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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Project Engineer logs nearly 1,300 days in Iraq

By Norris Jones
Gulf Region Central District

*B*aghdad, Iraq— “With every project, we’re helping Iraqi families,” says Andy May with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

He’s currently managing a dozen projects in north Baghdad Province valued at \$30 million. May just oversaw the completion of a \$450,000 girls’ high school and is building a new elementary school nearby. Each features 22 classrooms and will educate about 450 students.

“This is some of the most satisfying work I’ve been involved with during my 22 years with USACE,” May said. “We’re making a difference and it’s great to be able to help some very needy people in some very poor areas.”

One of those communities is Husseiniya, a city of 450,000 people. “It could be one of the most beautiful places anywhere. But today there’s sewage in the street and the kids are walking barefoot through it. It’s just a sad situation.”

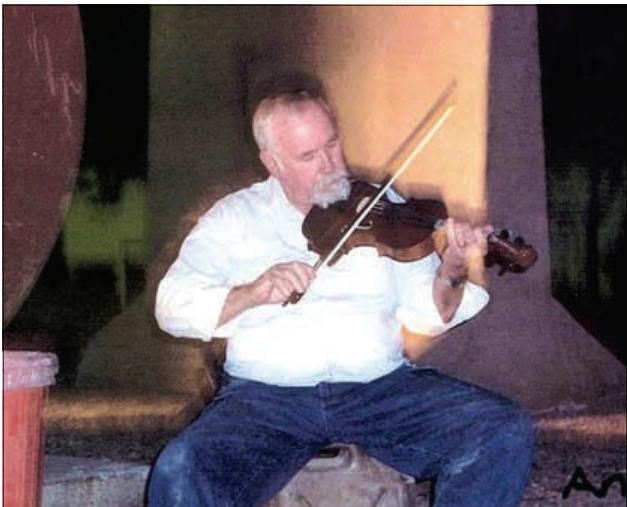
May, a project engineer, is responsible for a \$2.2 million contract purchasing materials for Husseiniya’s first-ever sewage system. It’s the latest in a series of improvements for the neighborhood, including a new police station, a courthouse, a primary healthcare center and a fire station. “This area had been neglected for decades. But today residents are seeing evidence that things are getting better.”

May has served over 1,300 days in Iraq. He flew into Baghdad International



*S*ince arriving in Iraq in 2003, project engineer Andy May has served more than 1,000 days here. He currently manages a dozen projects in north Baghdad Province valued at \$30 million for the Gulf Region Central district. [USACE Photo by Norris Jones]

Airport in April 2003 shortly after Saddam’s regime fell and helped establish Camp Victory. “There was no running water or electricity. I remember bartering with Iraqis, trading them beehives located on the base for critical electrical



When he's not overseeing construction projects for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, May likes to play the violin, which he taught himself to play during his deployment. [USACE Photo by Norris Jones]

parts." (He went home on emergency leave in August 2004 for a couple months when four hurricanes hit Florida. He's been part of the Taji Resident Office ever since.)

May was a Quality Assurance Representative on the Kissimmee River Restoration Project in Florida prior to deploying to the Middle East in 2001. He says he'd worked a half dozen hurricane disasters and enjoyed the change of pace those assignments offered. That's when he decided to volunteer for overseas duty. He was serving on a four-month tour at Camp Doha in Kuwait when 9-11 happened, and extended there until Operation Iraqi Freedom got underway and he moved north to Baghdad.

One of the unique aspects of his overseas duty is that May (in what little spare time he has) has taken up playing the violin. His grandfather loved the instrument, but he died before he had a chance to hear May play. He read some manuals and picked it up on his own. He likes classical music with his favorite composer being Vivaldi. May appreciates his co-workers

understanding when he does get a chance to practice. "They say it's tolerable," he chuckles, "and those who have been here a while kid me that I may even be getting better."

He and his wife have a 42-acre farm in Florida. "It's been in my family since 1880 and I'm the fifth generation to live on that piece of property. We have a 'u-pick' grape vineyard and also offer customers blueberries and vegetables."

The 58-year-old says his family continues to be supportive of his work in Iraq, but hopes sometime soon he'll be able to spend more time with his two grandchildren who were born while he's been deployed.

May will take a short break in February to see the birth of his third grandchild, but he's already submitted the paperwork to sign up for another year in Iraq.

"I believe if we don't confront the Islamic extremists here in Iraq and elsewhere, my grandchildren will be fighting them there. An enemy willing to kill 30



[USACE Photo by Norris Jones]

innocent Iraqi toddlers won't hesitate to kill 30,000 American infidels.

"Every Iraqi engineer or laborer working on one of our projects risks his life every day. But they keep coming back be-

cause they want something better for their children and grandchildren," May continued.

"The Iraqis I interact with appreciate what we're doing. I'm honored to oversee projects benefiting our brave troops and even more motivated by the smiles I see on young Iraqi faces on special occasions such as when they walk into their new school for the first time."

As of Jan. 31, 2007, USACE/GRD has:

4,350 planned projects - construction cost of \$8.204 billion; with a program cost of \$8.84 billion.

3,169 completed projects – construction cost of \$4.154 billion; with a program cost of \$4.39 billion.

894 ongoing projects – construction cost of \$3.097 billion; with a program cost of \$3.28 billion.

287 projects yet to be started.

Note: For additional information, contact Norris Jones, Public Affairs Specialist at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region Central District at (540) 665-2644 or Norris.Jones@tac01.usace.army.mil. For more information on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq, email cegrd.pao@tac01.usace.army.mil or visit our Web site at www.grd.usace.army.mil.