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New courthouse taking shape, bolstering Babil's 'rule of law'

By Alicia Embrey
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New Hillah Regional Courthouse under construction. [USACE photo]

Babil Province, Iraq — A new regional courthouse is taking shape to help Babil Province enforce the rule of law. The new \$7 million facility is scheduled to be complete next spring.

"The Iraqi judiciary has a long and proud history going back before the founding of the country itself," said Mark Robbins, Rule of Law advisor with the Babil Provincial Reconstruction Team. "For the most part, the judiciary in Babil enjoys the respect of the people. But many years of neglect under the previous regime has left it with a crumbling infrastructure and inadequate facilities to meet the rule of law needs of the local population," he noted.

The construction of a new regional courthouse and upgrades to the previous facility have been complicated, Robbins said. But the PRT has remained committed to it. "We look forward to working with the Babil judiciary to ensure that it will soon work in a facility that better reflects the honor and respect of the Iraqi judiciary" he added.

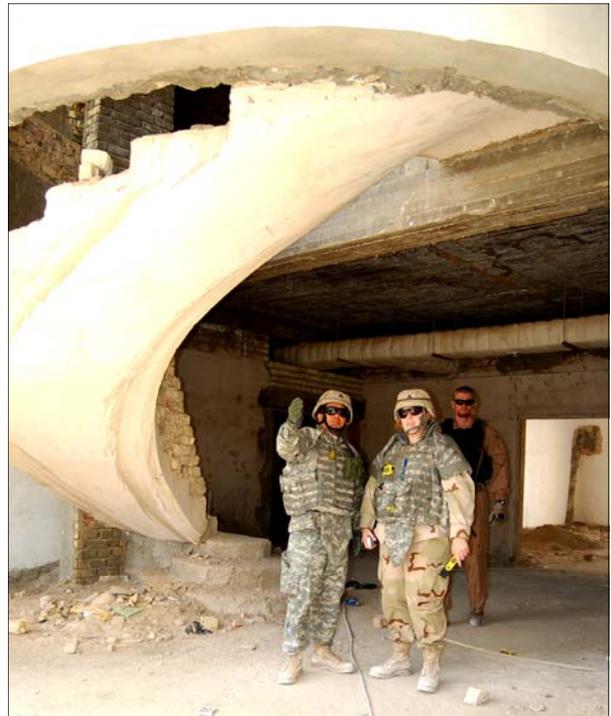
Babil Resident Engineer Jun Morales with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers says the new 35,000 sq. ft. multi-story courthouse will consist of the main office building and adjoining service buildings (cafeteria, guard houses and bathrooms), two fountains, public and employee park areas. "All buildings will have air conditioning, potable water and intercom systems. The older Al Hillah courthouse, the Municipal Court, will receive a facelift and security upgrades," Morales said. Throughout Iraq, USACE has completed 55 courthouse projects with an additional 11 ongoing with an additional 11 ongoing.

Babil, south of Baghdad, became the 12th of Iraq's 18 provinces to take the lead for its own security operations in October. "The Regional Courthouse is an expansion of their judicial system and a symbol of a new phase within the government," Morales added. "It's a key institution in the community's quest for law and order."



Hillah Regional Courthouse's plaza will feature fountains with service buildings also part of the plan. (USACE photo by Alicia Embrey)

This project is also creating jobs. Approximately 100 Iraqis are involved with the construction each day. Currently, nearly 100 judges and prosecutors, 175 employees, and almost 200 judicial police and security guards are working at the older Municipal Courthouse. Approximately 450 lawyers also use the existing facility. After the new courthouse complex opens, those numbers are eventually expected to increase.



Circular staircase near the main rotunda. (USACE photo by Alicia Embrey)

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