



NEWS



JAN 2009

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



Iraq Army's Shaiba Location Command

About 350 local Iraqis are on the construction crew building the new \$38.9 million Shaiba Location Command in Basra. The project is scheduled to be completed this spring. (USACE photos by A. Al Bahrani)



Local Iraqi construction workers place concrete for a water storage tank at the new \$38.9 million Iraqi Army Shaiba Location Command facility being built in Basra.

New Iraqi Army facility under construction in Basra

By A. Al Bahrani

Gulf Region South district

Basrah, Iraq — Iraqi Army's new Shaiba Location Command in Basra, where 1,000 soldiers will be based, is quickly taking shape.

The \$38.9 million project is 55% finished and scheduled to be completed this spring.

"The project includes dozens of new structures including barracks, warehouses, a headquarters facility, fueling depot, ammunition supply point, a dining facility, bakery, ice plant, laundry, barber shop, medical clinic, and fire station," explained Iraqi Army Lt. Col Mazin Mohamed, Shaiba's Deputy Commander.

About 350 local Iraqis are on the construction crew. "We're very pleased with their efforts and the quality construction we're seeing," he continued.

"The new facility will expand our logistic capabilities in Basra," Lt. Col Mohamed explained. "Our staff will ensure Iraqi Army units operating here get the supplies they need so they can achieve their primary mission of safeguarding local neighborhoods."

Project Engineer Mark Porterfield with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is helping oversee the work.

He says, "It's great to see the pride local Iraqi construction workers exhibit every day at the job site. They're making great progress. Of those I've talked to, they're obviously happy to be part of this effort and know it's important work that will benefit Basra for years to come."

Construction continues on new Iraqi Army facility



Project Engineer Mark Porterfield checks construction progress at the new \$38.9 million Shaiba Location Command.



**Shaiba
Location
Command**

Iraqi Army's new Shaiba Location Command in Basrah is quickly taking shape. That \$37.9 million project is nearly half-finished and will include dozens of structures providing office space, warehouses, fuel and ammunition supply, a dining facility for 1000 people, barracks, laundry, barber shop, medical clinic, and a fire station. It's located on a military installation 15 kilometers south of the Basrah Air Base. The project, which started in May, is scheduled to be completed next fall. About 350 Iraqis are on the construction crew. "That new base will be providing personnel to help ensure Basrah neighborhoods are safe," said Project Engineer Mark Porterfield. "It's great to be part of the effort."

ARRIVING MEMBERS



JAMES GOFF
 Mayson/Muthanna
 Construction Rep
 Tulsa District



TOMMY GREENFIELD
 Thi Qar Milcon
 Construction Rep
 Little Rock District



BART SHIVERS
 Maysan/Muthanna
 Resident Engineer
 Fort Worth District



LARRY KELLEY
 Camp Echo
 Resident Engineer
 Louisville District



PHILIP KIELHURN
 Adder Area Office
 Construction Rep
 New York District

Postcards from Iraq

Iraq — there's a true sense of hope

By Robert Vanoer, Basra Area Engineer
 Gulf Region Division South District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 Home: USACE Chicago District)

Today marks my three-week anniversary in-country and it seems as if I've absorbed three months of information. Among other things, I've visited at least 21 project sites, attended dozens of meetings and read countless emails. Otherwise stated, I'm busier than the proverbial "one legged man in a kicking contest" and wouldn't have it any other way.

My office is currently responsible for \$250 million in construction projects. We're overseeing work on the Basra Children's' Oncology Hospital (1 in 5 Iraqi kids don't live past 5), the Iraqi Navy Seawall and Pier in the Port of Umm Qasr, new water and wastewater treatment plants, new Iraqi military facilities, running grid power to Pump Station 2 at the Sweet Water Canal (the main source of water for Basra), the Basra Central Prison, new police stations, two courthouses, and a slaughter house. There are others, but this gives you the range of work we're executing.

I'm with a great staff of exceptional people including our Iraqi engineers who visit the projects daily documenting the quality and progress of construction, and that it's being done in a safe manner. I'm very enthused to be part of USACE's historic mission here. Regarding the country of Iraq and in particular Basra, I was saddened to see there are significant issues still to be addressed — rubbish in the streets, drainage and sewage problems, potable water not widely available, and electricity in short supply. Nevertheless, there are signs of progress — sidewalk improvement projects using brick pavers, beautification efforts with tree plantings along roadways, new bus stops, parks, and a sizeable amount of new residential construction.

When we drive through downtown Basra, it is absolutely bustling with activity. Most importantly, there is now a true sense of hope here. Since the Charge-of-the-Knights campaign this spring which was an Iraqi military-led operation to clear out the insurgency, the general populace is finally experiencing some real security, with police checkpoints now scattered throughout the city. Threats still exist but right now things are pretty decent. As to the weather, we are all basking and enjoying the most perfect weather days imaginable. Everyone knows the other shoe will drop in the summer. The winter here is like a perfect autumn day back home. Nights and mornings are chilly enough to turn the heaters on for a bit, but the days are sunny and mild.

When I was reunited with the team of Iraqis with whom I had previously worked, the joy was immeasurable. It was quite gratifying to learn that these courageous individuals had not missed a step and continued to perform at an extremely high level. They are the backbone of our organization in Iraq.

That's a lasting legacy I'm proud to be part of.



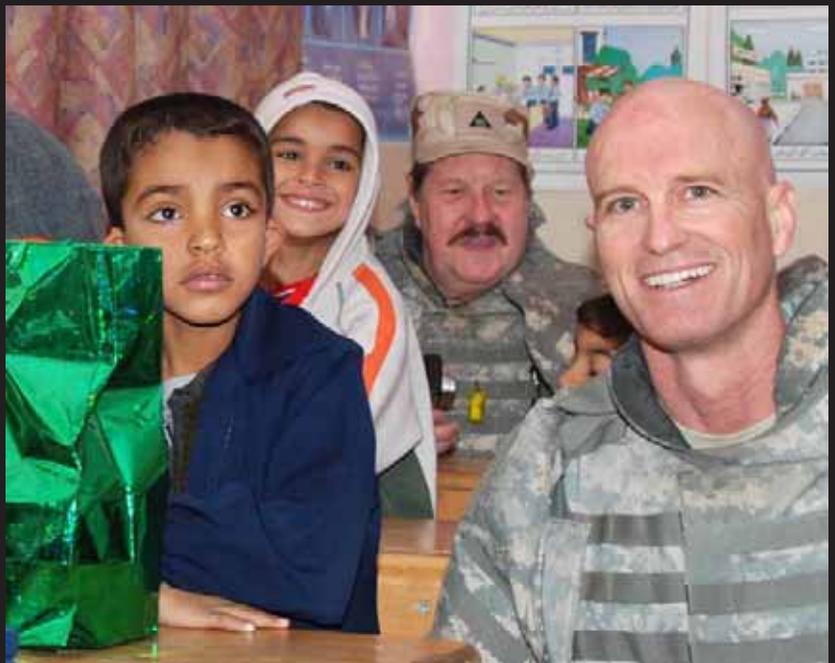
New courthouse takes shape.



Iraqi crew is quadrupling size of Basra water treatment facility.



Basra Area Engineer Robert Vanoer speaks with Iraqi engineers at a Basra Project site.



Loyd McClinton (background) and Mark Porterfield (right)

Army engineers help bring joy to hearing-impaired students

by A. Al Bahrani

Toys and soccer balls were presented to students attending Dar Al-Amal, a hearing-impaired school in Basra Jan. 19.

The school's headmaster, Wafaa Mohammed, said, "Today is very special for them. The kids are very happy to see you. We get very few such visits and your kind gesture means a lot to them. It tells them they are important and people really care."

Elizabeth Anderson, a Construction Representative with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said, "Seeing their smiles was wonderful. They were very well behaved and so appreciative." Anderson and six other USACE Basrah Area Office personnel visited the eight-classroom 28-year-old facility where 25 teachers instruct 130 hearing-impaired students.

"It was great to have an opportunity to give a little joy to these youngsters who have special challenges," said Loyd McClinton, also a USACE Construction Representative. "It was great to see their joy – each class gave us such a warm reception."

Georgia Lewis, USACE's Basrah Area Office administrative assistant, said, "When we first arrived, you could see that the students were wondering why we were there — but when we brought out the toys, their eyes got so big, it was a very special moment. I am so grateful to the school for allowing us to touch their lives in such a positive way."

USACE Project Engineer Mark Porterfield, says the visit was a highlight of his six months in Iraq. "Helping the Iraqi people is why we're here. This opportunity gave each of us a first-hand glimpse of why we're all working so hard on this historic mission."

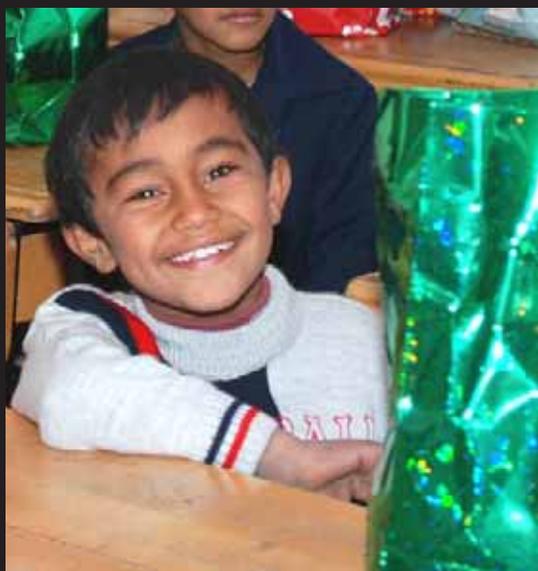


Elizabeth Anderson



Smiles everywhere as students offer a warm welcome to USACE personnel.

GRS gives toys to special students



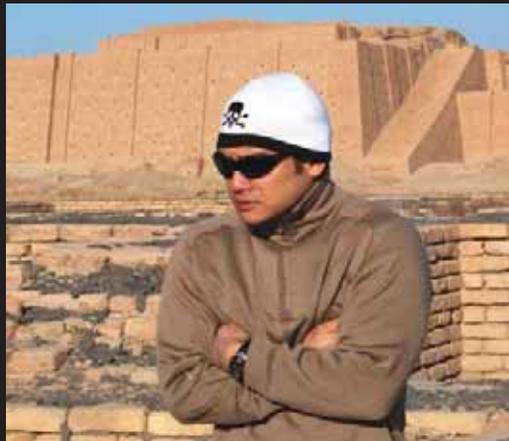
Georgia Lewis enjoys saying hello to some Iraqi youngsters.



GRS staff participated in a recent tour of 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.



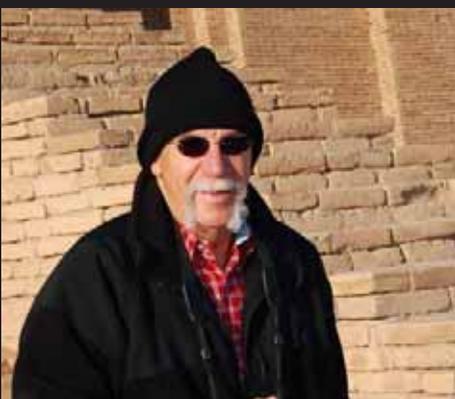
**GRS staff visits
Ziggurat of Ur**



Mike Monte discovered it can get cold in Iraq in the winter.



Paul Flamm



Denver Gillespie



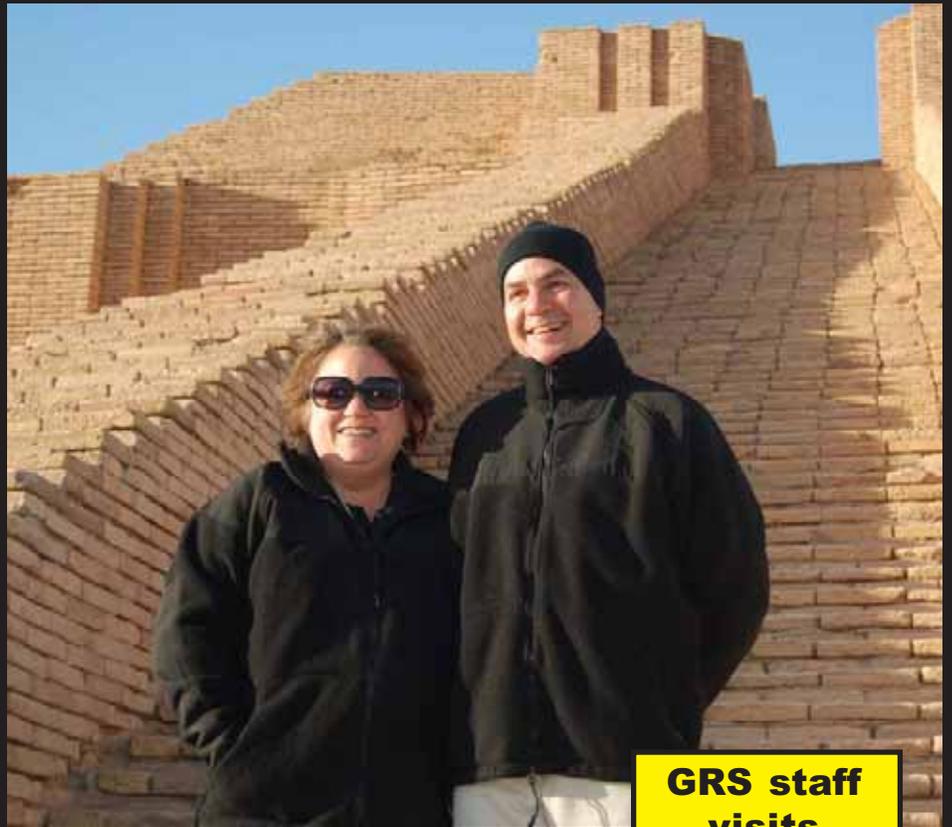
Avril Jones views one of Ur's ancient royal burial tombs.



Shelly Carter



Colleen Hickey



George and Linda Christensen

**GRS staff
visits
Ziggurat**



Robin Encarnacion



Mike Klyne



LTC David Berczek view what may be the world's oldest existing arch.



Robin Encarnacion, Paul Flamm, Shelly Carter, Denver Gillespie



GRS HQ staff say goodbye to MAJ Wright

'Coach' farewell

GRS HQ staff at Tallil said goodbye to MAJ "Coach" Edward Wright Dec. 16. Coach, who was mobilized with the 412th Engineer Command and was serving as GRS HQ Operations/Plans Officer, is heading to Basra Area Office on a follow-on one-year tour as their Operations Officer.



Senior Chief Joe Christian & 'Coach'



Art Patterson and 'Coach'



Maj Robert Kirkpatrick and 'Coach'



Colleen Hickey



LTC Berczek & CSM Thrasher



Steve O'Neill, Gus Ratcliffe, Dallas Morris



Denver Gillespie



George Afram



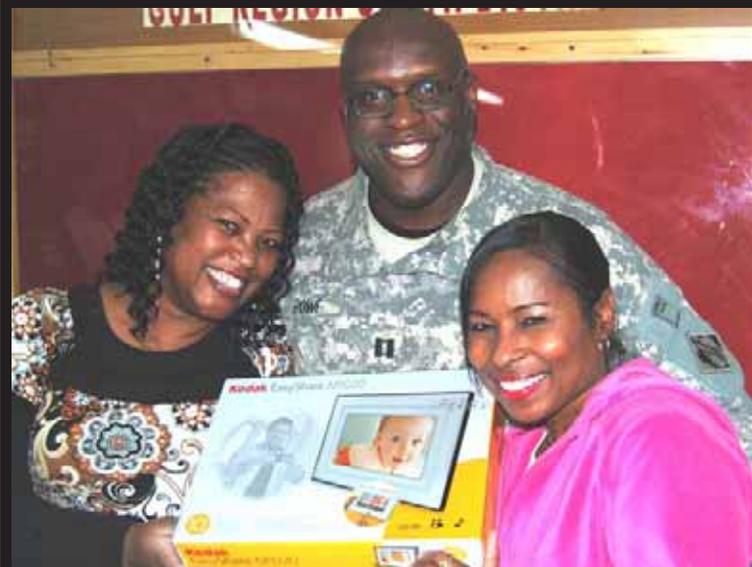
Gaz Evans, Si Hosey, Jason Johnson



Steve Farkus



**Farewell to
CSM Thrasher
and CPT Powe**



GRS staff hosted a special dinner Dec. 19 to say farewell to CSM Thomas H. Thrasher and CPT Patrick Powe (GRS Intel Officer) who completed their tours of duty as Army Reservists and are heading home.



Bringing joy to some special Iraqi youngsters



*SGT Danielle Colson and SSG Tiakka Johnson were among volunteers participating in Operation Voice of Hope Dec. 11 at COB Adder working with Iraqi young girls from the Al-Amal School for the Deaf, located about 20 miles north of Samawa, the capital of Muthanna Province. Each of the girls were given a basic audiogram to diagnose their hearing impairments and determine if a hearing aid would benefit them. The event was organized with the Muthanna PRT and the 3rd Sustainment Command's 7th and 287th Sustainment Brigades. SGT Colson is the NCOIC of GRS' logistics office and SGT Johnson is NCOIC of Adder Area Office.
(Photos by SSG Tiakka Johnson)*

DEPARTING MEMBERS



MAJ GLENN KIESWETTER
Qadasiyah
Resident Engineer OIC
412th Engineer Cmd.
Vicksburg, MS



SFC MATTHEW PLECTINOVA
Qadasiyah NCOIC
412th Engineer Cmd.
Vicksburg, MS



LTC EDWARD PRUETT
Basra Childrens Hospital
Project Manager
412th Engineer Cmd.
Vicksburg, MS



GEORGE SIMS
Adder Area Office
Area Engineer
Albuquerque District

DEPARTING MEMBERS



CSM THOMAS THRASHER
Command Sgt. Major
412th Engineer Cmd.
Vicksburg, MS



CPT PATRICK POWE
GRS HQ
Intel Officer
412th Engineer Cmd.
Vicksburg, MS



SFC GARY WHITE
Forat Area Office
NCOIC
412th Engineer Cmd.
Vicksburg, MS



MAJ KEVIN BRANCH
Babil Resident Office
OIC
412th Engineer Cmd.
Vicksburg, MS



MAJ PHILLIP JOHNSON
Forat Area Office
Operations/LNO
412th Engineer Cmd.
Vicksburg, MS

Postcards from Iraq

Call to duty in Iraq

By Command Sergeant Major Thomas H. Thrasher
Gulf Region South District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

I'm concluding my 2nd mobilization in the past five years — the first deployment was to Afghanistan, this time to Iraq.

I've traveled throughout the country on this assignment, from the north to the south, serving as the Command Sergeant Major for Gulf Region Division South District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Tallil, Iraq. We're overseeing nearly 200 projects valued at \$1 billion in Iraq's nine southern provinces helping improve basic essential services for Iraqi families including access to clean water, functioning sewers, medical care, courthouses, roads and bridges.

As the senior enlisted advisor for the District, I've had the privilege to work with a great team of people all striving to help Iraq move forward — military and civilians, and the Iraqis themselves. Nearly 150 Iraqi engineers are part of our staff, working hard each day to provide a brighter future for their children and grandchildren.

I've been outside the wire on numerous occasions to see the ongoing work. I've seen real progress here. The Iraqis are taking control of their country's future and the security situation is much improved. This is my first deployment with USACE and I'm proud to be part of their historic mission. Iraq is known as the cradle of civilization, the land between two rivers (Tigris and Euphrates). It's got great resources, families who value education, and a bright future.

As I complete this tour and return stateside, I want to thank everyone for their service and dedication. We could not effectively do this job without the support of our families who make the real sacrifices.

The USACE team is making a difference here. It's been an incredible journey, one of the best deployments of my career.

Thanks to everyone and stay safe.

CSM Thomas H Thrasher, USAR
844th Engineer Battalion
Knoxville, TN



COL Jack Drolet (GRS Commander, left), **MG Michael R. Eyre**, GRS CSM **Thomas H. Thrasher**, and **GRD CSM Richard M. Prater** visit a new water treatment plant being built in Thi Qar Province.



CSM Thrasher gives an Iraqi youngster a new soccer ball provided by stateside donors.

ARRIVING MEMBERS



CDR MARK REYNOLDS
Adder Area Office OIC
Kansas City, MO



LTC STEVE MOORE
GRS HQ FMS/MNSTC-I
Project Manager
HQ USAF Civil Engineer
staff at the Pentagon



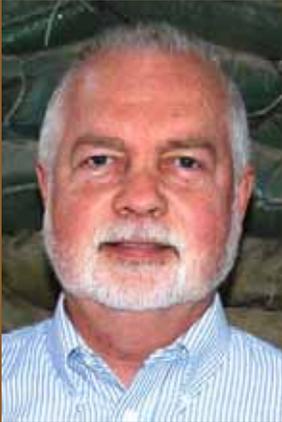
DAVE WEIR
Thi Qar Resident Office
Project Engineer
Chicago District



GREG CROON
Thi Qar Milcon
Project Engineer
Louisville District



BILLY E. WILLIAMS Jr.
Thi Qar Milcon
Construction Rep
Louisville District



KEN PARKER
Adder Area Office
Area Engineer
Granbury, TX



MATT HORTON
GRS HQ
GIS Administrator
Mobile District



JAMES CULLUM
GRS HQ
Office of Counsel
Little Rock District



SOLOMON CURRY
GRS HQ
Logistics Management
Mobile District



DENNY BAYS
Thi Qar Milcon
Construction Rep
Ft. Worth, TX



**SSGT MANUEL
CERVANTEZ**
BCH Electrical Tech
249th Eng. Battalion
Ft. Bragg



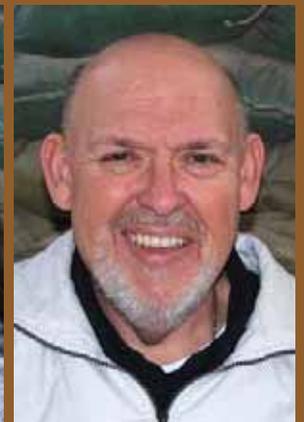
ANDREW MONTEZ
Basra Area Office
Project Engineer
Chicago District



DAVID JOHNSON
Thi Qar Resident Office
Construction Rep
Little Rock District



LINDA ZAMAROCY
Contract Specialist
Chicago District



KENNY BURFORD
Maysan/Muthanna
Project Engineer
Kansas City District

**ITAO checks
progress at Basra
Children's Hospital**



**Basra
Children's
Hospital**

Karen Aguilar, Director of the Department of State Iraq Transition Assistance Office, visited the 163.8 million Basra Children's Hospital Dec. 21 to view construction progress. Others participating included Richard Hancock (GRD's Program Director), COL George Wright (GRD Operations Officer), COL Curtis Lee (GRD Deputy Director of Programs), and CDR Phillip Cyr (Deputy ITAO Director). The 160,000-sq.-ft. 94-bed two-story facility, will provide a state-of-the-art pediatric facility with a focus on oncology. (USACE photos by A. Al Bahrani)

**GRS staff enjoys
New Year's fun**



Joanne Milo, Shirley Goodine, LTC David Berczek



*Barry Bragg & Shirley Goodine
check out the maple syrup.*



*Pietro Mistretta
and Mitch Peterson*



GRS remembers Aegis team with a take-out breakfast.



Plenty of fresh eggs.

Volunteers cook breakfast as GRS celebrates New Year

by Alicia Embrey

Tallil, Iraq – Shirley Goodine, Greg Vecchio and Greg Werncke brightened the GRS New Year's holiday with some tasty omelets and pancakes they served the staff for breakfast.

"I love the holidays and this was a great opportunity to bring folks together. What a way to start out the New Year," said Shirley Goodine.

Part of large Italian families, Goodine and Vecchio have a passion for cooking. "For me personally, one of my fondest childhood memories was our family holiday breakfasts. Just wouldn't be a holiday for me if I didn't spend some time in a kitchen," explained Vecchio. "This is my first holiday season away from my family ever, and I guess part of me just wanted to share the day with others and not be alone."

According to Vecchio, organization was the key to the event's success. "Greg Werncke did a lot in that regard including food prep and keeping track of people's orders. If not for him doing what he did, I know it would not have turned out as well," Goodine noted.

"I just showed up with a spatula and joined in," Werncke said. "The day provided a relaxed atmosphere where people could hang out, talk and watch movies. There were no college football bowl games on that early, so what else are you going to do on New Years Day?" he asked.

This is Goodine's fifth holiday away from family, the first for Vecchio and Werncke. "We all had great time. It was a lot of fun," Goodine noted.



Cook Greg Werncke



Cook Greg Vecchio

DEPARTING MEMBERS



LT NATALIE OSTRANDER
*Basra Childrens Hospital
 Resident Engineer
 NMCB Three
 Port Hueneme, CA*



PAUL FLAMM
*GRS E&C
 Engineering Tech
 Kansas City District*



DANIELLE BILLINGS
*GRS HQ
 Project Manager
 St. Louis District*



MAJ DEE J. KATZER
*GRS HQ Chief of
 MILCON Program
 Air Force Civil Engineer
 Staff, Pentagon*

Postcards from Iraq

My time in Iraq

**By CPT Patrick Powe, Assistant Operations Officer
 Gulf Region South District, Tallil Air Base
 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

I've learned a few things during my deployment to Iraq with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. What I know today after spending nearly a year here is that Iraqis have come a long, long way. It's no longer a beehive of insurgent activity — things here have dramatically improved.

My job as Assistant Operations Officer for Gulf Region South District (GRS) provided me an opportunity to interact with local Iraqis on a daily basis. One such person was my interpreter. He was a family man just like me. He has a wife and three children — I have a wife and two children. We were a lot alike and wanted similar things for our families (a good home, food, a quality education for our kids). When I traveled and talked to townspeople in other locations, I would get similar responses.

Iraqis, who were stifled by Saddam's regime, are now enjoying some hard-earned peace and newfound freedoms. My interpreter has satellite TV, a cell phone and internet in his house — he along with families throughout the country are now connected to the outside world. They are seeing how Arabs and Muslims in other countries live. They and their children have higher expectations and are seeking additional opportunities. This is how a free society evolves and it's great to see.

Although things are better, there is still much work to be done. Infrastructure that was neglected for decades will still require billions to improve — things we in America often take for granted such as clean water when we turn on the faucet, functioning sewers, electricity when we flip a light switch, access to medical care. GRS is currently overseeing nearly 200 construction projects in Iraq's nine southern provinces to address some of the country's essential service needs. We're making a difference.

I want to thank my wife and family for their continued support and understanding during my time away. I'm definitely looking forward to coming home!

I'm proud to have been part of the USACE team supporting their great mission. It's been an awesome experience, one I will never forget.

CPT Patrick Powe
412th Engineer CMD
Home: Jackson, MS



**CPT Patrick Powe
 and Iraqi interpreter Najem**



***Iraqis warmly greet us when
 we go out in the community.***



***Iraqi crews take pride
 in improving their cities.***

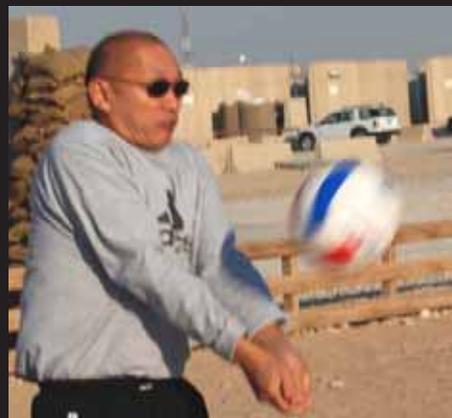
**GRS staff competes
in volleyball action**



*SSG Alan James and
LTC Steve Moore*



James Goff



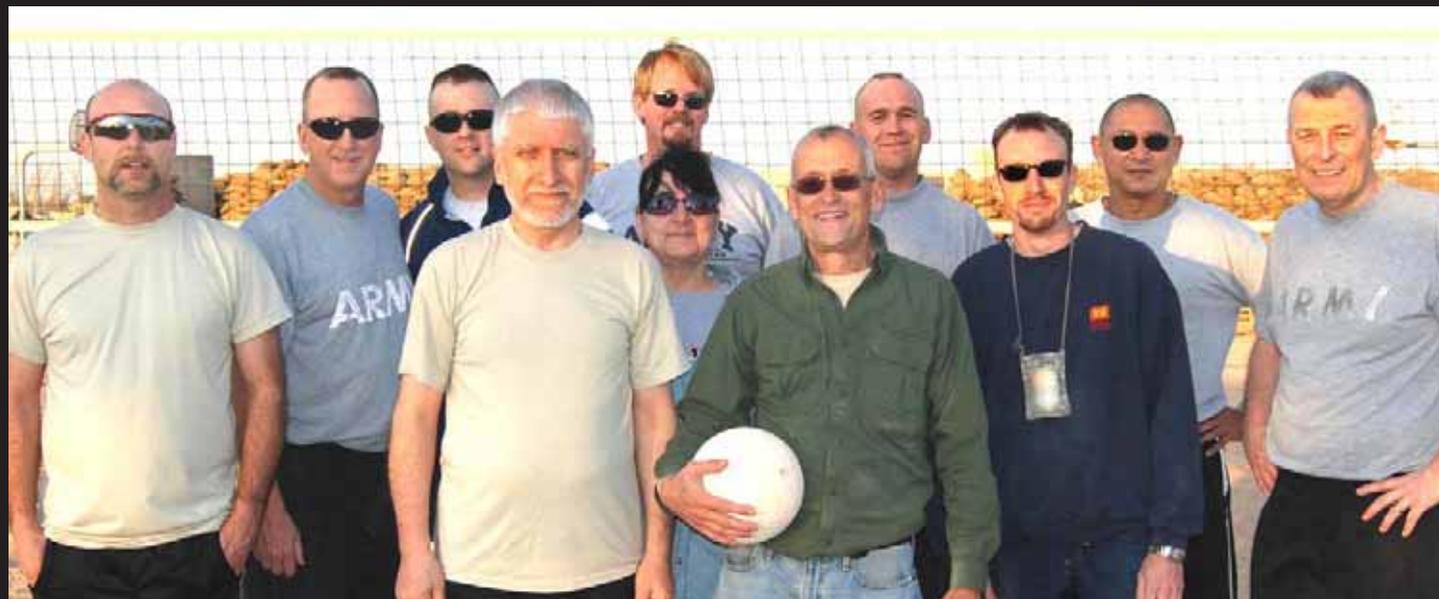
Ed Burdios



CSM Michael Sangren



George Afram



GRS players competing in a game Jan. 23 included James Goff (left), LTC Joe Ebert, LTC Steve Moore, George Afram, Bart Shivers, Shirley Goodine, Norris Jones, SSG Alan James, Denny Bays, and CSM Michael Sangren.

**GRD hosts
design review of
Umm Qasr pier**



British Royal Navy Captain Paul Abraham, Director of the Maritime Strategic Transition Team and senior advisor to the Iraqi Navy, speaks with Commodore Adel, Iraqi Navy's Chief of Staff during a design review of Umm Qasr's new pier and seawall.



GRS Engineer Nick Evanco speaks with Commodore Adel, Iraqi Navy's Chief of Staff, about the Umm Qasr pier & seawall project.



Construction on a new \$53 million pier and seawall will soon get started at Umm Qasr in southern Iraq that will provide the Iraqi Navy new port facilities as it continues to expand its naval capabilities. The pier and fueling facilities, scheduled to be completed in September 2009, will support new naval vessels being purchased by Iraq. GRS personnel participated in a working group meeting Dec. 17 in Baghdad and then briefed design plans Dec. 18 to RADM Mohammed Jawad Khadum (Commander of the Iraqi Navy) and GRD Commander MG Michael R. Eyre. This is GRD's first Foreign Military Sales project with funding provided by Iraq. (Photos by Robert Vanoer)

Lonestar entertains troops



Shirley Goodine with lead singer Cody Collins and keyboards player Dean Sams (right).

During an interview following their concert at Tallil Air Base Jan. 24, the band told reporters they were honored to be offered the opportunity to perform for those deployed here. "We can't say enough about the troops and what they're doing." The band performed a number of their greatest hits including "Already There" and "Amazed".

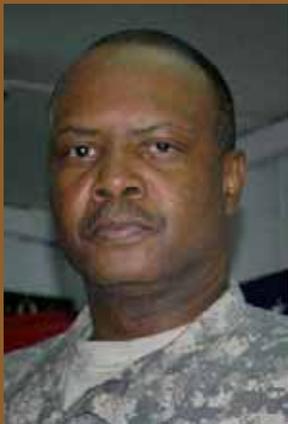


Country music band Lonestar, that has produced ten #1 songs, brought a taste of home to troops at Tallil Air Base during a concert Jan. 24 as the final stop on a week-long tour to Iraq. GRS staff members James Goff (left), Shelly Carter, and Maj. Sinlan Morrow had an opportunity to meet the entire band following the performance.



Construction is underway 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. Shown visiting the projects in December (photo at left) are LTC Mike Darrow and LTC John Osborn, the outgoing and incoming GRS Forat Area Office OICs. (USACE photos by Alicia Embrey)

DEPARTING MEMBERS



SFC WILLIAM MILLER
Shaiba NCOIC
412th Engineer Cmd.
Vicksburg, MS



SSG RALPH PRIVE
Basra Operations NCO
412th Engineer Cmd.
Vicksburg, MS



MAJ STEPHEN DALE
Basra Operations Officer
412th Engineer Cmd.
Vicksburg, MS



MSG DAVID BREITBACH
Basra Resident Office
Construction Rep
412th Engineer Cmd.
Vicksburg, MS



MAJ DANIEL GEORGE
Basra PRT Engineer
412th Engineer Cmd.
Vicksburg, MS

**Kids with special needs
get toys, book bags, blankets**



Sgt. Danielle Colson (top photo) and Staff Sgt. Ginelda Lyons with GRS along with Spc. Chris Irwin with 445th Civil Affairs Alpha Company from Mountain View, CA, visited the Rumaitha Community Center in Al-Muthanna Province Jan. 22 where they passed out toys, book bags, and blankets to 60 youngsters with special needs. See story next page.



A variety of military units and civilian organizations working at COB Adder have joined together to support a blanket drive for Iraqi families. Shown above are SGT Danielle Colson, COL Jack Drolet, and CSM Michael Sangren accepting 100 blankets from Randal Shell and Todd Lampert with Battlespace Flight Services and Bob Groman with General Atomics -- two of the many organizations supporting the blanket drive.

Groups collect blankets to help needy Iraqi families

by Alicia Embrey

Tallil, Iraq – Armed with nearly 500 blankets donated by military individuals, DoD civilians, contractors and organizations Staff Sgt. Ginelda Lyons and Sgt. Danielle Colson are on a mission to supply warmth for the future of Iraq – it’s children.

While deployed with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Lyons and Colson have visited various schools, hospitals and other USACE projects. These visits sparked their desire to lend a hand. “We saw that children in many areas lacked sufficient means to stay warm. We agreed that if there was any way we could help out, we would,” said Colson. “Just by reaching out in a little way, we were confident we could make a difference.”

Armed with charitable hearts and flyers, Lyons and Colson blanketed COB Adder with requests. “We have some great people over here and we had no doubt they’d be interested in participating. We started getting responses the same day.”



Staff Sgt. Ginelda Lyons says hello to one of the 60 youngsters with special needs getting a book bag, school supplies and a warm blanket at the Rumaitha Community Center in Al-Muthanna Province Jan. 22.

Much to the delight of Lyons and Colson, nearly 500 blankets have been collected in only two weeks and more are coming in every day. “A variety of organizations have joined in — Gulf Region Division South District, KBR, the Air Force, Triple Canopy, post chaplains — and the dining facility agreed to set up a drop off box,” Colson explained. Whether stationed overseas or at home, soldiers are willing to help those in need. “Wherever I’m at, I try to make things better and help when it’s needed. Whether it’s Iraq, Korea, Hawaii or back home in Georgia, there are always opportunities to help those in need,” Colson concluded.



Blankets, book bags and school supplies were given to 60 Iraqi youngsters with special needs at the Rumaitha Community Center in Al-Muthanna Province Jan. 22.