



NEWS



MAY 2009

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Gulf Region Division South District, Iraq



Iskandariyah Votech renovations increase job training opportunities

Community leaders, media and coalition representatives gathered for a grand opening to showcase the newly renovated \$5.4 million Iskandariyah Vocational Technical Center April 22 in Babil Province.

Dr. Reyad Hassan, executive general manager at the Iraqi Ministry of Labor, officiated with the assistance of Iskander Witwot (the newly-elected Babil deputy governor), Mansour Al-Manage (the newly-elected Babil Provincial Council member), Dr. Nehmeh Jasim Al-Bakrey (the former Babil deputy and newly-elected Provincial Council member), and Col. Jack Drolet with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Gulf Region South District Commander).

This Iskandariyah Votech and Industrial Complex, located 25 miles south of Baghdad, was once the industrial jewel of north Babil Province boasting of such facilities as the State Company for Automotive Industries (SCAI), the State Company for Mechanical Industries (SCMI) and Hateen munitions. During April 2003 the Votech, SCAI and SCMI were ransacked and torched by looters. Burned out shells of their former grandeur remained for years and the once 25,000 employees remained home.

To help revitalize that area, Iraqi officials, the Provincial Reconstruction Team and U.S. Forces combined efforts.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers oversaw the Votech's upgrade utilizing Iraqi contractors. The three-phase project included renovating seven dorms, a classroom building, an auditorium and mechanical shop. The Iraqi crew, consisting of 200 local workers, finished the project three months ahead of schedule. Of those workers, 50 were recent graduates of the center.

When the Votech renovations began in 2007, the school was offering a limited curriculum for

an enrollment of 30 students. This year the center is expected to train and house 4,000 students in a variety of occupational specialties including hair dressing, sewing, administration, clerical, computer maintenance, masonry, electrical, carpentry, welding, computers, and auto mechanics.

"The renovation project became a reality because of the partnership between city and provincial government leaders, Coalition Forces, the Babil PRT, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Iraqi construction crews, along with unwavering support from the local community," explained Col. Drolet. "The young men and women who come to this Vocational Center will learn skills, laying a foundation for future prosperity. We're honored to be part of this effort."

Many look to the Votech renovation as the first step to improving the local economy. According to Pradeep Patnaik, Babil PRT's Senior Economic Advisor, the Iskandariyah Votech "is critical in our efforts to attract foreign investment to Babil province." Because the

center is able to provide needed training, more than five international firms are considering manufacturing contracts with SCAI and SCMI industries, he continued. In 2008 SCMI assembled and sold 200 tractors and assembled 250 more. "All tractors were pre-sold with a plan of assembling and selling another 1,000 tractors this year," Patnaik said.

Currently SCAI is building prefabricated housing units, oil refineries, buses, construction equipment, greenhouses, and much more. "We are working with local and international businesses so that there will be enough work for everyone," Patnaik concluded.



Iskandariyah Votech



Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Eng. Mahmoud M. J. Al-Sheikh Radhi officiated at a ribbon cutting ceremony for the \$5.4 million renovation of the Iskandariyah Votech in Babil Province April 22.



Col. Jack Drolet points out that it was the partnership between Iraqi leaders and Coalition Forces working together that was responsible for Iskandariyah Vocational Technical Center being upgraded to help local Iraqis develop their job skills.



Local Iraqi leaders view the renovated Iskandariyah Votech during a ribbon cutting ceremony April 22.



Iskandariyah Votech



More than 20 Pan-Arab and Iraqi media including Sawa Radio, Al Baghdadi TV, Al Iraqia TV, Tariq Al-Sa'ab newspaper, Baghdad Radio, Al Sumnbla Newspaper, Al Huria TV, Iraq Economic News, Al-Rashid TV, Al Fayhaa newspaper, and Al Meezan newspaper reported on the April 22 ribbon cutting ceremony of the Iskandariyah Vocational Technical Center. GRS oversaw the center's \$5.4 million renovation by an Iraqi contractor who had more than 200 local workers on his crew, 50 of whom were recent graduates of the center.



When renovations began in 2007, the Iskandariyah Vocational Technical Center in Babil Province was offering a limited curriculum for an enrollment of 30 students. This year the center is expected to train and house 4,000 students in a variety of occupational specialties including masonry, electrical, carpentry, welding, computers, and auto mechanics.



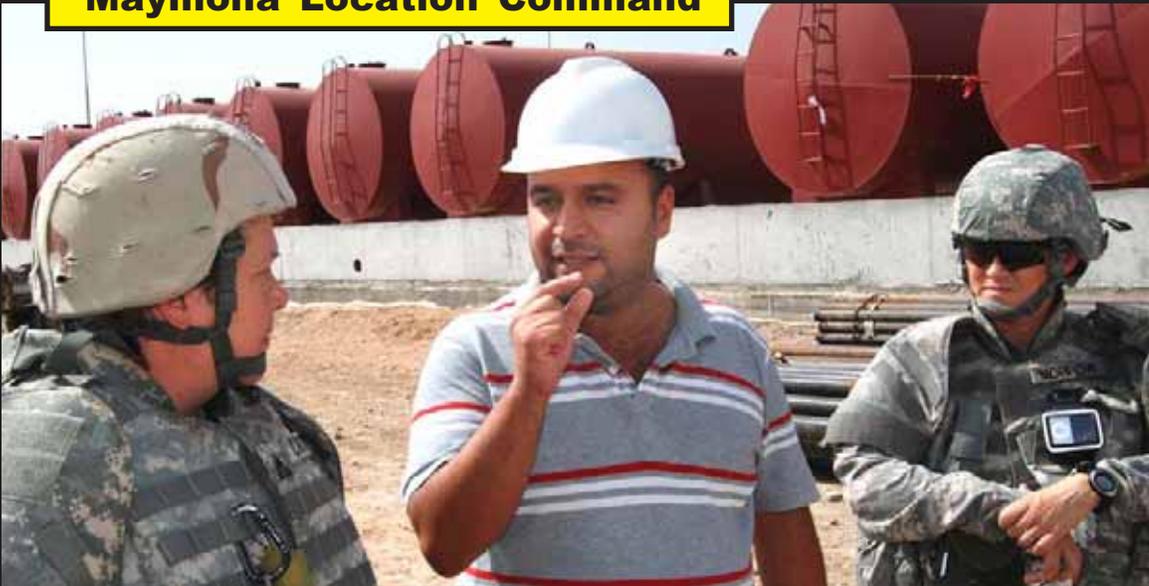
Iskandariyah Vocational Technical Center in Babil Province offers a varied curriculum including sewing and hair styling classes.



Local Iraqi leaders, school officials, and townspeople tour the renovated Iskandariyah Vocational Technical Center that is expected to provide job-training skills to 4,000 students this year.



Maymona Location Command



Construction Rep Shelly Carter (left) and Maj. Sinlan Morrow with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers speak with the Iraqi contractor about ongoing work at the new Al Maymona Location Command being built south of Amarah in Maysan Province. Part of the contract is a fuel distribution facility with twelve 10,000-liter tanks for diesel, benzene and kerosene (seen in background) as well as 2 million liters of bulk storage capacity.

Maymona Location Command taking shape near Amarah

Construction is on schedule to be finished by September on the Iraqi Army's new Al Maymona Location Command in Maysan Province.

That \$35.9 million project, where 1,000 soldiers will be based, includes dozens of structures — warehouses, barracks, a headquarters facility, fueling depot, ammunition supply point, a dining facility, bakery, ice plant, laundry, barber shop, medical clinic, fire station, water and wastewater treatment facilities.

The 18-hectare (44-acre) site is located south of Amarah, Maysan's Provincial capital. "This Location Command will support Iraqi Army units stationed in our area," explained Iraqi engineer Ali Abdul who is overseeing the construction for the Gulf Region South District. "It will ensure our Iraqi soldiers have the supplies they need as they improve security in our area."

GRS Construction Representative Shelly Carter says the Iraqi contractor is making great progress. "The Maymona Location Command will support Iraqi Army units safeguarding Maysan neighborhoods. Every time I visit the site, I see the pride local Iraqi construction workers exhibit doing their jobs. Of those I've talked to, they're happy to be part of this crew building this project that will benefit their community for years to come." Currently, nearly 150 local Iraqis are working at the site. "It's great to be part of this effort," said Ali, who is a lifelong resident of Maysan. Other projects he is managing include 25 kilometers of new road between Amarah and Maymona creating a 4-lane highway there, the construction of a new \$12.7-million surgical hospital in Amarah, and \$1.5 million to expand 3.3 kilometers of Majar Al Khabeer road to a 4-lane highway where it connects onto Maysan Rt. 6.



A local Iraqi worker constructs the base for a 10 cubic-meter-per-hour water compact unit that will be part of the new \$35.9 million Maymona Location Command in Maysan Province.



Iraqi Air Force compound



Shown above is the new \$1.9 million Iraqi Air Force life support compound at Basra Air base.



Lt. Col. Steve Parker, TF Gauntlet Commander, (Division Special Troops Battalion, 10th Mountain Division), says hello to Gen. Anwer Hamd Ameen.



Iraqi Air Force's new dining facility at the recently-opened life support compound on Basra Air Base.

Iraqi Air Force pleased with new Basra compound

By A. Al Bahrani

BASRA, Iraq—Iraqi Air Force personnel now have a new home at the Basra Air Base.

“If I use all the words, they won’t be enough to express my great thanks to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for their work helping us build Iraqi Air Force’s capacity not only in Basra Province, but in the whole country,” said Iraqi Air Force Staff Gen. Anwer Hamd Ameen, Iraqi Air Force Commander, during his visit to the new Iraqi Air Force compound in Basra April 14. “You ensured that a quality facility was provided.”

Iraqi Air Force Staff Maj. Gen. Hamed Al Maliki, Basra Air Base Commander, was also pleased. “There is a huge difference between the old facility where our airmen were housed and the new compound,” he said. “As the Iraqi Air Force gets bigger, this expansion is vital for the 450 additional air men who will be reporting for duty here,” he noted.

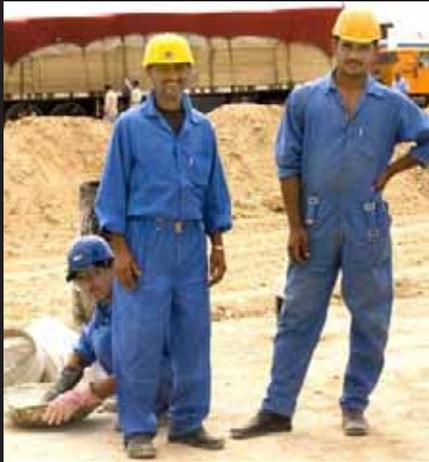
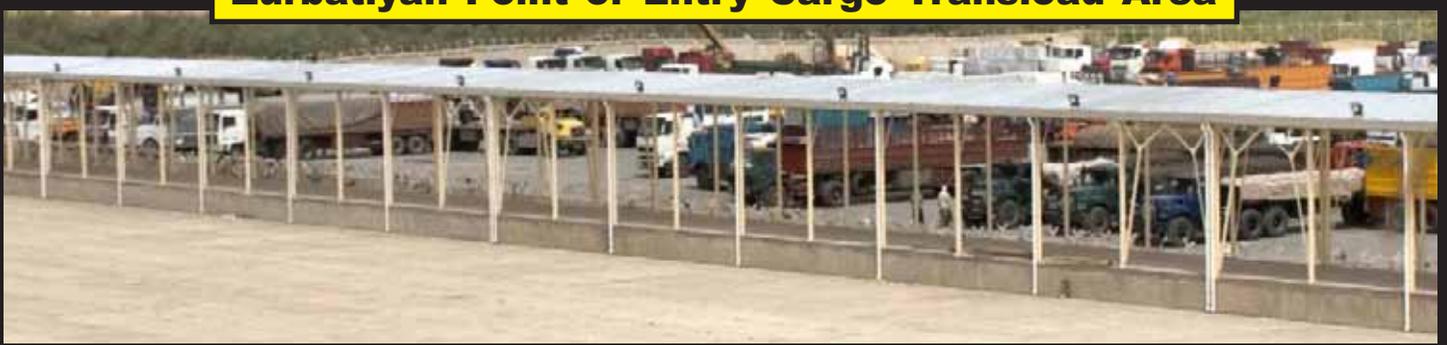
According to Lt.Col. Humberto Ramirez, who heads up USACE’s Basra Area Office, construction on the \$1.9 million project took about six months to complete. It includes new housing units with

air conditioners, a dining facility, as well as two new 550 kilovolt generators. The Iraqi contractor doing the work had over 50 local Iraqis on his crew and is also responsible for training staff on maintaining the new equipment.



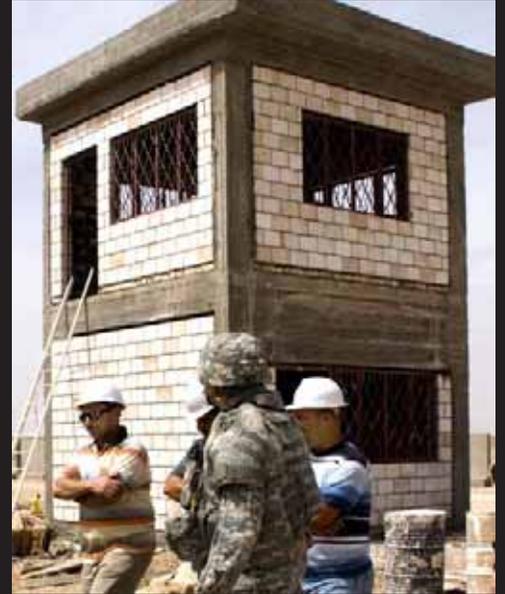
Iraqi Air Force Staff Gen. Anwer Hamd Ameen (left) and Iraqi Air Force Staff Maj. Gen. Hamed Al Maliki visit the new Iraqi Air Force life support facility in Basra April 14. (USACE photos by A. Al Bahrani)

Zurbatiyah Point of Entry Cargo Transload Area



A \$5.2 million Cargo Transload Area in eastern Wasit Province is taking shape. The project includes a loading dock, control tower, admin structures, and an inspection yard to allow 30 vehicles to load at one time on the Iran-Iraq border. It is designed to increase the border crossing efficiency while reducing smuggling and unregulated shipments. Nearly 80 local Iraqis are working on the project which is 75% complete. It is scheduled to be open by September.

(USACE photos by Alicia Embrey)



ARRIVING MEMBERS



CHARLOTTE CRAMER
Contract Specialist
Ft. Worth District



LINDA FREY
GRS HQ
Admin Assistant
Omaha District



FRED TUCKER
Public Affairs Specialist
Nashville District



KATHLEEN WERT
Human Resources
S1 Chief
SW Div CPAC
Ft. Riley, KS



DORIS "DORI" TURNER
MILCON
Project Engineer
Federal Aviation Admin
Washington, D.C.

DEPARTING MEMBERS



JONI HIBBARD
Chief, Civil Works
Louisville District



GREG WERNCKE
Adder Area Office
MILCON/MNSTC-I
Resident Engineer
Louisville District



JON ZATEZALO
Basra Children's
Hospital
Construction Rep
Pittsburgh District



KEVIN HAGGERTY
Qadisiyah
Resident Office
Construction Rep
Louisville District

ARRIVING



SGT MATTHEW RAUSCH
Supply NCO
Ft. George G. Meade
Baltimore, MD



Postcards from Iraq

USACE Iraq duty — making a difference

*By Israel Rivera, Facilities Services Assistant
Gulf Region South District, Tallil, Iraq*

For more than a year, I've had the privilege of being part of a truly noble mission in Iraq.

It's been an eye opening experience – humbling at times. An important and significant part of our team here are Iraqis. They come to work every day happy to help rebuild their country. Iraqis have the same dreams and hopes we all do. They want better schools, accessible medical care, cleaner water, more job opportunities, a brighter future for their children and grandchildren. And as part of the USACE team, we're helping make those hopes a reality.

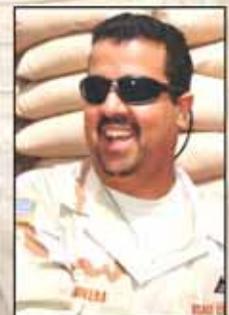
The Iraqis on our staff are an uplifting group. They want to be able to provide the basic necessities without having to fear for their lives. I pick them up first thing every morning at the front gate. I am proud of the remarkable opportunity to get to know them and work alongside them. They are an inspiration to everyone here. You can see the progress being made and there's a growing optimism among the Iraqi people about where their country is headed. We're working hard to get this job done.

I want to recognize my co-workers and friends at the USACE San Francisco District for their encouragement as I was considering whether to volunteer for this opportunity. I want to thank my lovely wife Christine and our family for their continued support.

Although I am missing my loved ones, I know I made the right decision. I am with a truly remarkable team of Military, Civilians and Iraqis. I'm proud to say I was part of this important moment in Iraq's history.



Israel Rivera says hello to a few of the Iraqis on the staff at Gulf Region South District, Tallil Air Base, Iraq. Israel deployed in March 2008, and provides facilities support working for the GRS Logistics Office.



Basra Children's Hospital



Col. Jack Drolet and Col. Jeffry Knippel



Air Force Col. Jeffry Knippel made a pre-deployment visit to GRS in April and viewed construction progress on the \$165.6 million Basra Children's Hospital that is scheduled to open later this year. This project will provide the only state-of-the-art pediatric specialist hospital in Iraq and will serve as not only a tertiary care center focused on childhood cancers, but will also become a training facility capable of improving and expanding the training of health professionals throughout Iraq. Col. Knippel will take over as the GRS Commander in July.

Basra Children's Hospital



Lt. Col. "Bear" Ramirez, CSM Michael Sangren, Col. Jeffrey Knippel, Gerald Ramos, and Col. Jack Drolet



Col. Knippel and Gerald Ramos



Hundreds of Iraqis are on the construction crew completing the \$165.6 million Basra Children's Hospital that is scheduled to open later this year. Components of the project include a 172,000-sq-ft. two-story children's hospital, mechanical and electrical plants, a staff dormitory, medical waste treatment plant, oxygen generation plant, autoclave building, medical supply warehouse, back-up generators, roads/parking, and landscaping on the 14-acre site. Once in full operation, it will employ in excess of 1,000 professionals and supporting staff. Air Force Col. Jeffrey Knippel viewed the ongoing construction during a pre-deployment visit to GRS in April.

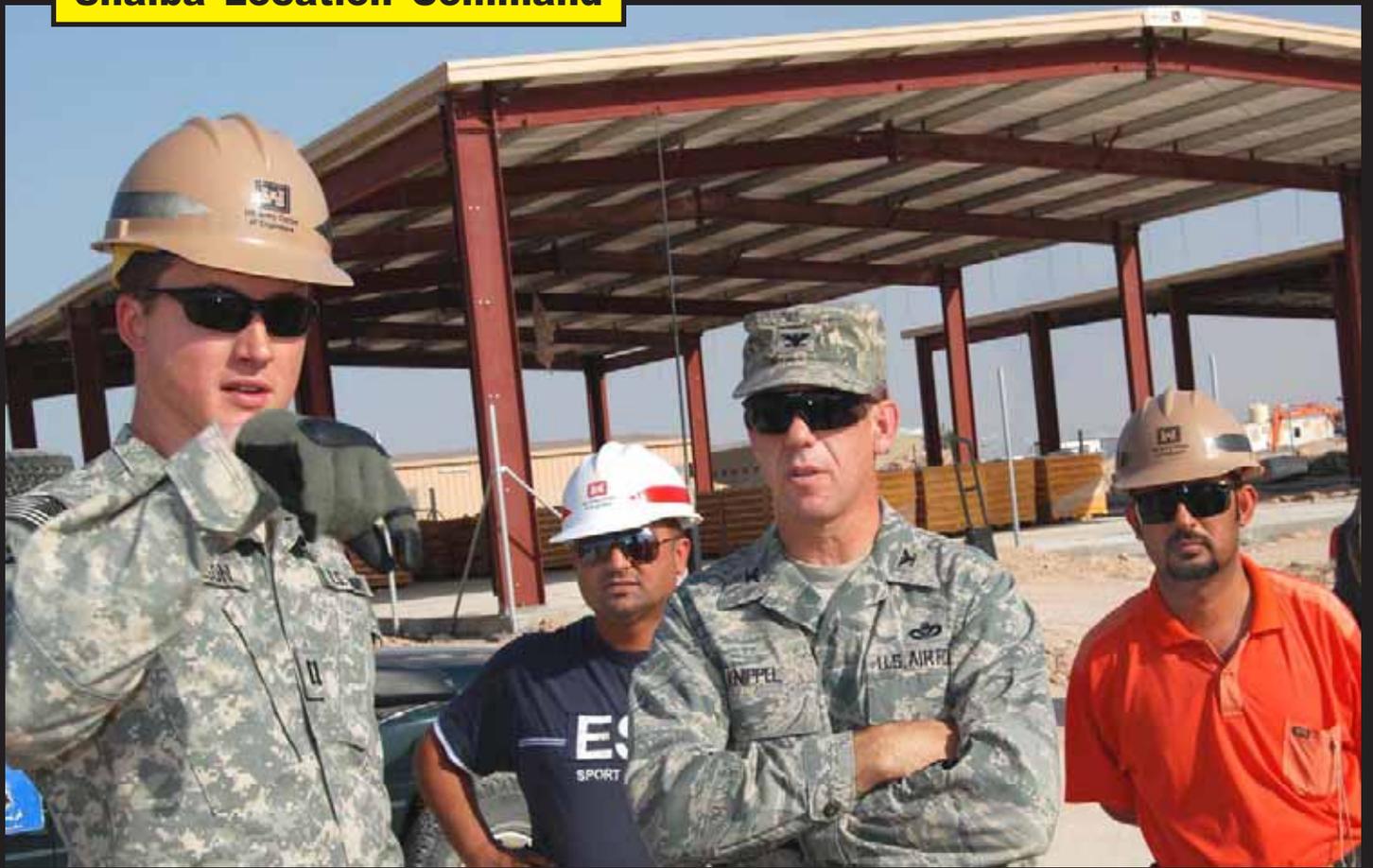
Umm Qasr Pier/Seawall



Col. Jack Drolet (left), Col. Knippel, and LTJG Daniel Gutierrez

Air Force Col. Jeffry Knippel views the construction progress on the \$52 million pier and seawall project at Umm Qasr. The first steel sheetpile shipment consisting of 2,647 tons has been off-loaded and the remaining 438 tons is on its way. The construction crew is currently putting in the road to the crane pad that will require about 20,000 cubic meters of material. This is the first Foreign Military Sales project between Iraq and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It will provide a state-of-the-art berthing facility for the Iraqi Navy and will support patrol vessels responsible for securing vital port infrastructure and seaways in Iraq's territorial waters. The face of the new pier will be about 213 meters. Col. Knippel made his pre-deployment visit to GRS in April and will be taking over as the new Commander in July.

Shaiba Location Command



Cpt. Joshua Wilson (Shaiba Project Engineer) briefs Col. Jeffrey Knippel



Hundreds of Iraqis are on the construction crew building the Shaiba Location Command in Basra where 1,000 Iraqi soldiers will be based. That \$38.9 million project is scheduled to be completed this spring. It includes dozens of new structures including barracks, warehouses, a headquarters facility, fueling depot, ammunition supply point, a dining facility, bakery, ice plant, laundry, barbershop, medical clinic, and fire station. Among those visiting the site recently was Air Force Col. Jeffrey Knippel.

Adder Area Office



Adder Area Office provided Air Force Col. Jeffry Knippel (left) an overview of their 46 projects valued at over \$250 million in Dhi Qar, Muthanna and Maysan Provinces including six new schools and 10 water compact units. Milcon/MNSTC-I Resident Engineer Greg Werncke (right) and Adder Area Office OIC CDR Mark Reynolds discuss details about a new Entry Control Point nearing completion at COB Adder. GRS Change of Command is scheduled in July when Col. Knippel will become the new GRS Commander.



Construction Rep Tommy Greenfield (left), Maj. Sinlan Morrow, and LTC Joseph Ebert

Adder Area Office



COL Knippel and Project Manager Steve Farkus



Air Force Col. Jeffrey Knippel (left)



Dhi Qar Resident Engineer Lynn Hancsak and Construction Rep Tommy Greenfield



Concrete is being placed round-the-clock at Ali Air Base in Dhi Qar Province in support of a \$58.5 million Combat Aviation Brigade Beddown Project. The work involves providing over 75 acres of contingency airfield parking for rotary and medium-load fixed wing aircraft as well as constructing a seven-story Air Traffic Control Tower. The customer is AFCEE (Air Force Center for Engineering and the Environment) and the 407th ECES (Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron).

Forat Area Office -- Diwaniyah



Qadisiyah/Najaf Resident Engineer Larry Kelley,
Col. Jeffry Knippel, Col. Jack Drolet



CSM Michael Sangren



Nearly 400,000 residents in Diwaniyah are benefitting with a more reliable electric grid from the completion of the new \$24.5 million 132/33/11kV substation in Diwaniyah April 16. Construction of the substation began in April 2007. Among those visiting the site April 14 was Air Force Col. Jeffry Knippel (bottom photo) who will be returning to Iraq in July for the GRS Change of Command when he will become the new GRS Commander. (USACE photos)

Forat Area Office -- Diwaniyah



Lt. Col. Dwight Davies is the Qadisiyah/Najaf Resident Office OIC and also serves as the Qadisiyah PRT Engineer.



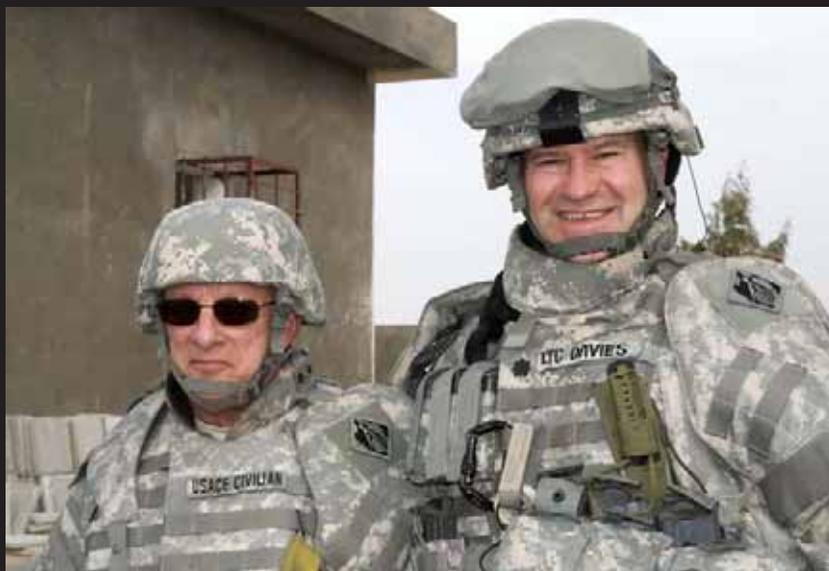
**Diwaniyah's new
132kV substation
goes on line . . .**

Iraqi contractor Pauwels International completed construction April 16 on the new \$24.5 million 132/33/11kV substation in Diwaniyah. Col. Jeffry Knippel (lower photo, left), Forat Area Office OIC Lt. Col. John Osborn, Qadisiyah/Najaf Resident Office OIC Lt. Col. Dwight Davies, Qadisiyah/Najaf Resident Engineer Larry Kelley, GRS CSM Michael Sangren and Col. Jack Drolet stopped by two days earlier to view the final testing of the equipment during the commissioning phase of the project. (USACE photos by Alicia Embrey)

Forat Area Office - Al Noor PHC



Lt. Col. Dwight Davies (center) discusses construction progress on the Al Noor PHC with Col. Jeffrey Knippel.



The new \$413,426 Al Noor Primary Healthcare Center includes a physicians' office with adjoining exam room, two nurse stations, a pharmacy, a mother and childcare treatment room, vaccination room and health education department. The facility will provide medical care for about 10,000 residents in the Al Noor village/Al Sumer neighborhood of Nahiyah. Construction of the 3,552-sq.-ft. clinic began in August, is currently 70% finished, and is scheduled to be completed by this summer. About 40 local Iraqis are on the construction crew. Shown in bottom photo left is Qadisiyah/Najaf Resident Engineer Larry Kelley and Qadisiyah/Najaf Resident Office OIC Lt. Col. Dwight Davies.

Forat Area Office - Babil



Construction of the new \$5 million Musayib Maternity Hospital in Babil Province is 82% complete. This project has employed hundreds of local Iraqis and when finished will ensure that thousands of local families have access to a modern state-of-the-art healthcare facility. The 50-bed hospital includes an emergency room, outpatient area, operation theaters, administrative wing, doctors' residence, reception area, wards, x-ray, laboratories, nurse stations, and pharmacy. Col. Jeffrey Knippel, Col. Jack Drolet, CSM Michael Sangren, Forat Area Office OIC Lt. Col. John Osborn, were among those visiting the site April 15 to check construction progress. (USACE photos by Victor Aquino)



Karbala residents celebrate completion of votech, ag school dorm renovations

KARBALA, Iraq – The walls look like they might crumble at any second. The classrooms are crowded wall-to-wall with students, some of whom are without a desk.

These are the conditions of many schools in Iraq. But projects all over the country are under way to provide a bright future for Iraq's education system.

Two renovation projects on a vocational school and agricultural school dormitory in Karbala were recently completed and community leaders celebrated with ribbon-cutting ceremonies. Both projects cost approximately \$360,000 and were completed in about six months.

The vocational school services approximately 300 male students who study electronics, electricity, agriculture and agricultural machinery.

Renovations to the vocational school included replacing ceilings; replastering walls; painting walls and ceilings and fixing sidewalks outside the structures.

Renovations of the dormitory included fixing up the original dilapidated one-story structure, building a second story and providing roof access.

The dormitory can house 105 students. Of the 330 students attending the school, 22 are currently scheduled to move in.

The Provincial Reconstruction Team

behind the projects is also involved in building school bathroom facilities for 24 projects throughout the province. These facilities may seem extraneous to education. But for Iraqi females, it can be the deciding factor, said Lt. Col. Andamo E. Ford, Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region South District, Karbala PRT infrastructure chief and engineer.

"In Arabic culture, when females get to a certain age – the age of puberty – if they don't have good facilities to use, they won't even bother going to school," Ford said.

PRT members say completing reconstruction projects is important to Iraq's future.

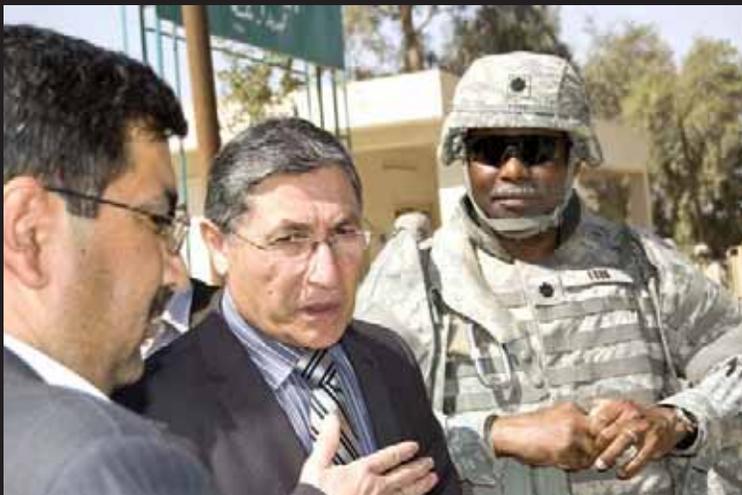
"(These projects) will help the young people of Iraq achieve an education or learn a trade," said Maj. John Gerald, 413th Civil Affairs Battalion contracting officer. "This translates into a better future for Iraq; because an educated population promotes civilization, cooperation and peace."

These projects are also valuable because they provide opportunities for Iraqis to see Americans as a positive influence on their country.

"It's real important for me to see that we, as Americans, can leave a positive legacy behind and hopefully change the mindset of some people so that they can see Americans are not bad people, that we are willing to work with everybody to provide a better quality of life for the people here," Ford said.



Karbala PRT Engineer reports



Karbala community leaders hosted ribbon cutting ceremonies to mark the completion of renovation at a local vocational school and agricultural school dormitory. About 300 students attend the votech school studying electronics, electricity, agriculture and ag machinery. The ag school dormitory can house 105 students of the 330 students enrolled there. Lt. Col. Andamo Ford (shown above) is the Karbala PRT Engineer helping upgrade local schools.



Karbala PRT Engineer Lt. Col. Andamo Ford is interviewed by a Baghdad satellite TV reporter.



Votech students on way to school. (USACE photos by Alicia Embrey)

Easter BBQ, karaoke fun



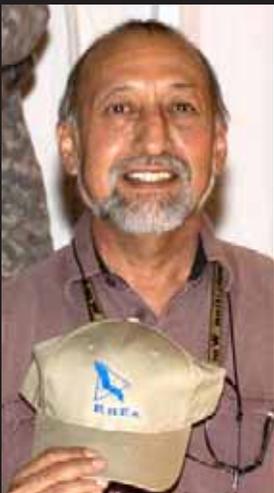
GRS staff stands up and joins in on some karaoke action.



Grillmaster "Izzy" Rivera



Maj. Melanie Dugar sings Madonna's "Borderline"



Jose Morales



Barney Davis wins a door prize.



Mitch Peterson



Kathleen Wert

Easter BBQ, karaoke fun



**Shirley Goodine
coloring Easter eggs**



SSG Tiakka Johnson performs Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody"

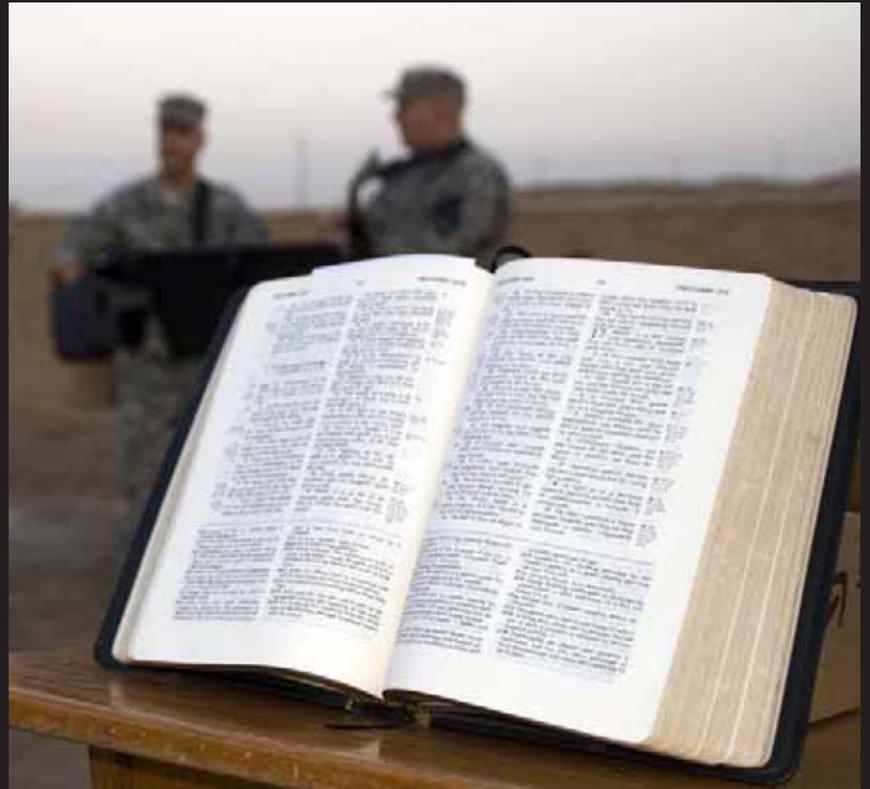


Joni Hibbard and Linda Christensen



Col. Jack Drolet sings Steppenwolf's "Born to be Wild"

Easter Sunrise Service at Abraham's home



Hundreds of military and civilians gathered for a Sunrise Easter Service in Ur at the Biblical birthplace of Abraham April 12. That home was rebuilt on its original foundation in the 1990s and contains 27 rooms, 3 staircases, and 5 courtyards. A new perimeter fence is being completed at Tallil Air Base which will return the archeological site to the Iraqis this month.



Forat Area Office team, Forward Operating Base Kalsu

Postcards from Iraq

Iraq duty -- supporting a great effort

By Victor Aquino, Construction Rep, GRS Babil Resident Office

When I read about the challenges of reconstruction in Iraq, I saw an opportunity to serve rather than just observe. With my son Victor aboard the USS Nimitz, and daughter Marie aboard the USS Ronald Reagan, I figured if I could deploy to Iraq we'd be adding another Aquino to the effort.

My job stateside as a Mechanical Planner and Estimator for the Public Works Department at U.S. Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Ca, prepared me for the technical part of my job – but I had no idea about the personal satisfaction one obtains interacting with Iraqis and helping them move forward.

As a construction representative with Gulf Region South District, I travel almost daily in the Babil province. My job is to help local Iraqi construction crews build quality schools, hospitals, water treatment facilities, and roads, on time and on budget. In a land where the language and construction techniques differ from those in the states – this is not an easy task.

One of my favorite memories is of my March 09 visit to the Snaditch Water Compact Unit, one of nine project sites we completed ahead of schedule. That day I realized we truly do impact people in more ways than I ever imagined. The Sheik of the community was at the worksite, smiling and very happy that USACE was ensuring that for the first time a quality water treatment facility would soon be providing clean water to the 500 Snaditch residents. He was waving his hands, tears in his eyes, proud that families there would no longer have to walk to the nearest water distribution point to obtain semi-clean water for their homes.

I recalled my childhood years, helping my Grandfather around his ranch and how hard it was to get water from a little creek for plants and livestock. Knowing that one of my projects was positively impacting so many people, seeing the true joy in the eyes of this Sheik, made me realize that volunteering for USACE is more than just a job.

The mission in Iraq gives me a great sense of satisfaction knowing that I am making a real difference for so many people here. When I return to California, my first priority will be making up for lost time with my family that I love and miss very much. But I'm taking home some great memories from this deployment along with a whole list of great friends from the USACE family here I've come to know and admire.



A youngster in Babil Province says hello to Construction Rep. Victor Aquino as he checks on essential service projects in that area.



Construction Rep. Victor Aquino talks with the local Iraqi contractor about current progress regarding four new water treatment units being built in separate areas of Babil Province. Each facility will have the capacity to produce 200 meters of drinking water per hour benefitting over 4000 residents. Total value of the four contracts is \$4.5 million.

Kut fish, meat markets taking shape



The Iraqi contractor is making progress on a \$2.7 million fish market and a \$2.4 million meat market in Al Kut in Wassit Province. The 1500-sq.-meter fish market will include 24 fish shops with cold storage, a cafeteria, coffee shop, central courtyard, and parking lot. The 2,000-sq.-meter meat market will include 25 butcher shops with cold storage, coffeeshops, central courtyard with two fountains, and a parking lot. Both projects will boost the city's economy creating 300 jobs. (USACE photos by Alicia Embrey)



New Al Kut Fish Market artist's sketch



New Al Kut Meat Market artist's sketch



A \$2.7 million fish market is under construction for Al Kut, a city of 300,000 residents in Wassit Province.

Snaditch Water Compact Unit

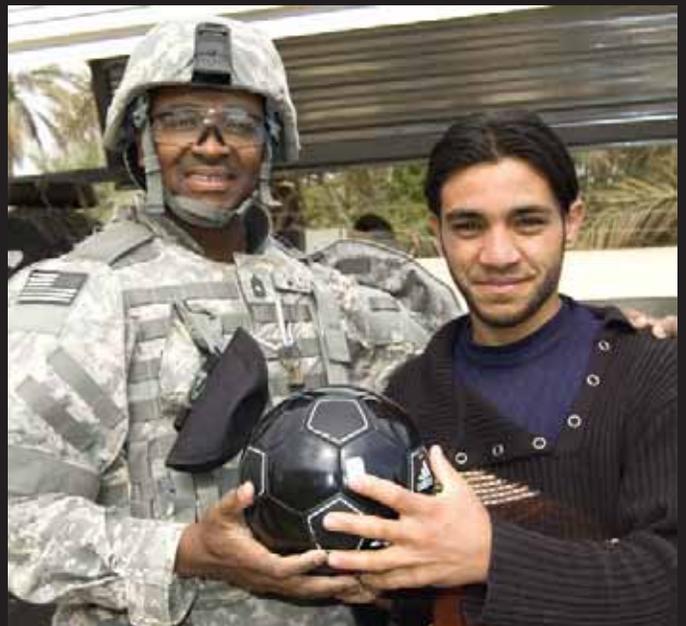


Babil Resident Office Construction Rep Victor Aquino



Babil Province site visit

During a recent site visit to the \$1.1 million Snaditch Water Compact Unit, Forat Area Office representatives including CW2 John Wallingford (shown above) brought smiles to the children by passing out soccer balls and candy. Work on the 200 cubic-meter-per-hour facility and distribution network is nearing completion which will provide fresh water to about 500 households to that community. About 50 local Iraqis were on the construction crew. (USACE photos by Alicia Embrey)



Forat Area Office NCOIC MSG Delano Wilson present a soccer ball to a local resident.



Nearly 50 local Iraqis are making progress building the two-lane 80th St. road in Hilla, Babil Province. Construction on the \$3.4 million project started in September, is currently 80% finished, and is scheduled to be completed in June. Visiting the site April 15 were Col. Jeffry Knippel, Col. Jack Drolet, CSM Michael Sangren, Babil Resident Office OIC Maj. Brent Bush, and Construction Rep Francis "Dutch" Steele. (USACE photos)

Postcards from Iraq

Helping Iraqis -- experience of my lifetime

By Joni Hibbard, Project Manager — GRS Chief Civil Works

I have worked for USACE 32 years — coming to Iraq on my first deployment to serve our country and to help improve the quality of life for the Iraqi people has been the opportunity and experience of my lifetime.

I am a Project Manager and Chief of Civil Works Sector which includes projects such as courthouses, prisons, water compact units, electrical substations and schools, all of which improve the local standard of living. It truly is an opportunity of a lifetime, to see the young Iraqi children and realize that we are giving them a better learning environment. They are so appreciative of anything and everything they receive. It is definitely an eye opener to view the quality of life over here compared to what Americans enjoy.

The USACE family in Iraq is a great team. Although many of the volunteers did not come from a USACE environment, we have pulled together to get the job done. The mostly civilian group also includes Army, Air Force and Navy personnel, plus Iraqi Engineers brought on to assist. It has been such an awesome experience to meet and work with people from "all walks of life."

My tour encompassed many of the western holidays, so that I was away from home on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. It's during those special times you truly appreciate the camaraderie this kind of deployment fosters. I have made many lifelong friends here in Iraq. I will leave here with mixed feelings, glad to be home, but sorry to leave such an outstanding group of individuals! I thank the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for offering me this unique opportunity and my husband and my two children for their continued support throughout this deployment. It's truly been time well spent. I will always look back on my deployment as the opportunity and experience of my lifetime.



Louisville District deployees tour the Ziggurat, the center of the ancient city of Ur, the capital of Sumeria, one of the most active and prosperous cities in southern Mesopotamia, and the birthplace of the prophet Abraham. Shown above are (left to right) Paul Fowler, Craig Bush, Joni Hibbard, Steve Farkus, Belinda Dillback, and Greg Werncke.



Iraqi youngsters from Nasariyah, ages 5 and 6, visited our Tallil compound in February enjoying a day of games, pizza, and hamburgers. Each went home with new toys donated by interested organizations and individuals stateside.

GRS staff visits Basra orphans



GRS Construction Rep. Mac Drake

Basra orphans warmly welcome Army Engineers

By A. Al Bahrani

Gulf Region Division South District

BASRA, Iraq – Volunteers stopped by an Iraqi orphanage April 26 to share some joy as they handed out toys and school supplies.

“Your visit to our orphanage today is a reflection of your kindness and humanity,” said Orphanage Dr. Wathib Al-Ahood as he welcomed the group from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. “We thank you for your help and support,” he added.

“It was exciting to be able to touch a child’s life, even in a small way,” said Georgia Lewis, an administrative assistant in Gulf Region South District’s Basra office.

LTjg Daniel Gutierrez, GRS’ Bucca Resident Office OIC, agreed. “It was a very memorable experience. We were greeted with such warmth and hospitality, not only by the children, but also the Headmaster and the teachers — I honestly was a little overwhelmed,” he noted. “Their kindness was truly a delight and is by far the most wonderful experience I’ve had in Iraq. Children are wonderful. There is an unconditional lightheartedness and happiness they possess that truly transcends borders and cultures. We traveled to Al Zahara Orphanage with the idea of handing out gifts from

the United States, but instead, I was touched by the gift of trust they extended to each of us,” he added.

Randall Lewis, Basra Children’s Hospital Resident Engineer, said “I’m glad what we did today helped brighten the lives of these children. But I can tell the special environment they have at the orphanage already makes them happy. Those youngsters and their reaction to us today were a huge gift to me personally. My hope for these children is that they can grow up safely and have all the freedoms and opportunities as are available anywhere,” said Randall Lewis. “And the great staff here, I’m sure, will help make that happen.”



GRS Admin Asst. Georgia Lewis

Construction Representative Mac Drake said, “Seeing their smiles was awesome. This visit has been one of the most rewarding experiences I’ve had during my 18 months in Iraq. I hope and pray all these children grow up to lead healthy, happy and productive lives.” The children sang ‘welcome to our home’ in English when the visitors arrived. The Al Zahara Orphanage in Basra provides a secure environment and education for more than 75 children.

GRS staff visits Basra orphans



LTJg Dan Gutierrez and Construction Rep. Jon Zatezalo present a young orphan a stuffed bear.



GRS Construction Rep Matthew Miller