



Iraqi woman-owned construction company wins contract bid

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Tallil, Iraq – Normally, awarding a construction contract is literally a ground-breaking event. However, a recent U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contract awarded recently in Southern Iraq is ground-breaking from a sociological perspective as well, because a female-owned business submitted the winning bid.

With recent contracting initiatives for the reconstruction effort, the Corps offers opportunities to female-owned businesses as well as those from local provinces when awarding construction and renovation contracts. In this particular instance, the company name will remain undisclosed in the interest of ensuring safety and security for the construction company, its employees, and the construction site.

The contract is for the renovation of an existing police station.

At a preconstruction conference, the Iraqi company owner (name withheld in the interest of ensuring safety and security), her mechanical engineer and civil engineer (both female), her female manager, and male translator were acquainted with the Corps' contracting and construction management procedures.

During the conference, Robert Hanacek, a Corps resident engineer, emphasized to the women the contract requirements considered most essential, as well as introduced the group to Corps personnel who will oversee the construction, including the Iraqi quality assurance engineer assigned to the project. Hanacek also covered the Corps' payment schedule, the 90-day construction period, site safety requirements, and the general scope of work.

Following the meeting, the owner graciously agreed to an interview regarding the rarity of her circumstances in Iraqi society.

Born in Kuwait to Iraqi parents, she said her upbringing had mirrored one typical for women in her culture and society.

"My family offered interference when I attempted to study at the college level, but that situation changed after the death of my father," she said. "It was then that I was able to continue my education."

The woman claims that her education changed her life by giving her a motive to advance herself further.

She viewed the recent Iraqi elections and female representation in the new government as positive advances for Iraqi women.

"We progress step by step. It is the beginning of the way," she said.

"Our company is also an attempt to prove that Iraqi women can be as educated, skillful, and successful as men."