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Chibayish Police Station To Open Despite Challenges

By BJ Weiner
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NASIRIYAH, Iraq – The project began in October 2006 – a small contract worth \$317,000. But its location, in southeast Dhi Qar, and its proximity to Maysan Province, where members of the Mahdi Army (Muqtada al Sadr) run rural villages, have made this project more challenging than most.

For the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers southern district, building and refurbishing police stations in the nine southern provinces under the auspices of the Multi-National Security Transition – Iraq has been for the most part a successful contribution to the stability of the security and police forces. But with the Chibayish Police station soon to open, Project Management Specialist Mike Fellenz feels a bit more satisfaction than usual.

“This was the very first project I was assigned when I arrived in country in October 2006,” he said. “And I have watched it mature from there, despite being one of the most challenging projects I have worked on.”

Fellenz explained that the contractor who won the bid has done a great deal of work for the Corps and each of the projects he has had have been executed well, and to the satisfaction of its quality assurance teams. “All but this one,” Fellenz said, “And very little of the difficulties we have had have been his fault.”



Project Manager Mike Fellenz discusses progress at the Chibayish Police station. Fellenz, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, conducted a walk-through inspection of the police station. (USACE photo by BJ Weiner)

The location of the construction has changed three times because of floods, land disputes and neighborhood disapprovals. When the location finally stabilized, the contractor had to level the ground in order to match the road elevation, which was roughly six to eight feet higher than the construction location. “We modified the contract so he could proceed,” said Fellenz. “Then he started running into tribal issues and the Mahdi army. Holidays cost him work time because of the lack of available labor and he struggled with all of these issues. The project should have been completed last year, but now we are 85 percent complete and I be-

lieve it's going to be a great facility and provide stability to the area."

The new police facility will replace an older existing station according to Navy Cmdr. Stephen Seaman, Adder Area engineer. Located near the Euphrates River, the work on site consists of clearing and removing debris from the location, elevating the site, building a new structure which is 20 meters square and providing support facilities including a generator, septic line, a water tank and sidewalks as well as a perimeter fence and vehicle gate.

He added that the contractor is finishing the exterior walls, guard towers and roads. He is also painting the building's interior and cleaning up the site.

"We are looking at April 1 as a closing date," said Fellenz. "I'm excited about closing it out and turning it over to the local police – after all, it was my first project here and I feel a lot of success in its completion."

"When complete, this project will provide a new up-to-date facility for the local police," said Seaman. "This should provide an added sense of security for the surrounding population."



An Iraqi worker on site at the Chibayish Police Station works on an outside wall at the facility. (USACE photo by BJ Weiner)

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