



Operation RIO Update

21 November 2003

Tom Miller & Paul Lauderdale discuss work
at GOSP 3R, South Ar Ramaila.
Army Corps of Engineers Photo.

An update for all SWD employees and Operation RIO volunteers supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Mission Update: Oil. Task Force Restore Iraq Oil (TF RIO) is charged with helping restore oil infrastructure and production to pre-war levels. Production had risen to over 2 million barrels a day, reflecting an increase in the general health of the Iraqi oil industry. Revenues from oil sales go directly to Iraqi authorities for rehabilitation of badly neglected infrastructure and for humanitarian needs. Oil is the source of more than 95% of Iraq's foreign exchange.

Iraq Project Management Office (PMO). The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) PMO has been set up by the Department of Defense to manage contracts for Iraq work to include accelerating the bid process for new contracts. In awarding the contracts, the PMO will emphasize full and open competition and responsiveness to the needs of Iraqi citizens. The PMO will manage the reconstruction program from Baghdad under the direction of Rear Admiral (Retired) David Nash. USACE involvement will consist in acquiring the new contracts, then turning them over to the PMO. USACE will also be the lead U.S. agency for the PMO construction directorate. In addition, USACE current Director of Military Programs, Maj. Gen. Ronald L. Johnson, will serve RADM Nash's deputy PMO.

Iraq Division. USACE is in the planning stages of standing up a new Iraq Division in January '04 with three Districts – north, central and south. The Division itself will be located in Baghdad, and will have the mission of supporting the PMO construction directorate, plus administering some of the other contract work. MG Johnson will be dual-hatted as Division commander, as well as deputy PMO. Most of the new Iraq contracts USACE will award as a result of the supplemental appropriation will be turned over to the PMO for administration. USACE currently has nine firms under contract in Iraq.

USACE employees. As of November 18, USACE has 341 military and civilian employees in Iraq working closely with CPA and the ministries on oil and other infrastructure, electricity restoration, destruction of Captured Enemy Ammunition, and field force engineering. In addition, USACE is supporting the US Agency for International Development's infrastructure reconstruction program, and providing design and construction services to the United States Central Command. USACE hydrologists are inspecting hydrological structures and advising other agencies on restoring the southern marshes. Teams of damage inspectors have assessed schools and hospitals, followed by USACE contract workers beginning the identified repairs. USACE volunteers have initiated adopt-a-school programs, to the delight of school administrators and children. Through the CPA and ministries, USACE has completed much beneficial recovery work in the areas of housing, police and fire stations, government buildings, water resources, sanitary sewers, trash, recycling and waste, and information management.

Lt. Gen. Robert Flowers: *"I think within the next six months, you will see a large difference in the quality of life for the Iraqi people, and within a year there will be a huge difference and it will keep getting better."*

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Electricity: Electricity in Baghdad continues at 2 hours on, 4 hours off. Storms damaged the Baghdad ring and Baghdad East-Kirkuk transmission lines. The Bayji-Baghdad West transmission line is also damaged. On November 17, power production peaked at 1,778 MW, which nearly doubled November 18 to 3,300 MW.

Water: 48 compact water treatment plants in An Najaf have been rehabilitated, providing safe water to 100,000 people.

Sanitation: Sewage disposal is being improved in Ad Diwaniyah (Al Qadisiyah Governorate) and Al Hillah (Babil Governorate).

Health: A citywide school hygiene education campaign has begun in urban Kirkuk (At Tamim Governorate) reach each of Kirkuk's 273 schools.

Conflict mitigation: The Iraqi Athletes' Rights Association is reviving the Ring Game, a famous Iraqi cultural tradition.

Human Rights: Rehabilitation has begun on the building for newly established Ministry of Human Rights

View From Down Range: LTC Tim French

By Alan Dooley

Lieutenant Colonel Tim French, USAR, is en route back to the Great Lakes and Rivers Division (LRD) of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, following a four-month stint with Task Force RIO (Restore Iraqi Oil) in Iraq. The Army Reservist, mobilized for one year, will serve the remainder of his one-year call-up in the Division's Emergency Management Section.



French, who is a youth pastor with the Kirtland (Ohio) Christian Fellowship church in civilian life, remembered that in March of last year, he challenged the young people in his youth group to become part of something bigger than themselves. Two months later he was mobilized from his Individual Mobilization Augmentee assignment with LRD. "I got a pretty rapid chance to live my own advice," he smiled.

Once mobilized, he quickly volunteered to come to Iraq to serve with Task Force RIO.

"It was the right thing to do," he said. I really thought it was important for me to become part of bringing freedom to Iraq after all its people have been through, and helping to ensure that they remain free," French said.

Task Force RIO is assigned the mission of restoring Iraq's oil production capability to prewar levels. It is crucial to the economic stability of Iraq since oil is the single most important element of the country's economy – producing more than 95 percent of the nation's foreign trade income. Iraq has the second largest proven reserves of petroleum in the world.

"Would I do it again? Oh, yes, definitely," he added.

Arriving in Iraq on July 20, French was quickly thrust into the push to restore the Iraqi oil system. He set to work with his background as an Army Engineering Officer to assume duties as RIO's Senior Project Manager. "It's my job to help other project managers. I am immersed in budgets, funding and planning," he said. "It's not very glamorous, but no money, no work."

What has impressed Lieutenant Colonel French most during his tour? "It's the people here. From the soldiers providing security at the gate, to the people in the Coalition Provisional Authority, to the myriad of other people from around the world working together, it's been amazing.

"I have also met more wonderful people through leading a Bible study. In addition to Americans, there were people from the United Kingdom, South Africa and even the Pacific island of Fiji, working together and worshipping together. I did that during my free time," he added with a laugh. A normal work week consisted of seven 14-hour days. "Actually, I haven't had a day off since July 13."

What other lasting impression will French carry home from Iraq? "It will be the contrast between Saddam's palaces and the rest of Iraq. This alone is proof of the gross injustice that prevailed here.

"I have found the Iraqis I have worked with to be no different than people anywhere. They have the same dreams we have. They work hard and are a pleasure to work with.

"I believe that if we give them the tools and freedom to use them, Iraq will be a great country. But it will take time and require that they be free from outside interference," he affirmed. "We have to stick this process out," he continued. If we leave prematurely it is going to be a disaster. Why fight if we don't intend to win," he asked rhetorically?

"I asked an Iraqi gentleman one day, 'How's your day been?' He replied, 'My days are good, so long as you stay here.' We cannot abandon these people. If we do, they will lose what they have just started to gain. And we will have to fight again, maybe closer to home next time," French said.



With the journey home close at hand, French is focusing on his family and church's youth.

"My wife, Betsy and our eight children are what I am thinking of a lot as this winds down." French paused to list his children: "Chris, 25; Tara, 18; Jessica, 17; Danny, 15; Tommy, 12; Ted, 10; Naomi, 9; and Leanna, 7. And there's grandson Robbie, 5. Tim and Betsy are high school sweethearts from Pittsford, New York.

"I also want to get back to my young people," he said. "I want them, and others, to learn the real story of what this is about. I want them to know of the soldiers and the people – more than the bombs and attacks."

French will take up his Sunday night youth group duties on return to LRD, commuting from Cincinnati on Friday's after work and driving back early Monday morning. He has done it before. "It's exactly 267 miles – each way," he told.

In addition to his family and youth group, French is also looking forward with great anticipation to his first meal in Mentor: "Pizza. Papa John's Pizza. That's what I have told Betsy I want."

French's superior contribution to the Task Force RIO mission in Iraq has been recognized by the Army with the award of the Bronze Star Medal.

View From Down Range: Steve Wright

By JoAnne Castagna*

Steven Wright, a public affairs specialist from the Huntington District, spent a five-month tour in Kuwait as part of the Corps' Team helping rebuild Iraq.

From March to August 2003, Wright lived like a soldier in open bay barracks, ate Meals-Ready-to-Eat rations, and worked busily "elbow to elbow" in cramped quarters in Camp Doha, Kuwait. Wright performed public affairs duties for the Corps' Operation Restore Iraqi Oil (RIO) that included informing the media about the work being performed by the Corps' Team RIO. Team RIO was tasked to restore Iraq oil production capabilities that had been destroyed by the war and sanctions.

He answered media inquiries from major international media outlets including major New York City print outlets, foreign and domestic press agencies, radio and internet media giants, wrote articles and vignettes and took photos for Corps and government publications. He spent many days in Iraq in extreme heat as he escorted media to various Corps work sites.

Working with the media is something Wright, a 27-year Corps veteran, was used to doing in his day-to-day job in the states as the Chief PA for the Huntington District. Volunteering and spending time in Kuwait was his first assignment in Iraq and his second assignment in the Middle East. He in Kuwait just after the Gulf War from 1992 to 1993.

According to Wright the Middle East needs the expertise of the Corps to restore its economy. "Iraq is a nation rich in oil resources with a poor population of 25 million. Oil will be the economic backbone of a new free Iraq." He added, "The oil infrastructure and oil production capability was damaged during the war and by sanctions since 1991. We the Corps of Engineers had the task of restoring Iraq oil production capability for the benefit of the Iraqi people."

The Iraqi people are appreciative of the work the Corps is doing. "The Iraqis knew what we were doing was to benefit Iraq," said Wright. He added, "They are a hospitable, gracious and polite people."

Wright said that the Iraqi people aren't much different from Americans. "Oil gives the Iraqis a chance for a stable future and economic prosperity." He added, "They are industrious, creative and dream of a safe and stable future and jobs and education for their children. These aspirations are similar to a lot of other peoples who live in a free democracy."

Wright understood this having school aged children himself. "During my tour I missed out on some important events, including my daughter's graduation from college and my son's graduation from high school. But my family and colleagues at the Corps were very supportive of my mission. When I came home, I was welcomed by yellow ribbons on my mailbox, light pole and front door."

"We are doing great work in Iraq. Seldom will you be able to see such a direct positive result from the work done by yourself and your organization," added Wright. "It is an outstanding example of the Corps' civil works capabilities being used to meet our national policy requirements. The U.S. needs a Corps of Engineers and we can go anywhere and accomplish great work."

*JoAnne Castagna works in New York District and has volunteered to write vignettes about TF-RIO employees who have already returned to the United States.



Checking valve repairs at Cluster Pump Station 3, North Ar Rumaila.

Army Corps of Engineers
photo by Wayne Stroupe

"HOOAH!!!"

MICHAEL L. SCHULTZ, COLONEL, EN
*Acting Commander,
Southwestern Division*