



# Operation RIO Update

3 October 2003

Taking a break in Baghdad.

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

**Mission Update:** Oil production this week averaged about 1.9 million barrels per day, just slightly below the elusive 2 million barrels per day. Refined product production improved this week with our goals for benzene, kerosene, and diesel being met or exceeded each day. Production of Liquid Propane Gas remains a challenge; however, efforts that have been underway for some time are expected to be completed in the near future. Efforts to commission some of the smaller refineries and topping plants are also underway which will further improve the situation.

**Other Iraqi News:** -Reconstruction is moving forward – more than 8,000 individual reconstruction projects have been completed in the past three months.

-On Sep 28, Iraqi power plants generated a peak 3,972 megawatts (MW) – the highest level produced since before the war. Generation has improved progressively over the last month. Peak production on Aug. 18 was 2,974 MW.

-The political process is underway – Iraq is on track to ratify a new constitution, which will be written by Iraqis.

**Help Wanted:** Several key jobs are opening soon for Task Force RIO. Skills needed include: GS-12/13 Project Managers and GS-12/13 Project Engineers to work in Iraq, and a GS-12 Accountant to work in Dallas starting in early November. If you are interested and have your supervisor's concurrence, call Jim Barton at 214-767-2370 for more information and possible deployment dates. This is an excellent time to be part of a history making project that is benefiting the people of Iraq.

**Deployments:** Departing 5 October: COL Emmett DuBose – USACE; Shakhur Misir – Tulsa District; Terry Bautista – Galveston District; Mary Robertson – Baltimore District; Natta Gill – St. Louis District; Ngozi Ihediwa – Kansas City District.

**Redployments:** Ed West, Tulsa District; Mike Webber, Fort Worth District; Pam Sisler, Fort Worth District; Royce Summers, Fort Worth District.

## **Acting Army Secretary Visits TF-RIO**

By Alan Dooley

Acting Secretary of the Army, the Honorable R. L. "Les" Brownlee recently paid a visit to Task Force RIO's (Restore Iraqi Oil) Camp Doha, Kuwait.

The Army's senior civilian leader met with personnel from that office as well as other TF-RIO personnel from the unit's Southern Area Office (SAO), which is forward located near southeastern Iraq's second largest city of Basra.

Brownlee met first with all personnel present in their office area, telling them how much he appreciated their tireless efforts to help the Iraqi people restore their war-torn nation's oil production to pre-war levels. He told them of the critical importance of their work and how much the American people appreciate them.

The Army Secretary next sat down for a detailed briefing by TF-RIO's commander, Brigadier General Robert Crear, USA, who also commands the Corps of Engineers Southwestern Division, in Dallas Texas.

Crear outlined the "going in" situation faced by TF-RIO personnel when they arrived at Camp Doha before the war, with a mission so classified they couldn't even tell people about their work. He described how that made it difficult to secure support early on as they prepared to enter Iraq's oil fields and other oil facilities closely on the heels of the invading land force. Their mission was to shut down and secure as much of Iraq's oil system as they could. Next they fought oil well fires, although there were far fewer than it had been feared there might be if Saddam elected to destroy Iraq's oil industry as he withdrew.

To bring the mission up to date he next laid out Task Force RIO's accomplishments, describing how the organization now includes several hundred Corps employees and military members, a host of contractor personnel and the more than 60,000 oil workers of Iraq.

Balancing successes with challenges, the general described how Iraq is now producing an average of 1.7 million barrels of petroleum a day, but is unable to meet its own domestic needs for fuels. He pointed out that this is due to a combination of the poor condition of Iraq's refineries and pipelines, as well as the effects of extensive postwar looting and sabotage.

General Crear next described the road ahead for Task Force RIO by laying out our future milestones, including the follow-on contract. He reiterated that the goal remains to complete Task Force RIO's mission by March 2004, although he acknowledged that everyday we find new, unforeseen connections between oil production and previously seemingly unrelated issues.

Secretary Brownlee told of his early association with oil. "I was what was called a 'rough neck,'" he reported – an oil field laborer. He also told how his Dad had "shot" oil wells, using nitroglycerine to bring difficult wells into production after they had been drilled.



The Secretary interjected questions and observations frequently during Crear's briefing and ended his fact-finding visit with several incisive remarks.

Before departing, Secretary Brownlee presented highly coveted Secretary of the Army coins to several TF-RIO members.

Brigadier General Crear returned the favor by presenting a Task Force RIO coin, a vial of the first oil produced in a free Iraq, and a traditional and colorful Task Force RIO

certificate of appreciation to the Secretary. Thanking everyone one more time, the Secretary departed en route to a flight to Baghdad and other points within Iraq to visit Army units.

### **A view from down range: Ed West**

by Alan Dooley

Sand Springs, Oklahoma native Ed West is returning from a four month stint in Iraq with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. There he has been assigned to Task Force RIO – Restore Iraqi Oil.

West, who hails from Sand Springs, is the son of Jack West, who still resides there.

In Iraq, West has been Chief of Information Management for the task force, a small group of some 70 Corps employees, who with contractor Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR) are working to help the Iraqi people restore their oil production capability to pre-war levels.



Restoring oil production to war-torn Iraq is critical, because in addition to supplying the nation of 25 million's domestic fuel needs, oil is the source of more than 95 percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings.

In his regular job, West serves as the network administrator for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Tulsa District.

West, a Marine veteran (1975-78) says he came for the adventure, and he has certainly had that.

Arriving not long after the second Gulf War, on June 10, West helped the growing TF-RIO organization make its first move at Camp Doha, Kuwait, from very basic working quarters to its current, well-equipped facilities at the sprawling Army facility there.

From there, West's duties took him throughout the California-sized nation of Iraq, from Basrah in the south, to Kirkuk in the northern oil fields, and finally to the capital city, Baghdad.

"Up in Kirkuk," West remembered, "we had just completed the communications system and computer network when the hotel the Northern Area Office was occupying, was attacked by terrorists with RPGs (rocket propelled grenades) and small arms. We hurriedly gathered the communications and computing equipment, loaded it into trucks and took it the Kirkuk Air Force Base. There, it had to sit in a tent for several days." West reported, "The dust there didn't do it much good."

When it was time to move the equipment to interim living and working space at Iraq's Northern oil Company compound, the whole installation and set up process had to be repeated.

When asked what his biggest challenge has been in Iraq, West replied uncomfortably, "It was the roofs. Basically, I'm not afraid of much of anything. But I am afraid of heights, and I feel like I have been on top of every building in Baghdad," he laughed.

"I guess it just needed to be done," West said. "So I just closed my eyes and climbed. I've been to the top of some places I would never have gone up on back in Tulsa."

When asked to identify the highlights of his tour with Task Force RIO, West said it was a difficult choice between working with the Iraqis to create a satellite communications system for the pumping stations on the critical IT (Iraq-Turkey) pipeline and standing up the communications system and computer network for the Task Force RIO office in Baghdad.

"I drove and rode up and down the 200 miles of the IT pipeline, nearly up to the Turkish border," West said. The adventure was incredible, he told. "The most amazing part was the Iraqi oil employees. They are sharp, hard working and eager to learn," he said.

"At the first pumping station, one fellow watched me set things up. At the next two he helped. Then he was ready to take over. It was simply amazing," he said.

"And they trusted us implicitly. They showed us the smallest details of their crucial oil pipeline system, hiding nothing from us. I can't even begin to say enough nice things about these people. They will make it all work," he said.

Shifting to Baghdad, West reported that when the computer network equipment arrived there, "It was like Christmas. We stayed up until 3 a.m. unpacking it, assembling the server rack and installing equipment. It was like putting the kids' toys together on Christmas Eve," he remembered with a grin.

After a fitful sleep, they went back at it again. "We were up until 2 a.m., installing the dish antenna, running cables and then aligning the antenna, again, on the roof, in the dark," he added. It wasn't just eagerness that kept them at work until early morning hours. By midnight it had cooled to under 105 degrees and outdoor work became more tolerable.

Today this equipment, which has been jointly labored over by a close-knit USACE team including members from no fewer than five separate Corps organizations in Baghdad, provides an integrated computer network and phone system that enables personnel from all of the organizations to trade data and reach out and communicate worldwide. "When you cooperate like this, nothing is impossible," West emphasized.

When asked what he will remember most, West quickly replied, "It will be the people. It will be the people and how hard their lives have been. They haven't gotten much out of all the wealth this country has generated from its oil.

"In the north, the very poor live in mud huts. The relatively well off have a water truck. They carry their life's belongings on its roof as they follow a herd of sheep. At night the whole family sleeps in a tent. Then they start all over the next day," he remembered quietly.

"I met a man up there whose father worked for the Iraqi government for 35 years. His pension was \$6 a month and he lived with his children. He had to. Under the Coalition now, his pension has been increased to \$60 a month. It's a new world for them," he said.

When asked what anyone contemplating volunteering should be prepared to do, West said, "Be ready to be a team player. Be ready to work with everyone. Everyone. Bring a good attitude."

Looking toward home, West noted, "I'm looking forward to a diet Pepsi that tastes like a diet Pepsi. I'm tired of tactical colors (the desert brown camouflage) and barbed wire too. And being able to flush toilet paper down the toilet will take getting used to as well," he said. "You have to throw it in the trash most places here (in Iraq) because the drain pipes are too small."

And more importantly, Ed will be returning to his family.

West's wife, Brenda, is a program analyst with the Tulsa District of the Corps of Engineers. "We got married in February," West said. "We had planned an August wedding, but when this came up, we went ahead. We'll do it right after I get back."

Ed is also looking forward to seeing his daughter, Mindy, 21, a junior at Oral Roberts University. Mindy, who is also trained as a sign language interpreter, appears to be following in her father's footsteps with a major in Information Management.

Ed West has relaxed for a few minutes almost every evening, sitting quietly on the patio of a building on the west bank of the Tigris River looking toward the east side of the sprawling city of five million. Recently, gazing eastward, he remarked "I've thought a lot about this place. I'll never forget the people here. We had just invaded their country, but they took us in, gave us tea and cigarettes, and shared what little they had. They are good people. They work hard and they do it for next to nothing. They're amazing."

His outstanding contributions to Task Force RIO, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the people of Iraq were recognized with award of the Army's Civilian Meritorious Service Medal.

**More vignettes:** Check out the USACE web page for more vignettes and additional information about the Iraqi mission. Go to [www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil) and click the Iraqi mission icon.

**Back Issues of RIO Update:** Have you missed an issue of RIO Update? Go to <http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/cepa/iraq/RIOupdates/RIOupdates.htm> and view copies of all back issues. Ms. Angela Williams in SWD IM, has been very faithful in maintaining this web page.

**"HOOAH!!"**

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

