



Instructions for American Servicemen in Iraq during World War II

John A. United States Army

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“American success or failure in Iraq may well depend on whether the Iraqis like American soldiers or not.”

The U.S. military could certainly have used that bit of wisdom in 2003, as violence began to eclipse the Iraq War’s early successes. Ironically, had the Army only looked in its own archives, they would have found it—that piece of advice is from a manual the U.S. War Department handed out to American servicemen posted in Iraq back in 1943.

The advice in *Instructions for American Servicemen in Iraq during World War II*, presented here in a new facsimile edition, retains a surprising, even haunting, relevance in light of today’s muddled efforts to win Iraqi hearts and minds. Designed to help American soldiers understand and cope with what was at the time an utterly unfamiliar culture—the manual explains how to pronounce the word Iraq, for instance—this brief, accessible handbook mixes do-and-don’t-style tips (“Always respect the Moslem women.” “Talk Arabic if you can to the people. No matter how badly you do it, they will like it.”) with general observations on Iraqi history and society. The book’s overall message still rings true—dramatically so—more than sixty years later: treat an Iraqi and his family with honor and respect, and you will have a strong ally; treat him with disrespect and you will create an unyielding enemy.

With a foreword by Lieutenant Colonel John A. Nagl reflecting on the manual’s continuing applicability—and lamenting that it was unknown at the start of the invasion—this new edition of *Instructions for American Servicemen in Iraq* will be essential reading for anyone who cares about the future of Iraq and the fate of the American soldiers serving there.

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