

THURSDAY
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JRCF, USDB attain 100 percent scores for accreditations

Melissa Bower | Staff Writer

An evaluator visiting Fort Leavenworth's two correctional facilities said she's only given a 100 percent score to seven prison facilities in 26 years — and never two in a row.

Evaluators from the American Corrections Association, a nonprofit organization outside the Department of Defense that accredits prison facilities throughout the world, spent about a week on post March 5-9 evaluating both the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks and the Joint Regional Correctional Facility. The three evaluators visited the prison facilities to check on more than 500 different standards — 61 of which are mandatory. They looked at health standards, safety, staff training and hundreds of other requirements. The evaluators spoke directly to the inmates, asking them questions about how they are treated and view their services.

Both the USDB and JRCF achieved 100 percent of the standards.

The ACA chairperson will prepare documentation of

the evaluation, and paperwork will be presented to an ACA accreditation board later this year to determine whether both facilities will achieve full accreditation.

"The hospitality has been outstanding," an ACA evaluator told JRCF staff during an outbriefing. "If this is what military installations are like ... you should be a model for others."

The USDB achieved its 100 percent status despite having an entire company deployed to Iraq. Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 40th Military Police Internment and Resettlement Battalion, served nearly a year at detention facilities in Iraq, training Iraqi staff to takeover the facilities.

Back home in the U.S., all Soldiers within the 15th Military Police Brigade had to compensate for having about 150 Soldiers deployed to Iraq, said Col. Eric Belcher, brigade commander. He said the junior Soldiers were challenged to work at levels they would not normally work, and leaders worked with extremely limited manpower. The USDB also had the added challenge of meeting

the ACA's re-accreditation process, which means evaluators sorted through documentation over the last three years at the USDB.

"To say we were stretched thin is an understatement," Belcher said. "But everyone stepped up and completed the mission without fail. I am extremely proud of all the Soldiers and civilians who have worked so hard to make this brigade what it is today, and the successful audit from the American Correctional Association validates all the hard work our folks accomplish in the facilities every day."

Lt. Col. Dawn Hilton, commander of the 705th MP I/R Battalion, which staffs the JRCF, said she was also proud of her Soldiers and civilian staff's achievement. The JRCF had to grow with the inmate population, she said, and also has many young and less experienced Soldiers.

"We knew this day was coming," Hilton said of the ACA visit. "They started with the mentality that we were going to get 100 percent, from the Soldiers all the way

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Prudence Siebert

Sgt. James Suggs, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, and Sgt. Eric Williams, 526th Military Police Company, 40th MP Internment and Resettlement Battalion, salute as Spc. Charles Hofmann, HHC, USDB, lowers the colors for Retreat March 12 outside the USDB. The USDB and the Joint Regional Correctional Facility received 100 percent on a recent evaluation.



Army photo by Pfc. Abel Trevino

Linguist Mahir Ibrahimov talks with children in a local village during a mission to open two water treatment plants near the post in February 2005 in Balad, Iraq.

Former Soviet soldier leads U.S. Army's culture efforts

Melissa Bower | Staff Writer

The act of burning the Muslim holy book is more than just deeply insensitive to the Afghan people, says the Army's senior culture and foreign language adviser.

But, such acts can be avoided by service members in the future with proper training and cultural education.

"It's a lack of cultural awareness training," Dr. Mahir Ibrahimov said of the Qu'ran burning that took place last month in Afghanistan. "If somebody had trained them and explained that to them, they would have never done that."

Each of the Combined Arms Center's centers of excellence has a culture and foreign language adviser. The senior among such advisers, Ibrahimov was the first hired into a similar program in 2009 at Fort Sill, Okla., based on a 2008 directive by then-Training and Doctrine Command Commander Gen. William Wallace. The Fort Sill program was so successful that accreditors suggested it become a model for the rest of the Army.

Ibrahimov moved to Fort Leavenworth in 2011, when CAC began taking over the role of the Army's Culture and Foreign Language Program.

"What we're trying to do for the Army, in my opinion, is extremely important," Ibrahimov said. "In the Cold War Era, there was a more clear enemy, U.S.-led NATO versus the Warsaw Pact. Now we have multiple hybrid threats."

Diverse experience behind culture and language program

Ibrahimov is a native Azerbaijani who immigrated to the United States in 1993 as a diplomat. His family was secular, but historically Muslim. Ibrahimov writes about the comfort of giving his father a traditional Muslim burial in his 2008 book, "Invitation to Rain: A Story of the Road Taken Toward Freedom."

Ibrahimov published a second book this month, "Life Looking Death in the Eye: The Iraqi War as Experienced by a U.S. Army Contractor."

Ibrahimov is fluent in English,



Submitted photo

Dr. Mahir Ibrahimov, Army senior culture and foreign language adviser, was a cadet in the Soviet army in 1974 when this image was taken.

Arabic and Turkish and a native speaker of Russian and Azeri.

Ibrahimov served compulsory two years of service in the Soviet Army from 1974 to 1976, interrupting his schooling to be a dentist. As a cadet, Ibrahimov served

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WEATHER

TODAY: Chance of showers
HI: 82 | LOW: 61

FRIDAY: Mostly sunny
HI: 80 | LOW: 61

NEWS UP FRONT

■ The Fort Leavenworth **WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH LUNCHEON** is from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. March 16 at the Frontier Conference Center, 350 Bidle Blvd. A ticket is not required to attend the program. For meal tickets and

information, contact the Fort Leavenworth Equal Opportunity Office at 684-1692/1694 or a unit Equal Opportunity leader.

■ **REPAIR WORK ON THE K-92/CENTENNIAL BRIDGE** has resumed. Traffic is reduced to one lane for both directions over the bridge. Drivers should

expect delays; alternate routes are encouraged. Construction is estimated to be complete in August.

■ The **COMMISSARY/AAFES ADVISORY COUNCIL** meets at 1:30 p.m. today in the Commissary back break-room. For more information, contact Alice Miller at 684-4903, extension 3203.

Ibrahimov

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in Volgograd, also called Stalingrad, where his father was injured while serving in the Battle of Stalingrad of World War II, in which the Soviets fought off the Nazis. There were more than a million killed in a six-month period from 1942 to 1943.

Ibrahimov talks about the extreme cold that would have been a factor in that battle, which he also experienced as a Soviet cadet.

After military service, Ibrahimov continued with medical college in his native Baku, Azerbaijan, graduating summa cum laude in 1978. He later changed his mind about his career and also obtained a master's degree in journalism and linguistics from the Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow in 1986. He worked for several years in Moscow, first for the Red Cross and then for the League of Scientific and Industrial Associations of the USSR.

Ibrahimov also obtained a doctorate in international relations from the Academy of Social Sciences in Moscow in 1991.

Ibrahimov was in Moscow during the breakup of the Soviet Union, which he writes about in his first book. His office was in the same area that was surrounded by tanks during the failed 1991 Soviet coup attempt by the bureaucrats.

Upon the breakup of the Soviet Union, Ibrahimov became one of the first diplomats in his newly independent country of Azerbaijan. The country was not without problems, however, and Ibrahimov was also witness to a war between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the 1990s.

Ibrahimov worked various jobs in Azerbaijan and then in the United States. He obtained a post-graduate degree in the international public policy program for mid-career professionals at Johns Hopkins University in 1995.

Ibrahimov began working for the U.S. Department of State's Foreign Service Institute, preparing U.S. diplomats for their overseas departments. In 2004, he took a leave of absence from his job to work as a contract translator for the U.S. Army in Iraq at Balad Air Base and Logistics Support Area Anaconda. The 28th Public Affairs Detachment produced a video about his time there at <http://www.dvidshub.net/video/1868/jack-all-languages>.

Lessons learned from British and Soviets

For Ibrahimov, he's seen what a lack of cultural awareness can do in

Afghanistan. As a citizen of the Soviet Union, he watched soldiers in that country make some of the same cultural errors in 1979-1989.

"I lived through this period when the (Soviet) soldiers started to return as part of the phased withdrawal, many of them without limbs because they were ambushed by the mujahideen," Ibrahimov said. "And now, more than three decades later, I am, as an American with full scale security clearance, witnessing the same process."

He even has a cartoon drawing of "Do's and Don'ts" given to Soviet soldiers during that time period. Ibrahimov said it's a lot of the same information that is told to U.S. Soldiers in Afghanistan today.

The Soviets had the advantage over the Americans because many of their ethnicities — Uzbeks and Turkmens, for example, were similar to Afghans. Some did not have a language barrier with the Afghans. However, as Soviets, none practiced religion and the Afghans still considered "Soviets" interchangeable with "Russians."

"So that led to alienation in perception from the Afghan population thinking 'They are infidels, they are Russians that came into our country,'" Ibrahimov said. "As soon as you step into that country, you become an invader."

The Soviets had the complication as well that the war was supported by some of the world powers — the United States and China.

Today in Afghanistan, the United States has several challenges among the four main insurgent groups, Ibrahimov said. There are two Talibans — one in Afghanistan and one fighting the Pakistan sovereign government and two other insurgent groups as well. It's much more complicated than the situation in Iraq, he said.

The United States does not have the complication of the enemy being supported by outside world powers, Ibrahimov said.

There are positive examples of what good cultural awareness can accomplish. Ibrahimov points to British Brig. Gen. John Nicholson in the 1800s, noted for his participation in the British Empire in India. Nicholson's example of a positive interaction with indigenous cultures was so well known that western researchers in the 1970s found Pashtun mothers were still telling their children, "You better behave — Nicholson is coming!"

Ibrahimov said without cultural understanding, militaries cannot



Prudence Siebert

Just beyond copies of his books, Dr. Mahir Ibrahimov, Army senior culture and foreign language adviser, talks about some of the powerful people he has met and worked with during an interview Feb. 27 in his office at the Lewis and Clark Center. Ibrahimov is author of "Invitation to Rain: A Story of the Road Taken Toward Freedom" and "Life Looking Death in the Eye: The Iraqi War as Experienced by a U.S. Army Contractor."

accomplish their missions.

"You can win the battle, but you cannot win the war," he said. "That's what happened to the Soviets. They were winning the battle but they lost the war. The same happened to the British."

Ibrahimov has published several articles in military trade journals — "Fires" and "Military Intelligence" professional bulletins — that further explain his knowledge of the indigenous culture and strategy for integrating that knowledge into professional military education.

Educating the Army on culture and linguistics

The Army's Culture and Foreign Language Program is a strategy encompassing both education and training, partly within TRADOC, but also in Forces Command and throughout the Army. Its intent is

to push knowledge of culture and language down to the lowest level of recruit Soldiers and up to the Army's highest senior leaders. And, Ibrahimov said, it requires a global strategy Armywide, not just knowledge of the Middle East.

"It depends on the current operating environment," he said. "It used to be the Middle East, Iraq and Afghanistan, now it's shifting toward the Asia Pacific. We always need to be ready as a robust program to refocus on the changing operational environment."

Sameh Youssef, CAC's Culture and Foreign Language Program adviser, said there are many programs in place to help Soldiers learn.

"The biggest issue that we face is a lack of awareness," he said.

The Army's CFLP has several partners: the cultural and foreign language advisers located in each

Center of Excellence, TRADOC cultural center and the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center all form a cultural knowledge consortium, Ibrahimov said.

They've identified four stages of language and cultural knowledge concurrent with a Soldier's career.

Stage 1 requires recruits and new Soldiers achieve a basic awareness of culture, sufficient to operate in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational environment and at a level of competence necessary to serve at the platoon level.

Stage 2, at two to seven years of service, requires Soldiers to have a cross-cultural competence, regional knowledge and some language proficiency to effectively operate in a JIIM environment with competence necessary to serve at the company level.

Stage 3, at eight to 16 years of service, Soldiers should demonstrate advanced understanding of culture, language and possess regional expertise and the ability to apply it in a JIIM environment as staff officers.

Stage 4, at 17 years or more of service, Soldiers should demonstrate a sophisticated understanding and the ability to apply culture, language and regional expertise across JIIM environments at the strategic level.

The education takes place within initial military training, U.S. Military Academy, the Sergeants Major Academy, captains career courses, schools within the Command and General Staff College and the Army War College. There are also Soldier competency panels to ensure that members of the military are learning at the expected levels.

The Army has to do a good job of spreading cultural and linguistic knowledge among its ranks, Ibrahimov said. He tells American Soldiers that like Nicholson, they should be honest and retain their own cultural background, but be mindful and knowledgeable enough to respect cultures in their operating environments.

Threats, he said, can come from anywhere.

"In order to confront those threats, we need to be culturally astute," he said. "We need to interact with the local population, with indigenous cultures, to show that we respect their culture. In order to be able to show respect, we need to understand those cultures."