



## ***They Come in all Sizes, Ages and Uniforms . . .***

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Tom Clarkson  
Gulf Region Division  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Baghdad – ... and labor long and hard, day in and day out, often through choking dust and searing heat. They are brave, patriotic volunteers ... and many of them are Civilians serving in Iraq for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE.)

Robert G. Kennedy, 58, USACE, Gulf Region North (GRN), Tikrit Area Office Resident Engineer, is just such a professional who is no stranger to difficult challenges in grueling circumstances.

Kennedy is an electrical engineer by base training - though he holds several degrees. In-country for nearly a year, he speaks with pride and enthusiasm about all he hopes to accomplish in the seven months remaining on his deployment. So far, he's assembled an impressive portfolio of work accomplishments.

Not long ago, Kennedy completed a plethora of highly difficult and challenging tasks by wrapping up work on 135 mega watt gas turbine power generators at the Bayji Power Plant, the largest power generation facility in Iraq.

The word "large", however, does not do justice to this plant. With two 135-megawatt, gas turbines working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, this facility will generate power for 270,000 Iraqi homes. Better yet, it is engineered for the future. While all units presently run by light fuel oil, the future holds a conversion to natural gas – a commodity yet to be effectively utilized in a country where the current supply typically is burnt-off as a byproduct in the oil refining process..

With obvious pride in his voice, Kennedy describes how this effort was truly an international one.

"In addition to the pros from the U.S.A., this project employed 1,100 Iraqis and a comprehensive cadre of great multi-national professionals from Brazil, Great Britain, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Germany, India, Ireland, Jordan, Scotland, and Turkey," he said.

This focused professional, whose home is the magnificent mountains of Western Maine, candidly assesses the quandary of how to provide power for all of Iraq as a "most challenging" one. He points out the obvious ... how now with Saddam Hussein's regime toppled, the people of Iraq have begun purchasing many new electrical devices for their homes and businesses – from televisions to air conditioners. As a result, the electrical demand is growing at a tremendous rate.

"This is the story that never seems to get told back in the States," he says. "The reality is that, with the present projected rise of electrical demands, no matter how much we do, nor how fast, it may still take several years before every Iraqi household has electricity.

"The great goal of 'power for all' is made more difficult when people come to realize that Hussein had electrical availability concentrated in the greater Baghdad area. Even that system was in abysmal disrepair as those tasked with maintenance and upkeep were provided little to support upkeep and maintenance."

Kennedy quickly interjects, "Now that they have a say in their future, the innumerable Iraqis with whom I've had a pleasure to work are honest, energetic, and eager to learn. I have no doubt that this country will be in very good hands as they continue to take over more and more responsibility."

For many reasons, getting to that point will continue to be a difficult course. He says that although he is a "simple technical engineer by training," Kennedy has found his work also requires keen business acumen, sensitivity to proper liaison activities, a wide spectrum of construction knowledge and all manners of management aptitudes, as well as substantive sensitivity in how to work within an Arabic culture.

"All of this has certainly been worth it as I know that when I leave, I can go home knowing that I have done something truly useful for mankind as a whole and, specifically, for my many Iraqi friends," he says.

"Now that I'm approaching the end of a meaningful tour of duty helping this country build for its future, I can soon," he says with a broad smile, "fade into retirement and become a full-time brook trout fisherman."