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## *Senior Leadership Conference Held In Gulf Region South District*

By John Connor  
Gulf Region South District

**TALLIL**, Iraq – Leaders of the Gulf Region South district of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers held a conference during which they reviewed their operations with an eye toward better fulfilling their mission of helping to rebuild the infrastructure in nine southern provinces of Iraq after decades of neglect, decay and war, and assisting the Iraqi people in achieving self-sufficiency by enhancing their capacity and governance.

Wrapping up the day-and-a-half senior leadership conference, which was attended by a dozen top leaders from GRS headquarters and regional offices and which yielded concrete results on fronts including critical mission actions, engagement strategy and process standardization within the district, GRS commander Col. Steve Hill said he was very pleased with what the conference achieved.

"We covered a lot of ground," he said, telling members of his leadership team that "my assessment of our capabilities, your capabilities, has gone up two notches."

The conference included much brainstorming and give and take. As it neared its end, Navy Cmdr. Michael Lang, officer in charge of the Adder Office, said, "We're all on the same sheet of paper." Maj. Rick Smith, S-3 at the Basrah Office, said one definition of adventure is "stepping outside your comfort zone—we did that." Capt. William Delucchi, GRS S-2 and the junior man at the table, indicated he felt



GRS leaders discuss mission, strategy at Senior Leadership Conference, with Col. Steve Hill, GRS commander, at head of conference table. (USACE photo)

comfortable mixing it up with his seniors and added that "decisions were made that will improve the way things are done."

"I'm really pleased with what we did," said Lt. Col. Gregory Raimondo, the deputy GRS commander who played a large role in organizing the conference.

Safety was among the topics dissected at the conference—from the individual, supervisory, and organizational perspectives. "The majority of accidents happen when there's an environmental change,"

said Col Hill.

In terms of safety and GRS interaction with Iraqi counterparts, "the biggest challenge is cultural," said Lt. Col. Kenneth McDonald, officer in charge of the Basrah Office.

Hill told his senior leaders regarding safety that "we need to set the standard, not just with the Iraqis but with us." He added that "there is nothing I would not shut down for a safety issue." Safety considerations cited at the conference in the context of project site visits

included assessing risks and what any given visit could be expected to achieve.

Discussing what the conference yielded, the district commander said, "We operate best with a solid foundation and common focus." That foundation rests on the commander's vision, which is encapsulated in the acronym "MEPS, with Safety"--MEPS standing for Mission, Engagement, People and Systems.

The GRS mission, emphasized repeatedly during the conference, is to provide quality projects while enhancing Iraqi governance and providing economic support. Top projects in the GRS district include the Nasiriyah Water Treatment Plant, Aspen Road, and the Basrah Children's Hospital.

On engagement, questions conference participants will be answering going forward include: "Who are your (Iraqi) partners? Who did you talk to last week? Who are you talking to next week." All of these actions are designed to more effectively synchronize and integrate the interactions of all key players in the theater, emphasizing creating a larger role for the Iraqi people in forging their future.

One byproduct of the conference was a decision to insert into the schedule a requirement where certain people will report



From top, going left to right, Col. Steve Hill, GRS commander, Lt. Col. Gregory Raimondo, Kelly Brown and Tom Eidson at work at GRS Senior Leadership Conference. (USACE photo)

specifically on what projects they have looked at over the previous two weeks. This "look back" at what has been accomplished on projects will be in addition to an existing 21-day "look ahead" report. The "look back" will be done every other Tuesday. "I want to know what projects you've looked at since we met two weeks earlier," said Hill. "What did we accomplish on projects?"

On personnel evaluations, the leaders hammered out agreement on the rating regime to govern specific jobs district-wide.

Said Hill, who is now into his second month as GRS commander, "The best way to get to know each other is to go out and kick over some rocks."

**Note:** John Connor is the Public Affairs Officer with the Gulf Region South district, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Iraq. For more information, contact Grant Sattler, public affairs officer at 540-665-1233 or email requests to [CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil](mailto: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](http://www.grd.usace.army.mil)