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Wassit Council Reviews Upcoming Projects, Training Issues

By Mohammed Aliwi
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WASSIT, Iraq—Along with Wassit's governor, officials from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers attended that province's Provincial Reconstruction Development Council (PRDC) meeting in al-Kut March 4 for an overview of future and current projects, as well as engineering staff training issues.

Lee Wolf, Wassit area construction representative for USACE said the PRDC consists of the director generals (DGs), the governor, the governorate provincial council and the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) which is represented by the U.S. State department, USACE and Coalition representatives who help funding some of the current projects.

"[The Wassit PRDC] generally meet[s] twice a month and then we meet offline with the members of the PRDC several times during the month depending on which member it is and what particular issue they may have," said Roberto Bran, program manager with the Wassit Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). He said each meeting has a different purpose and objective. "For example, in the fall we were developing project nominations for 'brick and mortar' and now we are transitioning to identify projects, nominating them to get the packets built and the scopes of work completed as well as the bills of quantity written and the technical issues sorted out. We nominated them to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad for approval. Now we are prioritizing them. They will be solicited and [contracts] awarded."

Wolf said that, through the PRDC meet-



Wassit Governor, Lateef Hamed, discusses technical issues while presiding over a recent Provincial Reconstruction Development Council conference in al-Kut. (USACE photo by Mohammed Aliwi)

ings, the PRDC and the PRT prioritise the projects according to the benefit of the project and the needs of the people in the area. Usually the governors and the DGs take the lead on this action.

"The PRT is basically configured into three different groups," Bran said. "One is focused on politics and governorates, the second one is focused on economics and development and the third one is focused on reconstruction, central services and urban planning of infrastructure."

Lee explained that the PRDC guides the DGs through funding and the possibilities of getting the projects approved and



Roberto Bran, Wassit Provincial Reconstruction Team program manager, (center in white jacket) explains the goals of the recent conference and the project funding issues to the Wassit governor Lateef Hamed in a March 4, 2008, meeting. (USACE photo by Mohammed Aliwi)

funded. The U.S. government and Iraqi government are working together on building projects that benefit the Iraqis. "The Iraqi DGs make the decisions about the projects," added Bran.

Lee said that most of the projects USACE manages are funded by the U.S. government under Economic Support Funds (ESF). "But we do have a bridge project in Wassit province that was Iraqi-government funded and we do quality control and quality assurance and report the results to the Iraqi government," he said.

Lee explained that their aim is to help the Government of Iraq achieve U.S. level standards and provide all citizens with access to basic services. "That is what we are doing to help people achieve equal standards of living," he said.

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