



Gulf Region Division lights tree to start holidays

By John Connor
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BAGHDAD, Iraq--Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Dorko, presiding over a tree lighting ceremony at Camp Essayons here, had a message for members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers team in Iraq that fit nicely with the holiday season and also transcended it.

"The work we do now will stand for years, decades, and generations to come," said the general, the commanding officer of the Corps' Gulf Region Division, which has districts in northern, central and southern Iraq.

The tree lighting ceremony opened with the playing of the national anthem and a prayer. Speaking before the general were Col. Gary Pease, the GRD chief of staff, and a chaplain, Maj. Felix Sermon.

The colonel spoke of thoughts of loved ones and of looking out for teammates during a holiday season that can be stressful. The chaplain read from scripture and recalled before the holiday tree's lights were turned on how light drives out darkness.

Carols were led by the GRD Gospel Choir, which in turn was led by Margaret Jones, who reminded people that choirs are supposed to facilitate singing, not sing alone.

Dorko noted that this is an important time of year for Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. He lauded members of the Corps of Engineers team who are working to make Iraq a better place for tomorrow and who are trying to create a place where children can grow up in peace. And he spoke movingly of the Corps' enduring legacy in Iraq.

He also said, "We need to look out for each other." The tree was lit and "Silent Night" was sung.

Col. Dale Adams, the GRD deputy commander, then read, "'Twas the Night before Christmas," after which a closing prayer and benediction were delivered and followed by more seasonal songs and refreshments.

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