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Shatt Al Arab Courthouse enhances local rule of law

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BASRAH, Iraq – The people of Al Tanoma, a city east of Shatt Al Arab River, will soon open a new courthouse, in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division.

When the new, modern facility is completed next spring, it will have a direct impact on the rule of law here, said Laith Abdul Sammad, the chief judge on the Basrah Supreme Judiciary Council. This is one of more than 65 courthouse projects throughout Iraq providing a foundation for a strong judicial system; 55 are already complete.

Approximately 40 local Iraqis, including judges, clerks and security personnel, will work at the new facility when it opens next spring. That number is expected to grow once it's fully operational, said Sammad.

"I'm looking forward to seeing this project finished because the 27-year-old existing facility in Al Tanoma is not sufficient for the 120,000 residents of the area," he explained. "The new courthouse will serve as the central pillar for a fair judicial process, strengthening the community's pursuit of peace and justice," he added.

The Iraqi firm building the \$1.4 million courthouse is making good progress and the project is 54 percent complete, said Iraqi Engineer Al, the Deputy Area Engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"Currently the 30 local Iraqis on the construction crew are plastering the interior and exterior walls and installing the main electrical panel and wiring," he noted.

The 588-sq.-meter three-story courthouse compound will feature parking lots, an administrative checkpoint and two gardens, Sammad said. "The local Iraqi crew is taking pride in the work, and the Chief Judge is pleased with the construction quality he's seeing," he added.



The local Iraqi construction crew is making progress on the new Shatt Al Arab Courthouse in Al Tanoma, Basrah Province. (USACE photos by A. Al Bahrani)



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Note: For high resolution photos see www.grd.usace.army.mil/news/releases/index.asp.