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## *Gulf Region South Welcomes New Commander*

By Lisa Coghlan  
Gulf Region South

**TALLIL, Iraq** - Colonel Stephen L. Hill, the previous district engineer and commander of the Pittsburgh District, Pa., became the fifth commander of the Gulf Region South (GRS) district in a ceremony at LSA Adder July 28. Brig. Gen. Michael J. Walsh, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division, Baghdad, was the reviewing officer.

"I am humbled and honored by the opportunity to join such a tremendous team and serve our nation during this critical period in history," Hill said.

Hill was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers upon graduation from the United States Military Academy in 1982, where he earned a bachelor of science and engineering. Subsequently, he earned a masters degree in civil engineering from Purdue University, and a masters in strategic planning and policy from the Army War College.

"I look forward to serving you as we face the coming challenges together. There is no place I would rather be than here with you," said Hill to his new command team and staff.

Relinquishing command of the Gulf Region South district was Col. Gary E. Johnston, whose next assignment is G-3 for Task Force Hope in New Orleans, La.

Johnston told members of the Gulf Region South district present for the event and those who could not be here, "My



Col. Gary Johnston, former commander of the Gulf Region South district, addresses those in attendance at his change of command ceremony July 28 in Tallil, Iraq. Johnston heads to the Corps of Engineers Task Force Hope to assume the G-3 position. [USACE Photo by Lisa Coghlan]



Left to right: Col. Stephen Hill, incoming commander of the Gulf Region South district, Brig. Gen. Michael Walsh, commanding general of the Gulf Region Division, and Col. Gary Johnston, outgoing commander of the Gulf Region South district stand during the playing of the National Anthem at the GRS change of command ceremony July 28 in Tallil, Iraq. [USACE



Col. Stephen Hill, new commander of the Gulf Region South district, passed the unit colors to the district's senior enlisted advisor, Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy Freitag, during the change of command ceremony July 28 in Tallil, Iraq. [USACE Photo by Lisa Coghlan]

mission here was primarily to be an engineer for Iraq, and that is what I spent the last year doing. Not only are we building Iraq, we are building the future of Iraq."

"We can look at all the accomplishments we have made on the ground, all the projects, but they don't mean anything if we don't take it to the next level of governance. They don't mean anything if they are not here to support the people of Iraq. That is our focus, that is our future and that is where we should be focused today" stated Johnston.

GRS was initially established at the Basrah Airport and then moved to Tallil Air Base in September 2004. The district's mission is to provide responsive construction related services through the Gulf Region Division to the Multi-National Forces-Iraq. The south district was initially established to manage projects to support reconstruction in Karbala, Babil, Wasit, Maysan, An Najaf, Al Qadisayah, Dhi Qar, Al Muthana, and Al Basrah Provinces - an area covering more than 65,000 square miles.

GRS manages more than 1,500 projects valued at more than \$3.3 billion, of which over 1,182 have been completed to date. The value of the work that has been completed is nearly \$2.1 billion with \$1.1 billion in active projects. The District is also responsible for all military construction (MILCON) projects in southern Iraq.

GRS is a team of more than 480 U.S. military, civilian, and Iraqi Associates who work side-by-side to provide the facilities to support the transition of Iraq to a viable and stable democracy.



Left to right: Brig. Gen. Michael Walsh, commanding general of the Gulf Region Division, and Col. Stephen Hill, commander of the Gulf Region South district, during the GRS change of command ceremony July 28 in Tallil, Iraq. [USACE Photo by Lisa Coghlan]

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