



# Operation RIO Update

29 Aug 2003

LTC Byron Race looks down from the balcony of one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces where Race now works.

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

## **Mission Update:**

Task Force RIO people remain on the move. In both the Northern Area Office (NAO) and Southern Area Office (SAO), work is progressing on the "permanent" lodgings. We hope to have our people in the SAO modular housing any day now. Our Kuwait element is transitioning to Baghdad with some moving into a former home of one of Saddam's wives and others going across the Tigris to collocate with KBR. Communication is not completely set up in Baghdad but that too is getting better.

Oil production levels this week exceeded previous thresholds, largely due to Prime Power introducing stable electricity for the Basrah refinery. With a reliable source of electrical power available, southern Iraq's oil industry is poised to resume production of benzene (gasoline) and diesel fuels for vehicles and generators, and Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG), the lifeblood necessary for cooking and heating throughout the country. Finally, it will be possible to move growing quantities of crude oil to export facilities to generate foreign exchange earnings for the entire nation.

## **Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program:**

As promised last week in RIO Update, we are now providing further information on the CISM program.

The Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program, available for employees, does not replace professional counseling and other services provided by EAP. The two programs complement each other in support of our team.

CISM peer supporters help employees recover more quickly from abnormally stressful job-related incidents and trauma, collectively known as "critical incidents." CISM peer supporters are not therapists or counselors. They are empathetic Corps employees who are trained in recognized protocols and standards of care established by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation.

Peer supporters are available in all SWD Districts. In order to respond to concerns about/from individuals returning from overseas after Forward Engineering Support Team (FEST) deployment, SWD peer supporters recently received additional training with emphasis on issues that could affect returning FEST employees. Interventions are made only on request. All personal information and responses volunteered by participants are held in strict confidence and no written notes or recordings are kept. Employees can find out about the SWD CISM program on the Natural Resources Management Gateway, <http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/cism/cism.html>, or by contacting the following individuals: Terry Holt and Beverly Cruzen – Tulsa District; Tim Gibson – Fort Worth District; Chris Smith – Little Rock District; Kristine Brown – Galveston District or Elisa Pellicciotto - SWDO.

**Scheduled for Deployment:** Scheduled to go to CRC 7 Sep:

Paul Bisdorf , SWT; Doug Bruner, MVP; Jeromy Caldwell, SWT; William Graney, NWS; Ira Matthews , SWF; Mike McAleer, NWP; Josette Pullen, NWK; Robert Stubbs , SWT; Steven R. Waite, NAE

*Team RIO continues to need good Corps employees to fill important jobs. It is an excellent time to gain project manager or PDT experience in a historic mission environment. Contact Linda Ranallo (214) 767-2385 or Jim Barton (214) 767-2370 to discuss deployment opportunities currently available or to add your name to the list of volunteers. Supervisory approval is required.*

**Scheduled to return:** Elaine Brubaker, SWF; Don Dunn, SWL; Jim Gilmore, SWD; Lewis Herring , SWF; Cheryl Hodge-Snead, SWF; Gary Loew, SWD; Chuck Miles, SWT; Laurie Sargent, SWD; SSG Bonnie Smith, SWD; James Walker, HNC

**A view from down range:**

Article and photo by Alan Dooley

Lieutenant Colonel Byron Race is returning from Iraq and Kuwait, having reached the end of a one-year tour of active duty that has culminated with service with Task Force RIO (Restore Iraqi Oil) as part of the second Gulf War.



Task Force RIO's mission is to help Iraq restore its oil production capabilities to prewar levels. Iraq harbors the world's second largest reserves of petroleum and this energy treasure is key both to Iraq's domestic restoration and is the primary source of foreign income for the war-torn nation.

Race, who came on active duty in October 2002, first served with the Fort Worth, Texas District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers where he had the direct opportunity to work with the relatively new field force engineering doctrine for deploying USACE expertise to support overseas contingency operations.

As 2003 dawned he received firsthand experience with this concept of sending the Corps' engineering capabilities overseas with a visit to a deployed team in Afghanistan. "I was involved in planning and support to a Forward Engineering Support Team, or FEST-A, and the opportunity to travel forward to observe this work in action was invaluable.

In February Race was pulled into the Corps' Southwestern Division where he was assigned as Officer in Charge of the Rear Detachment of Task Force RIO, then being formed to meet whatever requirements might emerge from a possible war in Iraq, and the follow-on mission to protect, and then restore, Iraqi oil production.

Serving there through the war and opening months of the recovery effort, Race was sent forward in June to serve as Task Force RIO's Deputy for Support – being made responsible for the mammoth logistics effort, information management (computer and communications services), personnel and administrative services, to support the \$1.2 billion effort in Iraq.

The 24 year Army veteran rose to a challenge that tested both his civil engineering skills and organizational and leadership background to support a diverse group of extremely mission-oriented people. Under his oversight, the RIO team, scattered across three operating sites over a region the size of California, has moved repeatedly, each time improving their living and working conditions.

"This has been a remarkable opportunity," Race reported. "Not only was it an exciting year close to the end of my military career, it was extremely meaningful work as well."

"And it was fun too," he observed, ignoring long hours and stress of living and working in what was only recently a war zone.

"I will never forget stopping to observe a pipeline break in southeastern Iraq, near Basra. It was literally in the middle of the desert. Within minutes, one, two and then three cars pulled to a stop, and friendly Iraqi citizens from the area got out, shook our hands and thanked us for coming to Iraq. That experience just doesn't come through in the media back home. You absolutely have to experience it to understand its depth and meaning."

Just like the American public when they gained their first glimpses of deposed dictator Saddam Hussein's palaces, Race too was awed. "Never could I have imagined that I would work at a desk in such a place," he grinned. "It was simply the experience of a lifetime."

A Civil Engineering Graduate of the University of Vermont, Race works in that field with the Portland, Maine engineering firm of Dufresne-Henry, Inc.

Race, who resides in Dry Mills, is a native Mainer and hails from a long-time, multi-generational Maine coast family.

Byron Race's superior contribution to the global war on terrorism and in particular to the \$1.2 billion program to restore Iraq's oil production was recognized with award of the Army Meritorious Service Medal presented to him by Task Force RIO commander Brigadier General Robert Crear prior to Race's departure from the area of operations.

### **A view from down range: Chris Kennedy**

Story by Alan Dooley

Chris Kennedy, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Tulsa District chemist, saw the fight to free Iraq and has seen the fight to win the peace there, "up close and personal."



Since mid-March, Kennedy has been assigned to the Corps' Task Force RIO (Restore Iraqi Oil), a small group of some 70 Corps employees working to help the Iraq people rebuild their capability to exploit the world's second largest known oil reserves. Oil production supplies Iraq's domestic needs as well as providing the vast majority of Iraq's foreign exchange.

"I came for the experience. I wanted the challenge of applying my skills a long way from home and with minimal support. I had no prior military experience and to be sure, I was apprehensive. No, make that, I was afraid," Kennedy said shortly before departing Kuwait.

Kennedy arrived at Camp Doha, Kuwait on March 17, two days before the war began.

"The first time we came under attack by Scuds, as I was sprinting to a bunker in my chemical gear and body armor, I heard and saw a Patriot Missile thunder into the sky from nearby. It was an attention getter, but I sure didn't stick around to watch," Kennedy reported.

Once ground forces had streamed north and driven any Iraqi military from the southern oil fields of Iraq, Kennedy's real work began in earnest.

"I was detailed to carry out assessments of oil facilities on land and offshore, as well as to examine pipelines. I was also part of our response to oil spills and to other environmental and safety issues. Our mission was to secure the fields, fight fires and spills if they occurred, and in general make sure that Iraq's oil assets came through as well as they could," Kennedy said.

Kennedy told how he knew himself better following the experience. "I'm more confident now. I know I can anticipate problems and even deal pretty well with unexpected challenges. It's all about what the military calls 'situational awareness.'"

"I'm also more aware of the need for attention to detail as a result of this experience," he went on. It's the little things like making sure you have a full gas tank, seeing if your spare tire is fully aired, knowing where your cell phone will and won't work, taking spare batteries with you, etc., that can make a real difference if you get into an unforeseen situation.

"I also learned a lot about other people, how they respond to others, how they deal with stress and how to identify their limits. I'm a people watcher by nature, and this was an extraordinary opportunity to observe others under a variety of situations we might not encounter at home," Kennedy concluded.

He told of other experiences he had during the war and its aftermath. "I got my first Blackhawk (helicopter) ride and spent some time aboard USS Anchorage, a Navy amphibious landing ship in the Gulf.

"The experience aboard the ship was extraordinary. Those young sailors are doing it all out there. They treated me like a visiting celebrity. I even got to steer the ship one night for awhile," Kennedy remembered.

When asked if he would recommend this or similar experiences to others, Kennedy paused and replied: "That would be a qualified 'yes.' I'd tell them that they would need to be flexible. They will need to it to be tough – they may live in tents, it may be hot, and so forth.

"It's more than just their technical jobs with the Corps. You may have to change a tire too. That sort of 'life competency' counts when the chips are down," he said.

But obviously the experience can be extraordinarily satisfying.

Shifting to thoughts of home, Kennedy talked of his family. "My wife Sherrie, our three children: Karissa, 4; Cassie, 3 and Aeryn, 1, are waiting for me. It has been a long time."

His mother Sharon, who is a bookkeeper, and dad, Euel, a longtime math professor and retired college associate vice-president, as well as his brother Jeff, a high school teacher at Union High School in Tulsa, are also eagerly anticipating his return.

"What am I looking forward to at home? Of course, I'm eager to get back to the people I love and who love me," Kennedy said. "It will be nice not to have to look over my shoulder constantly, or to be careful about where I step (unexploded ordnance was a serious hazard where Kennedy worked). I want to be able to stop wearing shoes in the shower and I think I'll go out in the yard and roll in the grass when I get home too."

Kennedy's contribution to the war and post war oil recovery effort has been recognized by award of the Army Superior Civilian Service Award.

But more importantly to him personally, Kennedy reflects: "I did my share."

**"HOOAH!!"**

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