



U.S. EMBASSY - BAGHDAD

2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

-Air Force Partners with PRT to Improve Iraqi Living Conditions-

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Kirkuk - Members of the U.S. Air Force serving in northern Iraq recently teamed with the Kirkuk Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) on a project designed to help Iraqis improve waste management practices in the region.

Airmen of the 506th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron (ELRS) Vehicle Management Flight helped train 11 Iraqis on proper maintenance techniques for newly acquired equipment that the city of Kirkuk will use for garbage and trash collection and removal.



US Air Force 506th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron personnel work with Iraqi drivers to learn basic maintenance on new big rig trash haulers. (Credit for photo: Senior Airman SerMae Lampkin, U.S. Air Force)

"We are ensuring the equipment that was purchased for the local Iraqis will be preserved by teaching them preventative maintenance," said Master Sgt. Robert Stewart, the 506th ELRS Vehicle Management Flight chief deployed from Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska.

The Kirkuk PRT, with funds from the U.S. Army, purchased the new vehicles and at the same time experts on the Team overhauled the city's waste management system.

The vehicles the Iraqis were trained to maintain included several waste compactor transfer units, water trucks, and front-end and mid-sized wheeled loaders.

Master Sgt. Stewart said, "Our flight is ensuring they are learning all the pre-operational checks including fluid and equipment checks, which will enable these vehicles to provide services for years to come.

"The training went surprisingly smoothly, and they seemed to take a good grasp on the material," said Staff Sgt. Shawn Reed, a 506th ELRS mechanic and training instructor deployed from F. E. Warren AFB, Wyo.

"They showed up with a good knowledge base already, but we helped further that base by working with our equipment. Hopefully they can take what they learned and bring it back to their work environment to help rebuild and better their own communities," Reed added.

The Iraqis agreed the training was beneficial and will improve their life in their hometown.

"Without the Americans, we wouldn't know how to operate this new equipment because this is all new technology for us," said an Iraqi trainee. "They clarified a lot of our questions, which will help us accomplish our jobs more efficiently. We have old machines that break down fairly often, and we don't have any spare parts to fix them.

"This new technology will be a big help to us," the Iraqi added, and "we are very proud to have it - this is historic for us. We thank the Americans for all their help to equip and train us."

In past years, the city's municipality department struggled to overcome outdated waste management techniques and failed to maintain a functioning waste collection system.

Concerns with previous practices include several health, safety and security issues for not only citizens who reside in Kirkuk, but also coalition forces working in the area, said Brian McCarthy, the PRT solid waste management adviser.

"One of the main concerns Coalition Forces have with waste management is the fact that waste lying beside the road is a common place for insurgents to plant improvised explosive devices. We can take away these hiding places if certain areas in the cities are cleaned up," McCarthy said.

"Another major piece to this, he added, is "instilling pride in the place where these Iraqis live, so they will, in-turn, take better care of their areas and be more comfortable in their surroundings."

Future plans include the creation of transfer centers used to place waste en-route temporarily to a new and environmentally improved landfill site to serve the more than 700,000 Kirkuk residents. One transfer station has already been constructed and will be ready for operation upon the delivery of the PRT-donated vehicles.

"The vehicles involved in the training will enable more effective waste collection and transportation to the recently constructed, Coalition-funded sanitary landfill outside the city," McCarthy said.

Commenting on the PRT's partner, McCarthy said, "The Air Force has been very accommodating in their help to the PRT, and we couldn't complete this without them."

He said, "No local garage in Kirkuk has the tools, equipment and expertise of this unit. The Airmen here have plenty of invaluable experience and understanding of vehicle maintenance that really benefits the Iraqis. They also have the training qualifications that allow the Iraqis to get the most from this experience."

"The Air Force's support is vital to the success of this PRT initiative that will create a better standard of living for Iraqis in Kirkuk, McCarthy concluded.