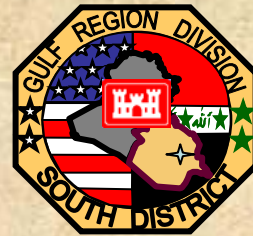




Southern Views



Produced for the Men and Women of Gulf Region South

Volume 1, Issue 2

October 2006

PAO Returns to the Mean Streets of Portland – Carries Back Lessons Learned from Combat in Iraq

By Ken Holder

First, I didn't write the headline. This will be my last column for Southern Views. In October I return to my job as the Division PAO for Northwestern Division in Portland, Ore.

While it is safe to say that I'll be happy to get back to my family and happy to get back to my work, it is also safe to say that I will miss everyone at GRS and I'll think of you often.

It's been my honor to work for COL Larry McCallister and COL Gary Johnston. While their approach to problems is different, they share three things that makes them great leaders and sets them apart from the crowd – they care about people, they care about people, and they care about people. I would be proud to work for either one again anywhere, anytime. Both could easily be general officers. I said what I had to say to COL McCallister when he left.

To COL Johnston, thank you for involving PAO up front in almost every situation. You truly understand what we bring to the table and because of that you involve us early and often.

Thank you for trusting me to do my job and giving me the room and resources to accomplish my mission.

For those of you that I got the chance to meet and write stories about, thank you for letting me tell your story and share it with others.

Holder continued page 12



Margaret Williams discusses a project with fellow engineer Air Force Capt. Jason Campbell. Williams and Campbell serve in the Gulf Region South district headquarters at Base Camp Adder in Iraq. (ARMY PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER)

Army Engineer Demonstrates Her Engineering Talent in Iraq

By Mohammed Aliwi

It is difficult to imagine even an ordinary working day at Camp Adder without Margaret A. Williams, project engineer with the Thi Qar Residence Office of the Gulf Region South (GRS) District.

The interest and enthusiasm she shows towards her work deserves much appreciation and praise.

Kindness, steadiness and readiness to help are those exclusive features that characterize Williams and cause everybody to relate to her on all levels.

The only thing stronger than her project management skill is her commitment to integrity. She is the example of a hard worker.

The first thought that occurs when speaking about Williams is her will. In the depths of her strong personality there is a great force of will.

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ARMY PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER

Sgt. Maj. Benny Hubbard with Peter Scarrott, security detail member, make a Sept. 6 progress inspection of the An Nasiriyah Maternity and Pediatrics Hospital.



Southern Views

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- Sgt. Maj. Benny L. Hubbard**
Command Sergeant Major
- Ken Holder**
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Commander's Corner

By COL Gary Johnston

What the Terrorists Forgot

A couple weeks ago we were all thinking about where we were on September 11th. Personally, I was inbound to Reagan National Airport in Washington D.C. on an early flight.

The flight would be diverted and it would be 6 hours before I would be able to get in touch with my family.

It would take me almost another 24 hours to get home from the airport I was diverted to.

In the years following the attack on the two Towers and the Pentagon, there's been many theories and analysis as to why terrorist targeted the World Trade Towers.

One theory has been that in the wake of Vietnam and Somalia, that the United States public demonstrated an unwillingness to support the type of long term sustained military operations required to fight a war on terror.

It was felt that terrorists identified our vulnerabilities and took the opportunity to attack our morale.

As a soldier, I understood that if the nation decided to take on a war on terror it would be a long and protracted war.

I must be truthful in that I was concerned about our nation's willingness to support a long-term campaign against terrorists and its corresponding casualties.

Then one day while returning home from work on the train while stationed in Chicago something happened that made me change my perspective on America's staying power.

It wasn't a presidential multi-country tour, Secretary Rice getting support funding for Iraq or Lebanon, or the democratic debates. It was that the Cubs lost.

That's right. It was the year that the Chicago Cubs had a chance of making it to the World Series.

There were all types of speculation about an all Chicago world series between the Sox and Cubs.

However, it was not to be, the Cubs lost.

The Cubs loss put what the terrorist may have forgotten about in perspective for me.

Now, being new to the Chicago area, I didn't know about the Cubs goat jinx, but having grown up in Louisiana as a Saints fan, I did understand disappointment.

This perspective came slowly in the days after the shocking Game 6 loss and the final Game 7 elimination.

After all the finger pointing, blaming an overzealous fan, and armchair second guessing of the coaching staff, I started hearing fans on the train ride into Chicago, and even in the papers, begin to utter the enduring words "wait till next year."

As I heard the loyalty embedded in these simple words it dawned on me what the terrorists forgot.

They wanted to break our morale but forgot that we are a nation of Cubs fans, Saints fans, Marlin, Red Sox, and yes—even Yankee fans.

We are a nation that will accept a loss but will never accept defeat.

Those enduring words "wait till next year" express the same eternal hope and optimism that our forefathers had for our constitution.

A team may be beaten, but that hope by their fans of a better next year will carry it through the bad times.

It's my belief that as the War on Terror continues that the fans of freedom will endure and sustain efforts to win something far greater than the World Series.

Wait till next year...what the terrorist forgot is that it is impossible to defeat hope.

God bless the Cubs
God bless the Saints
God bless America





The “Word” from the Desk of the Command Sgt. Major

By SGM Benny Hubbard

As I travel throughout the district I'm finding a common thread. Everyone is excited about what we're doing here in Iraq.

The South District has come a long ways in the past five months since my arrival.

Some of the faces have changed and we're all focused on the end results.

There's lots of energy with the people I talk with and I enjoy the commitment they have towards their projects.

A few areas that I'm concerned with are our situational awareness, safety, motivation, and your health. This month I'll talk a little on situational awareness.

In order for GRS to remain number 1 we must always lead from the front, which means keeping our people in the game.

We must remember that we are out of our comfort zones over here and must stay alert at all times.

I often hear “we don't do it like this in the states,” but we're not in the states. It is very different here in Iraq.

We have a defined mission to rebuild and transfer projects to the Iraqis.

Overall the vast majority of people here appreciate what we are doing for them and helping to make their lives easier.

There are others for whatever reason who refuse to comply, and these factions try and make it difficult for us.

We can't afford to get complacent here and must always remain aware of the potential threat, staying alert 24/7. We must know what to do the instant the situation is not normal.

Always comply with training drills as they only perfect what you need to do in a real situation.

You need to recon your area and know the placement of every bunker or safe haven in the vicinity of where you sleep, eat, work, shop, etc.

Also help in the accountability for the reporting process that eventually reaches our headquarters.

This is important, please take it seriously, and help keep everyone in GRS safe.

Some of you are re-deploying or going on R&R leave.

I ask you to remain vigilant and don't get complacent in your surroundings.

We have a tendency to let our guard down when knowing we are leaving our area. This is the wrong time to relax and take it easy.

As you get ready to leave, remember you're still vulnerable to the same dangers we all face.

“Stay alert and stay alive” is my motto.

Your destination will be there and it is my job that you arrive there safely.

So as you tend to wind down, stay alert.

I really want everyone to think situation awareness at all times and know what to do in the event the worst case scenario happens.

I'd like to say thanks to all of you who made it to Camp Adder for the 5K run on Labor Day.

It was fun and a great part of the SGM's PT plan. Everyone who participated did very well, and proves we have a great level of fitness throughout GRS.

I congratulate Randy Mendenhall in our Basrah Office for placing 3rd in the KBR sponsored photo contest.

I'll continue to recognize others as I get reports and travel the district.

COL Johnston and I really appreciate all that you do in GRS.

I will continue to sing your praise of being the best district in GRD.

Remember to always strive to do your best; you are an integral part of the team in the South District. You make a difference!

ESSAYONS! And always remember... Together Each Achieves More!

-- Your Command Sergeant Major



Future Looks Good for Iraqi Banks and Monetary Wire Transfers

By Mohammed Aliwi

Banks all over the world use a specific process to transfer money from one place to another in accordance with accepted international electronic fund transfer (EFT) systems.

Before the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi banks would wire-transfer money to and from the Central Bank of Iraq and use government checks, issue and guaranteed by that bank, to help customers get access to their money when outside of Iraq, according to a bank manager who did not want to be identified.

After the liberation, banking operations halted abruptly and lost their money because of looting and robbery, she said.

Currently, Iraq's two main banks, Rafidain Bank and Al Rasheed Bank, are accredited by many countries, have good records dealing with the government check system and wire transfers, but at the moment aren't dealing with electronic transfers because of technical problems.

Due to the difficulties with electronic transfers, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region Division has been forced to use other methods to pay its employees. The Corps' financial specialists went to work and came up with a plan to solve the problem.

Nicholas R. Ash, the manager of the Resource Management Section at Gulf Region South (GRS) District, said, "Normally, electronic funds transfer is a bank to bank transaction. The banking systems in Iraq are not on par with the rest of the world."

"But that should not be a surprise to anyone. What is important is how the system is developing," he said.

"Some 18 months ago, it was extremely hard to convince contractors to accept anything except cash and they had valid reasons."

Previously, when the Corps paid its contractors, cash was given upon the delivery of the completed project.

By using cash, they started encouraging the contractors to open accounts in the accredited Iraqi banks – accredited by banks that can transfer money from America to Iraq by wire service.

The Corps has sent the contractors a list of such Iraqi banks, approved by the Minister of Finance, to ensure the money is safely and securely transferred.

"Now, the situation is different," Ash explained, "The Iraqi banking system is improving and as confidence increases, we are seeing more and more contractors take advantage of the EFT system."

"We have a way to go, but it is improving at a very fast rate. Next year, we will look back on this month as another leap forward," he said.

"Contractors who are paid by EFT reap the benefits of safety, convenience and security."

The contractor does not have to drive hundreds of miles carrying very large amounts of money.

"The contractor can focus on what he does best, and that is rebuilding Iraq" he added.

According to Wayne P. Robertson, program analyst in the Resource Management at GRS, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers forwards the EFT information to the United Finance Center for input into the COE Financial Management Systems (CEFMS).

"I monitor the payments through CEFMS and do tracers on the payments if the contractor has not received the payment from the Iraqi bank within three weeks after the EFT has been sent," Robertson said.

H. Salman, a contractor from Missan Province, said, "It is unsafe for me as a contractor to travel from one province to another with all the dangers of the roads to receive payments in cash."

"Maybe a terrorist will attack me and have my head and my money too. So it is easier and safer to me to have my money through wires," Salman said.

There are many Iraqi professional bankers working hard to help the contractors get their payments correctly and on time.

Baghdad Bank Deputy Manager Layla Adnan Yahia said, "Our bank dealt with the electronic funds transactions before and we are still dealing with that."

"We have two credentialed correspondent banks outside Iraq, the Housing Bank of Trade and Finance and the National Bank of Kuwait."

"Those banks receive the funds from the Bank of America and transfer it to us. We appreciate the help of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to refresh this process again in our country," she said.

ARMY PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER



Wayne Robertson, standing, and Nicholas Ash discuss the next round of electronic fund transfers.



Remembering a Man

Who Cared Enough to Make a Difference

By Kenneth L. Holder and James Bullinger

Are you a politician who says to himself: "I will use my country for my own benefit"?... Or are you a devoted patriot, who whispers in the ear of his inner self: "I love to serve my country as a faithful servant?"

-- Kahlil Gibran

The noted Lebanese author and philosopher Kahlil Gibran could have easily been writing about an Iraqi employee of USACE Gulf Region South – an engineer murdered in cold blood whose only desire was to see his country rebuilt and the long time suffering of his people brought to an end.

Iraqi Engineer Salah Hadi Obid was a man intent on making a difference in native land. A man determined to help his countrymen rebuild his nation's infrastructure and improve the quality of life of his fellow citizens.

Salah was simply by any definition—a patriot—the kind of man of which his nation was in desperate need.

After three decades of neglect under Saddam Hussein's tyrannical regime, followed by the war in 2003 that removed him, then damage from looters and sabotage, much of Iraq's infrastructure is either destroyed, in decay, or inoperable.

Salah was a 35 year old degreed Iraqi engineer who possessed the knowledge, skills and the fortitude to do the job and to do it well.

"Salah was one of those rare individuals that possessed everything he needed to be successful in whatever field he chose," said Lt. Col. Lorenzo Valenzuela, deputy commander of Gulf Region South.

"As an Iraqi he was deeply saddened by all the hardships his nation and its people had been put through. Years of war, tyranny, neglect and then war again left their mark on Salah.

He also understood what we're trying to do for his people and he truly enjoyed being a part of rebuilding this nation to its former glory," he said.

His desire to help his country led him to employment with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as the deputy resident engineer in the Forat Area Office in the Qadissiyah Province of southern Iraq.

Salah's ability and his dedication to the reconstruction mission made him an invaluable resource -- but it also placed him in danger.

"He was our 'go-to' guy on a whole bunch of levels," said Valenzuela, "Engineer Salah was an excellent ambassador for his nation and for us.

"He trained other Iraqi Engineers on issues varying from construction techniques to safety.



Iraqi Engineer Salah Hadi Obid giving an impassioned speech on freedom during a ribbon cutting ceremony in early June for an Iraqi police station he helped build in Diwaniyah. (ARMY PHOTO)

When we needed to explain things to government officials – Salah was always the one we turned to and asked for help.

"He was more than just an employee, more than just another engineer, he was the heart and soul of our operation up here in Forat. I can't even begin to describe the magnitude of loss we all felt when we received the terrible news that he had been murdered," he said.

Michael Osborne, the resident engineer in the Forat office, not only

supervised Engineer Salah, but was proud to call him -- friend.

"Engineer Salah and I were friends and worked together for approximately 13 months. I trained him on USACE procedures and U.S. construction methods," Osborne said.

"His family and my family exchanged emails frequently." Osborne explained, "We exchanged Christmas gifts for our families.

"He was the right kind of person the USACE needed for reconstruction efforts in Iraq, Engineer Salah was a dedicated and loyal employee, experienced and professional.

"He always responded to taskings immediately and gave 110 percent to complete them," Osborne said.

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ARMY PHOTOS BY JAMES BULLINGER



Right – Resident Engineer Mike Osborne snaps a shot of the new school, above, under construction in Hashim Al-Merqal in the Qadisiyah Province which will bear the name of his friend Iraqi Engineer Salah Hadi Obid.



Remembering a Man *(continued)*

His projects included preparing the design for the 8th Iraq Army Division's barracks and force protection structures.

But one of the most important and last projects to Salah was the Hashim Al-Merqal School in Qadisiyah, which was once a mud and straw structure used by more than 500 children.

According to Osborne, this school became a reality because of Salah's tenacity and his dedication to his people.

"There was no money, no land and no support from the provincial government, but Salah never gave up hope and he carried the cause forward, as he did with all of his projects, and with some luck obtained just enough funds from the Corps an account dedicated to Iraqi educational construction project," Osborne said.

And with that \$182,650 victory, construction started June 13.

"The facility will be dedicated as the 'Salah Obid School' when it is completed in October," Osborne said. "Salah was well respected by his peers and other locals that he lived and worked with."

But by working for the Americans, Salah placed his life and family at risk with the forces of evil bent on stopping a free Iraq. He sensed the danger and had sent his family away to safety.

On June 23 while on his way to help a small village build a mosque, Salah was abducted, tortured and shot 12 times. His body was found two days later.

"Those who captured and killed him understood the psychological impact his loss would have on the reconstruction effort," said Valenzuela.

"Even in death Salah has defeated the very forces that sought to silence him forever. It is because of Salah that our resolve has been strengthened. We have never been more committed to the mission," Valenzuela added.

"The school that will bear his name forever that says to the evil forces at work in Iraq that you can't silence a man of character with a bullet or with acts of terror. At end of the day right will always win out," he said.

Ironically, Salah was born on America's Independence Day, July 4, 1970, and wanted nothing more than to share his talents with his people and bring freedom to Iraq.

"He was the future of this country and he would want us to carry on," said Valenzuela, "We owe him nothing less than our very best each and every day."

"He wanted a better life for his family and his country," Osborne said.

Before departing on R&R leave to the U.S., Osborne and Salah had a meeting on June 18 and Osborne described the depth of their friendship.

"I drove Salah to the gate after our meeting, we embraced and Salah told me 'I love you my brother. Be safe and enjoy your family.'" Osborne said. "Salah was a stabilizing presence with our local workforce. He is missed for many reasons."

Salah is survived by his wife Zaineb and young daughters Ula and Zaharaa, 10 and 8. They are safe and back home again.



Williams *continued from page 1*



One of the best parts of Margaret Williams' job is meeting and interacting with the Iraqi people. Here she greets Iraqi Brig. Gen. Saad Ali Ati during an April 12 ribbon cutting ceremony for the new barracks for the Iraqi 609th National Guard Battalion, a \$9.9 million project. ARMY PHOTO

She is very careful and attentive towards her job, which is reflected in the warm and thankful feedback of the Iraqi contractors she works with.

Iraqi engineers say the most amazing thing is that Williams always shows a strong appreciation for Iraqi engineers and is always happy to work with them.

She makes them feel like they are the biggest, most important partners at the job sites.

Coworkers say she has the vision of creation and translates it into project implementation, and communicates cleanly, openly and effectively.

"I've been working with Margaret for a year now and I can't imagine a better working relationship between her and the Iraqi contractors," said Rick Mers, project engineer at GRS.

"Margaret is thoughtful, responsive, has initiative, and is able to grasp the heart of whatever I'm trying to convey through words and imagery and design.

"She also is incredibly generous with her talent and makes the often difficult process of project management and representation into an interesting and engaging process," he said.

Mers says Margaret is attentive to every detail of the construction projects she is working on --costs, security and safety. Not least, she is a joy to work with.

"She's amazing. She has this combination of soft touch, clear skill, engaging humor, complete timeliness and overall competence," said Air Force 2nd Lt. Richard Hallon, project engineer at GRS.

"Margaret combines engineering and technological skills with heart and understanding that communicates the essence of the Iraqi associates who are working with her," he added.

Iraqi contractors know that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manages their construction projects through Williams, and it's her instructions that convey the quality and values of the Corps work.

"Before coming to Iraq, I worked as a construction representative for the Detroit District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers," Williams said.

"On July 28, 2006 I celebrated 20 years of service with the Army Corps of Engineers," Williams said, "I'm overseeing the construction of many big projects here in Iraq like the elevated storage tanks, booster pump stations, and pipeline installation for the Nasiriyah Water Treatment Plant."

Williams says she's working on the Nasiriyah Drainage Pump Station, the 609th Iraqi National Guard Battalion barracks, several road projects, four railroad stations, several bridge projects, and over a half dozen of other water projects.

She also says that the Army Corps of Engineers is a magnificent organization which is instrumental in overseeing military and civil construction, flood control, environmental restoration, navigation improvement, recreation, and emergency assistance during disasters.

"The Corps of Engineers has been instrumental in rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure," she explained,

"The work the Corps is doing has dramatically improved the living conditions and well-being of the Iraqi people."

Williams ensures that any construction project she has is being managed according to plan to meet quality objectives, and not cost more than is budgeted.

Developing a project plan--which includes defining project goals and objectives, specifying tasks or how goals will be achieved, what resources are need, and associating budgets and timelines for completion--is what Williams does.

Project planning, implementation, evaluation and maintenance are items she follows through the progress of her projects.

Williams also said that working for the Corps of Engineers has given her the opportunity to work with military officers and civilians from all over the world.

"I have also had the opportunity to work with our Iraqi engineers, who I have the utmost respect for," she said.

"They risk their lives each and everyday to work with us [Americans].

Williams says she has learned a lot from Iraqi engineers and hopes she has been able to teach them about the importance of providing our customers, the Iraqi people, with quality work.

"I also continue to explain to them the importance of safe work practices, which minimizes accidents on our construction sites," Williams said.



Career Success Brings USACE Volunteer to Iraq

By A. Al Bahrani

The high efficiency, dedication and pride that Joyce Jackson, administrative assistant with the Basrah Oil Area Office of the Gulf Region South (GRS) District, takes towards her work are worthy of praise.

Jackson's expertise in all aspects of administration has added to her success in her career.

Jackson never expected to be in Iraq, but when she had the chance to volunteer, she didn't hesitate to take the opportunity to come help the Iraqis better their lives.

"Truly the Iraqi people are caring people and are willing to be part of making a difference in their lives and for their country," Jackson said.

"You never hear them complain. They take life in stride and make the best of situation," she said.

Jackson explained that she enjoys working with the Iraqi people for she believes that everyone learns from each other. She has contributed and made a difference in her own way.

Maj. Zac Delwiche, operations officer with Basrah Oil Area Office, said that Jackson knows her job and does it well.

"She is always timely with reports, friendly and able to talk to the right person to get the job done," Delwiche said.

She has had a difficult year with the passing of her husband.

But she courageously returned to finish her time here in Basrah.

"I arrived in Iraq on Nov. 2, 2004 with a plan of staying 6 months, but I enjoyed being here and meeting the Iraqi people. So I kept extending" she said.

"As of November 2006 I will have been here 2 years," Jackson said, "I wouldn't have stayed for 2 years if I hadn't like it."



ARMY PHOTO BY A. AL BAHRANI

Joyce Jackson of the Basrah Office.

Jackson said that she has visited Al Ziggurat at the city of Ur and Abraham's house which is unbelievable and so interesting.

"I want to tell my people how incredible my tour has been, although the work is hard, it was worth it," she explained.

"Just knowing you are apart of a historical rebirth with the reconstruction part, plus building hope for the future," she said, "Isn't that worth the hard work?"

Jackson said that by November 2006 she will be home again, returning to her work at USACE's Sacramento District in California.

She says she has a lot of beautiful memories in her mind to sustain her, and hopes to return in two more years.

Army Corps of Engineers Answers Urgent Call for Transformers for An Nasiriyah

By James Bullinger

Many people are aware of the criticisms in the media concerning the problems of electrical power outages and the rationing across the country, especially in the Baghdad area, but many are not aware of the overall causes of the problems or how the USACE is working to address them.

Recently in An Nasiriyah, the city began experiencing an implosion of their power distribution network, leading to prolonged power outages and rationing.

In early June intermittent surges of power began destroying many of city's well worn transformers. As the summer heat intensified, the problems grew worst.

According to Lewis Tyler, the project manager for the Electrical Sector with the Gulf Region South District headquarters, the GRS understands the situation and is helping to provide a solution. Tyler oversees all of the GRS electrical projects.

He stated the main challenge lies with the country's transmission and distribution networks.

"Most of the transformers serving local communities and homes, which converts high voltage power down to a usable 220 volts, date back to the 'fifties'," Tyler said. "These transformers are already worn out and should have been replaced decades ago, but that didn't happen and many are now failing all across the country."

A great portion of Iraq's electrical structure dates back to the 1950s and 1960s, when the country first built much of its current capability.

In addition, Iraq's liberation by coalition forces has created blessings and a new curse.

"Individual Iraqis are experiencing a prosperity that was unheard of during the Saddam years," Tyler said, "Many Iraqis are now working and purchasing items that were once beyond their means or only permitted for a select few under Saddam's rule."

"The average Iraqi is now buying air conditioners, fans, TVs, refrigerators and appliances, cell phones and computers, which were once unavailable to them, and this has increased electrical demands everywhere," he said.

Tyler explained people don't understand that you can't connect multiple high amperage appliances to a line designed for one appliance or a light without a meltdown or burn out somewhere along the system.

"The old lines and transformers cannot sustain the demands or loads being places on them and they're overheating, overloading and failing."

City officials used power rationing as a means to safe-guard the remaining transformers, but failures still continued to occur as summer temperature reached summer highs in the 130s.

In early August the people of Nasiriyah were demonstrating in frustration about the severe situation and by mid-month these demonstrations had turned violent.

On Aug. 22, reports of death threats to the

Dhi Qar Province director general for Electricity and others, substantiated how dire the situation was.

Province and local city officials contacted the GRS's Reconstruction Liaison Team with an urgent request for assistance.

The RLT serves as a go between for local and regional Iraqi government officials and community leaders, and the staff of GRS.



Outdated and non-functional transformers fill the electrical maintenance yard of the Ministry of Electricity in An-Nasiriyah, Iraq, awaiting disposal. Recent efforts by the Gulf Region South District helped to provide 50 new transformers on short notice.

continued page 11

Transformers (continued)

"We establish and develop relationships with key community and project leaders," said Tim Salthouse, RLT leader for the GRS. "Then we facilitate introductions between our contractors and the communities where we have project sites."

Another aspect of the RLT is to assess the mood or sentiment of a community and provide ground truth information to the GRS commander, which in turn helps with decisions on support of reconstruction efforts and various projects.

"Our team provides advice and counsel on community activities and key people in the region," said Salthouse, "This includes information on groups or individuals who may poses a threat to reconstruction operations."



"Our task was to identify and recommend countermeasures to mitigate any possible threats to our people involved the delivery and transfer of the transformers to the local electrical company," Salthouse explained.

Then early morning on Aug. 29, four flatbed transports rolled into the Ministry of Electricity's local maintenance yard to deliver the 50 new transformers valued at just over \$140,000.



Above - A convoy of four flatbed trucks arrives Aug. 29 at the Ministry of Electricity's An Nasiriyah maintenance yard to delivery 50 new transformers.

Left - A new 400 volt transformer for An Nasiriyah is offloaded from a flatbed truck Aug. 29. The Army Corps of Engineers assisted with an emergency purchase after an urgent request from the Ministry of Electricity.

ALL PHOTOS BY TIM SALTHOUSE/AEGIS

Salthouse's team worked with the officials from the electrical sector and asked them to submit a complete plan on how they would propose to fix their problem, which was carried to Tyler.

Tyler conducted an analysis of the plan, then researched and found 25-250va and 25-400va transformers to help repair Nasiriyah's distribution network.

Before delivery could be made, Salthouse's team would need to coordinate security arrangements.

"We were able to quickly help Nasiriyah and Ministry of Electricity in this matter by working thru our RLT," Tyler said, "The RLT also coordinated the security for the delivery."

To date over \$942 million in contracts to rebuild or add new capacity have been awarded.

When finished, 60 new substations will be in place to provide safe, reliable power distribution.



Own the Edge...Safety ON and OFF Duty!



Holder continued from page 1

When I got here almost six months ago I thought this time would never come and now that it is here I still have things that I want to accomplish but time is short and I will have to concentrate on getting the projects done that I know will have the most impact.

GRS is a great organization, an excellent example of what a district should look like and what it should do.

There isn't one person here that isn't top drawer.

To my fellow morning meeting compatriots -- thanks for making the last 6 months fun.

Morning meetings were something to look forward to because you all have great senses of humor.

To the three deputy commanders, thank you for all your support and for allowing me access to the subject matter experts in your area that I needed to get tough questions answered.

Thank you for your advice and counsel.

So what did I learn over the last six months?

Here are a few things in no particular order:

- I miss my family more than I ever knew you could miss anything.

- If you stay at a place to long you will receive indirect fire.
- Ribbon cutting equals bad day to be a sheep.
- Clean uniform is a relative term.
- Indoor plumbing should not be taken for granted.
- If someone yells get in the bunker, get in the bunker.
- The Corps is an incredible organization.
- The capacity for giving and caring is apparently a part of our DNA.
- Porcelain does not stand up to rebar.
- I know less than I thought I did.
- We take being Americans too much for granted.
- It's not the guy at the chow hall's fault that your ID card is your CAC reader.
- It's harder to get up the four steps to the gym trailer than any other 4 steps in Iraq.
- No two steps in Iraq are the same height.
- Mohammed Aliwi knows lots of colorful Arabic words.
- Dates are pretty good when they're fresh.

Thanks for being my friends and my family.

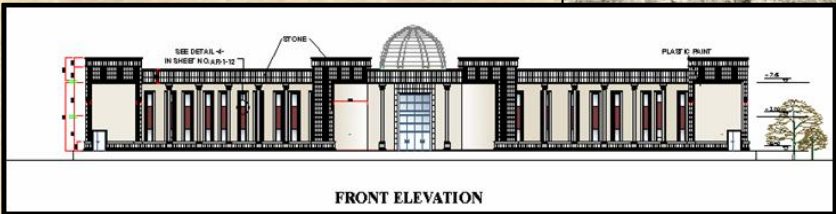
I invite you all (but not all at once) to stop in if you're in the Portland area. I'm in the book.



Hillah Federal Courthouse Started

Recently the Babil Area Office participated in a groundbreaking ceremony to commemorate the start of the Hillah Federal Courthouse. The \$6.5 million project will provide a quality state of the art justice complex serving the Babil Province. "I'm proud to be a part of this project to help bring security and justice to the Babil Province," said Maj. Kevin Stoll, Babil Resident Engineer. The Courthouse is a multi-floor structure constructed primarily of concrete and masonry materials. The site provides several challenges in its low elevation and flat topography. It will require removal of existing soil and additional fill to provide an adequate foundation and drainage. The interior and exterior spaces are efficiently organized for a user friendly environment and will be emblematic of a quality Courthouse. The project is estimated to require 16 months to construct, which will allow for operations to begin in 2008. The project will provide a courthouse that will symbolize a good and fair justice system for over 5 million residents of the Babil Province and South Eastern Region.

Pictured here posing for a photo after the ground breaking ceremony are (l to r): Maj. Kevin Stoll; Gary Jones, Babil RO Construction Rep; Architect Abass Ismael, Deputy Babil RE; Chuck Riley, Forat Area Engineer; Lt. Col. Gus Washington, GRS MNSTC-I PM; Lt. Col. Lorenzo Valenzuela, GRS Deputy Commander; and Lt. Col. Kirk Stemple, Babil Deputy PRT Leader. Below is an artist's rendering of the courthouse's front view after construction



USACE Turns Over New Coast Guard Forward Operating Base to Iraq

By Ken Holder

"The keys to stability in Iraq lie in unity, security and prosperity. Iraqis are making steady progress toward these goals. The formation of a unity government that upholds the voice and resolve of all Iraqi people will set the stage for efforts to diminish the violence and improve security, as well as enhance economic and cultural well-being." – General George W. Casey.

General Casey made those remarks in early May and today they hold truer than ever before. Stability in the nation of Iraq is dependent upon the people coming together, feeling safe in their nation and creating a society that enables the Iraqis to conduct commerce and seek out ways to import and export their goods. The Iraqi people got a boost to their stability recently as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers turned over a new \$3.26 million Forward Operating Base at the port of Umm Qasr.



ARMY PHOTOS BY KEN HOLDER

"Stability is something that Iraq is trying very hard to accomplish," said COL Gary Johnston, Commander, USACE, Gulf Region South. "They won't be able to do that unless they have all the elements in place. This project helps accomplish the three of the pillars that were outlined in May by General Casey. This base will allow Iraq to increase the security of its waterways, ports and coast. That will go along way to helping the economy provide prosperity for all the people of Iraq. Ultimately that will enhance the unity of the people of Iraq."

For as long as anyone can remember, smuggling has been a drain on the Iraqi economy. Some estimate that the nation loses millions, if not billions, of dollars in revenue from oil smugglers alone each year. Until recently the Iraqi Coast Guard had few resources in which to fight the highly armed and well trained smugglers who operated with near impunity within the coastal waters and rivers of the nation.



Iraqi Coast Guard Commadore Tariq Jabbar Hammodi and Col. Gary Johnston cut the ribbon on the Umm Qasr FOB.

According to Iraqi officials this facility provides the Iraqi Coast Guard with a secure forward operating base along the Khor Az Zubair waterway. With improved visibility of the waterways and port operations, establishment of this facility increases the level of security for both the ports of Umm Qasr and Khor Az Zubair.

"We're very proud to have been able to do this project for the Iraqi Coast Guard and for the people of Iraq," said Johnston.

"If the smugglers know that Iraq is serious and has the resources to confront them, maybe it will make them move their operations elsewhere or consider a new line of work."

Started in August 2005, the project was to design and construct facilities in support of a forward operating base for the Iraqi Coast Guard and Inland Waterways Department or CGIWD.

Major features of the project included the construction of administration and accommodations buildings, boat and vehicle hardstands, boat ramp, a pier with floating dock, perimeter fencing, a fuel point and a power supply facility.

"I was happy to sit down with (Iraqi Coast Guard) Commadore Tariq Jabbar Hammodi and discuss this project and his concerns for future development of the facility," Johnston said.

During the meeting Commadore Hammodi thanked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Johnston's team for the base, and expressed his ideas for other projects he would like to see at the installation. The request included upgrades to electrical service, water supply, communications, additional ship mooring and maintenance.

"The Commadore, like all good military commanders, wanted to make sure that I surfaced some of his additional needs and concerns up through my chain of command," Johnston said. "I assured him I would do that and encouraged him to make contact with the appropriate Iraqi governmental officials so they know his needs as well."



News Around the District



ARMY PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER

Construction for Iraq's Next Generation

Sgt. Maj. Benny Hubbard, center, and Rick Mers, a Dhi-Qar Resident Office construction representative, conduct a Sept. 6 "walk and talk" progress inspection of the \$9 million An Nasiriyah Maternity and Pediatrics Hospital project with Iraqi contractors and engineers. When finished the hospital will provide prenatal, delivery and pediatric services to more than 350,000 Iraqis in the An Nasiriyah and surrounding region.

Railway Reconstruction Efforts Rolls On

Col. Gary Johnston, GRS commander, gets a first hand look at some of the refurbished and rehabilitated equipment in the Samawah Railroad Maintenance Facility in Muthanna Province. Johnston, along with Andy Adams, left, and 2nd Lt. Richard Hallon, far back, toured the \$8.6 million refurbishment project as a part of the Sept. 6 reopening ceremony activities. ARMY PHOTO BY KEN HOLDER



Embassy Site Survey



ARMY PHOTO BY MAJ KEVIN STOLL

The Babil Resident Office completed a successful 5-day planning conference Aug. 17-21 on future security and force protection upgrades to the Regional Embassy Office's Al Hillah complex. Attendees included Brett Fredricks with Perini, Chris Farley and Paul Christianson with KBR, Hannan Mubarek (GRD), Greg Keena (Perini) and John Bombard (DOS).

News Around the District



ARMY PHOTOS BY JAMES BULLINGER

Iraqi Engineer's Daughter Honored with Special Duty for PHC Opening

A young Iraqi girl served as the scissor bearer for the Sept. 18 ribbon cutting ceremony for the new primary health clinic in Al Aziziyah, just north of Al Kut. She is Koka, the daughter of Iraqi Engineer Hussein Sabry – who helped with the construction project. Koka carried the ceremonial scissors atop an ornate tray surrounded by rose buds. Wasit Deputy Governor Ahmed Abdu Salam formally opened the PHC with a snip of the ribbon. Many local leaders and GRS representatives Col. Gary Johnston, commander; Lt. Col. Lorenzo Valenzuela, GRS deputy commander; and Maj. Theresa Straus, Wasit Resident Office resident engineer attended. Below right, Straus congratulations Koka, with her father, on the great job she did. The \$583,000 project will help to provide medical and dental care to 100 to 150 patients a day when it is up and running to capacity.

Jurf As Sakhr Opens New Police Station

Lt. Col. Patrick Donahoe, left, commander of the 1st Bn., 67th Armor Regt., 2nd Brigade Combat Team, assists Iraqi Maj. Gen. Qais Hamza, Babil provincial police chief, with cutting a red ribbon in celebration of the opening of the Jurf As Sakhr Iraqi police station Sept. 19. Lt. Col. Dale Johnson, North Babil Resident Engineer, was on hand to meet with the Iraqi officials, assess the construction and discuss the project. Johnson said this project will enhance the security in Jurf As Sakhr and serve as a visible reminder to the insurgents that the Iraqi police are serious about bringing criminals to justice.



ARMY PHOTO BY KEN HOLDER

GRD CSM Visits South District, Tours Nasiriyah Water Treatment Plant.

Command Sgt. Maj. William D. McDaniel, Jr., CSM for the Gulf Region Division, dropped in on GRS for his monthly visit Aug. 18-21. McDaniel uses his tours to each district every month to help keep Maj. Gen. William McCoy abreast of issues in the field. As part of his visit, McDaniel stops at ongoing construction projects and job sites for first hand updates. Pictured here (l to r), Project Engineer Rick "J.R." Long gives McDaniel a tour of the An Nasiriyah Water Treatment Plant, escorted by Lt. Col. Ed Patterson, Adder Area Engineer, and Sgt. Maj. Benny Hubbard, GRS CSM.



ARMY PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER

QRE Trains Up New PE

ARMY PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER



Qadisiyah Resident Engineer Mike Osborne, left, briefs new arrival Arturo Sosa, a project engineer, on Iraqi building methods and key items to look for during site inspections during a visit to the Ghammas Primary Health Clinic Aug. 22.

GRS S3 Pins On Lt. Col.



ARMY PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER

GRS Operations and Plans Chief Gene Griffin, left, was promoted to lieutenant colonel on Sept. 23 at Camp Adder. Col. Michael Herman, GRD deputy commander, served as host for the ceremony and promoted Griffin before the GRS headquarters staff and his wife who was watching live via an internet web camera. Griffin is a California National Guardsman from Sacramento and recently assumed the S3 duties after leaving Camp Echo as the Najaf Resident Engineer officer.



GRS People Notes

Pin and Patch



ARMY PHOTOS BY JAMES BULLINGER

Two GRS members were presented with unit combat patches for more than 30 consecutive days in a combat zone Aug. 26. COL Gary Johnston, commander, presented Lt. Col. Jason Tanaka, left photo, Najaf Resident Engineer; and Maj. Kevin Stoll, right, Babil Resident Engineer, with their patches and certificates.

Nothing Like a Hard Ride After a Hard Day

After a long day in the office there's nothing like a long ride on a stationary bike to wind down. Here various GRS members stationed at Camp Adder poses for a snapshot Aug. 28 with fellow spinners at the "House of Pain," also known as the physical fitness center. We thought about identifying the GRS folks, but decided to spare our readers the "sweaty" details.



COURTESY PHOTO



USACE – It's People Who Make the Difference



New Arrivals

The GRS command team welcomed new arrivals (sitting l to r) George Fowler, Dhi-Qar Resident Office construction representative; Keith Loos, contracting officer; John Murner, Najaf Resident Office construction rep.; and Priscilla Perry, project manager for electricity, to Iraq during a Sept. 10 hail. Standing (l to r) are: Air Force Lt. Col. John Balzano, executive officer; Col. Gary Johnston, commander; and Sgt. Maj. Benny Hubbard, command sergeant major.



ARMY PHOTO BY KEN HOLDER

Thanks For A Job Done Well



ARMY PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER

Col. Gary Johnston, left, and Sgt. Maj. Benny Hubbard, right, presented awards Aug. 26 to Yolanda Brown, Rod Hill and David Breitbach before their departure from the GRS District. Brown and Hill received the Superior Civilian Service Award and Breitbach a Commander's Award for Civilian Service. All three did a great job and their presence is truly missed.

Farewell Donation

Sandra Lipsey, an administrative support assistant at GRS HQs, donated her DVD collection of movies to the public share library in the Public Affairs Office just before her Aug. 25 departure. Lipsey and her husband Bob served for a year here, he as a construction representative in the Basrah Area Office. Both Lipseys volunteered to transfer over to Afghanistan to serve an additional 6 months with the U.S. Army's Chief of Engineering and Construction office and are now based in Kabul. Thanks Sandra and Bob.



ARMY PHOTO BY JAMES BULLINGER