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## *Will Engineering Efforts Be Coalition's Legacy In Iraq?*

By Norris Jones  
Gulf Region Central

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** – “You are the pros coming from all corners of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers world,” said Brig. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, speaking to the diverse group of civilians and military comprising the Gulf Region Central district in Iraq.

Brooks, the deputy commanding general for Support, Multinational Division Baghdad, was a keynote speaker for a two-day senior leader conference hosted July 1-2 at the GRC headquarters on Victory Base Complex, Baghdad.

He talked about the years of decay in Iraq's infrastructure. “And so the challenge you face, in concentrating your efforts as world-class engineers to leave the situation better than you found it, is harder than you could ever imagine,” said Brooks.

“You have to be an All-Star Team because average work is simply not going to be adequate. Only above average work, superb work, excellent work, will give us even a chance to progress further than we are right now,” said Brooks. He also said that Iraqis have very high and often unrealistic expectations of the United States.

He encouraged those attending to partner with the 20 Brigade Combat Teams in Iraq, local Iraqi Neighborhood and District Councils, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, the Amanat (City of Baghdad's

government), Beladiya Director Generals, and various Iraq National Ministries in ongoing reconstruction efforts.

“This is a rich country. It has all kinds of resources. It has everything every other country in the world wishes it had. They haven't been able to tap into their own wealth because of internal politics and the decrepitude I spoke about due to their inheritance from a socialist regime,” said Brooks. “They have oil, water, arable land, an industrious people, and a history unparalleled throughout the world - it's all here.”

Brooks said the riches of Iraq had not been committed at this point and “we have to stimulate that commitment.”

His final point touched on the long-term legacy of the Coalition's investment in Iraq, having lost 3,750 lives and expended billions of dollars.

According to Brooks, he often hears about the British experience at the end of World War I. And many of Iraq's strongest institutions were generated at that point. Bridge construction became the legacy of the British. There's a term they refer to the British at that time – they call it ‘Abu Naji.’ They harken back to the excellent engineer work of Abu Naji, not Abu Naji's benevolence, not the things that helped them build government, but the bridges.

"I wonder what the legacy will be when they think back to the experience of the United States, 80 years hence. If it's like Abu Naji, it's going to be what the engineers left. It will be things that are iconic of presence and commitment, especially if it's done well and it endures over time," said Brooks.

Following his talk, Brooks opened it up to questions and spoke about the importance of providing access and context to media, especially Arabic language journalists, so those in Iraq and neighboring countries know and understand what is going on here. "It's not their responsibility to provide context, it's yours," he charged.

Brooks, the U.S. Army's former Chief of Public Affairs, pointed out that Multinational Division Baghdad has more embedded reporters since November when they took over than the previous three years combined. "We opened the doors up ... access plus context gives the potential for accurate content."

Colonel Lewis, GRC commander, thanked Brig. Gen. Brooks for making GRC part of his team. "That has made it possible for us to do so much more," she said.

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