

# ESSAYONS *Forward*

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Gulf Region Division (Provisional), Iraq - Volume 2, Issue 1

February 22, 2005



**Dawn of a New Democracy —  
Elections in Iraq**



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*Commander's Column*



January is a watershed month for the Gulf Region Division. It is the one year anniversary for GRD which was established on January 25, 2004. It is the culmination of one of our significant milestones of delivering on this program, and it is the month that brought the first democratic elections to the country of Iraq in over forty years! All of us are fortunate to have been here for this important moment in the lives of the Iraqi people.

As we look back at the short history of GRD, it is clear that our current accomplishments are the efforts of so many people. More than 1,100 Soldiers, and mostly civilians, have served in GRD this past year. With an average strength in GRD of about 350 throughout the past year, we've turned over the organization more than three times. Many have contributed, and many must continue to serve in order to maintain our momentum.

We are delivering! This month we achieved more than 1,700 project starts valued at approximately \$4.3 Billion. More than 500 projects have been completed. It is absolutely clear that your efforts in reconstruction contribute to providing a secure environment, and the hope of a better future. Many Iraqis will tell you that it is this hope that caused them to vote. On January 30th, they told the world that they believe that their future remains bright.

We must continue to work to improve the quality of life by expediting the reconstruction effort. We must overwhelm the insurgents with the presence of projects, much like the Iraqi people overwhelmed the insurgents with the number of voters. Our goal for February is 2,000 project starts valued at more than \$5 Billion. It will take the collective efforts of the entire reconstruction team to make this a reality. The important mission here is not the number of projects or the dollar value, but to help the Iraqi people in progressing with an improved quality of life, and to overwhelm the insurgents with the amount of reconstruction. This will help our men and women in uniform as well as the Iraqi people. I have great confidence in our Team!

Many thanks to each member of our team: civilian, military, and our Iraqi co-workers. In the months ahead, take some time to read, rest, and exercise each day. It will make all the difference in this demanding environment. Please take care of yourselves, take care of each other, and keep safe as we continue to deliver on this program.

God Bless you all.

**BG Thomas P. Bostick**

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All photos must be high resolution and include complete caption information.

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**COVER:** Iraqi soldiers at Camp Taji are bussed to a nearby voting station to participate in Iraq's first free election since its liberation in 2003.  
(Photo by Alicia Embrey)

## A Word from the Division's Command Sergeant Major

I'd like to take the time to share with you an awesome story of Courage, Selfless Service and distinguishable leadership by a special member of our Engineer family. He and his family are a great example to all of us that merits emulation - an example of team work and focus on the task at hand. Please see the article below about the personal sacrifices made by Sgt. 1st Class Paul Smith in the face of a hostile enemy - sacrifices that cost him his life and has led to his family accepting the Medal of Honor (MOH) on his behalf posthumously.



As the Commanding General (CG) and I circulate through the battle field we find our team doing extra ordinary things. One thing that stands out the most within our observations is the seamless interaction between Civilians and Soldiers that serve together in GRD and jointly battle against the Global War on Terrorism.

We are plagued daily with mundane yet important issues that often blur our vision and cause us to forget why and what we're doing here - things in regards to policies, relationships, standards, misunderstandings and discomforts. We often find ourselves riding a roller coaster of emotions as we learn of losses and experience new achievements. This can add stresses that usually point to our differences as opposed to what brings us together. I think is fair to assume that we all experience such emotions.

One of the important lessons that I continue to learn every single time we attend a memorial to fallen comrades is the heart wrenching sense of loss experienced by those closest to our fallen Soldiers. One can't help but to experience the same sense of loss and closeness when their lives and characteristics are relived by those who loved them. On reflection, words such as love, brotherhood and family are used as adjectives to help console the heart that is forever broken in this fight against terror.

As we often fly over Iraq, we can distinguish your accomplishments and impact on this Nation as we continue to deliver

the reconstruction to the Iraqis - to use the CG's word, we must continue to deliver this reconstruction - this will be our legacy. Soldiers and Civilians working together hand in hand with one common goal.

I remember the difference between "now and then" - as we fought the war initially the Iraqis feared us, the Soldiers. After my unit arrived in Mosul we found nothing but fear and a city lacking in services. For days no one would even come out of their homes fearing what the American Soldiers

would do to them - no power was being distributed to the city and nothing was open for business. Today, while we have new security problems, we can easily distinguish a people that are trying to thrive, and cities that though limited have their lights turned on. It was impressive as we flew in the evening to look out into the horizon and see the lights shining in a free Country.

We are extremely proud of our team. We ask you to take time to reflect and evaluate why we're here. We ask you to continue to serve together as Soldiers and Civilians that are entwined with one common goal - a great family that is caring for one another and that doesn't make a distinction between Soldiers and Civilians, but one family that embraces one another as brothers and sisters that lovingly serve each other.

Our fallen comrades gave their lives and many continue in such a service. We must learn and understand from sacrifices as the insurgency doesn't make a distinction between anyone wearing the uniform. Their destructive hunger fills their appetite for hate when they harm anyone of us. Let us continue to make our work environment a good place to serve where we place the need of the team above the individual.

We're extremely proud of you - thank you for everything you do

**CSM Jorge L. Gutierrez**

Sgt. Paul Smith is the first Soldier from the Iraq war to get the medal, which hadn't been awarded since 1993.

Sgt. 1st Class Paul R. Smith, who spent his boyhood in Tampa, became a man in the Army and died outside Baghdad defending his outnumbered Soldiers from an Iraqi attack, will receive America's highest award for bravery.

President Bush will present the Medal of Honor to Smith's wife, Birgit, and their children Jessica, 18, and David, 10, at a ceremony at the White House, possibly in March.. The official announcement will come soon.

"We had faith he was going to get it," Mrs. Smith said, from her home in Holiday, "but the phone call was shocking. It was overwhelming. My heart was racing, and I got sweaty hands. I yelled, "Oh, yes!" ... I'm still all shaky.

"People know what's he's done ... people know that to get a Medal of Honor you have to be a special person or do something really great.."

What Smith did April 4, 2003, was climb aboard an armored vehicle and, manning a heavy machine gun, take it upon himself to cover the withdrawal of his men from a suddenly vulnerable position. Smith was fatally wounded by Iraqi fire, the only American to die in the engagement..

"I'm in bittersweet tears," said Smith's mother, Janice Pvirre. "The medal isn't going to bring him back. ... It makes me sad that all these other soldiers have died. They are all heroes."

With the medal, Smith joins a most hallowed society. Since the Civil War, just 3,439 men (and one woman) have received the Medal of Honor. It recognizes only the most extreme examples of bravery - those "above and beyond the call of duty."

That oft-heard phrase has a specific meaning: The medal cannot be given to those who act under orders, no matter how heroic their actions. Indeed, according to Library of Congress defense expert David F. Burrelli, it must be "the type of deed which, if he had not done it, would not subject him to any justified criticism."

From World War II on, most of the men who received the medal died in the action that led to their nomination. There are but 129 living recipients.

Smith is the first soldier from the Iraq war to receive the medal, which had not previously been awarded

since 1993. In that year, two Army Special Forces sergeants were killed in Somalia in an action described in the bestselling book *Black Hawk Down*. The officer who called Birgit Smith on Tuesday nominated her husband for the medal.

Lt. Col. Thomas Smith (no relation) sent in his recommendation in May 2003, beginning a process that involved reviews at 12 levels of the military chain of command before reaching the White House. On Tuesday, Lt. Col. Smith expressed satisfaction that the wait was over, and great admiration for his former subordinate.

In the Army, he said, you hear about men who won the Medal of Honor. "You think they are myths when you read about them. It's almost movie-like. You just don't think you'd ever meet someone like that."

Paul Smith, he said, was not a "soft soldier" who suddenly got tough under fire. "This was a guy whose whole life experience seemed building toward putting him in the position where he could do something like this. He was demanding on his soldiers all the time and was a stickler for all the things we try to enforce. It's just an amazing story."

Lt. Col. Smith commanded the 11th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, during the American attack on Iraq, which began March 20, 2003. On the morning of April 4, the engineers found themselves manning a roadblock not far from Baghdad International Airport.

A call went out for a place to put some Iraqi prisoners.

Sgt. Smith volunteered to create a holding pen inside a walled courtyard. Soon, Iraqi soldiers, numbering perhaps 100, opened fire on Smith's position. Smith was accompanied by 16 men.

Smith called for a Bradley, a tank-like vehicle with a rapid fire cannon. It arrived and opened up on the Iraqis. The enemy could not advance so long as the Bradley was in position. But then, in a move that baffled and angered Smith's men, the Bradley left.

Smith's men, some of whom were wounded, were suddenly vulnerable.

Smith could have justifiably ordered his men to withdraw. Lt. Col. Smith believes Sgt. Smith rejected that option, thinking that abandoning the courtyard would jeopardize about 100 GIs outside - including medics at an aid station.

Sgt. Smith manned a 50-caliber machine gun atop an abandoned armored personnel carrier and fought off the Iraqis, going through several boxes of ammunition fed to him by 21-year-old Pvt. Michael Seaman. As the battle wound down, Smith was hit in the head. He died before he could be evacuated from the scene. He was 33.

The Times published a lengthy account of the battle, and Smith's life in January 2004. It can be seen at [www.sptimes.com/paulsmith](http://www.sptimes.com/paulsmith)

Sgt. Matthew Keller was one of the men who fought with Smith in the courtyard. "He put himself in front of his soldiers that day and we survived because of his actions," Keller said Tuesday from Fort Stewart in Georgia. "He was thinking my men are in trouble and I'm going to do what is necessary to help them. He didn't care about his own safety."

Some of the men who fought alongside Smith were sent back to Iraq last month. Keller, 26, is scheduled to return Feb. 15, but was scrambling Tuesday to delay his deployment to attend the medal ceremony in Washington.

"I want to be there to support the family and show thanks for what Sgt. Smith did," Keller said.

Mrs. Smith moved to Holiday after her husband's death, to be near his parents. Her daughter, Jessica, recently moved out on her own and is thinking about going to college. Son David is a fifth-grader at Sunray Elementary School in Holiday.

"From the beginning (David) didn't show much feelings, keeping to himself," Mrs. Smith said. "He thinks if he brings it up it will make me sad. He's trying to be the strong one. The day Paul left for Iraq he told David, "You're the man in the house now."

"Paul is not forgotten," she said. "He's part of history now. It makes me feel proud, so honored that I was allowed to be part of Paul's life. Even today he's probably laughing at all of us, saying "You're making way too big a deal out of me."

"He did what he had to do to protect his men, not to get a medal."

## *Academy gets renovation, expands to receive additional cadets*

A \$5.2 million renovation and construction contract was awarded in December for the Zahko Military Academy in northern Iraq. The academy, which opened in 1997, will have four existing facilities renovated and two new ones built under this contract. Six of the academy's training classrooms were renovated earlier this year under a separate contract.

The project is being funded by the Multinational Security Transition Command – Iraq. MNSTC-I is responsible for getting the Iraqi army, security and border police ready to provide security for Iraq. “In respect to Zahko our mission is to develop the existing academy into an Iraqi Military Academy that will produce high quality, motivated and disciplined officers to serve the new Iraqi Army,” said Lt. Col. Mark Slowik, assistant director of education for the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team.

The academy staff is excited about the construction project, said Maj. Gen. Shihab Duhoki, academy commandant. “The coming improvements provide us good support in developing the academy for a brighter future.”

The academy's cadets are typically high school graduates, between the ages of 18 and 23. Officials would like to start recruiting college graduates too. “Our aim is to attract as many college educated people as possible to fill the officer ranks,” Slowik said. “Leadership is a key ingredient in rebuilding an army. Zahko is building future leaders.”

The academy offers a wide array of training that lasts anywhere from three to six months, to one to two years. The two year program teaches basic soldiering skills such as drill and ceremony, saluting and weapons training. Cadets also receive lessons in maneuver tactics, land navigation, defensive strategies, attack and withdrawal procedures, artillery, military engineering, nuclear, biological and chemical response and military history. Core training in physical fitness, computers and English are taught throughout the two years.

“Before the Iraqi freedom war, we only trained cadets from Kurdistan,” explained Duhoki. “Since the war we have begun to train cadets from all provinces of Iraq. For instance cadets from Baghdad, Baquba, Kut and Mosul are sent here for training by the Ministry of Defense.”

This is a powerful message of how things are changing for the better in Iraq, said Rich Maskil, MNSTC-I project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Northern District. “The collaboration between the Kurds and Arabs is a great thing,” he said. “It's a big difference going from Saddam Hussein's campaign against the Kurds to where we are now -- the Kurds and Arabs training and fighting together to provide security for a free Iraq.”

The class that just graduated from Zahko included its first Arabic students, Slowik pointed out. “Zahko represents a small step in the unification of Iraq.”

Project construction will take place in three phases that will overlap to accelerate the process. “This is a fast-track design-build contract,” Maskil explained. “It is designed to move out quickly. Within just a couple days of award the contractor submitted site and foundation designs. They were given approval to start work and dirt was turning Dec. 27. The contractor is anticipating completion in 18 weeks with the compressed work schedule.”

New construction includes a barracks, headquarters building, 440-meter track, paved drill and ceremonies training ground and an obstacle course. Renovations will be done to the academy's existing headquarters building, two dining facilities, perimeter wall, water supply and distribution system, sanitary sewer system and the swimming pool.

The new buildings will be constructed using block and mortar, a more labor intensive construction process that maximizes the employment of local Iraqis. The contractor, based out of Turkey, has already begun to bring in local workers and has initiated a positive relationship with the academy, Maskil said.

The contractor's on-the-ground coordinator, who requested to remain anonymous, said the company saw the project as a good opportunity. “There is a lot of work to be done in Iraq,” he said. “We hope to have other projects but what's important is that we do a good job here and construct a good quality product for the academy.”

The coordinator, who was born in Turkey and raised in the United States, has a unique perspective on Iraq's journey towards democracy. “The American values of freedom and democracy are universal. The people of Iraq have never experienced this freedom. To them this is all new, but they are not going through this alone. We all want to see peace for Iraq, and any role I can play in helping to rebuild this country I am happy to.”

During construction, Corps personnel will provide construction management and quality control. “Upon completion, the academy will be an even better place to train Iraq's future military,” Maskil said. “They'll have better quality training facilities and the military will grow because the academy will have more room to accommodate cadets.”

The prospect of more cadets makes Maj. Gen. Duhoki very happy. Currently the academy can accommodate 100 students but after renovations it will be 250. “This work is very necessary,” he said. “It helps us receive more cadets from all of Iraq. It increases our ability to receive and train them. After graduation they will serve in the Iraqi military as officers. Here we will provide them with all types of modern training so they can establish peace for Iraq with the help of coalition forces.”

**Nicole Dalrymple**

# Standing up to be counted

## *Defying dangers demonstrate desire for democracy*

January 30<sup>th</sup> people around the world watched and waited in anxious anticipation as the people of Iraq took a step towards freedom. But for the people of Iraq freedom is not just a relevant word. It is a dream they risk their lives for daily. Freedom starts with the power of one.

Words spoken by Patrick Henry over two hundred years ago still exist in the hearts and minds of Americans – “Give me Liberty or Give me Death.” For the Iraqi people these are not just words. “By their very actions, the Iraqi people are living and dieing, to achieve freedom,” said LTC Randy Westfall, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region Central deputy commander.

At Camp Taji, north of Baghdad, the power of one voter turned to the voice of thousands. From 7 a.m. until the voting booths closed, doors swung open and shut due to the steady unhampered Iraqi civilian and military determined to risk the odds and take their place in history. Each leaving with their index finger covered in ink, the method used to prevent duplicate voting. The word Inshalla (God Willing) still echo in the streets of this poverty stricken community.

The next day when Mary Moore, USACE-GRC administrative assistant, greeted Margaret, an Iraqi Forman at Camp Victory, as she does everyday, Margaret, held up her inked finger. “How excited Margaret was to show me that she had voted. I was so proud of her. I thought of the American people that don’t vote because they think their one vote won’t count. Margaret is just one vote, one person that risked her life, proud to have the chance to vote.”

Like many Iraqi contractors and labors working throughout Iraq for USACE, Margaret makes daily trips from her home to Coalition Military Bases. Their stories tell of fear and hope.

Amad, a contractor building a Counter-terrorism Training Facility at Camp Dublin, worries for the safety of his family, friends, and co-workers. Each day as Amad leaves for work his seven sons, armed with weapons, go with him as protection.

According to Steve Morgan (Catfish), USACE-GRC quality control employee, Amad has security cameras around his home and at night his sons take turns protecting the family. While he and his wife sleep, his sons guard over the family watching for thugs that hide in the shadows and threaten their life. “The other night his sixteen year old son saw two insurgents creeping upon the house,” Morgan explained. “A fire fight ensued for thirty minutes and he killed them.

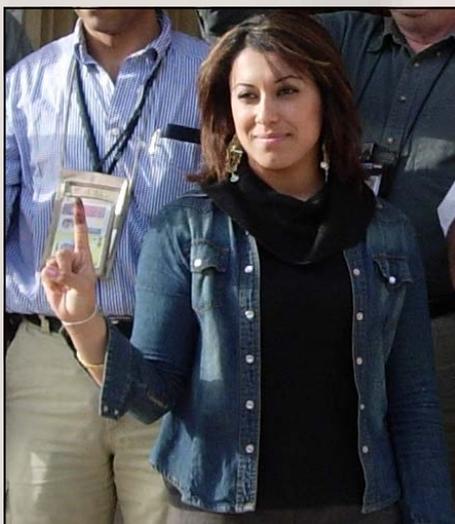
However, another contractor down the street was not so lucky. The insurgents managed to get into his home, killing the whole family.”

Margaret and Amad’s stories are just a few that Corps of Engineers employees, volunteering in Iraq, hear daily. Yet like them, contractors and laborers continue to fight the odds, returning to work each day. Like the Iraqis training at the 9 million dollar Counter-terror Training Facility, the contractors are themselves freedom fighters.

Unlike their Iraqi counterparts training at the new facility, the contractors’ and labors weapons are engineering and construction plans, picks, shovels and the knowledge that they are just one – one with the power to heal their country and transform their future.

**Alicia Embrey**

**Editor’s note: Contractor names have been changed for security concerns.**



**Iraqi soldiers and civilians throughout Iraq celebrate the chance to vote in free elections for the first time in their lifetime. The purple ink, used to prevent multiple voting, became a ‘brand of honor’ for those who participated.**  
*(USACE and donated photos)*



## Clean Water coming to Fallujah

**T**he Iraqi Ministry of Water and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have combined forces to bring sanitary drinking water to the people of al Fallujah.

Currently assessments are being performed at four water purification treatment plants and three water towers. The Corps of Engineers is working with the Fallujah Reconstruction Cell, as well as Iraq Ministry representative to execute 10.3 million dollars worth of water projects. These projects are targeted at rehabilitating and updating the system that provides drinking water for up to 400,000 residents in the city of Fallujah .

Prior to the recent military operations that scoured the city of insurgents, water was drawn from the Euphrates River for the residents. According to Major William Burruss, 1 RCT Resident Office, Camp Fallujah , water in Fallujah was processed through several treatment plants along the Euphrates . The water was then pumped to water towers, but due to illegal water taps and other problems, the system could not maintain sufficient pressure. The new projects are aimed at correcting that.

The projects under consideration will add capacity to the existing plants, add storage capacity, increase pressure, and connect the proposed new water towers. The old system's pressure was too low at the homes for water to enter, so each home pumped water from the distribution system into cisterns on their roofs.

The new system will treat the water at the plants and then pump it to water towers for storage, and eventually distribute it into the homes. "In the mean time, the Fallujah water department will have to pressurize sections of the water system, look for leaks, repair them, and move on to the next section of line," Major Burruss said.

Once the leaks in the system are repaired, the system will be capable of holding more pressure and the water can be distributed farther out to surrounding communities.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers military and civilians, serving in Iraq , are dedicated to helping the people of Iraq rebuild their life, community, and country.

**Alicia Embrey**

## Village roads get facelift

**O**ver \$10 million is being invested in reconstructing and paving almost 200 kilometers of rural village roads in four northern Iraq provinces.

The State Corporation for Roads and Bridges, a directorate of the Ministry of Housing and Construction, identified village roads in Diyala, Ninewa, Tameem and Salah ad Din for pavement improvements, in cooperation with their local governors, explained Andrew Bailey, program manger for the Project and Contracting Office's Transportation and Communication Sector. When PCO was established it identified the road projects for funding through the Iraqi Relief and Reconstruction Funds.

"The director generals of each governorate were actively involved in selecting the local roads to be upgraded," said Rixby Hardy, program manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Northern District's Transportation and Communication Sector.

"They are aware of the needs and desires of the local people."

"These projects are intended to improve rural access between villages, towns and cities," said Bailey. "In the States, they are typically considered farm-to-market roads since most of these roads support agriculture." Iraq's agricultural products include wheat, barley, rice, vegetables, dates, cotton, cattle and sheep.

Since October, construction work has begun on 103 kilometers with the remaining 97 scheduled to start in coming months. All work is being done by local contractors who are responsible for site surveys, design and site preparation, construction, testing and quality control for all phases of work.

The village roads, which are basically dirt roads, will be made into paved, two-lane roads using an asphalt base and an aggregate sub-base. Where needed, the contractor will grade out bumps and potholes, even out the road, do necessary excavation and backfill and cross drain the roadway.

Preparation work is very important, according to Hardy. "The contractors will level off the ground and put down a sub-base that's compacted. The sub-base is very important. If you don't take care of the lower level the road won't last," he said. For much of Hardy's 30-year career with the Corps he was a soils engineer. "You need a good, strong foundation that can hold the road up."

Since most of the village roads are gravel and dirt, Bailey said the reconstruction work will enhance the road's safety and improve its alignment. "The benefit to the Iraqis is improved, safe road access so that they can travel and move goods and serves to and from the marketplace," Bailey said.

There are four basic modes of transportation necessary in the development of a country, according to Hardy. They are navigable waterways, airports, railways and roads.

The Iraqi rivers and terrain are not conducive to the development of an inland navigable waterway system, he said. However there are plans to develop and improve Iraq's airports, railways and roads.

Airports are important from an international aspect, Hardy said. A \$10.3 million contract was awarded Nov. 27 to construct a new air traffic control tower and install new runway lights and navigational aid equipment at the Mosul Airfield, all critical components in the effort to bring the airport up to international standards. "This is very important for the future economic development of northern Iraq."

Railways are second only to roads in a country's transportation infrastructure, according to Hardy. Ongoing renovations and repairs at 30 railway stations in northern Iraq will help restore the operational readiness of the stations and provide a safe environment for the Iraqi people to travel in.

Roads are by far the most utilized mode of travel for a country's citizens, Hardy said. "These road projects are intended to enhance the quality of life for the Iraqi people. The Iraqis are going to see how these roads directly impact them. The roads will help the Iraqis live better lives by being able to travel, get to the market, visit cities and see family. Roads help unite people and connect them to a larger community."

**Nicole Dalrymple**





## *A child's smile — the future of Iraq*

Seeing children's eyes light up and a smile spread across their faces has made Charlie Comer's whole deployment to Iraq worth it. Shortly after arriving at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Anaconda Area Office in October, Comer was made the onsite construction representative for five ongoing projects. His subsequent routine of meeting his Iraqi workers at the perimeter gate offered Comer the most rewarding experience of his deployment.

Every day, except Fridays, Comer

drives to one of Anaconda's perimeter gates and awaits the entry of his assigned Iraqi workers. It is a lengthy process that requires the workers to clear several check points and ID stations, and can often take up to two hours.

While waiting Comer has been able to interact with and visit Iraqi children waiting to be seen at the Anaconda Hospital. "It's the one thing I look forward to every day," he said.

The children, as well as adults, come to see the hospital staff for various injuries and illnesses. They sit long hours, waiting on benches that are within a secure area of the base. Comer has noticed everything from broken arms and legs, to other more serious injuries suffered from gun fire and explosives.

"I can't help but feel for all these kids, especially after all they've been through," he said. "Most of them sit quietly waiting their turn to go into the hospital. Some just sit in deep thought. Some come alone and others come with their parents. Their parents often look tired from all the years of worrying about what was going to happen next."

Prior to deploying, Comer collected small gifts in hope of being able to give them to Iraqi children. He got Smokey Bear baseballs, comic books, pencils and rulers from the U.S. Forest Service, and

his daughter gathered together Ranger Rick badges, whistles and many other small gifts from the Corps' Libby Dam project in Montana, where Comer works.

"When I found out I was selected for an assignment in Iraq, I was excited about the opportunity to help with reconstruction, but I was also hoping I'd have the opportunity to interact with the local people," he recalled.

Shortly after arriving in Iraq, Comer began to take those small gifts to the children at the gate. It wasn't long before almost the entire Anaconda Area Office was collecting things for Comer to give the children. The gifts soon included school supplies, stuffed animals and shoes.

Rich Halverson, from the Corps' Walla Walla District, contributed school supplies he'd received from his local Lions Club. Jeanie Klingman, from the Seattle District, received a box of stuffed animals, and Comer's mother sent a box of dolls and assorted balls.

"The list goes on and on," Comer said of all those who contributed gifts for the Iraqi children. He estimates that he received over 20 boxes of miscellaneous items and an additional 10 boxes of shoes. His family and co-workers at Libby Dam collected the shoes after he mentioned the need. Most of the adult



**A young girl waits to be seen by doctors at the Anaconda Hospital. During his deployment, Comer estimates he received more than 20 boxes of miscellaneous items to hand out to Iraq children, making up about 100 gift sacks.**

**Left: Charlie Corner poses with a young girl waiting to see doctors at the Anaconda Hospital. Below: Gifts of school supplies and stuffed dolls make two young girls smile.**  
*(All photos courtesy of Charlie Corner)*



Two young boys enjoy a sack of gifts given to them by Corner. Although the effort to rebuild Iraq and instill trust in the Iraqi people will be a lengthy process, according to Corner, “one day at a time, one child at a time, we will succeed.”

Comer acknowledges that rebuilding Iraq is a lengthy process and that it’s going to take some time to get things back to normal, but he said if we take it “one day at a time, one child at a time, we will succeed.”

Back at Libby Dam, Charlie Comer is a jack of all trades. His duties include being the dam’s safety and security officer, providing emergency management oversight and ensuring the project is environmentally compliant. Comer will be redeploying home Feb. 7.

Nicole Dalrymple



shoes were given to the Iraqi workers, while the children’s shoes were given to those waiting in line at the hospital.

“We are doing a lot of good things over here in Iraq,” he said, mentioning the reconstruction of Iraq’s schools, fire stations, hospitals and other public infrastructure. “It’s been a good experience working with the locals, but I think what I’ve enjoyed most is the time I spent with the kids. They are the future of Iraq.”



Troops at Logistical Support Area Anaconda test run the instillation’s new wash rack. The \$630 thousand project, overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, was turned over to installation personnel Dec. 17. A wash rack, a military term for a car wash, plays a key role in troop redeployment. A unit can not redeploy to the United States unless their equipment is thoroughly cleaned of any soil, dirt, vegetation or harmful pests. The U.S. government enforces stringent inspection standards to prevent the transportation of harmful agricultural pests and diseases. The facility, comprised of six bays with high pressure washers, can accommodate any vehicle ranging from a Humvee to an Abrams tank. This facility enables troops to clean their vehicles and put them on air transport at Anaconda, saving them a long, dangerous convoy to Kuwait. *(GRN Photo)*



The Al Kut Lock and Dam in southern Iraq is one of many all to familiar water control structures for members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The unique civil works capability of the Corps came in handy for the mission in Iraq.

*(Photos provided by Robert Lesko).*

# Civil Works in Iraq

Corps employees serving in Iraq for the Gulf Region Division (GRD) often work on projects outside their previous work experience. When Corps people go to Iraq, they expect new challenges and to develop new skills, but sometimes their back home Corps experience pays dividends for the Iraqi people.

Eric Dolly and Rob Lesko worked for GRD on the New Iraqi Army Base at An Numaniyah in south central Iraq. Dolly, a Lock Master for the Greenup Locks and Dam on the Ohio River in the Huntington District, worked as a quality assurance inspector at An Numaniyah. Lesko, a civil engineer in Pittsburgh District's Construction Division, was the An Numaniyah's project engineer.

Both Dolly and Lesko, experts on locks and dams, never expected to use their knowledge of navigation construction projects in Iraq. In early May 2004 the Coalition Provision Authority requested (GRD) inspect the operational condition of the Al Kut Lock and Dam. This lock and dam is on the Tigris River and located 40 miles east of An Numaniyah. Dolly and Lesko's background and knowledge and their proximity to Al Kut made them perfect for the inspection job.

Dolly said that seeing the Al Kut Dam was an amazing sight. He didn't know what to expect, but he didn't expect an imposing structure spanning 1800 feet across the Tigris River.

"I was absolutely surprised and amazed this remarkable lock and dam was surrounded by a major city. To think the British designed and built this project 70 years ago, and it is still in very good condition was incredible," Dolly said. "It was also interesting to me to see the everyday life of the people. The city of Al-

Kut surrounds the lock and dam. Therefore, standing on top the dam, I saw the constant flow of people, cars, trucks, bicycles and donkey carts as they crossed the highway bridge. Downstream, people were using cast nets to fish in the tail water. I was a totally unique experience."

Lesko's inspection notes describe a unique and innovative to Corps standards lock and dam. The 1800 foot long dam has 56 gates 19.5 feet wide and 21.5 feet high. Each operates by using by 1.5 horsepower motors assisted by counter-weights. If the electricity or motors fail, the dam operators can manually operate the gates.

The gate mechanical system uses two cables attaching to each side of the gate. These cables are then spooled to separate grooved drums turned by a single shaft driven by a single gearbox.

Dolly remarked that the gate system was another surprise.

"It amazed us both that they used such small motors to open and close the gates. We thought it was a great design. It was elegantly simple," Dolly said

Lesko said the gate mechanical systems were maintained and in working condition, with the exception of three gates that were missing mechanical equipment and an electrical housing for an operating panel destroyed by a large caliber small arms round or by shrapnel.

"Since there are 56 gates, three or four inoperable gates won't be a detriment to the operation of the dam," Lesko said. "The replacement cost for the missing mechanical equipment could be as much as \$40,000 to \$50,000, but I am told the repair parts are on order."

“The difference in the pool elevations at the dam is 26 feet or 18 meters,” Lesko said. “We met the Director of the Al Kut Dam, Mr. Abib, who said that the dam is operated to maintain a pool of 18 meters. Since the dam would be overtopped at 18.64 meters, there is little excess room before overtopping occurs. We saw sand and gravel deposits on the dam piers that show the river has overtopped the dam by several meters.”

The single lock chamber is 52.5 feet by 262.5 feet. Again, 1.5 horsepower motors are used to individually operate the lock gates. The lock chamber also has a fish ladder adjacent to the river wall.

The last lockage, according to the lock and dam director, was prior to the 1980 Iran-Iraq. The navigation system is not operating due to sediment shoaling. Operating the system would require dredging. Currently, the downstream depth at the dam is three feet or less and the navigation pool requires at least nine feet to operate.

The Iraqis and British developed this navigation system with two purposes in mind. One was to create a navigable waterway, the other was to reverse the flow of many tributaries feeding the Tigris. This provided a reliable source of Irrigation water for hundreds of square miles of arid land. The other purpose was to transport agricultural products, but it can support a full range of bulk commodities. Although most of the Iraqi farmers operate

at the subsistence level, the reconstruction work in Iraq included improving farming practices and the lock and dam system will contribute to this objective. The land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers historically is the Fertile Crescent. It has been a rich farming area for thousands of years and crisscrossed with irrigation ditches.

Iraq’s principal agricultural products are wheat, barley, rice vegetables, dates and cotton.

Dolly said that one of the reasons for the unusually high upper pool elevation of 18 meters was to provide irrigation water for the farmers from the Tigris River.

“It is a rich farming area and without the navigation dam and a high pool level, the farmers would not get needed water for irrigation. Similar to the water intakes on the Ohio River not being possible without the higher pool due to the navigation system,” Dolly said.

The next lock and dam downstream is Al Amarah 100 river miles from Al Kut. From Al Amarah the Tigris flows into the Euphrates River and form the Shatt Al Arab river near Basrah and then into the Persian Gulf 200 miles south of Al Amarah.

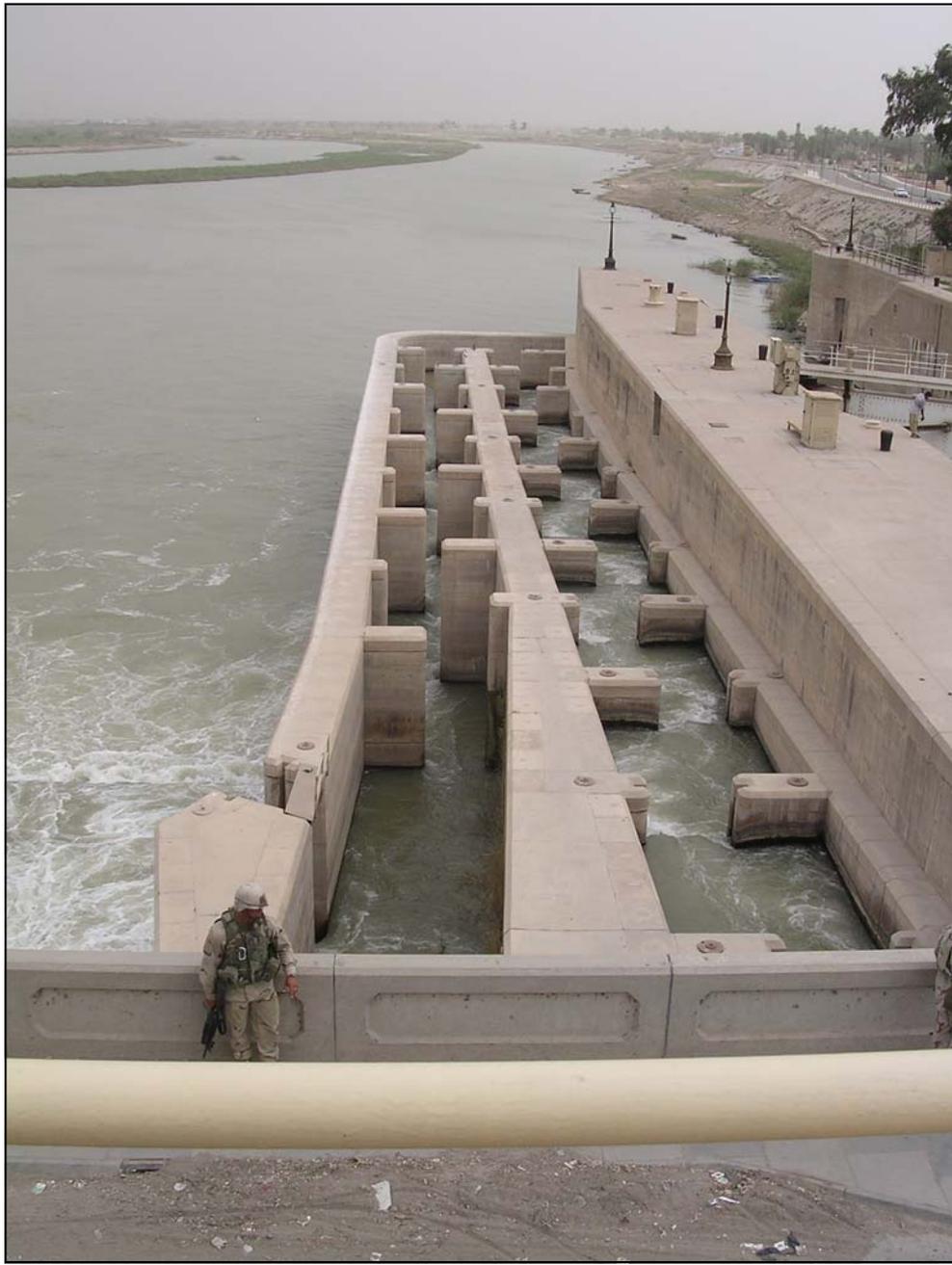
Both Dolly and Lesko have returned home, but still get energized when they talk about their unexpected assignment in Iraq, in assessing the Al Kut Lock and Dam. Since returning, Lesko transferred from Pittsburgh District to the Louisville District and now works at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Columbus, Ohio.

**Steven Wright, Huntington District**



**Counter weight to one of Al Kut Lock and Dam’s 56 gates. One and a half horsepower motors aided by counter weights open and close each gate.**

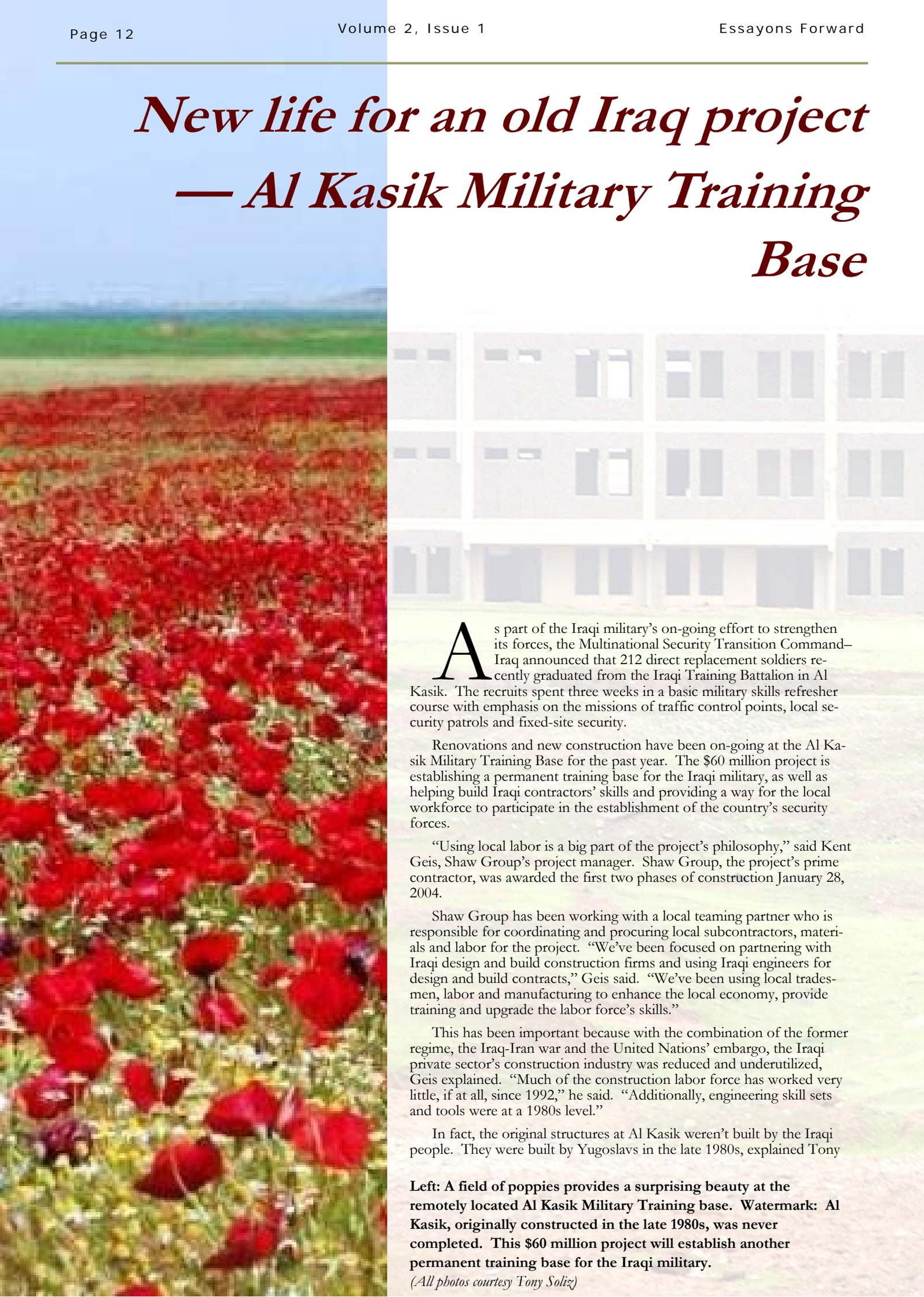
**Fish ladders, such as this along the river side of a lock wall, are not too dissimilar than those in the United States.**



Iraq

# *New life for an old Iraq project*

## *— Al Kasik Military Training Base*



**A**s part of the Iraqi military's on-going effort to strengthen its forces, the Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq announced that 212 direct replacement soldiers recently graduated from the Iraqi Training Battalion in Al Kasik. The recruits spent three weeks in a basic military skills refresher course with emphasis on the missions of traffic control points, local security patrols and fixed-site security.

Renovations and new construction have been on-going at the Al Kasik Military Training Base for the past year. The \$60 million project is establishing a permanent training base for the Iraqi military, as well as helping build Iraqi contractors' skills and providing a way for the local workforce to participate in the establishment of the country's security forces.

"Using local labor is a big part of the project's philosophy," said Kent Geis, Shaw Group's project manager. Shaw Group, the project's prime contractor, was awarded the first two phases of construction January 28, 2004.

Shaw Group has been working with a local teaming partner who is responsible for coordinating and procuring local subcontractors, materials and labor for the project. "We've been focused on partnering with Iraqi design and build construction firms and using Iraqi engineers for design and build contracts," Geis said. "We've been using local tradesmen, labor and manufacturing to enhance the local economy, provide training and upgrade the labor force's skills."

This has been important because with the combination of the former regime, the Iraq-Iran war and the United Nations' embargo, the Iraqi private sector's construction industry was reduced and underutilized, Geis explained. "Much of the construction labor force has worked very little, if at all, since 1992," he said. "Additionally, engineering skill sets and tools were at a 1980s level."

In fact, the original structures at Al Kasik weren't built by the Iraqi people. They were built by Yugoslavs in the late 1980s, explained Tony

**Left: A field of poppies provides a surprising beauty at the remotely located Al Kasik Military Training base. Watermark: Al Kasik, originally constructed in the late 1980s, was never completed. This \$60 million project will establish another permanent training base for the Iraqi military.**

*(All photos courtesy Tony Soliz)*

Soliz, project construction representative with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps of Engineers is providing construction management and quality control.

The buildings, which were constructed using large pre-cast concrete panels that slide into place, forming the exterior and interior walls, were never completed. "It is a sturdy construction," Soliz said. "Unfortunately, vandals came in and stripped all the buildings of doors, windows, electrical components, mechanical systems and plumbing fixtures. All that was left was a shell. The perimeter fencing system was also removed."

"In order to offer a training area for the Iraqi military, Al Kasik had to be restored," Soliz said. "Al Kasik is possibly the largest military training base in Iraq. The privates go through a ten week training course, much like a boot camp. They learn basic soldiering skills, marching and marksmanship. They learn how to run checkpoints, do close-in drills, search buildings and do patrols. After graduation they are shipped out to their permanent stations."

This is Soliz's second deployment to Al Kasik. Initially he came over for a 120 day deployment, arriving in country the end of January 2004. After being home for the summer, he returned for a year deployment. "I told certain people I would come back," he said, feeling ownership and responsibility to see the project through to completion.

Al Kasik has been one of the more challenging projects in Northern Iraq. Steady progress has been made since day one but it has been impacted by numerous difficulties associated with security in Iraq, Geis explained. There have been threats; suicide bomber, small arms fire and mortar attacks; ambushes; hijackings; and murder.

"There have been many challenges and tragedies along the way," Geis said. "The biggest challenge we have faced is the safe transportation of labor and material to and from the project site. With deep regret, lives have been lost and materials have been hijacked during the course of the project."

Because of threats, many workers live within the perimeter of Al Kasik. "Many workers live on post," Soliz said. "They have to. A lot of them can't leave. If they do, they're either killed or they can't return. This is not business as usual."

"Transitioning into Iraq has been a unique experience and challenge for everyone," Geis said. He explained that since the U.S. military has outsourced most of its design and construction capability, this requires the private sector to work side-by-side with the military in peace, as well as wartime conflicts. "Our engineers and superintendents have had to adapt to the Iraqi construction methods and demonstrate standard construction methods to the local populace. In addition, the engineers have never had to think about security issues while completing construction tasks. It has required some adaptation on everyone's part."

The first two phases of construction awarded to Shaw Group included restoring and renovating the existing buildings and supplying temporary water and sanitation, as well as the construction of nine new projects.

A modification was issued April 15 to design and build temporary power, a

water treatment plant and distribution system and a waste water plant. The first two phases were completed and signed over to the Iraqi military on July 22. Even while renovations were taking place, the military was using the space and security forces were being trained.

Shaw was also awarded a third phase of construction April 15. This work was completed in September and now Shaw is currently working on modifications and additional work items at the base, Geis said. "The bulk of this work will be completed by the end of February. We anticipate being finished and demobilized by the end of March."

The Air Force Center for Environmental Excellence, a contracting agent for the government, has awarded three primary construction contracts for work at Al Kasik. The base's two medical clinics, the perimeter fence, shoot house, check point, permanent power and well drilling are being handled by one of those contractors.

"Shaw and the team members here at Al Kasik are committed to the completion of this project and are proud of what we have done to date," Geis said. "The team here understands how important this project is to the U.S. and Iraq. The sooner we finish and the Iraqi Armed Forces is able to independently secure their own country, the sooner U.S. troops can redeploy."

He went on to say that Shaw has befriended many of the local people and has become 'intertwined in their lives.' "We have developed new relationships, secured contracts with local firms and directly hired locals into Shaw. We are obligated to see the project through with them. By providing a good sound location for [the Iraqi Army] to train, the local labor force is directly contributing to solving Iraq's security challenges."

**Nicole Dalrymple**

**To ensure security for the project, last year local workers installed a new perimeter fence around the base.**



# Getting new electrical capacity to the customer

## Substations and transmission lines

Construction work began December on four new electrical substations in the province of Irbil. The substations, which will use transformers to step down power and distribute to areas at a lower voltage, will serve homes, schools and business in Debg, Irbil, Khanzad and Khoshnaw. The substations are another propo- nent in the Herculean effort to restore electricity to all users around the country.

Just two months ago responsibility was transferred to the deputy of the Ministry of Electricity for a completed \$27.4 million emergency reconstruction project that restrung 174 kilometers of power transmission line and rebuilt 444 towers. The project was largely responsible for reconnecting the Kurdish power grid to the rest of Iraq.

Nearly 4,000 people, from over a dozen nations, worked on the 7-month-long project. "I personally met workers from Iraq, the U.S., India, Turkey, Australia, Lebanon, Bosnia, Syria, England, South Africa, the Philippines, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland," said Kevin Blair, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' project engineer who worked quality assurance on the project.

The massive electrical project was split into two phases. Phase one began March 9, and phase two began August 18. The ministry had estimated repairs would take seven to eight months. Despite all the extraordinary conditions of working in a

challenging environment, total on-the-ground construction took 128 days, Blair said. "The project was completed on time, actually ahead of schedule," he added. Blair took over as project engineer toward the end of phase one construction and was on phase two through to completion.

Along with the normal obstacles associated with construction, additional challenges were met and overcome by work crews. Some of the challenges were 130 degree temperatures, river and highway crossings, cities and mountains, not to mention swampy areas and language barriers, Blair recalled. "We also had to be on constant alert to security issues not only on the job site but also while traveling to and from work. There was also one phrase I'd never seen in a contract before: "The presence of minefields will not be allowed to delay work."

While work conditions were often times dangerous, the project was a critical part of reconstructing Iraq's infrastructure. Due to theft and destruction only 19 towers remained of the old network. The 444 new towers and 174 kilometers of power transmission line are carrying much needed electricity to homes, schools and businesses throughout Northern Iraq. The power lines consisting of Teal conductors are capable of carrying 240 megawatts of power.

The lines will allow hydroelectric generation to be dispatched over the grid to support summer peak demand, as well as meet the growing demand for stable, reliable power throughout Iraq. The lines will also support the winter peak requirement for power in the Kurdish area. In the future these lines may also be used to import power from Turkey and are designed for future conductor additions that would increase the capability to 480 megawatts.

The incredible efforts of 4,000 people this year not only helped reconnect the power grid for northern Iraq but also helped reconnect northern and southern Iraq after a 13-year severance. "It's really exciting to hear the stories of how prior to reconstruction efforts residents were only receiving two hours of electrical power a day and now they are getting close to twenty or more," Blair said.

After completing his assignment on the power project, Blair was reassigned to the Corps' Mosul Area Office and is currently establishing a new resident engineer office in Irbil. Irbil, a city of close to one million, is benefiting greatly from Blair's and other's efforts.

"Most people [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' employees] don't get to see the results of their labor when they come to work here," Blair said referring to the fact that many employees come over on four or six month rotations. "They return home before seeing the result of their hard work. I've been very

**Due to theft and destruction, only 19 of the old network's towers existed. Vandals were pulling down the towers to steal the metal and sell as scrap.** (All photos by GRN)



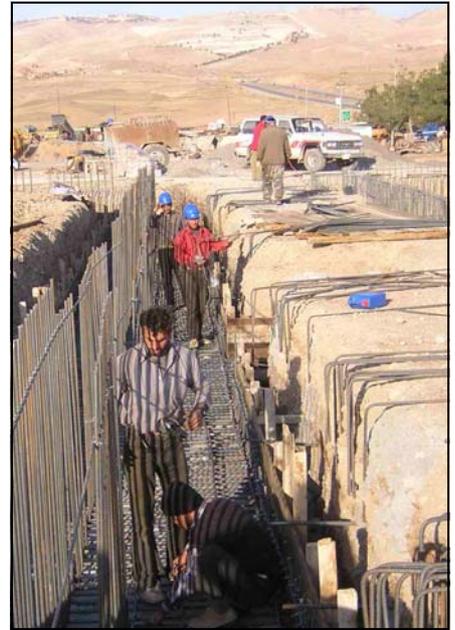


lucky to not only see the project completed but my office is now located in one of the cities most benefited by it.”

Irbil is a city booming with new construction and growth all around, said Salar Said, Project Contracting Office’s Irbil representative. “Construction is everywhere. It’s just booming. Construction is taking place on roads, buildings and sewers,” he said. “Kurdistan was cut off in 1991,” he went on to say. “There were no major projects going on here during Saddam’s regime. Now there is growth everywhere.” Irbil is a symbol of the incredible growth opportunities now available for all of Iraq.

The hope is that as reconstruction progress is made and power generation is increased that residents will soon have 24 hours of uninterrupted service. The construction work on the four new substations and rehabilitation work on the 11 and 33 kilovolt distribution lines will play an important role in giving Iraq a brighter more prosperous future.

Nicole Dalrymple



**Construction work began on four new electrical substations in the province of Irbil Dec. 11. Workers are installing reinforced steel for the switchgear house and transformer foundations.**

Destroyed transmission towers are replaced.

Newly constructed towers lining an Iraqi city street are carrying 240 megawatts of electricity to Iraqi homes, schools and businesses. One megawatt is capable of powering 800 to 1,000 homes, depending on the energy need.



## *Project will ease overcrowding in Iraq's northern-most province*

The construction of four brand-new schools for the children of Iraq's northern-most province, Dahok, began in early January. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in cooperation with local government officials, awarded \$1.3 million for the construction of two 12-room two-story schools, one six-room kindergarten, and one nine-room secondary school Dec. 28. All work will be done by Dahok province contractors.

Several of Dahok's schools were constructed in the late 70s and early 80s through a United Nations program. Since then the schools have deteriorated due to lack of funds and resources for maintenance. Many have leaking roofs, inoperable plumbing, no potable water, no windows and no heat.

About 100 Dahok schools are getting much needed renovations under separate contracts, but an even greater need remains. For several months the Dahok government has asked repeatedly for new schools, not just renovations. The school system currently supports approximately 200,000 students, said Anwer Mohammed Hassa, head of planning for the Ministry of Education. "We have about 200,000 kids in the province and that includes kindergarten, primary and secondary schools. New schools are very important."

Classrooms can be filled with as many as 60 to 80 students at a time, Mike Posovich, program manager for the Corps' Northern District's Building, Health and Education Sector, observed during a recent visit. Some schools run three separate shifts of students daily to handle the need.

The problems with the schools have been growing over the years, explained Hameed Salih, public relations representative for

Dahok's governor. "Dahok was never considered part of Iraq during Saddam Hussein's reign," he said. "The province was completely neglected in the 70s and 80s."

He went on to explain that in 1988 when Hussein ordered the use of chemical weapons on the Kurds many fled Iraq but others were forced to leave their villages and move into the cities. "The cities have become very overcrowded and the schools face severe shortages," he stated.

Following the Gulf War in 1992, the Kurds established their first local government, and although their capacity to do reconstruction was limited, they made efforts towards improvements. "At the time we were under double sanctions," Salih added. "The UN had sanctions against Iraq, and the Iraqi government had sanctions against the Kurds. It has been a very slow process."

Now that Saddam is gone the Dahok government wants to encourage its people to return to their villages but that is challenging. "Many people have been living in the cities for over 20 years now," Salih said. "To make them willing to move back we know we need to provide the same services they've grown accustomed to in the cities. The focus right now is on schools, health care, water projects and electricity." In addition to these four schools the governorate has 90 schools under construction. Fifteen have already been completed.

End of the year funds and a lot of hard work and dedication helped make the four schools a reality. Back in October Corps representatives from the Northern District visited the director generals in all seven provinces within its area of responsibility: Dahok, Diyala, Irbil, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah Ad Din and Sulaymaniyah. It was at this meeting that Dahok officials explained their desire for new schools to the Corps.

"It has taken a lot of effort to get these four schools," said Posovich. "It has been very important to involve the local officials and have their approval. Up to this point we haven't been able to deliver the government's most pressing needs. But now with these new schools we are helping them address a real serious



problem. When the end of the year funds became available we saw the opportunity to make things happen for Dahok. The ministry already had plans and specs on the shelf so that helped us move forward quickly.”

The bid process was accelerated to meet the required end-of-year start date. The initial proposals of work were sent out Dec. 23 and bids were opened Dec. 25. In order to compete all vendors had to be from Dahok province, as well as members of the contract union. The bids received were disappointing. All but one of the bids came back twice as high as the reasonable estimate.

“The bids were as high as \$900 thousand for one school,” Posovich said. “The vendors were unwilling to reassess their bids and the government suspected collusion. All but one of the vendors was disqualified by the governor.”

The proposals were re-advertised in hopes that more reasonable bids would be received. Bids from 21 vendors were opened Dec. 28. Thanks to more realistic bids all four schools were awarded. The contracts were signed and a preconstruction meeting was held that evening.

The process was a success thanks to cooperation between the Corps, local Project and Contracting Office representatives, U.S. Army Civil Affairs personnel in the area and Dahok officials.



Sgt. Maj. Thomas Sigee and Mike Posovich, both of the Division’s North District, visit the site of one of the new schools and meet with the children and one of the future teachers. (GRN photo)

“It was important that we involve the local officials in the selection process,” Posovich said. Earlier this year an Arab contractor was brought in to do renovations on the Kurdish province’s schools. Work was stopped because the contractor did not have local support. “We needed their approval to move the process forward. The government also has experience working with these contractors and their input is extremely valuable.”

“It took a long time to translate promises into action,” concluded Salih. “We are all happy to see progress being made. Very soon our people will have new schools.”

**Nicole Dalrymple**



**Watermark:** The Dahok school system supports approximately 200,000 students. Classrooms can be filled with as many as 60 students at one time and some schools run three separate shifts to handle the need. The schools are in poor condition due to lack of maintenance and overcrowding.

# Corps cancer survivor thankful to serve in Iraq

Leaving Portland in early August to serve as a civilian in Baghdad, Iraq was a sacrifice for Linda Tompkins in a number of ways. Besides her absence from friends and family during the holidays, she also gave up her five-year streak of raising money for breast cancer research as a participant in the Portland to Coast charity walk.

"I've loved being involved in raising awareness and money for breast cancer, but as important as that has been to me, coming [to Baghdad] has been even more important. I really know we're making a difference in the lives of the Iraqi people. The Corps [of Engineers] is building schools and roads and power plants. We're building the whole infrastructure of a new [democracy]."

For the past five years Linda served as a walker and a coordinator for "Christine's Dream Team," a team of twenty eight walkers who all were breast cancer survivors.

Eight years ago, Linda discovered she had breast cancer when her doctor called her at her office. She cried the entire twenty-five mile trip to her Portland home, sure she was going to die.

When she arrived home her husband Jim looked down from repairing a roof to see Linda standing in the back yard with tears streaming down her face. He could hear her sobbing and he knew then the mammogram result.

Only six years into their marriage, the couple faced a life or death obstacle, but they faced it together.

"Jim was unbelievably supportive. Would you believe, no matter the sacrifice, he went with me to every single doctor's appointment."

Only a month after her doctor called her with the disturbing news, she went into surgery for a double mastectomy with

tram-flap reconstruction. The operation was a complete success. She has had no further signs of cancer.

"I only got the initial exam because my sister had just had her own breast cancer surgery, but I was five years younger and never thought I would get cancer."

"I changed a lot from the experience," Linda says. "Before my breast cancer I was a real wallflower, very shy. After this, I feel free."

Meeting Linda now, you would never know she was once a wallflower. She is a gregarious outgoing red head, but to meet her now, you would have to fly half-way around the world – to a war zone.

"I went to work for the Army Corps of Engineers in 1999. Until coming here [to Baghdad, Iraq] I worked in the Portland District at the Hydroelectric Design Center."

"I started working on the paperwork last summer knowing that the Army needed volunteers to help rebuild Iraq. It took me three months of making arrangements, but last August I flew into this great adventure."

One person glad she is here is her supervisor, in the Real Estate Department, Ann Volz.

"Linda brings an energy and an enthusiasm for our work that really helps. She is aggressive and speaks her mind. She has had to be a quick learner as she has taken on a lot of work outside her specialty. She fills in our gaps and keeps the office together while we conduct our critical mission."

You won't get any argument from the Division Commanding General Thomas Bostick, "Linda works in our Real Estate department helping fulfill a crucial mission. As many construction projects as we have started, we try to ensure every lease of private property is at a fair market value. The Real Estate office works throughout the whole country of Iraq doing this."

When asked about



Tompkins in Baghdad (USACE Photo)

the hardest part of being here, Linda said, "It is hard being here, but [the hardest part is] not the scary rockets or mortars or car bombs. I just spent Christmas without my family and I have two little girls at home that miss their grandmother terribly."

Including Thanksgiving, and with New Year looming, Linda faces her third major holiday away from her family. These are holidays that she didn't have to be in Iraq. Originally, Linda was supposed to go home in time for Christmas. Her original volunteer tour was only for four months.

"But once I got here and got to know some of the local Iraqis, I could see how much our work meant here. That's why I volunteered to stay two more months." Linda's six months in Iraq ends in January with her having missed the cancer walk and the holidays. She feels fulfilled because she feels her priorities are straight.

Linda advocates regular self-exams and early mammograms. She knows the earlier breast cancer is discovered, the better chance of survival a person has.

"If I hadn't had my breast cancer, I would never have had the inner strength to come to this war. I know I am a stronger person for what I have survived. Now I am able to use that strength to help in this struggle. I have so much to be thankful for."

-Capt. Frank Myers

**"I know I am a stronger person for what I have survived. Now I am able to use that strength to help in this struggle. I have so much to be thankful for."**

—Tompkins

SPECIAL FEATURE

# Afghanistan Engineering District

The other front line in the Corps' global war on terrorism



**Fred Wissel in Afghanistan. While AED is not aligned under the Gulf Region Division, is it similar supported by the Transatlantic Command and represents the other 'front' for the Corps role in the global war on terrorism.**  
*(Photo provided by Huntsville).*

**F**red Wissel knew he was about to make a decision that could change his life. He had thought about the decision for weeks. Working in Iraq or Afghanistan could be an interesting experience, he reasoned.

Wissel's instinct to remain safe was strong. "I didn't want to end up a hurt or dead hero," he said. But his desire to help others was compelling.

So like many other Corps of Engineers employees, Wissel made the decision to trade his relatively safe life as a project manager at Huntsville Center for the unknown, perhaps risky, life working as a project manager in Afghanistan.

Wissel decided to join Operation Enduring Freedom. The mission of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan District became his own.

The two-fold mission is to improve the quality of life for the people of Afghanistan whose lives have been critically altered by the more than 25 years of war and civil unrest in the country; and to improve the quality of life for American Soldiers who serve there.

The Afghanistan Engineer District (AED), headquartered in Kabul, is supported by more than 80 Corps of Engineers civilian volunteers. The three major program areas are the U.S. Forces Program, the Afghan National Army (ANA) Program, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Reconstruction of Afghanistan Program.

Upon reporting for duty in Kabul, Wissel found that he had been assigned to a job in the actual construction of barracks for ANA's military personnel. His immediate response was, "I'm not a construction person."

His assignment was subsequently changed to program management in the design/build area, a job more appropriate to his expertise.

Like his job at Huntsville Center, Wissel's responsibilities in Kabul involved coordination of technical engineering personnel, project scheduling, contract negotiation and funds management for AED projects.

His job skills and experience served him well since the Corps' Afghanistan Engineer District is helping develop the infrastructure for an effective, functional Afghanistan National Army.

One of many projects supporting ANA is the repair of airport runways. Unexploded ordnance left from the Russian conflict litters the ground along the barbed wire-lined perimeter of the airport's runways. Runways are in a serious state of disrepair.

Additional projects are construction of bases for brigades, hospitals and training facilities. "The work is varied and interesting," Wissel explains.

A typical workday began at 7 a.m. and ended around 8 p.m. six days each week. Wissel's day, however, began at 5 a.m. to accommodate sharing of bathroom facilities located down the hall from the room he shared with two other people.

On Friday working hours were from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m., giving a few hours off for recreation such as volleyball and cook outs.

Wissel has volunteered to go to Afghanistan for an additional four-month tour. The decision to return was not as dramatic as with the first assignment. He has found a special kind of satisfaction in his work there.

"I feel... that I did the right thing although I will be the first to admit that I miss the good, normal life that I gave up to come over here," he said.

Though he doesn't know what his next assignment will be, it likely will continue to involve projects in support of ANA as on his first four-month tour.

Wissel expresses his commitment to the mission of the Corps of Engineers in Afghanistan. "If we didn't care about the people of Afghanistan, we would not be there. We are there to improve the quality of life for the people," he comments.

-Huntsville Public Affairs

## Hail and Farewell

### Hailing:

Angela Baskins, RIE GRD, Southwest Division  
 Lt. Col. Glen Bassett, Strategic Planning GRD, Colorado Springs, Colo.  
 Robert Buckman, Construction Rep GRN, Louisville District  
 Denise Calabria, PAO GRD, from Kaiserslautern, Germany  
 James Dalton, Bus. Mgt. Directorate GRD, South Atlantic Division  
 Jacob Davis, Construction Rep GRN, Seattle District  
 Lt. Col. David Diehl, Chief, G-1 GRD, Huntsville Center  
 Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Todd Duncan, G-4 GRD, Portland, Ore.  
 Garris Ebron, Logistics Specialist GRN, Louisville District  
 Hollis Fletcher, LOGCAP GRN, Portland District  
 Linda Frey, Admin Assistant GRN, Omaha District  
 Paul Gagne, G-6 GRD, NMCI, Covington, Ga.  
 Florentine Gilkey, Admin Assistant GRN, Kansas City District  
 Connie Gillette, PAO GRD, USACE HQ.  
 Col. Jim Green, Strategic Planning GRD, Mt. Morris, Pa.  
 Timothy Flaherty, Project Engineer GRN, Louisville District  
 Cassandra Harriman, IT Specialist GRN, Outside agency  
 Capt. Paul Hicks, Aide de Camp GRD, Fort Hood, Texas  
 Deborah Hoepfer, Resource Management GRD, Orange Park, Fla.  
 Paul Holcomb, Area Engineer GRN, Rock Island District

Donald Holmes, Construction Rep GRN, Omaha District  
 Perry Hubert, Senior Construction Project Manager GRN, Rock Island District  
 Byron Johnson, IT Specialist GRN, Europe District  
 Lee Kenderdine, Project Engineer GRN, City of Nashville  
 Bonnie Kunkle, Resource Management GRD, Europe District  
 Thomas Mack, Resident Engineer GRN, Rock Island District  
 John Murner, Construction Rep GRN, New England District  
 Rona Parker-Anderson, Admin Assistant GRN, Kansas City District  
 Joseph Pimenta, G-2 GRD, Fort Belvoir, Va.  
 John Rintoul, Chief, PCO Construction, Buffalo District  
 Phyllis Ritchie, PCO RM, Alaska District  
 Bill Ryals, Deputy, RIE GRD, TAC  
 Donna Sherman, G-6 GRD, TAC  
 Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Vincente Soto, G-3 GRD, San Antonio, Texas  
 Curtis Stracener, Contracting GRD, Mobile District  
 Brad Trajnowski, G-6 GRD, Sarasota, Fla.  
 Robin West, Logistics Specialist GRN, Portland District  
 Darralyn Williams, Contracting GRD, Huntsville Center  
 Frank Wolfe, IT Specialist GRN, Treasury Department  
 Greg Wilson, Chief, Realty GRD, Kansas City District



**Maj., William Taylor**  
 G-1 GRD  
 Returning to:  
 Portland, Ore.



**Linda Tompkins**  
 Real Estate GRD  
 Returning to:  
 Portland District



**Bob Stockbower**  
 Bus. Mgmt. Dir. GRD  
 Returning to:  
 Southwest Division



**Capt. Mike Rainey**  
 Aide de Camp GRD  
 Returning to:  
 West Point, NY



**Jackie Purrington**  
 Project Management GRD  
 Returning to:  
 New Orleans District



**Bill Mason**  
 Resource Manager GRD  
 Returning to:  
 Huntsville Center



**Mark Emelio**  
 IM Specialist GRD  
 Returning to:  
 Louisville District



**Robert Dils**  
 Strategic Planning GRD  
 Returning to:  
 Fort Leonardwood, MO



**Maj. Karl Petkovich**  
 LNO GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Army Reserve



**Carol Correll**  
 Internal Auditor GRD  
 Returning to:  
 Fort Hamilton, NY



**Col. Walter Chaanovich**  
 Strategic Planning GRD  
 Returning to:  
 Fort Meade, Md



**MSG David Breitbach**  
 G-3 GRD  
 Returning to:  
 Cave Creek, Ariz.



**Charlie Comer**  
 Construction Rep GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Seattle District



**Jim McCoy**  
 Construction Rep GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Portland District



**Mike Posovich**  
 Project Manager GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Portland District



**Rich Maskil**  
 Project Manager GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Omaha District



**Donna Castro**  
 Admin. Officer GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Portland District



**Bruce Bartoo**  
 Construction Rep. GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Portland District



**Vera Moseley**  
 PBO GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Albuquerque District



**Norm Bloom**  
 Admin Assist. GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Portland District



**Rudy Posis**  
 Project Engineer GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Japan Engr. District



**Roy Clark**  
 LOGCAP GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Walla Walla District



**Duke Loney**  
 Resident Engineer GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Portland District



**Brad Cox**  
 LOGCAP GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Kansas City District



**Charles Sontag**  
 Contract Spec. GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Little Rock District



**John Offen**  
 Project Engr. GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Omaha District



**Richard Halverson**  
 Fac. Mng. GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Walla Walla District



**Ken Samsel**  
 Con. Rep. GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Portland District



**Brian Evancho**  
 Con. Rep. GRN  
 Returning to:  
 Coast Guard