

10-15 With a 187 Suspect*

Altadena Deputy Steve Bonas took his job as a field training officer seriously. He emphasized self discipline and fundamentals.

That's why Sergeant Joe Carbajal had always taken the "BOLO's" seriously. ("BE ON THE LOOKOUT" advisories.) Back when he was on training with Deputy Bonas, Joe was constantly being quizzed about "what are we looking for today..." Sgt. Carbajal had therefore developed the habit of studying and memorizing partial plates, suspect descriptions, car makes, etc.

On November 7, 2005, Sgt. Carbajal was assigned to work a checkpoint in the desert. This particular checkpoint was more of a security checkpoint than the typical drunk driving or seatbelt version.

Joe wasn't thinking about the BOLO's so much when the dark blue Audi pulled over. But when the driver got out and Joe saw him towering over one of Joe's guys at the checkpoint, something clicked from a briefing he'd heard a few days ago. *Let's see, unusually tall male, Iraqi descent, wanted in connection with 2 murders...more like assassinations...*

The murder victims were United States Army soldiers on duty *in Iraq*, recently killed in an ambush by a hidden IED. The checkpoint that Joe was working at was *not* in Altadena, but instead was 15 miles southeast of Baghdad, Iraq. And, until he was called up about a year ago to serve his country as a member of the military reserve, Sgt. Joe Carbajal had been Deputy Joe Carbajal, Altadena Sheriff's Station.

But now, temporarily anyway, he was Sgt. Joe Carbajal, Delta Company First Battalion–184th Infantry (Air Assault) with the U.S. Army's 4th Brigade Combat Team. He was in Iraq fighting a guerrilla war with insurgents whose deadly specialty is sneaking around laying traps for American servicemen and Iraqi Police, or firing 60 mm mortars from a mile away. Unfortunately for Joe and the thousands of others assigned to the effort to get Iraq back on its feet, he and they were governed more by the rules of civilian law enforcement than by the rules of war. Which meant that the whole assignment was just that much more dangerous and frustrating.

After alerting his fellow soldiers to what he suspected, Joe started a field interview using his 3-part "LASD m.o."—a combination of asking questions, mixed with "rapping about whatever" to keep the guy off guard, plus a smile all the while.. Not easy to do when you don't speak the local language! Joe used sign language, drawings in the dirt, and finally an interpreter.

"Hey, nice Audi—don't see too many here in that good shape..." "Say, do you play basketball? You'd be really good at it..." Meanwhile, what he was learning about "Stretch" (name, tribe, location of his house, etc.) was being relayed by radio to Army intelligence, set up nearby and busily comparing Joe's incoming info to reports, evidence and witness testimony to determine for sure if this was *the* suspect.

Joe managed to keep the guy at ease and talking for the 15 minutes it took for the word to come

back over the radio—"Arrest him!" Click, click, (sound of handcuffs!) and then to the green zone jail.

Deputy Joe Carbajal had his first 187 hook as Sgt. Joe Carbajal, U.S. Army. A lot of soldiers there were mighty impressed with Joe's observation that day. A few, however, like Joe, were peace officers when in their homeland life, and although also impressed, they understood that Joe's hook (arrest) was all in a day's work for a *really* capable street cop.

* *Prisoner in custody on a murder charge*