



"Walk the Talk"

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Baghdad, Iraq – When lives are on the line, some people, do exactly as they promised. And relative to that, an entire country is being changed as a result of the commitment, focus, and labor of a diverse array of individuals from many countries.

Smooth, urbane, and clearly one with Iraqi's future well set in his mind, Mohammed AL Aubaedy, capsulizes it simply, "While many in America argue and debate whether you should be here, every day across my country, your people are making a very big difference for me and my countrymen. It is difficult for us to understand why any would question the value of this help you are providing in the rebuilding of Iraq. You came here and said you were going to work with us to make our country better and now are doing it. You do as you say."

Indeed, several hundred contractors, government service, and military personnel are going about their work doing just that – often an echo away from insurgent gunfire that makes life difficult and death, potentially, easy.

Such is the nature of the work of a diverse array of professionals who comprise the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region Division (GRD) and its reconstruction partner the Project and Construction Office.

With projects as varied as water and sewer projects – now approaching 300 countrywide – to well over 800 schools and nearly 200 healthcare facilities and hospitals being built, GRD is dramatically impacting the lives of those who have long suffered under the wholly inattentive leadership of a tyrannical regime.

As one who personally witnessed Saddam's effect on his country and countrymen, the outgoing 29 year old speaks with conviction. "Many fail to understand that this was the base of the problems plaguing much of the equipment and facilities in Iraq. For, virtually, the entirety of Saddam Hussein's tenure, because of his lack of support and commitment for maintenance and upkeep of the country's infrastructure, everything was in a most dire condition. Other than around him in Baghdad the electrical system was on the edge of implosion." The result of this was that most of the country struggled with minimal, if any, power.

The focused young man added, "Our government's infrastructure is still vulnerable; people need to understand this. Iraq is a democracy in its infancy facing many growth problems. We're not yet toughened, hardened, or mature."

As a result, the insurgents still, sometimes, slow down our growth and development. But Americans need to know we are a determined people. We will grow. We will thwart the efforts of the insurgents. We will soon be a significant, contributing, democratic, force - not only in Arabia but within the world community, if God wills."

Indeed, growth is happening. And, with few things more requisite to life than water, this is an area of major focus for reconstruction efforts. In fact, while safe, drinkable water is an absolute necessity for humanity to survive, this base commodity of life has often been difficult for Iraqis to get.

Yet, recent completion of water treatment plants have provided such for nearly one million people. For Americans, these communities appear as hard to pronounce, remote locales, but to the residents of Erbil-Ifraz, Nassiriyah, Balad Rooz, Najaf, Diwaniyah, Dukon-Sulay-Chamchamal and Wahda/Wathba in the Baghdad area, they are home and, now, much improved ones as a result of the coalition reconstruction efforts.

Yet, Mohammed acknowledges that much remains to be done. "We have many, highly-qualified water, electrical, and oil engineers, in Iraq, with lots of experience. We need to get past political differences and focus all of our great Iraqi talent and ability. We deeply appreciate all that the coalition of countries has done for, and, with us. But, now it is time for us to do more and more solely for ourselves."

Well up on American idiom, he smiles and says, "Now, let us walk the talk!"