government.

“We teach a course in the governmental structure of Iraq and why it has evolved the way it has,” Crouch said. “We do this in order to understand how it has developed and what we think are the reasons it has developed that way.”

Course material changes as well, they explained, because the situation is always changing.

“The subject matter we are teaching now wouldn’t have been the same that we would have given 18th Airborne Corps before their last deployment,” Crouch said.

That is because the constant feedback from units and commanders, as well as internal after-action reviews, has allowed the LDESP to tailor their instruction to the situation currently on the ground as opposed to months or years ago.

“Each [point of instruction] is tailored to the unit,” Tomasovic said. “We send a menu of topics to the unit, what would be helpful, and ask the commander for feedback.”

For example, Tomasovic said, the XVIII Abn. Corps Commander, Lt. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin, requested certain material be touched on during the seminar – subjects he

thought the corps would be most engaged with during the deployment. The LDESP had the block of instruction put in to the seminar.

This type of thinking has the program showing success in numbers, as well as from its audience.

LDESP has gone from 2 seminars a year since its 2001 inception, to 50 seminars being taught last year.

"The information gained from the seminar has been absolutely valuable," said Maj. Mike E. Dawson, an operations officer for the XVIII Abn. Corps' Intelligence and Security section.

"Having speakers at the seminar that have been to Iraq, lived there and know the country, means that we can talk to them in this forum ... they know what works and doesn't work because they have been there and know the people," he continued.

Soldiers in attendance took up sidebar conversations with instructors during the three days of instruction, business cards exchanged hands, and feedback went to LDESP managers with promises of more to come – proof positive that although the seminar had to end, the network of knowledge wouldn't.



Capt. Rachel Landsee, an operational law attorney with the XVIII Airborne Corps Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, talks with Dr. Richard Temsch, economist and president of "Missing Link International," following his block of instruction to leaders of the corps' staff during a seminar Dec 6. The seminar was a three-day educational event given by the Leader Development and Education for Sustained Peace program at the Holiday Inn Bordeaux in Fayetteville and was designed to educate the corps on the current situation in Iraq as they prepare to deploy in early 2008 as the Multi-National Corps – Iraq Headquarters.