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## LSA Anaconda/Balad Air Base Prepares to Support Draw in Iraq

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*BALAD, Iraq* - As Coalition forces in Iraq begin to drawdown and bases around the country close, LSA Anaconda/Balad Air Base provides continued logistical support and emergency combat assistance to the central region.

Chosen as a hub to enable U.S. forces to maintain a foothold in central Iraq, Anaconda provides direct support of mobility operations that will result in significantly more throughput capability for the region.

In preparation for the influx of cargo and personnel that are soon to come, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, along with the Central Command Air Forces of Central Command, have worked together to execute \$70 million in construction in the past year. Streamlining and building capacity is the primary goal - the consolidation of the Aerial Port Debarkation is key to this process, according to base officials.

The Aerial Port Debarkation consists of multiple projects that work together as a system: a Tactical C-130 Ramp is capable of parking 21 C-130s; a Strategic Ramp can handle five C-5 aircraft; a Material Handling and Equipment Road connects the North and South ramps, which enables easier cargo transition and alleviates 96 percent of traffic currently utilizing the taxiways; and a cargo marshalling yard.

"All of these projects work to consolidate Aerial Port functions while streamlining cargo up/down load operations," says Jim Widmer, USACE project engineer. "The end result is a 40 percent



*This newly constructed Material Handling and Equipment Road connects the North and South ramps – enabling the easier transition of cargo, which has alleviated 96 percent of traffic on the taxiways. [ARMY PHOTO]*

increase in cargo throughput.”

Before the cargo marshalling yard opened for business, 20,067 passengers were moved through the air base per month -- as well as an average of 10,994 tons of cargo; 6,907 pallets; and 1,779 aircraft.

Since the completion of these projects, the base has experienced an increased integration of commercial air fleet in the cargo movement process. More than 153,000 pallets have passed through Balad via aircraft vs. over-the-road convoy teams.

“By completing them [the projects], ahead of schedule,” explains Widmer, “we are taking 153,000 pallets off of 46,000 trucks in the convoy system and getting 99,000 troops off of the roadways and out of harms way sooner.”

The final piece of this streamlining and capacity building is the Reception Staging and Onward Integration facility. This one facility with independent in-processing and out-processing capability will be able to handle and throughput 26,000 personnel a month.

“Feedback from our customer, the 332 Air Expeditionary Wing, has been overwhelmingly positive, both for sheer speed and uncompromised quality,” says Maj. Marc Vandever, U.S. Central Command Air Forces, Construction Management Office, office at Balad Air Base.



*The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, along with the Central Command Air Force Central Command has executed \$70 million in construction projects in preparation for the influx of cargo and personnel expected to come. These improvements will handle and throughput 26,000 personnel a month. [ARMY PHOTO]*



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“Long-term, comprehensive master plan has positioned the 332 AEW and Air Force to effectively utilize USACE to execute, succession, projects that have transformed mobility footprint at Balad over the last few years,” explains Vandever.

In addition to these ramps, the Corps is constructing two expeditionary fabric hangars to conduct fuel cell operations previously accomplished in Kuwait or Al Udeid.

“These construction projects were completed in record time due to the construction expertise of KBR Construction,” said Frank Scopellito, area engineer. “Early stockpiling of materials eliminated shortages minimizing impact on production efforts. Historically, there were concrete shortages, but through the expertise of the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Air Force personnel, working jointly with the Corps and KBR Construction, a significant production rate was maintained through all of the projects.”

*Note: Polli Barnes Keller is the author of this release.*

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