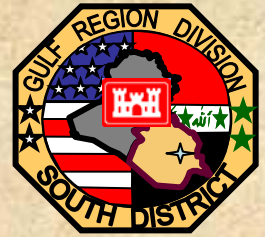




Southern Views



Produced for the Men and Women of Gulf Region South

Volume 1, Issue 1

September 2006

First issue of “Southern Views” hits the streets

By Ken Holder
Public Affairs Officer
GRS

You're reading the first issue of **Southern Views** – the internal newsletter for the men and women of **USACE Gulf Region South**.

To the best of our knowledge a newsletter has never been done for GRS and we're happy to be able to bring this one to you.

It is our fondest hope that the publication will tell your story to not only your fellow volunteers, but also that you'll be proud enough of it to send the publication to your friends and families around the world.

There is no doubt that this publication will grow over time and it will take on the personality of the men and women who are serving here.

We ask that you submit your stories, your photos, your thoughts to us each month for inclusion in future publications.

Please send your thoughts, photos, and story ideas to me at any time at ken.holder@us.army.mil



THINK SAFETY!

Volunteering proves to be an eye opening experience

By Mohammed Aliwi
Iraqi Media Relations Officer
GRS

For Edmay Mayers the desire to volunteer for service in Iraq was the same as it was for many Americans – she wanted to do her part to support her country in the Global War on Terrorism. Once in Iraq however, she felt her heart open to the victims of war – especially those too young to have been anything but pawns of the previous brutal regime. Mayers came to Iraq to support America, she will leave with something much more precious – knowing that she brought some joy into the lives of some children who desperately need some happiness.

Working in the resource management office of Gulf Region South as an administrative assistant, Mayers is one of nearly 500 Army Corps of Engineer employees currently serving in Iraq. She spent most of her career with the U.S. Navy and Defense Finance and Accounting Service. At home in New Orleans District/ Real Estate Division / Appraisal and Planning Branch, Mayers works as a realty clerk.

Mayers has been in Iraq for more than nine months of her one-year tour.

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Southern Views

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Southern Views is your news and feature E-zine, published monthly. If you have news, suggestions for articles or ideas you think would be useful for **Southern Views** email us at ken.holder@us.army.mil or call the Public Affairs Office at (540) 542-1531.

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Commander's Corner

By COL Gary Johnston

Out of the Mouths of Babes

In the last few years, we in the Army have been bombarded with change. We are in a country in which change has become a way of life, both good and bad. I have been working in an environment of change for the entire 26 years of my career. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you a lesson learned that I got a little over 16 years ago that has helped me access and develop courses of action in an environment of change. My teacher in this lesson was my 2 1/2-year-old daughter and the object of the lesson was a child's clothes hanger.

At the time our second daughter was still an infant, so on Sunday morning while Susan was up feeding Katherine, I was charged with getting Alana ready to go to church. The standard operating procedure was that I would wake her up and feed and dress her. At some point in this operation, I would normally take time to shave and this act normally fascinated my daughter, especially if blood was involved. It would generate a string of questions as to why dads had to shave. It was during one such experience that this lesson was learned. Alana was sitting on the bathroom counter watching me shave. As I was answering a series of questions while attempting to shave, I nicked myself, which caused Alana to look away. It also caused her inquisitive gaze to focus on her Sunday dress hanging on the bathroom door handle.

As I am trying to stanch flow to the category III wound on my chin, the observations and lesson begins. The conversation went something like this. "Oh, Daddy look" and she points to her dress. "Yes, baby that's your dress." "No, Daddy the thing," still pointing to the dress. "What thing Baby?" as I try to determine if a call to 911 is required. "The thing on the dress." "Oh, that thing, it's just a clothes hanger," I remarked after determining the wound was not life threatening.

She holds her arms up and states, "I want to see." So I lift her off the counter to investigate this new find.

As I complete my triage, I hear her comment, "Oh, look Daddy, it's Bambi, and Thumper and Friend Squirrel." The hanger had a fawn facing to the right in the center and a rabbit and squirrel on either side of the fawn. Now the lesson begins.

She is standing in front of the hanger giving it an intense, squinty stare and states, "Oh, Daddy let me look at the other side." By this time, I am completing the last acts of my major medical treatment and make the offhand comment, "Baby, the other side looks just like that side." "Oh, Daddy let me see!" "But Baby, it's just the same." The pragmatic military engineer mind kicked in. This item was a hanger, clothes, plastic, blue in color, imprinted with forest scene and nothing more. "Oh Daddy, PLEASSSE?!" and batted her eyes. It was the eye thing (this would become an art form in later years) that got me.

So as the self-assured adult in this conversation, I took the dress off the hanger, turned the hanger over, and showed my daughter the other side. My statement was "See Baby, it's the same as the other side." Her immediate response was "Oh no, Daddy, Bambi is going the other way." I did a double take and looked at the hanger and sure enough, Bambi was facing left. I stood realizing I had trapped myself into only knowing what I thought to be the truth.

Commander continued on page 4



From the desk of the GRS Command Sergeant Major

By SGM Benny Hubbard



SGM Benny Hubbard



My short time in Iraq has been a real reward for me. I was blessed to have been assigned to the South District for the Corps of Engineers. I didn't know what to expect coming in and was shocked on entry. As a Command Sergeant Major, my troops were civilian as well as military personnel.

From day one my goal has been to philosophy the TEAM approach. I realized real quick what a talented group of individuals who shared the same philosophy as I aspired to convey. I am fortunate to be able to travel in all of our area and also out of our area.

It has convinced me in my travels that GRS personnel are the best in the country. GRS is one TEAM that is motivated and will not stop until the mission is done. I applaud each of you in a job well done. I am very proud to be associated with you and will try my best to represent you in the same professional manner you show me.

Our morale is on an all time high, we are making sure the life support we are providing is equal across the board, safety is always an issue but I see everyone doing there best to comply to all of the procedures as they are published, and we continue to improve on a daily basis. I will continue to travel throughout GRS to make sure we continue to maintain our number "1" status.

We are the best and I will continue to shout it to the world. I personally thank each and every one of you for the contribution you are making for our country as well as Iraq.

ESSAYONS and always remember...*Together Each Achieves More!*

-- Your Command Sergeant Major

Commander continued from page 3

I had not looked at both sides with a critical eye and I wondered how many times in the past I had been guilty of the same thing in other decisions, many of which involved the safety and lives of my soldiers. Could I have made better decisions? Today, the hanger resides as a marker in my study Bible and is a daily reminder to look at all sides of the issue before making judgments and decisions.

In this time of change, I would ask your help in developing the district to meet the needs of this Nation. To become a growing organization, we will need to learn to view the district from the eyes of our headquarters, our partners, customers, and fellow coworkers to make change that best realizes the needs of all of these. The last thing we can afford is to assume Bambi only goes one way because it is the way we have always thought.



Volunteering continued from page 1

Mayers has dedicated her off duty time to help the children of Iraq. She's been in contact with her friends and family back home to obtain donations of school supplies for Iraqi children. In Iraq it is not uncommon for children to not have the bare necessities to learn -- pencils, books, paper and schoolbags.

"I really appreciate that," Mayers wrote in an e-mail to friends and relatives back home who had donated school kits and candy for her to distribute. Mayers has had the opportunity to hand some of those donations over to the Iraqi students as she visited three different schools -- Al Diwanyah Kindergarten, Al Ameer High School for girls and Al-Zubeida Secondary School in Diwanyah.

"The girls were excited and they were very friendly to me," Mayers said. "And if there is still doubt in some minds as to why we are here -- my gosh, just look at these children and it is so easy to see just one of the reasons we are here -- making a better future for the next generation of Iraqi. I am certainly thankful to have been even a little part of this great mission," she added.

"The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is rebuilding and rehabilitating schools all across Iraq. Part of that effort is to replace mud schools and train the Iraqis modern ways of construction and safety. Contracts for replacing many mud schools have been awarded, and construction has started in different sites," Mayers said. During a trip to Diwanyah, she handed teddy bears out to the Iraqi children. "Al Diwanyah Kindergarten was amazing. I did not have enough bears to give out that day, I only had 50 and they had 70 children; so when we returned to Camp



Edmay Mayers visits with teachers.

Echo, I purchased 50 more bears and Barry Stuard, a corps employee who was working in Forat Area Office in Diwanyah gave them out to the children," she said. "After I returned to work here at Camp Adder in Thi Qar, I missed out on the real fun of actually giving these bears to these precious children and seeing the smiles on their faces. I do not have pictures of them receiving the bears -- I am still trying to get them."

Mayers has a passion for helping children and takes every opportunity to participate in humanitarian work to provide them with basic necessities. She would, in particular, like to see all the children in Iraq happy and living peacefully. She asked the girls at Al Ameer High School in Diwanyah to sign some teddy bears to send them to her grand daughter Kaci. "The signing of the bears was at Al-Ameer High School for Girls -- they signed the top hat of the bear for Kaci's classroom at St. Christopher School, Metairie, Louisiana (she is in the 4 year old program). To thank these girls, I sent bags of M&M's to them," Mayers said.

"Our goal is to create a developed society and long-lasting relationships based on our mutual desire for helping the Iraqis rebuilding their country. I am here because I believe in the what we're doing in Iraq and Afghanistan. "



Chief of Engineers visits Gulf Region South, expresses thanks and gratitude during townhall

From Staff Reports

LTG Carl A. Strock visited Gulf Region South recently to get a first hand look at how Iraq reconstruction is progressing in the Southern part of the country.

The Chief of Engineers flew into Iraq aboard an USAF C-21 landing at Camp Adder. He was greeted by an entourage from the District and the Division that included MG William McCoy, Gulf Region Division Commanding General, and COL Gary Johnston, Commander, GRS District.

LTG Strock wasted no time in getting down to business, going straight from the flight line into a briefing of the projects he was going to see while he was at GRS. LTG Strock toured the Nasiriyah Water Treatment Plant and the Nasiriyah Prison project. The site visits were followed by a command overview that outlined the state of the District.

Later in the evening LTG Strock led a townhall meeting at the Camp Adder dining facility that centered on the Corps' Strategic Vision – "One Team: Relevant, Ready, Responsive and Reliable, proudly serving the Armed Forces and the Nation now and in the future."

It was obvious to everyone in attendance however that his primary message to the men and women serving here in Iraq was that (paraphrased) – "your nation is proud of you, the Corps is proud of you and he is proud of you."

LTG Strock told those in attendance at the town hall how proud he was of being a part of the corps and the tremendous contribution made by those who had volunteered to serve in Iraq, Afghanistan, and in support of Hurricane Katrina recovery operations.



LTG Lorenzo Valenzuela poses with LTG Strock at the townhall.

Strock said that in his view the people of the Corps have proven that they are competent, courageous and committed to public service. While the majority of the town hall was centered on his pride in the men and women who have volunteered to serve, he also shared his view of the Corps and where we are headed in the future.

The chief's message included a review of where things stood in the Corps today – a short 'State of the Corps' message. He talked about challenges that we face as a nation, as an Army, and as a community of practice.

The Chief of Engineers explained that, in his opinion, the organizational changes made during the past few years have USACE moving in the right direction. He said his intent is for us to remain prepared for what the future brings as we work on doing the right things and doing things right.

LTG Strock visits GRS – the day in pictures



Above – LTG Strock talks to J.R. Long and Jun Morales about the progress on the Nasiriyah Water Treatment Plant.

Right – Gail Thearle keeps the COE's helmet and body armor safe and nearby.



Below – The GRS team got the opportunity to take a knee and pose for a group photo with the senior leadership of the Corps, the Division and the District.



LTG Strock visits GRS – the day in pictures



Above – The colors fly proudly over GRS.

Right – Rod Hill, Chief of Contracting, receives a commander's coin from LTG Strock.

Below – Command team poses for a quick photo.



LTG Strock visits GRS – the day in pictures



Top left – LTC John Balzano, LTC Kenneth McDonald and LTC Lorenzo Valenzuela.

Top right – Andy Adams says farewell To MG William McCoy as COL Gary Johnston escorts the general.

Above – LTG Strock explains the way ahead.



MCPO David McVaney coordinated all of The party's movements within the GRS area of operation.

ABOT Repairs are Key Part of Iraq Reconstruction

**By Ken Holder
Public Affairs Officer
GRS**

In the 1960's broadcast television carried a lot of public service announcements or PSA, as they are more commonly called. There were PSAs for the environment, PSAs telling you not to litter and PSAs from the Peace Corps that extolled the virtues of helping those in developing nations to build a brighter future for themselves. It was not uncommon to see Americans portrayed helping remote villagers develop sources of clean water, or pointing out the benefits of proper crop irrigation to a farmer in a developing nation – in general teaching those less fortunate than us, to be more self sufficient and build a brighter future.

The Army during that same period of time was not seen in such a positive light. The war in Vietnam was in full swing and the Army, was seen as an instrument of destruction. How interesting that here, in the early part of the 21st Century, the Peace Corps and the Army now seem to have a lot in common. The Army Corps of Engineers is building a future for Iraqis one brick at a time, one water treatment plant at a time, one permanent school building at a time. *Continued page 11*

Upper right – The loading arms were refurbished under phase one of the project.

Right – Sandy Rayl has kept a close watch on the ABOT project.



ABOT Repairs continued

The economic engine that will propel Iraq into the future, say most experts, will be oil and gas exports, and here too, you can find the Army Corps of Engineers civilian and military employees hard at work – building the future.

Two of the Corps employees in Gulf Region South, Basrah Area Office, that are making a difference are Oil Program Manager Sandy Rayl and Construction Supervisor Dave Anderson.

“I think you have to be a humanitarian to want to volunteer and come over here in the first place. You have to care about people,” Rayl said. “I think you have to ask yourself at the end of the day, ‘what have I done for the Iraqi people today,’ you have to care about your fellow man and want to help. If you don’t care about the Iraqi people I can’t imagine why you’d want to be here.”

The sentiment is one echoed by Anderson – “It sickens me sometimes that the real story of the Iraqi people and what we’re doing to help them, and what they’re doing to help themselves, doesn’t make it into the mainstream media,” Anderson said. “The Iraqis that we work with risk their lives everyday just to come to work and try and build a future for themselves, their nation and their families. That’s something you don’t hear much about in the news. When we leave here I want to be able to look back and know I made a difference for these people.

They (the Iraqis) are incredibly friendly, intelligent and for the most part they understand that we’re here to help and more importantly they want and need our help.”

Rayl and Anderson are currently focusing a lot of energy and effort towards restoring the capacity of Al Basrah Oil Terminal, also known as ABOT -- Iraq’s primary economic engine in the South. When they’re finished they hope their work will enable the platform to load 3 million barrels of crude per day into tankers – a major boost to the nation’s economy.

“Oil and gas are obviously the economic engines that will run this country,” Rayl said. “Right now it is the major export of the country. Someday that may change but right now the Iraqi people need the income this facility is capable of generating. They need our help and they appreciate what we’re doing”

Some of the things that will be completed during phase two of the construction include: emergency shutdown, metering, generators, fire suppression systems, life boats and life boat deployment system and control buildings all at a cost of \$41,594,799.

“These systems and the work we’ve done during phase one means this platform will be a viable commodity,” Anderson said.

Continued page 12

Tankers wait for days for the chance to fill up at ABOT. The repairs will make the platform operate at much better level and will bring in much needed revenue for the nation of Iraq.



ABOT Repairs continued

During Phase One the following work was accomplished:

Platform A (Loading Arms, Hydraulic Bridges, & Accommodation Units):

Strip down the loading arm swivel joints; and replace seals.

Refurbish 18 loading arm slewing cylinders.

Refurbish five quick disconnect couplers and cylinders; and replace a damaged quick disconnect coupler.

Repaint the loading arms.

Repair or replace all hydraulic systems that operate the loading arms.

Refurbish loading arm control panels.

Refurbish the two hydraulic power units for the 48" main line valves.

Refurbish all 48" local control panels.

Refurbish one hydraulic unit on Berth 2.

Repair telescope gangways on Berths 1 & 2.

Install fixed accommodation units on Platform A.

Platform B (Loading Arms and Hydraulic Bridges):

Replace a quick disconnect coupler; refurbishing a vacuum breaker; resealing the loading arm hydraulic power unit; replacing damaged hydraulic hoses; greasing all accessible joints; and performing a function test.

Repair and refurbish the 48" hydraulic power unit and perform a function test.

Repair telescopic platform bridging systems: remove, refurbish, and reinstall the hydraulic power unit, directional control valves; two main lifting cylinders; two extension cylinders; slewing motor and pump. Provide new hydraulic hoses and piping. Conduct a function test.

While the work being done on the platform is substantial, much of the benefit the Iraqis will receive comes in the form of learning improved safety and construction techniques. Anderson says the Iraqis are quick to learn and adopt American practices.

"When we first started out here safety was an afterthought," Anderson said. "I see more and more where the Iraqis are safety conscious. That's something that I feel really good about – knowing that they've learned things from us that can save their lives. I see them out here now and they're wearing eye protection, hardhats, they have hearing protection and they're wearing boots. This is a real step forward."

Rayl says that she wants to stay the course and see this project completed and for the program to succeed.

"The Iraqi people deserve our best efforts. I think their future depends on what we (the Corps) do in the months to come – in the time we have left. The closer we get to completing projects and going home the more important it becomes to do this work and do it right," Rayl said.



*News Around the District***Wall Street Journal Reporter Visits Basrah Area Office**

Bob Farrell, former Oil Program Manager, explains to Chip Cummins of the Wall Street Journal the status of several reconstruction projects. Cummins visited GRS to get a firsthand look at the work being done to reconstruct the South's oil infrastructure. The result of the visit was a positive article in the WSJ.

Adder Officials Visit Nasiriyah Drainage Pump Station

Morgan T. Morehart, program director with Washington Intl., Inc., briefs LTC Ed Patterson, Adder area engineer, and CPT Jason Campbell on NDPS status.

Ambassador Saloom visits Basrah Children's Hospital

Ambassador Joseph Saloom, director, IRMO, departs the plane in preparation for a visit to the Basrah Children's Hospital. Ambassador Saloom visited the site to assess progress and help chart the road ahead. GRS took over management of the project recently from USAID. When completed, the Basrah Children's Hospital will be a tremendous asset for the local people and surrounding communities.



GRS IM Team repairs communications link

Terrence Stitt (left), GRS IT Specialist, and Robert Lee, IT Specialist Forat Area Office, teamed up to repair communications equipment at the Hillah office. The team spent two days restoring communications. Stitt and Lee had to deal with equipment and communication issues in order to get the office back online.



Division CSM and District SGM meet to discuss issues

CSM William McDaniel (left) and SGM Benny Hubbard used the GRS change of command ceremony as an opportunity to meet and discuss important issues facing GRD, GRS and the engineer enlisted force.



*GRS People Notes***New Arrivals**

GRS welcomed eight new members to the district Aug. 13. Seating, left to right, James Hodges, James Bullinger, George Schmidt and Natalie Sudman. Standing, left to right, Sue Chen Chen, Thomas Dunn, Cheryl Hodge-Snead and Ethan Luke.

Pin and Patch

Five GRS members were presented with unit combat patches for more than 30 consecutive days in a combat zone Aug. 13. Receiving their patch are, left to right: COL Gary Johnston, Capt. Jason Campbell, Lt. Col John Balzano, LTC Ed Patterson and Lt. Richard Hallon, accompanied by SGM Benny Hubbard.



Parting Shots

Safety Signs

Some self explanatory safety signs...

