Resilient is the one word that kept coming to mind for Floyd County police Capt. Greg Dobbins as he reflected on a training mission in Israel.

Dobbins and Rome Police Major Rodney Bailey were among a delegation of law enforcement executives from Georgia who went to Israel to learn more about Israeli law enforcement best practices from June 17 to July 1.

They traveled throughout Israel and had a chance to meet law enforcement leaders who spoke about their specific districts in Israel. Israel has a National Police Force and leaders in each district spoke of their unique challenges.

“They have burglaries, thefts, the car break-ins and things like that, but I guess the biggest difference that I saw was the daily threat of terrorism,” Dobbins said.
That's where the word resilient kept kicking in. He said the police and citizens alike take the threat of terrorism very seriously, but they do not let it stop day-to-day life.

For Dobbins, it was his first trip to Israel, taken through the Georgia International Law Enforcement Executive Exchange, administered by staff at Georgia State University in Atlanta.

This is the 27th year for the program which sends officers to Israel and brings Israeli officers to Georgia.

The group visited one city that was bombarded with rockets over 2,300 times last year alone. The local police commander told them the population in that region was actually growing.
“It’s just part of life to them,” Dobbins said. “They only have 15 seconds to react once the siren goes off. You have a bus stop and then a bomb shelter, a playground and then a bomb shelter.”

“Their officers go out every day prepared for a terrorist act. That’s just a part of daily life,” Dobbins said.

He felt very safe the whole time he was there and even had a little time for sightseeing.

“Seeing a lot of the religious sights was just awesome,” Dobbins said.

Community policing is just as big a part of what the Israeli police do and that’s very similar to local policing practices, he said.

“Everywhere we went to it was all about community involvement,” Dobbins said. Anyone in Israel can be a part of the police force, regardless of their religion or ethnic background and the police want to respond to the needs of everyone in the same manner.

“One thing I took away is they use a ton of volunteers,” Dobbins said. “They’ve already been trained but they come in and volunteer their time — at the 911 centers and others actually ride with the police. The volunteers help show their community interaction.”

In Israel, it is mandatory that all citizens — men and women — serve in the military, the national police or the border guards.

“One thing they use a lot over there is cameras,” Dobbins said. “Each city we went to the number of cameras differed but you have cameras watching streets, watching intersections and they have the volunteers watching the cameras.”

Those cameras are a deterrent to crime when the public is aware that they are virtually everywhere, he said.

One particular district stood out. They’d decided to use Facebook to distribute information in the various languages used by those they served in order make sure they were communicating with everyone, he said.