

ESSAYONS *Forward*

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Gulf Region Division (Provisional), Iraq - Volume 2, Issue 3

April 28, 2005



**DELIVERANCE on reconstruction
— Corps commanders on message**



April 28, 2005

Volume 2, Issue 3



Inside this issue:

<i>CG/CSM columns</i>	3
<i>Chief's visit</i>	4 - 5
<i>Oney's effort</i>	6
<i>ICE in Iraq</i>	7
<i>Northern projects</i>	8
<i>New hospital</i>	9
<i>Strategic communications</i>	10 - 11
<i>News clips</i>	12 - 13
<i>New schools open</i>	14 - 15
<i>FOB 7</i>	16 - 17
<i>Iraqi women-owned business wins bid</i>	18
<i>AED</i>	19
<i>Hail and Farewell</i>	20

Iraq Image....



Camp Taji, Iraq – Iranian helmets from the Iraq/Iran war left abandoned in a warehouse at Camp Taji, Iraq. The warehouse renovation effort is part of \$2 million project managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The project will benefit both U.S. and Iraqi military stationed at the camp. (Photo by Harry Weddington, GRD Photographer)



COVER: Brig. Gen. Thomas Bostick, Gulf Region Division Commander (right), and Lt. Gen. Carl Strock, Chief of Engineers, field question at a press conference held in Baghdad for Arab media in March. (Photo by Harry Weddington)

ESSAYONS FORWARD

CPA-USACE-GRD, Baghdad APO AE 09316 DESK: 540-665-5341* CELL: 011-964-790-192-5107*
Thuraya: 00-882-164-333-9324 *CONUS area codes

ESSAYONS FORWARD is the field magazine of the Gulf Region Division (Provisional), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in accordance with AR 360-1. It is produced for electronic dispersal. Limited hardcopy circulation as needed. Production in the theater of Iraq. Letters, articles, notices of events, photographs and art are welcome, but may be edited for clarity or brevity. Publication of any submission is at the discretion of the editor.

Submissions can be emailed to: **Thomas.a.ohara@us.army.mil**

All photos must be high resolution and include complete caption information. The views and opinions expressed in this field magazine are those of the writers and are not necessarily those of the U.S Army Corps of Engineers, or the Department of Defense.

ESSAYONS FORWARD is on-line: www.grd.usace.army.mil/news/Essayonsforward

Commanding General: *Brig. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick*

Division/District Public Affairs staff:

Ross Adkins (Chief) Lu Anne Fantasia (Deputy) Thomas O'Hara (Editor, Reach back CENWO) Nicole Dalrymple (GRN) Alicia Embrey (GRC) Denise Calabria (GRS) Harry Weddington (Photographer) Mike McAleer (GRN)

Commander's Column



Another exciting and most challenging month here in Iraq with the Engineer Summit, visit by the Chief of Engineers, and mission execution with more than 2,200 starts valued at \$5 billion and more than 680 completions valued at \$900 million. Truly a great month!

The Engineer Summit was an enormous success. Gen. Casey opened the summit reinforcing the importance of the reconstruction mission here in Iraq. The summit was focused on transitioning in the new members of the team involved in reconstruction since the last major transfer of authority was completed when 1CAV transitioned TF Baghdad to 3ID. Gen. Casey said that teamwork was the key to success in the reconstruction mission. He stressed the importance of two lines of constant growth in Iraq: the Iraqi Security Forces, and Reconstruction. He said that this is all about One Team...One Mission. Gen. Casey looked at the many different organizations in the audience, and said that everyone has different objectives; spend some time talking it out, and then do what is right for the Iraqi people.

It was great to see the Chief of Engineers, Lt. Gen. Strock again. His last visit in August 04 saw the reconstruction mission just starting with just over 200 projects in June 04 to over 2200 projects in March 05. The Chief mentioned that over 3000 Corps employees have rotated through Iraq and Afghanistan since these operations began. He spoke about the Regional Business Center concept with funding now coming into the divisions and workload spread throughout the districts to help maintain stability in the workforce. The Chief visited GRS, GRC, GRN, and GRD and at the Town Hall meetings, he reinforced that the "Just do it" cards were still in effect. The Chief also visited each of the major subordinate commands included all U.S. divisions, as well as the Polish and British led multi-national divisions, and the Korean brigade in Irbil. In every case, the maneuver commanders praised each of the districts and GRD for the enormous support they've received in the reconstruction effort.

This month's Society of American Military Engineers' luncheon was another huge success story. We had two speakers, the Chief of Engineers from both the Army and the Air Force. Lt. Gen. Strock and Maj. Gen. Fox were, coincidentally, visiting Iraq at the same time and our local chapter was fortunate to have them both offer to speak. This luncheon had the largest attendance ever with over 180 people from all of the different members of the construction team.

This has been another challenging and exciting month. On behalf of the Chief of Engineers and all of the leaders in the Gulf Region Division, thank you for a job well done. Each day, members of our team are contributing to the history of this great country. We work side-by-side with our coalition and Iraqi partners to build a brighter future for the children of Iraq. Not too often in one's life do we have a chance to witness monumental change, and there are even fewer opportunities to actually be a part of that change. Thank you for all that you do each day in this very important mission. You continue to deliver and you continue to make a huge difference. Thank you for your service.

God Bless you all.

BG Thomas P. Bostick



Cmd. Sgt. Major's Column

During our travels, we continue to meet new Iraqi people and constantly interact with and listen to members of our team. Throughout our conversations, one theme continues to resurface: What we do in Iraq is

definitely not business as usual and is very much different from life in a "normal" district. Frankly, I am humbled by our experiences here and look forward to seeing with my own eyes what life in a district is like. While we all appreciate these differences, each of you continues to rise above them and finds new and innovative ways to accomplish the mission in this unique environment.

The USACE employee serving in Iraq is a very special individual. Let me qualify this statement by explaining that everyone in the Gulf Region Division is a valuable member of our team and a USACE employee, regardless of your background or how you came to us. Everyone here has volunteered to serve in Iraq in order to support our reconstruction mission. And each of you is making a unique contribution and personal impact upon what we are doing in conjunction with the Iraqi people.

Watching the Iraqi people diligently and bravely tackle all the challenges they face in their nation's reconstruction and their new beginnings reminds me of my own personal struggle as an immigrant who migrated to the United States in early April 1973. Upon our arrival, the American citizens embraced my family of four and helped us get started with our new lives. As a result, my family has grown to be very productive members of our country in various professional and business fields, due to the guidance of the Americans we encountered and our willingness to embrace the opportunities offered to us.

My father was a mason and my grandfather was a master carpenter. They both attempted to teach me their trade, which, clearly, I neither assimilated well nor followed. Yet, that experience gave me an appreciation for understanding how difficult manual labor can be. It's simply hard work, and it requires a great deal of physical endurance; something the Iraqis continuously demonstrate well. Often, we may lose sight of why we are here. However, if we reflect on the complexity and the challenges the Iraqis face as they struggle with forming a new government and a new country, it brings into perspective the fact that their needs far outweigh ours.

Each of us has reason to feel good about our involvement here. The type of work we do brings hope to the Iraqi people and a tremendous improvement to their quality of life. On the many occasions I have had to listen to the Iraqis' concerns, I have been touched with their humility and the desire to have a new life in their country... a concept similar to "American Dream."

While the "American Dream" is often something people want to realize in the continental U.S., we can say that the Iraqis now have an opportunity to achieve what was once only a dream in their own land. Forward-deployed, USACE employees contribute firsthand to the new beginnings of this great and historic nation in spite of a very determined enemy that constantly looks for ways to harm and interfere with our mission.

We have a great team – one of the finest with which I have had the honor to serve. Because of your selfless service and willingness to serve in the Gulf Region Division, the Iraqi people can now believe in a brighter future – they can now hope and aspire to achieve their own dreams for themselves and their children ... in their own country ... thanks to your sacrifices and your help. Much in the same way that my family enjoyed the generosity of the American Citizen, the Iraqis will (one day, in the not so distant future) have the opportunity to live and accomplish most, if not all, of each of their heart's desires. Due to our reconstruction efforts and mission accomplishments, the Iraqi people have the hope they need to see them through their struggle for a better future.

Thank you for everything you do.

CSM Jorge L. Gutierrez

GETTING EYES ON TARGET

Strock's second trip to GRD as Chief of Engineers

More than 180 engineers and engineer support personnel from the US government and government contractors turned out recently to hear what their leader had to say during a Society of American Military Engineers luncheon here.

Lt. Gen. Carl A. Strock, the 51st chief of the US Army Corps of Engineers, was in Iraq for a morale and site visit to the Corps' Gulf Region headquarters and three districts. He began his brief, enthusiastic talk by praising the spirit behind this society dating back to WWII.

"Engineers were all over the battlefield," Strock said, "and most of them had never worn a uniform. They started the Society of American Military Engineers because people have a need to stay in touch with those they share a lifetime experience with. You will experience that from this tour, too."

The general said he admires the joint and international teamwork going on with the Global War on Terrorism, adding that the Gulf Region Division would have 21 Navy and nine Air Force personnel on board as early as this summer.

"One of the Corps' strategic goals is to become more joint and expeditionary, and we're meeting that goal. We have a solid mobilization of our industry." He added that the previous night, he saw more diversity of military branches, contractors and Department of Defense civilians sitting together than he typically sees in our nation's capital.

"The Multinational Forces-Iraq truly is all about international and joint efforts and solutions," Strock said.

He shared some observations with the group. "Over 2,000 current reconstruction projects is tremendous progress from 200 projects last fall, and the Iraqi people are beginning to see hope," Strock said.

Day-to-day progress of large projects such as electricity grids and water treatment and purification networks is harder for the Iraqi people to see immediately. Smaller projects—schools, police stations, medical treatment facilities, fire stations, etc.—are more quickly completed and visible to Iraq's citizens.

Strock also emphasized the importance of teaching and working side-by-side with the Iraqi workforce. "The Gulf Region Division currently employs 180 local national personnel, and the coalition and Iraqi forces see us as a helping hand pulling them up," he said.

Strock invited his "battle buddy" to make some remarks. Maj. Gen. L. Dean Fox, chief of Air Force Engineers, commended the S.A.M.E. for its substantial membership growth in the past months.

"This post has grown from 65 members last November to 181 today. That's almost triple and I applaud your efforts at team-building."

Within the S.A.M.E.'s 123 posts there are some 21,000 members, with 15,000 companies," according to Fox. "And most of those individual members and companies have sustained membership."

The Gulf Region Division's Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Tom Bostick made a light hearted comment to the group. "Two service chiefs of engineers sitting at the same table... this is a historic day."

Media availability

During a media availability event following the luncheon, Strock and Bostick answered questions from local and Western media representatives:

Responding to a question about personnel and site security, Bostick said the security of all personnel—Iraqi and American—is paramount.

"We're doing the best we can in all sectors, with security as our first consideration," Bostick said. "Our Iraqi workforce being intimidated by insurgents is a big concern. And, it's difficult to physically get to the large-scale projects because they're usually further out from the cities. Security is critical."

Responding to another media question, Bostick said, "Some of the systems [in the Iraqi infrastructure] are old and have been neglected for over 35 years, which requires a lot of maintenance, training and parts.

"But, we're making progress. The demand for electricity is about 60 percent higher now than it was last year," Bostick said; an increase directly attributed to Iraqi citizens' recent and new consumer power of electronics and convenience appliances.

Reference a media question about oil projects, Bostick said much is being accomplished toward getting oil well heads back on track, but that extensive set-backs have been suffered due to damage by insurgents. Bostick said Iraq's goal is 3 million barrels daily, to which he added, "...and the Iraqis are making the decisions."

Strock reiterated that reconstruction projects are a combination of electricity, transportation, oil, and water purification and treatment, but that 90 percent of the projects are the smaller ones—schools, police and fire stations, and medical treatment facilities—all vital to good quality of life for Iraqi citizens.

In response to a final media question reference the Iraqi workforce, Strock said it is a challenge because we [Americans] have standards that are not always reasonable



Chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Lt. Gen. Carl Strock (left), invited his "battle buddy" to make remarks during a S.A.M.E. luncheon, March 22, at the convention center in Baghdad. Maj. Gen. L. Dean Fox (center), chief of Air Force Engineers, commended the S.A.M.E. for its substantial membership growth in the past months. The Gulf Region Division's Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Thomas Bostick (right), made a light hearted comment to the group, "Two service chiefs of engineers sitting at the same table... this is a historic day."

(Photo by Harry Weddington)

in our host nation countries. “But, there is a degree of stability, and we do employ 180 Iraqi personnel in the Gulf Region Division. We’re making steady progress.”

Chief charges GRD staff

“My charge to you is to focus on the mission; strive to be better, faster, cheaper, greener and safer; practice proactive engagement; and have fun!” Strock said to GRD staff and employees in an afternoon town hall.

“By greener, I mean environmental consideration is a major leg of all of our Corps projects. By safer, I mean the safety of individuals, force protection, our contractor personnel, and the safety of the people who will use what we build.

“Proactive engagement...don’t wait to be told what to do. Ask what you can do and tell others what you need to do for them. Fun? Take your job seriously but don’t take yourself seriously. With the exception of some of the military, all of you are here because you said, ‘Put me in, coach!’

“So, what you’re experiencing now as our forward deployed is and should be fun. You’re the focal point with the Army Corps of Engineers.”

Strock explained Corp priorities, in no particular order, “because they’re equally important. It’s like juggling glass balls,” he said. Support national security—both abroad and through reach-back initiatives; safeguard the environment; ongoing disaster and terrorism response through military missions; and effecting changes now for our 2012 implementation.

“There are four non-negotiable aspects to the 2012 implementation plan,” Strock said. “One headquarters, regional integration teams, communities of practice, and regional business centers, or RBCs.

“We can’t afford 45 stand-alone districts so the RBCs will make district boundaries more porous and operations more collaborative across district boundaries,” Strock explained.

He asked Corps personnel to bend to a more outward focus. “We know who we are and where we’re going, but I want to engage [empower] those we support.”

The general closed the town hall by saying the GRD and the Purchasing and Contracting Office are one in the same. “You’re moving in the right direction and you’re doing good work as a team.”

Q’s and A’s

Throughout the day, the affable and approachable chief took time to answer people’s questions:

Q: What do you think you’ll see in Iraq two years from now?

Strock: Tremendous change! Today we’re trying to put the “Iraqi face” on all efforts. Soon everything will have the Iraqi face, arms, legs, and backbone. This country will kick in and rely less and less on the international community, and more and more, the benefits of their current investments will not be reversed.

Q: Can you talk some about the time, cost and quality of what we’re doing here?

Strock: Quality is the challenge because of the environment Americans come from. Our quality control people on the ground here must balance those standards with local realities; supplies, materials, the local workforce and their intimidation and security factors. We need to stay sensitive to the fact that we can’t get the 100 percent standards we’d get in the United States.

Q: What is the future of the local national employees currently working for USACE?

Strock: Our Iraqi employees are a valuable part of the team, but we don’t know if the Iraqi government will continue to use the Corps after 2006. The future also depends on how other military operations go.

Q: The Corps has attracted a lot of DoD civilians who are not prior USACE employees before now. What happens to us when we leave Iraq?

Strock: I know if I were a hiring official, I wouldn’t hesitate to choose you for a vacancy because, from a qualitative standpoint, you are veterans of a war. And, as a side note, a request has gone to Congress to raise your pay cap to \$200K, and I have no reason to think that won’t get approved.

Q: Is the good news about our accomplishments and successes getting through?

Strock: It’s a disappointment that the positive word is not getting out, but we can change that. First, if all of you have a sense of hope, that’s good news. If the steady drumbeat is the negative stuff, we’ll soon lose the American public’s support, So, I ask each of you to write letters to your home towns and communities about the spirit and hope you see here. *[Note: Your public affairs staff can simplify this for you through the Army and Air Force Hometown News Release Program. Let them help you get your good news published in your hometown newspapers.]*

Lu Anne Fantasia

Oney's effort...



Children in the Green Zone school play on new playground equipment provided by Washington International as part of an ongoing unofficial adopt-a-school program led by Oney Pruett from GRD. Pruett is on his second tour in GRD and has sponsored this school since summer 2004.

(Photos by Oney Pruett)



I first met Ernie Waterman of Washington International about a year ago during my first tour of duty in Iraq. I was visiting a fellow Army Corps of Engineers employee while delivering mail. Ernie has a quick wit and a winning smile. We became friends instantly. I stopped by to visit him about once a week for a few minutes of conversation.

During one of these talks, I told him about a school project I was just starting. He instantly said he'd like to help and asked what was needed.

"Playground equipment would be great!" I replied.

He promised to do all in his power to help me. He's a good man and man of his word. Washington International agreed to buy and install the equipment, and bought some temporary, plastic playground equipment last year before I redeployed back to Memphis.

About two weeks before I was scheduled to return for this second tour, I got an e-mail from Najat, Ernie's secretary, telling me they had the heavy duty playground equipment and were ready to permanently install two sets at the International Zone School. They wanted me to be there and were going to wait for my return.

The first set was installed Feb. 15, 2005, with the CEO and other company officials of Washington International on hand to see the wonderful expressions and smiles of many, many children as they slid, swung and climbed all over their new playground equipment. Joyful smiles radiated from the teachers' faces as they watched their children enjoy the moment.

These children are the future of Iraq. We Americans have always been a giving, supportive group for the entire world. We've shared our wealth generously. Washington International has heart—a big heart—and I'm a very proud American to have been associated with them.

Washington International, I salute you!
Oney Pruett, GRD

(NOTE: You can read more about Oney's effort to support the Green Zone school in ESSAYONS FORWARD Vol. 1, No. 5)

ICE forms in southern Iraq

Despite high temperature readings, and the presence of palm trees, ICE has formed in the typically hot, Southern region of Iraq. The phenomenon is not due to an iceberg, a glacier on the move, or a second Ice Age. This particular ICE is not even weather related. Instead, ICE is an acronym that stands for an impressive group of Iraqi professionals who are working hard and risking their personal safety in an effort to rebuild their country.

The civilian Iraqi Corps of Engineers, or ICE, is the brainchild of Farrell McMillan, an area engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region South. A native of Rhode Island, McMillan arrived in Iraq in November 2004, to begin his four-month volunteer service in the Corps' Iraqi reconstruction program. Once on the job, he was troubled by the fact that he was responsible for overseeing two separate and distinct Iraqi engineering groups. While the responsibility did not bother him, the distinction between the two Iraqi groups did.

McMillan's predecessors had laid the groundwork for hiring Iraqi engineers. They created the Iraqi Forward Engineering Support Team, IFEST, and the Iraqi Engineering Development Team, IEDT, thereby putting Iraqi engineers to work for the U.S. Army. However, the IFEST and IEDT contracts ended on Dec. 31, 2004.

Two days later, when McMillan rehired the engineers and brought them into their offices, his observations surprised him.

"As I watched them setting up the office on their first day back, I noticed that each group went to their "separate corners," said McMillan. "That did not sit well with me, so I explained the concept of working as a team, and that's how ICE came to be."

According to McMillan, the ICE teams are invaluable to the Corps for overseeing Iraqi construction sites because it is easier for native Iraqis to move about and communicate with the workers.

"They can get to the sites better than we can because we [Americans] have to go in the armored [security] convoys," said McMillan. "The ICE teams send us daily reports on the construction activities. They are our eyes and ears."

The ICE teams are deeply involved with reconstruction projects in such diverse areas as police stations, schools, water plants, railway stations, power substations, primary health centers, health clinics, and maternity and pediatric hospitals.

Their daily reports include such details as quality assessments, the number of people working at a site, the type of construction taking place, and any safety or security issues that need to be addressed. The Iraqi engineers also provide at least two photos of ongoing construction when they submit their information.

Recently, all 26 members of ICE gathered to bid a fond farewell to McMillan who is due to return to Rhode Island. During an elaborate luncheon of numerous Iraqi homemade delicacies, ICE members eagerly related their opinions of the ICE program and their appreciation for McMillan.

(While the opinions flowed freely, none of the Iraqis wished to divulge his name or have his photograph taken for fear of reprisal for supporting the Coalition effort. In order to guard their privacy and security, no identities are revealed in the following interview.)

The first ICE engineer, a civil engineer with 16 years experience, said that he had studied engineering at the University of Baghdad and had previously worked in Iraq, Sweden, and Yemen. When asked his feelings about working with Americans, he said there was little difference.

"I think there is no problem [working for the Americans] in the southern region of Iraq because we were always separate from the regime," he said. "I am very happy [to be a member of ICE] because I want to offer something to my city and my country."

"All the people who contact me are happy to see new ideas in Iraq after Saddam Hussein," he said.

A second ICE member offered a different perspective on the engineering program.

"We are working on bigger projects that affect our infrastructure. Until now, we only worked on concentric projects (such as maintenance and painting.) Now, the security situation is restricting the [reconstruction] progress at this time," he said.

A third engineer offered yet another view that carried political overtones and a strong belief in the promise made by U.S. and coalition forces.

"I think we need the USA now because we need the security. In the future, we believe the USA will leave and then we will carry the load," he said.

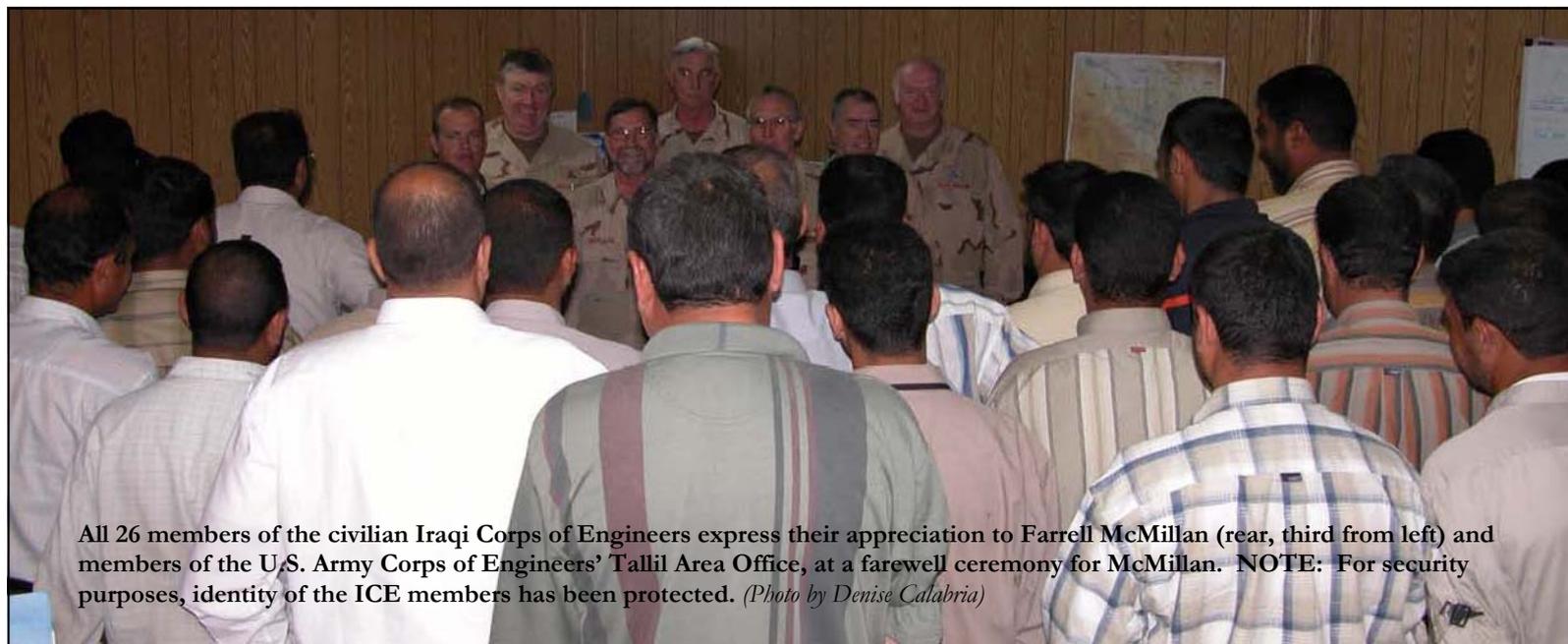
"We all live in the global age, so we all need each other. We need support from the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government to rebuild our country."

When asked if he would like to give a message to engineers in other countries, the fourth interviewee spoke eloquently.

"We extend our hands across the water and invite you to visit the new Iraq in five to ten years. Then, you will see more modifications and projects performed only by Iraqis. We want to be one of the first in the region ranking with other countries in power and democracy. This will be a beautiful country," he said.

"Finally, we will succeed."

Denise Calabria



All 26 members of the civilian Iraqi Corps of Engineers express their appreciation to Farrell McMillan (rear, third from left) and members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Tallil Area Office, at a farewell ceremony for McMillan. NOTE: For security purposes, identity of the ICE members has been protected. (Photo by Denise Calabria)

Power and school projects coming to completion in northern areas

Bayji Gas Turbine Upgrade places an additional 260 megawatts of electrical power on the national grid. The \$54 million project to rehabilitate two gas turbines was completed last month.

(USACE Photo)



Reconstruction efforts in the Salah ad Din province continue to return big dividends to the Iraqi people. In the Iraqi Reconstruction program, visible signs of progress are everywhere—with the two biggest events in March being completion of the Bayji Gas Turbine Upgrade, and renovated schools with their new doors open.

As summer approaches, the Bayji project places an additional 260 megawatts of electrical power on the national grid. Completion of this \$54M project rehabilitating two gas turbines is a testament to overcoming a challenging environment of fuel shortages, security issues, funding constraints, parts shortages, and an unskilled local labor workforce.

School renovations top the list in reconstruction efforts in Salah ad Din. The school renovations are providing students with an improved learning environment and helping to inspire pride in the local community. Last month, 31 schools were completed, with 10 of those in the Samarra District. April projections are for another 44 schools to be completed.

The renovation projects in Salah ad Din will positively affect over 13,000 Iraqi students and boost the local economy in the form of labor, materials, and subcontracts. The use of local contractors and local labor has been instrumental in inspiring pride in the local communities and injecting money into the local economies.

Two transportation projects, the train stations in Heliwat and Al'Fat'ha, were completed last month. The transportation infrastructure improvements include reconstruction of over 26 kilometers of village roads in remote areas of the province, creating all-weather roads to support the reliable transportation and deliv-

ery of goods and services to hundreds of local Iraqis. The projects include replacement of failed drainage structures, repair to the road sub base and placement of an asphalt concrete road surface.

Two Primary Health Clinics in Salah ad Din province were started in March. Seven additional planned clinics are nearing their start date. These projects will provide “turn-key” health clinics with furnishings, equipment, and supplies making the new facilities fully operational. The clinics are being sited in local cities and villages where the people will have direct access to health care.

Two electrical substation projects have started in the province, the beginning of a \$20M contract for five substations and one feeder line. These projects will upgrade the existing distribution network of power throughout the province.

As March ended, 89 projects completed within the Gulf Region Northern District, which includes the seven northern provinces of Dahok, Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah ad Din and Sulaymaniyah. Currently there are more than 475 projects in progress, with over 180 projects forecast completed, and 99 projects forecast to begin this month.

Reconstruction efforts in the schools sector have the greatest number of projects ongoing. Other projects include border forts and border entry points, military bases, police and fire stations, police training academies, schools and health clinics, new roads, and airport renovations. Improvements are also being made to the country's oil infrastructure, its power plants and its sewer and water distribution systems.

Mike McAleer

A brighter hospital and a brighter future

It is widely recognized that a country's future rests squarely on the shoulders of its children. Therefore, in a land where most children have seen more than their fair share of sickness, poverty, and war for the past three decades, it follows that lowering the infant mortality rate and providing children an improved standard of medical care would rank high on the nation's list of priorities. That is the case in Iraq.

With a focus on these child-centered goals, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region South, or GRS, manages the renovation and re-building of Iraq's Public Health Sector in the southern portion of the country. As construction managers for the Projects and Contracting Office, PCO, GRS verifies all construction work with quality assurance checks.

Representatives from both organizations recently visited a maternity and pediatrics hospital in southern Iraq to perform such a check. The hospital name will remain undisclosed in the interest of patient and staff security.

Upon entering the facility, the main floor appears dark and unadorned ... threadbare, yet clean. Several women clad in abayahs busily mop the floors. Their efforts are noble, but not enough to raise the facility to current appropriate medical standards.

"The existing hospital is in terrible shape," says Juan Vargas, PCO project manager-Southern Facilities. "Renovating it answers our mandate to reduce the infant mortality rate."

Vargas says the complete Iraqi hospital system is under stress due to antiquity, lack of maintenance, separate issues, and the wars.

"Anything we can do [regarding renovations] will help this particular hospital, as well as lift the pressure from the entire hospital system," he said.

According to Bob Hanacek, GRS resident engineer, the \$10M contract includes improvements to the water, sewer, and power systems; roof replacement, heating/ventilation/air conditioning systems, medical supplies, and cosmetics.

"Every portion of the 260-bed hospital will be touched," said Hanacek. "The contract also includes new operating suites, tons of new medical equipment, and many donated medical supplies. We are re-equipping the entire facility."

Vargas addressed a primary upgrade of the hospital's sewer system that will go unnoticed by the hospital's future patients.

"The groundwater table is very high and the hospital sits very low, thereby resulting in contamination between the sewer pipes and the water table," he said. "We are putting a brand new drain system throughout the hospital grounds."

"Although the problem extends beyond the hospital, we will make provisions to isolate the hospital from the problem and make improvements as well," he said.

One noticeable improvement is the installation of an elevator to the third floor children's ward. In the past, the hospital's elevators only operated between the first and second floors. Hospital employees had to carry their young patients to the top floor on a litter.

By using hoisting equipment on the roof, workers installed extended elevator shafts and cables to provide service to all levels of the facility.

"Due to the addition of these two elevators, for the first time, the children's ward will be fully functional," said Hanacek.

In the interest of stimulating the local economy, an Iraqi design-build contractor was awarded the extensive hospital renovation project. Iraqi contractors are performing approximately 90 percent of the work.

When asked for his summation of the hospital project, Vargas said, "I think we are on the right track."

That summation suggests a brighter future for the mothers, infants, and children who will occupy the cheerful, renovated hospital rooms. The project's scheduled completion date is by the end of April 2006.

This project is one of 27 being incorporated into the construction or rehabilitation of 22 hospitals nationwide.

Denise Calabria

Below: Rick Mers (left) and Bob Hanacek (second from left), GRS, discuss with Iraqi contractors the floor covering to be used in the maternity rooms. Watermark: Juan Vargas (right), PCO, makes an observation regarding the sink installation in a maternity room. (Photos by Denise Calabria)



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

*Building bridges of a different kind***Traveling to Iraq**

In January, as the date for Iraq's first legitimate elections in 40 years approached, journalists from around the world poured into Baghdad to report on events surrounding that historic day. I was privileged to be able to travel to Iraq to work at GRD during this time. My job was to try to capitalize on the increased media presence by getting them to write about the progress that was being made in the reconstruction efforts across Iraq – a challenging assignment since the media often cover the explosions and attacks and don't cover the more neutral or positive reconstruction stories.

While I was in Iraq I had many people approach me on the subject of media coverage. Why, they asked, do the media only cover death and destruction and ignore all the good things that are happening? And when I returned from Iraq and told people what I had seen and experienced, many of them asked me, again, why is the story the media paints so different from what you're telling us?

I was asked these questions so often, and so vehemently, I wanted to write a little bit about why I believe the divide exists between the reality we know in Iraq and the perception the media shares with Americans back home. Perhaps more importantly, I'd like to talk about what each of us can do to help bridge that divide.

Understanding the News Business

You may have heard the phrase, "If it bleeds, it leads," when we talk about media coverage. What that means, unfortunately, is that if there's death or injury – especially to U.S. Soldiers or civilians – it will make the news.

With almost 18 years in media relations, let me take a shot at explaining the news "business" – and never forget that second word. Today in the U.S., many of the major media outlets are owned and operated by large corporations. And media outlets are in business to stay in business. They make decisions about what they will air or print based on what will "sell." These corporations spend a lot of time and money polling and researching the public's opinions on what they want to see so to some degree, we can only blame ourselves for what gets covered. It's what we, as Americans, are turning on or buying at the newsstand.

And it's important to note that those decisions on what will be covered – what will air or what will get the front page -- are not made by the reporters we work with, they're made by producers and editors often back in the U.S.

There is another aspect to consider with regard to the U.S. media. The one venue that does consistently publish and air positive stories about events in Iraq is the smaller market media outlets. They don't have the same "business" model mentality as the major media outlets and often want to cover Iraq from a personal level, especially if someone from the area is serving in country.

An Information War

Most would agree that we, the coalition, won the traditional war on the ground in 2003 but another type of war has continued and continues even today – an information war.

And while we may have demonstrated superiority in a combat, in the information war the outcome is still undetermined. We are dealing with an enemy that isn't bothered by journalistic ethical or moral rules and who expertly uses the media as a pow-

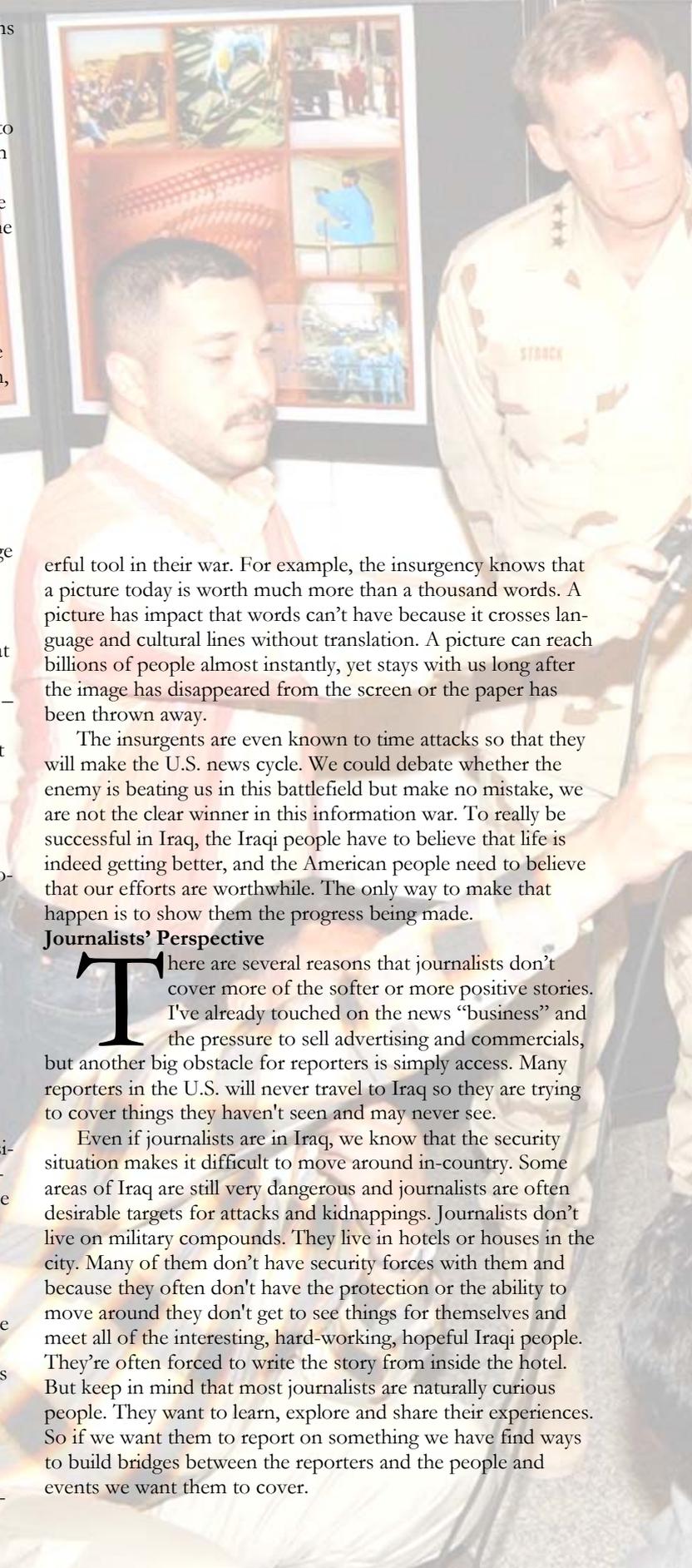
erful tool in their war. For example, the insurgency knows that a picture today is worth much more than a thousand words. A picture has impact that words can't have because it crosses language and cultural lines without translation. A picture can reach billions of people almost instantly, yet stays with us long after the image has disappeared from the screen or the paper has been thrown away.

The insurgents are even known to time attacks so that they will make the U.S. news cycle. We could debate whether the enemy is beating us in this battlefield but make no mistake, we are not the clear winner in this information war. To really be successful in Iraq, the Iraqi people have to believe that life is indeed getting better, and the American people need to believe that our efforts are worthwhile. The only way to make that happen is to show them the progress being made.

Journalists' Perspective

There are several reasons that journalists don't cover more of the softer or more positive stories. I've already touched on the news "business" and the pressure to sell advertising and commercials, but another big obstacle for reporters is simply access. Many reporters in the U.S. will never travel to Iraq so they are trying to cover things they haven't seen and may never see.

Even if journalists are in Iraq, we know that the security situation makes it difficult to move around in-country. Some areas of Iraq are still very dangerous and journalists are often desirable targets for attacks and kidnappings. Journalists don't live on military compounds. They live in hotels or houses in the city. Many of them don't have security forces with them and because they often don't have the protection or the ability to move around they don't get to see things for themselves and meet all of the interesting, hard-working, hopeful Iraqi people. They're often forced to write the story from inside the hotel. But keep in mind that most journalists are naturally curious people. They want to learn, explore and share their experiences. So if we want them to report on something we have find ways to build bridges between the reporters and the people and events we want them to cover.





Building Bridges

What can we do to bridge that span between reporters and events to wage and win battles in the information war?

What it really boils down to, again, is access: access to people who are experts and can explain things in a way that the average person can understand; access to people who are not experts but who saw, felt, or experienced something newsworthy; and, access to locations where things are happening -- to projects and events.

We can all sit back and wring our hands and complain that the media aren't giving the progress in Iraq fair coverage. If so, quite frankly, we can expect more of what we have already seen.

Or we could each get personally get involved – commit to build those bridges of access and become a Soldier in the information war. As Lt. Gen. (ret) Robert Flowers, former Chief of Engineers used to say, "If not now, when? If not you, who?"

So here's what you can do:

While in Iraq:

Fill out a Hometown News form. The Army and Air Force Hometown News Service provides forms that ask for basic information about you and what you're doing. Ask the PAO in Iraq for a form, complete and return it to the PAO. They may want to add a photo. The Hometown News service will turn your form into a news release and send it to the media in either your current town, hometown, or both.

Tell your PAO back at your home office that you'd like to be interviewed by the local media. The PAO can coordinate the interview and assist you in preparing for it. You can complete an interview in several ways: 1) over the phone for print, radio or web-based outlets; 2) in writing for print or web-based outlets, or; 3) on-camera for TV. TV interviews can be done live or they can be taped.

Tell the in-country PAO when things are happening in your area/project/program. Work with the PAO to develop a "pitch" or invitation to the media (both Iraqi and U.S.) to learn more about the subject. Remember that journalists are curious and inquisitive and I've never met a reporter who would rather sit in a hotel than get out and interview people. Make yourself available for interviews but first get media training. Don't go into "battle" in the information war untrained.



Beating the drum to get the good news out on Iraq reconstruction, Corps officers and those serving in Iraq constantly search for opportunities to bring reporters in theater to the story. Since 2003, more than 3000 Soldiers and civilians have served as part of Corps efforts in Iraq. Each are potential communicators to tell the reconstruction story in Iraq.

(Photos by Thomas O'Hara)

Watermark: GRD Commander, Brig. Gen. Thomas Bostick (right) and Chief of Engineers, Lt. Gen. Carl Strock (center) address a crowd of Arabic media during a Baghdad press conference in March.

(Photo by Harry Weddington)

And finally, tell the PAO back at your home office when you plan to return home and that you'd like to talk to the local media. You are very newsworthy before you deploy, while you're deployed and immediately after you re-deploy. People in the U.S. really do want to know what is happening in Iraq and you will be a great source of first-hand, up-close experience.

Let's take away all the excuses for why the media doesn't talk about the good things that we know are happening. Let's give them access and information and pique their curiosity. Let's show the insurgents that we are just as skilled in our ability to build communication bridges as we are to build steel bridges.

Maybe in the end, the words of another famous general will be proven true as we wage information war. Maybe we will find, as Napoleon Bonaparte said, "The pen *is* mightier than the sword."

Connie Gillette, HQ USACE

Najaf Teaching Hospital Outpatient Clinic opens

Sometimes change occurs all at once. More often, it proceeds and makes its impact felt at a gradual pace. The latter example is the case for the extensive overhaul taking place at the Najaf Teaching Hospital.

The renovations, performed by local Iraqi contractors, are part of a major rebuilding project overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region Division. Under this venture, rehabilitation efforts focus on the main hospital building and consist of repairing damaged floors, walls, and ceilings; improving mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems; and upgrading emergency power and sewage treatments, for an estimated cost of \$15M.

The seven-story, Najaf Teaching Hospital, built in 1982, features 420 patient beds and 13 operating theaters and is part of a campus used to train physicians and healthcare personnel throughout Iraq. Currently, the facility educates 250 undergraduate students – 50 of whom are pharmaceutical students.

In the interest of addressing a critical medical need, rather than waiting until the May 2006 proposed completion date for the entire endeavor, the Corps split the hospital renovation project into three phases.

Phase I was already completed by Parsons, Inc., and consisted of emergency repairs, demolition, site cleaning, and renovations to the hospital's basement and ground floor.

Corps employees coordinated to isolate improvements to the Outpatient Clinic (Phase II) as a separate and distinct portion of the project. Because of their planning, that much-needed sector of the hospital reopened recently, thereby allowing the hospital staff to expedite accommodating the minor or routine medical and surgical needs of its patients.

Phase III incorporates the major rehabilitation work for the rest of the hospital facility. That segment of the project is scheduled to begin next month.

According to Dr. Saafa, director of the Najaf Teaching Hospital, the Corps made the right choices regarding awarding the renovation contract and expediting the outpatient clinic modifications.

"The Outpatient Clinic is very good," Saafa said. "The [Iraqi] contractor is very professional and honest. The team controlling the renovations is one of the best. They can solve any problem," he added.

The hospital expects to serve approximately 500 patients daily at the outpatient clinic for the first week following the

opening, with the number quickly increasing to 1,000-1,500 daily.

Two teams of about 20 physicians and specialists will staff the clinic and will perform 500-1,000 minor surgeries per month.

"Our clinic will feature specialists in the areas of General Surgery, Orthological Surgery, Dental Surgery, Breast Clinic, Diabetes Clinic, Cancer Clinic, Neurology, Endoscopy, Ultrasound, X-rays, Plastic Surgery, Ear/Nose and Throat, Medical Rehabilitation, and Laboratory Services," Saafa said.

The doctor reported that the clinic opening was delayed by one week due to a shortage of medical equipment and medicine, but that the clinic now has a one-month supply of everything needed to serve its patients.

"We appreciate the assistance from all of the agencies that helped us so far [by supplying equipment and medicine], to include the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Higher Education. And we are ready to cooperate with anyone willing to assist the hospital in the future," he added.

Denise Calabria

Loyalty Base finalizes Zebelin sewer line repair

The first sewer lines for Sadr City were laid in 1963 with major expansion in the subsequent two decades. During this time the lines were negatively impacted by the 1980 and 1991 wars and lack of maintenance. The cleaning and rehabilitation of the Zebelin line—approximately a \$6.5 million dollar project—is now in its final stages of repair.

According to Mike Mitchell, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers project engineer, sewage backups into the streets and homes of the residents of Baghdad create a hazardous environment.

"Particularly hazardous considering the Baghdad sewer systems harbor hydrogen sulfide, carbon dioxide, methane, unexploded ordnance and fecal born-diseases, among numerous other hazards."

The intent of sewer line cleaning is to remove foreign materials from the lines and restore the sewer to a minimum of 95 percent of the original carrying capacity or as required for proper seating of internal pipe joint sealing packers.

"Since the success of Sadr City's sewage system removal depends a great deal on the cleanliness of the lines, the importance of this phase of the operation is accentuated," Mitchell said.

The purpose of the project is to remove the ponding sewage from the popu-

lated areas, transport the sewage to a treatment plant, and ultimately safely return it to the environment, according to Mitchell.

"The site observation and theoretical study of the existing conditions show that the current sewage flow is greater than the predicted maximum flow. Additionally, the area suffers from a lack of drinkable water – a problem currently being remedied by new water network installations."

"The country has been exposed to special conditions like wartime fatalities, and cultural practices which in turn cause a noticeable increase of deaths in the population besides the harm caused by the ponding of sewage in regions serviced by the Zebelin trunk line," Mitchell said. "However, even though the death rate is high, the population continues to increase."

The situation is further exacerbated by throwing trash down the manholes, he added.

"Local residents often use the open manholes to dispose of garbage, broken appliances, tires, and just about anything you can imagine. If it can fit down an opening in the line, it has been placed in there at one time or another," Mitchell said. "Open manholes due to stolen manhole covers have been the cause for the deaths of an unknown number of people."

Initial assessment of the line did identify abandoned sewage lines throughout the system, he added.

"Abandoning a line is common practice in most areas if it is too expensive to repair. It's often more economical simply to parallel the old line or redesign the system all together," he said. "Many times, due to population increase, the abandoned line would no longer serve the needs of the area, even if it were in proper working condition," Mitchell said.

The Zebelin line is currently the primary trunk line servicing all of Sadr City and every sewer line in the city eventually feeds into it. In the future, some of the flows will be diverted into a new mainline to help ease the overused Zebelin line.

Repairing the sewage treatment plants processing the Zebelin sewage is scheduled to be complete by the end of this month, according to Mitchell.

"The repairs will ensure the functioning of the system and the reduction of backups that will continue to occur until the treatment stations become fully functional," he said.

"Since the Zebelin line is not adequate to service the current population of the area, another primary trunk line is being planned for installation in the near future."

Alicia Embrey

School doors opening again for children in Iraq

Imagine a school that has no reliable electricity, inoperable restrooms, no glass or fly screens in its windows, a roof that leaks whenever it rains and too few desks for the children who come to learn. Many schools throughout Iraq are in this condition, some worse.

Millions of dollars in Iraqi Relief and Reconstruction Funds are being spent to repair and reconstruct schools throughout Iraq. The majority of the reconstruction work is being done by local Iraqi companies.

"The future of any country lies with its children," said Linda Carter, construction representative for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Kirkuk Area Office. "Schools are instrumental in the proper development of our children. It is difficult to learn in buildings that are overcrowded and in disrepair."

Currently, more than \$2 million is being spent on 38 school renovations in the province of Kirkuk. There is an additional \$1.4 million available that is expected to be used on eight more schools, that are currently out for bid. So far, three schools have been completed, and an additional eight are scheduled for completion this month.

The schools being reconstructed were selected from a priority list provided by the province's Director General of Education. The DG provided a list of 80 schools in need of renovation and repair. The plan is to do as many schools as possible with the available \$3.4 million.

Knowing that the available reconstruction dollars will only go so far, the education department is looking for other funding sites. "We have been working through the International Bank to identify funds for renovation and new school construction, as well as supplies and equipment," said Fawzia Abdulla Awanis, acting Director General of Education in Kirkuk. "We have also been supplied some funding from the Ministry of Education in Baghdad to build 12 new secondary and primary schools and six kindergartens, as well as funds for renovating approximately 68 schools."

"These school renovation projects are important because they represent an investment in the future of this country," said Mike Gilchrist, project engineer in the Kirkuk Area Office. "This work is improving the environment where the next generation of Iraqi decision-makers will start their education. The children will benefit from a clean, pleasant, renovated, well-equipped school in which to learn."

"Most of our schools need renovation in the areas of water closets, painting, tile replacement, windows, doors and roofs," Awanis explained. "During the winter, the lack of adequate windows and doors and leaking roofs has a significant impact on the schools. It is difficult for the students to stay in school and learn. Also, many villages have mud schools, which during the rainy season fall down and have caused accidents, injuries and deaths."

The schools in Kirkuk are representative of the condition of schools throughout Iraq.

Most of the reconstruction work includes repairs and replacement of roofs, windows and doors, tile floors, plaster work and painting, new bathrooms, sanitary and storm sewer work, plumbing, electrical, security and fencing, general cleanup and possible additions.

"Without these renovations, it is impossible to hold school and for the students to stay in school for long periods of time," Awanis said. She explained that the school system supports

141,146 primary students and 37,266 secondary students. The system consists of 1,012 schools, the majority of which are primary and intermediate/secondary schools. There are also 15 secondary schools for industrial education, 35 kindergartens, two teacher institutes and two secondary schools for Islamic studies.

Because of the large number of students, most schools in Kirkuk run two to three shifts a day. "Instead of four hours of school per day, most students are only getting two and a half hours per day. A normal school day would be four hours," Awanis said.

The schools have additional needs too, Awanis went on to say. "There are a lot of smaller schools that need to be expanded. Most of our schools need meeting rooms and offices for teachers and staff, as well as playing fields for the children. And although it's not part of renovations, there is a great need for improved technology and teaching equipment and up-to-date school books. We also need qualified teachers but there are no available training courses."

During Hussein's time, Awanis recalls that "many teachers needed two jobs in order to earn enough money to live. Their salaries were very minimal and they were not well respected for their experience and work."

Awanis speaks from years of experience. She has worked with the education department for 37 years, first as a secondary school teacher, then headmaster and finally a supervisor and manager. She says that she greatly enjoys her work.

Looking out to the next five years, Awanis hopes to see many positive changes. "We hope after five years, everything is changing. We hope students will have books, and the teachers will have better skills and more modern equipment with which to teach."

As for the future, Awanis says she hopes the Iraqi people will develop their skills to do the best they can in their duties. "I hope, we as teachers, will develop our skills so that dignity can be restored to the teaching profession. I want to see the Iraqi people living in peace, safe from terrorists. I hope to see better operating schools that will help our children build strong relationships with each other and prepare them to live like all the other children of the world."

Nicole Dalrymple



A secondary roof is installed at a Kirkuk area school. "Most of our schools need renovation in the areas of water closets, painting, tile replacement, windows, doors and roofs," said Fawzia Abdulla Awanis, acting Director General of Education for Kirkuk. "During the winter, the lack of adequate window and doors and leaking roofs has a significant impact on the schools. It is difficult for the students to stay in school and learn."



Fawzia Abdulla Awanis, acting Director General of Education for Kirkuk, reviews some of the school status forms. Awanis has been working in education for 37 years, first as a secondary school teacher, then headmaster and finally as a supervisor and manager. She loves her job and looks forward to Iraq’s future. “I want to see the Iraqi people living in peace, safe from terrorists,” she said. “I hope to see better operating schools that will help our children build strong relationships with each other and prepare them to live like all the other children of the world.”

(All photos courtesy Kirkuk Area Office).

Watermark: Currently 38 schools in the Kirkuk province are being reconstructed. Three have been completed and eight are scheduled for completion in March. There are plans to start an additional eight schools once the contracts are awarded. This school’s old plaster façade is being removed to be replaced with a new one. New water tanks, which will be installed on the school’s roof, sit in the foreground.

Locals are happy to see the renovation of an area school nearing completion. The Kirkuk school system supports 141,146 primary students and 37,266 secondary students. The system consists of 1,012 schools, the majority of which are primary and secondary/intermediate schools. Knowing that the available reconstruction dollars will only go so far, Kirkuk’s education department is looking for other funding sites. “We have been working through the International Bank to identify funds for renovation and new school construction,” said Fawzia Abdulla Awanis, acting Director General of Education. “We have also been supplied some funding from the Ministry of Education in Baghdad to build 12 new secondary and primary schools and six kindergartens, as well as funds for renovating approximately 68 schools.”



GRN-FOB7

Forward Operating Bases being built in Iraq

As many as two hundred Iraqi workers are now helping to build a forward operating base for the New Iraqi Army in the province of Salah ad Din. The prime contractor, who was issued a notice to proceed Nov. 15, has been working at the site since Dec. 27. Until recently, the contractor had been averaging between 45 and 50 employees a day, but now that the more labor intensive work of setting formwork and rebar and placing concrete has begun, the number of workers has greatly increased.

Construction, which is mapped out for an aggressive 180 day completion period, is just a few weeks behind schedule.

“At first, delays were experienced because of the security situation and the elections,” said CJ McCann, resident engineer at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Tikrit Resident Office, which is responsible for the base’s construction. “The contractor has been working really hard to catch up and finish by the scheduled mid-May completion date.”

The Tikrit Resident Office is providing onsite quality assurance representatives to monitor the contractor’s performance and ensure a quality product is built for the Iraqi people.

Two construction representatives trade out on a weekly basis due to the extremely austere living conditions. Despite the difficult living conditions, the resident office personnel are excited

to be involved with this project, McCann said. He went on to explain that in the coming weeks arrangements will be made to permanently station two construction representatives and a project engineer on site to manage the construction effort.

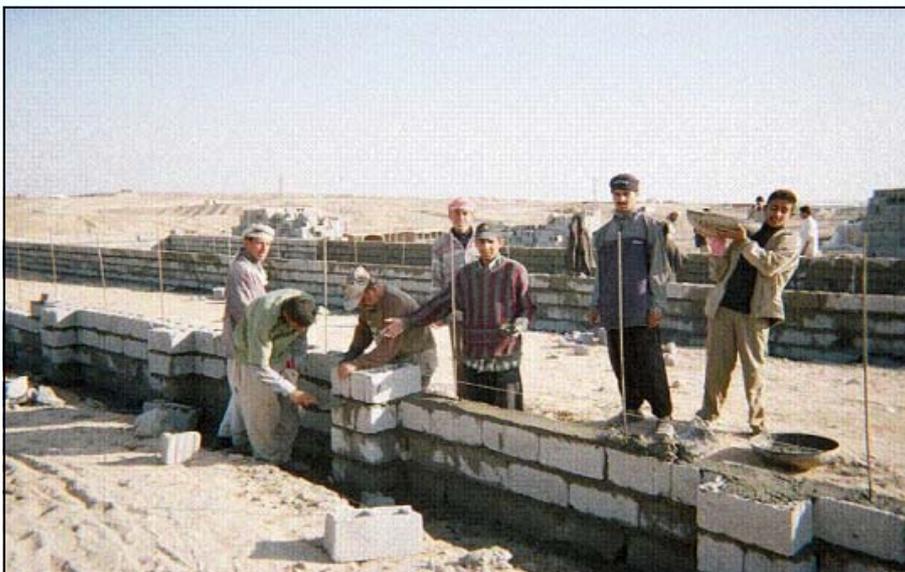
The \$12.4 million project is providing a permanent base of operation for the Iraqi Army in one of the more hotly contested provinces of Iraq. The site already has three pre-existing structures that will be renovated and several new buildings will be constructed.

Currently, workers are renovating the three existing buildings and constructing eight of the 12 new barracks, as well as the new headquarters building. Block and mortar construction is being used for these structures. It is a labor intensive construction method that requires more workers, the majority of which are coming from the surrounding communities.

In addition to the barracks and headquarters building, a dining facility and shower and latrine facilities will be constructed. Site improvements will include a power generation and electrical distribution system, as well as fresh water supply and sewer collection systems. Force protection upgrades will be made to the perimeter security and entry control points, and existing roads will be improved and two new ones will be built.

A bulldozer and excavator begin to make way for the new forward operating base. The prime contractor, who was issued a notice to proceed Nov. 15, had a topographical survey crew on site Dec. 27 and heavy construction equipment started work Jan. 9. (Photos courtesy Tikrit Resident Office)





Workers begin the building process, one block at a time. Construction of the new base is mapped out for an aggressive 180 day completion period. Initially there were delays due to security issues and the elections but the contractor has been working hard to catch up and finish by the scheduled mid-May completion date, explained CJ McCann, resident engineer at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Tikrit Resident Office.

The base is being funded by the Multi National Security Transition Command-Iraq. MNSTC-I is responsible for getting the Iraqi army, security forces, and border police ready to provide security for Iraq.

“Forward operating bases help the Iraqi forces manage and sustain their forces, and they are instrumental for successful operations,” said Capt. Steve Alvarez, with MNSTC-I. “Through MNSTC-I advisors the Iraqis gain valuable support, anything from professional recommendations, to mission essential supplies like ammunition, to back-up response forces. The bases plays a significant role in the development and deployment of the Iraqi Security Forces.”

Nicole Dalrymple



Watermark: Construction has begun on eight of the twelve new barracks planned for the Iraqi Army’s forward operating base in the Salah ad Din province. “Forward operating bases help the Iraqi forces manage and sustain their forces, and they are instrumental for successful operations,” said CPT Steve Alvarez, spokesman for the Multinational Security Transition Command – Iraq. “The FOB plays a significant role in the development and deployment of the Iraqi Security Forces.”



Until recently, the contractor responsible for the construction of a new forward operating base in the Salah ad Din province had been averaging between 45 and 50 workers a day. Now that the more labor intensive work of setting formwork and rebar and placing concrete has begun, the number of workers has increased to 200. The \$12.4 million project will provide a permanent base of operation for the Iraqi Army in one of the more hotly contested provinces of Iraq. The site already has three pre-existing structures that are being renovated and several new buildings are being constructed.

Iraqi woman-owned construction company wins contract bid



Rick Mers (rear, left) and Bob Hanacek (rear, center) meet with the manager, civil and mechanical engineers, and proprietor of the Iraqi woman-owned construction company recently awarded a contract bid in Iraq.
(Photo by Denise Calabria)

Normally, awarding a construction contract is literally a groundbreaking event. However, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contract awarded earlier this month in Southern Iraq is groundbreaking from a sociological perspective as well, because a female-owned business submitted the winning bid.

With recent contracting initiatives for the reconstruction effort, the Corps offers opportunities to female-owned businesses as well as those from local provinces when awarding construction and renovation contracts. In this particular instance, the company name will remain undisclosed in the interest of ensuring safety and security for the construction company, its employees, and the construction site.

The contract is for the renovation of an existing police station.

At a preconstruction conference, the Iraqi company owner (name withheld in the interest of ensuring safety and security), her mechanical engineer and civil engineer (both female), her female manager, and male translator were acquainted with the Corps' contracting and construction management procedures.

During the conference, Robert Hanacek, a Corps resident engineer, emphasized to the women the contract requirements considered most essential, as well as introduced the group to Corps personnel who will oversee the construction, including the Iraqi quality assurance engineer assigned to the project. Hanacek also covered the Corps' payment schedule, the 90-day construction period, site safety requirements, and the general scope of work.

Following the meeting, the owner graciously agreed to an interview regarding the rarity of her circumstances in Iraqi society.

Born in Kuwait to Iraqi parents, she said her upbringing had mirrored one typical for women in her culture and society.

"My family offered interference when I attempted to study at the college level, but that situation changed after the death of my father," she said. "It was then that I was able to continue my education."

The woman claims that her education changed her life by giving her a motive to advance herself further.

She viewed the recent Iraqi elections and female representation in the new government as positive advances for Iraqi women.

"We progress step by step. It is the beginning of the way," she said.

"Our company is also an attempt to prove that Iraqi women can be as educated, skillful, and successful as men."

Denise Calabria

Afghanistan Engineering District*

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



Afghans a Majority of the Workforce

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers currently has approximately \$40 million in contracts awarded directly to Afghan companies. (AED photo by Maria Or)

Pushing at each other, Afghan men crowd early in the morning, clambering in hopes to be the one who might be accepted into a trade school to earn \$3 that day and even more importantly, a skill that will provide a future.

In a nation where unemployment remains a pressing problem, the Contrack Construction Training Center is a place where Afghans are paid to learn necessary trade skills that upon graduation will help them obtain jobs with Contrack International, one of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' main construction contractors.

The Corps' Afghanistan Engineer District is committed to encouraging the employment of Afghans. "Our hope is that at some point we can reach the entire Afghan workforce," said Col. John B. O'Dowd, district commander, at a recent news conference.

"A majority of workers on our projects are local nationals and 75 percent of the workers involved in our new construction projects are Afghans," he added.

This May, Contrack International will celebrate their one year school opening anniversary. The school, which offers six trades, provides pre-apprenticeship training in masonry, steel fixing, painting, plumbing, electrical work and carpentry.

The hours that each student accumulates in the 30-day program can go towards a full apprenticeship which is 4,500 hours, a standard put in place by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Job placement for all students who have graduated is one of the company's top priorities and they try to place all students with the Contrack organization. However, the graduates are free to work with anyone.

"I can also say that 10 months ago when I got here, many of the Afghans employed were laborers doing digging and manual work," said O'Dowd who regularly travels to project sites to check on progress.

"You didn't see many Afghans working in skilled trades because after 25 years of war it was hard to find skilled Afghan craftsmen. That's changing. We routinely have Afghan con-

crete workers, Afghan carpenters, and we have Afghan masons working on all of our jobs," he said.

According to the United Nations 2004 National Human Development Report, "although precise statistics are unavailable, it is estimated that unemployment is as high as 2 million out of an estimated labor force of some 8 million" in Afghanistan.

It adds that "creating adequate employment opportunities is critical to reducing the high levels of poverty among the majority of Afghans. It could help in restoring normalcy and building a stake in maintaining peace, and provide people, particularly young men, real alternatives to fighting."

On any given day, over 6,000 Afghans are employed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects nationwide. They work among the many programs the Afghanistan Engineer District manages.

This includes the construction from ground up for all Afghan National Army facilities which are comprised of brigade garrisons, regional commands, a military academy, military training and military entrance processing center, logistics command, central movement agency facilities and more.

The Corps is also building facilities for the Afghan police, facilities to support ongoing coalition operations and providing technical assistance to the United States Agency for International Development – USAID.

Other individual projects include the construction of the Afghanistan-Tajikistan Bridge, renovations at the Rabia Balkhi Women's Hospital in Kabul and the construction of the Chele Daktharan housing project that will provide shelter for thousands of displaced refugees in Kabul.

In addition, the district also provides a Ministry of Defense Installation Management mentor to assist in the development and sustainment of Afghan National Army military installations, policies, master planning, facility programming and resource integration.

It is the mantra of the mentors to help Afghans to become self-sufficient and successful in the development of their own nation.

Afghans are also employed by the Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan, Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan, other agencies such as USAID and many other reconstruction and humanitarian organizations in-country.

Maria Or, AED

* While not aligned under the Gulf Region Division, AED is another front on the Corps' contribution to fight the global war on terrorism.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—Gulf Region Division



Hail and Farewell

Hailing:

Fernando Aguilar, PM GRS, Walla Walla District
 Bev Barta, PM GRS, Savannah District
 Arthur Bennett, Construction Rep GRS, Jacksonville District
 Terrence Baker, Operations NCO GRS, new employee
 Katie Brasfield, Contract Specialist GRS, European District
 MAJ Danny Blanks, G3 GRD, Southwestern Division
 Emiliano Cruz, Construction Rep. GRS, Philadelphia District

Ruth Ellison, Admin Asst. GRS, Alaska District
 LuAnn Fantasia, Deputy PA GRD, New employee
 Keith Felde, G1 GRD, TAC
 Michael Fellenz, Construction Rep. GRS, Buffalo District
 Greg Fillers, Project Engineer GRS, new employee
 LTC Andrew Goetz, Deputy FAO, GRS, Jacksonville District
 Russell Holeman, Area Engineer GRS, Tulsa District
 David Howard, PM GRD, DOE National Renewable Energy Laboratory
 Marc Kodak, PM GRD, TAC
 Stephanie Loera, Admin Officer GRD, Kansas City District
 Peter McGuckin, Construction Rep. GRS, Walla Walla District
 Joseph Minick, PM GRD, Omaha District

MAJ Roosevelt Samuel, STRATCOM LNO GRD, 18th Airborne
 Norman Siedschlag, Project Engineer GRS, Ft. Hood DPW, Tex.
 Ella Snell, Spv. Contract Spec. GRD, New York District
 Laura Stiegler, Contract Spec. GRD, Huntsville
 Michael Taylor, PM GRD, HQ USACE
 Lewis Tyler, Program Manager GRS
 Betsy Weiner, PAO GRS, Huntsville Center

Farewells: (Photos not available)

Eddie Miller, UPO GRC, Vicksburg District
 Doug Weldon, GRN, Lewiston, ID



David Dierickx
 Con. Rep. GRC
 Returning to:
 Rock Island District



MAJ William Burruss
 GRC
 Returning to:
 Memphis District



LTC Randy Turner
 Deputy DE GRC
 Returning to:
 Jacksonville District



Kenneth Larson
 Resident Engr. GRC
 Returning to:
 Alaska District



Christopher Prescott
 Const. PM GRC
 Returning to:
 Sacramento District



Jimmy Waddle
 Chief of Const. GRC
 Returning to:
 Vicksburg District



David Glorit
 Proj. Engr. GRC
 Returning to:
 Huntsville Center



Chester Ashley
 Area Engineer GRC
 Returning to:
 New Orleans District



Farrell McMillan
 Resident Engr. GRS
 Returning to:
 New England District



Tracy Grimberg
 Program Anlst. GRS
 Returning to:
 Huntington District



Fawzy Makar
 Area Engr. GRS
 Returning to:
 Savannah District



Ed Majano
 Civil Engineer GRS
 Returning to:
 Woodlands, TX



Donald Wood
 Proj. Engineer GRS
 Returning to:
 New England District



Kenneth Comfort
 Prog. Manager GRS
 Returning to:
 Ft. A.P. Hill, VA



Laurie Kaemmming
 IT-COMM GRC
 Returning to:
 TAC



Russ Rote
 Proj. Engr. GRC
 Returning to:
 Jacksonville District



James Trumble
 Proj. Engr. GRC
 Returning to:
 Louisville District



CPT Darren LeMaster
 ENO 1st CAV GRC
 Returning to:
 Seattle District



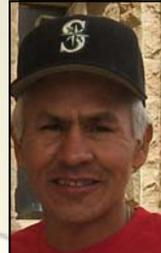
LTC Victor Zillmer
 GRC
 Returning to:
 Texas, USA



MAJ Michael Clancy
 GRC
 Returning to:
 New York District



LTC John Leighow
 Dept. DE GRN
 Returning to:
 Seattle District



Steve Marchand
 Logistics/Fac GRN
 Returning to:
 Seattle District



Russell Johnson
 Proj. Mgr. GRN
 Returning to:
 Portland District



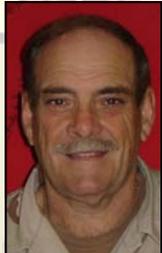
Kimberly Robinson
 Contract Spec. GRN
 Returning to:
 Far East District



MAJ Matthew Orenstein
 Dep. Area Engr. GRN
 Returning to:
 Huntington District



LTC Andrew Nelson
 Area Engineer GRN
 Returning to:
 Townsend, MA



Jimmie Moore
 Proj. Engr. GRN
 Returning to:
 Korea



Martin Monning
 Elec. Engr. GRN
 Returning to:
 Portland District



Don Holmes
 LOGCAP GRN
 Returning to:
 Omaha District



Linda Christensen
 Admin. Asst. GRN
 Returning to:
 Omaha District



Cristy Chavez
 Prog. Analyst GRN
 Returning to:
 Walla Walla District



Janet Dove
 Special Prog. Admin GRD
 Returning to:
 TAC



Carol Hewes
 PM GRN
 Returning to:
 Seattle District



MAJ David Bailey
 Dep. Area Eng. GRN
 Returning to:
 Albuquerque District



John Kasbar
 Asst. GRD Counsel
 Returning to:
 Jacksonville District



Gerald Ramos
 PM, GRD
 Returning to:
 Huntsville Center



Margaret Brant
 PCO Admin, GRD
 Returning to:
 GRN Mosul, Iraq



Angel Fernandez
 MILCON PM, GRD
 Returning to:
 IMA



SFC Robert Mancuso
 OPS NCO, GRD
 Returning to:
 Washington, D.C.



MAJ Rodney Cain
 OPS Officer, GRD
 Returning to:
 Honolulu, HI