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 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

## ***Air Force officer experiences 'joint' and 'multi-national' to the highest degree***

By John Connor  
 Gulf Region South District



Maj. Dee J. Katzer (left), Construction Representative Tommy Nason, and Project Manager Steve Farkus view the site where a new \$30 million 60,000 sq. ft. dining facility is being constructed at Camp Delta in Wassit Province. (USACE photo)

**Tallil Air Base, Iraq** — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers fields a diverse team in Iraq, including many representatives from other services, such as Maj. Dee J. Katzer of the U.S. Air Force.

For most of the past six months, Katzer has served as the Military Programs section chief for the Gulf Region South district, USACE's office covering reconstruction and related services in the nine southern provinces of Iraq.

In that capacity, Katzer leads a staff responsible for planning and executing many significant projects with a value of \$1.1 billion. He oversees the "cradle to

grave" management of these high impact projects, working with numerous agencies to resolve issues to ensure each one meets the customer's expectations.

Katzer serves as the project manager for the first Foreign Military Sales Project that USACE is executing for the Government of Iraq, the new pier and seawall complex at Umm Qasr. "What makes it unique is that I'm an Air Force Officer managing an Iraqi Navy project for a U.S. Army organization—talk about Joint and multi-national!" he exclaimed.

A 1995 graduate of the Air Force Academy, Katzer is an active duty Air Force



Maj. Dee J. Katzter (right) at the Iraq-Iran border in Maysan Province. (USACE photo)

officer assigned to the Air Force Civil Engineer Staff at the Pentagon. "There are four of us from the Civil Engineer Staff scattered throughout the Gulf Region Division," said Katzter, who will return to the Pentagon when his Iraq tour ends in December. Although currently residing in Virginia, Katzter and his family call Colorado home.

During his deployment, Katzter has traveled throughout most of southern Iraq and seen sights ranging from camel herds and the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to the Ziggurat, an ancient temple that he can view from his office window.

"Working for USACE has been a very unique experience since in the past I'd always been the customer, hounding the Corps to complete projects on time and under budget," he said. "Now I am on the team providing the service and giving the customer the quality they pay for," he continued.

As the first FMS initiative implemented by the Corps in Iraq, the \$52 million Umm Qasr project is being closely watched by the Government of Iraq who is paying the bill. Its success could have long-term effects on future opportunities. The project is scheduled to be finished in September 2009. Katzter said a lot of additional FMS work is envisioned for USACE, as well.

Reflecting more broadly on the work

done by the Corps of Engineers in Iraq, Katzter said: "It is obvious that we are making a difference when you see a completed water treatment unit and distribution system that provides drinking water for the first time ever to a local neighborhood. It is also obvious by the friendly smiles and waves from the kids as we travel to different jobsites."

Katzter was impressed with the "wide diversity of civilians willing to come to Iraq and help out, including school teachers, park rangers, lock operators and private citizens who are career construction workers or managers."

He praised the people he's met as "consummate professionals," and said of the soldiers with whom he has traveled on occasion — "it was amazing — their focus, dedication and professionalism — especially considering that for many it is their second or third tour in Iraq."



Maj. Dee J. Katzter (left) participates in a pre-construction meeting for the \$52 million pier and seawall complex being built with Iraqi funds at Umm Qasr. (USACE photo)

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