



For Immediate Release
Feb. 8, 2007
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Maximum security correctional facilities help secure Iraq's future

By James Bullinger
Gulf Region South

AN NASIRIYAH, Iraq -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) continues to help the Iraqi government move forward with developing its infrastructure, build upon its security and justice systems, and improve the quality of incarceration facilities.

Rick Mers, a USACE project engineer serving in Iraq for the past 29 months, has overseen the contract for the new Nasiriyah Maximum Security Correctional Facility being built in the Dhi Qar Province for the past 14 months.

"The initial construction started Nov. 2, 2004, but delays occurred when the original U.S. contractor withdrew from the project after making little headway," Mers said. An Iraqi construction firm stepped in to take over the contract in 2006 and is now making progress.

Mers, who hails from the Huntington District in West Virginia, said this project would help alleviate a congested Iraqi confinement system.

"Inmates at the other prisons, such as the politically-sensitive Abu-Ghraib and Camp Bucca, may eventually be housed at this prison," he said.

Mers makes frequent visits to the prison to check on the contractor's progress. The \$73 million project is more than a third of the way through to completion, he said. The sprawling facility is designed after modern U.S. standards for prisons, providing for humane treatment of inmates.



Rick Mers, left, a project engineer, and Lt. Col. Dale Johnson, center, both with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, discuss progress on the Nasiriyah Maximum Security Correctional Facility with Iraqi engineers and construction company representatives during a January visit. [USACE PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER]

When finished in late October or November, the prison will have two 400-inmate maximum-security buildings, each with its own attached visitor control build-



Iraqi construction workers prepare to refill a trench where concrete and re-bar footers have been recently installed. The new prison project employs an average of 200 workers a day, helping the local An Nasiriyah economy. [USACE PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER]

ing and an exercise area. "In addition, four prefabricated steel buildings will house a medical intake and release building, a maintenance building, and a kitchen and laundry facility," Mers said. "There is also a mosque for prayers and other religious events."

The facility will be self-sufficient with an administrative building, armory, water treatment plant and storage tanks, and a sewage treatment plant.

"The prison will be capable of producing its own electric power within its utility area," Mers said. "It'll have four generators and fuel tanks, associated transformers and switchgears to provide power."

According to Lt. Col. Gustavus "Gus" Washington, a senior project manager for the Security and Justice sector at the Gulf Region South District Headquarters, "Currently, this is the only facility of this type and scope being managed by our district.

"Future work at the prison, which is not part of the current contract, includes another 400 inmate maximum security building, an education and vocational building, and an industries building," Washington said.

USACE oversees other correctional pro-

jects in Iraq.

"There is one other facility under construction utilizing the design of the Nasiriyah site," said Lt. Cmdr. Mike Lowry, a Security and Justice project manager with the Gulf Region Division Headquarters in Baghdad. "That project is a 1,800 bed facility at Khan Bani Sa'ad in the north."

Lowry's office provides additional management support and coordinates with Iraqi Ministry of Justice on correctional system facilities.



An Iraqi craftsman installs ceramic tiles in a bathroom for a medical treatment facility under construction at the site of the Nasiriyah Maximum Security Correctional Facility. [USAC PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER]

"There is another major prison project underway at Zrka Dahuk using a different site plan, and renovation projects to existing facilities in the Al Anbar and Baghdad Provinces," Lowry said. "The completion of these modern correctional facilities will help improve the quality and availability of inmate incarceration space. Completion is essential to maintaining human rights and advancing the rule of law."

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 James Bullinger is the public affairs officer for the Gulf Region South District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq . For more information, contact Betsy Weiner, public affairs officer at (540) 665-2656, or email requests to CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil. For more information on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq, visit: www.grd.usace.army.mil.