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USACE Engineer Helps Improve Iraq Security

By John Connor
Gulf Region South District

TALLIL AIR BASE, Iraq – Jim Marple, an engineer managing projects in excess of \$325 million and developing future projects valued above \$828 million for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region Division, is finishing another tour.

In 2007, Marple served his first six-month deployment as a water project manager overseeing initiatives to bring clean water to Iraqi neighborhoods. Serving both tours with USACE GRD's south district, Marple provides reconstruction services in Iraq's nine southern provinces.

"The local atmosphere seems to be much improved over the 2007 tour," said Marple. "The IDF (indirect fire) is much more infrequent and road conditions--IED's (improvised explosive devices)--seem to be much better. Iraqi workers tell me they also believe things have improved."

An Arkansas native who works for the USACE Little Rock District, Marple in recent years deployed twice to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, CA and volunteered as a quality assurance representative along the Louisiana Gulf Coast and east Texas to work on the Hurricanes Katrina and Rita recovery.

Marple resides in Cabot, AK with his wife. He served six years active duty as an Army CH-47 Chinook mechanic/Flight Engineer. He began his USACE career in 1995 in the Little Rock district as an Intern Park Ranger for the Greer's Ferry



USACE Project Manager Jim Marple checks construction quality at the new \$28.8 million prison being built near Nasiriyah in southern Iraq. Phase I, which is complete, includes an 800-inmate facility along with buildings for medical, laundry/kitchen, maintenance, a prayer room and office space. Phase II and Phase III will add housing for an additional 800 inmates as well as a visitor control building. The facility is creating hundreds of local jobs providing an economic boost to the Nasiriyah area.

(USACE photo by Norris Jones)

Lake Project Office's Recreation and Resource Management Section. Later in 1999, Marple graduated from the University of Central Arkansas with a Bachelor of Science degree in Public Administration.

In 2003, he was tapped to be the Chief Park Ranger responsible for administering

one of the Corps' largest recreation programs. His stateside administrative experience has come in handy in Iraq. He is now the Military Construction and Security & Justice Project Manager for Gulf Region South.

Marple's job involves developing and using project tracking tools, working with USACE resource management personnel to ensure adequate project funding; and providing the leadership, communication and coordination needed to resolve problems and issues in a timely fashion.

He said what he likes about his job is the satisfaction of seeing the projects take shape and put into use the "interaction with his co-workers" and "constantly learning about PM (project manager) roles and responsibilities."

Among the many security and justice projects, Marple worked a half dozen courthouse projects. "These are important both practically and symbolically in terms of promoting the rule of law, a cornerstone of Iraqi society," he said.

He also manages the construction of a \$28.8 million prison near Nasiriyah that will house 1600 inmates. "Security and justice – it's great to see things are improving in Iraq," he concluded.



USACE Project Manager Jim Marple checks construction quality at the new \$28.8 million prison being built near Nasiriyah in southern Iraq. (USACE photo by Norris Jones)

Note: John Connor is a contributing writer for the Gulf Region South district, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Iraq. For more information, contact public affairs by phone at 540 665-1233, by e-mail to CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil, or visit www.grd.usace.army.mil.