



U.S. EMBASSY - BAGHDAD

## 2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

### -Iraqis Gain Cardiac Training Courtesy of PRT-

By Barry Greenberg  
Special Correspondent

April 14, 2008

**Dhi Qar Province** - Twelve medical residents from Samawa General Hospital in neighboring Muthanna Province received cardiac training April 10 in a day-long session led by U.S. Army Brigade Surgeon Colonel Thomas Dove, a cardiologist working with the Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRT) operating in southern Iraq.



Iraqi residents attending cardiac training at a U.S. Army hospital in Dhi Qar interact with military medical personnel.

The Iraqi physicians also got cultural insights into how U.S. doctors interact with each other and how women are integrated into the U.S. military medical services.

The PRT in Muthanna facilitated the training, which took place at U.S. Army Contingency Operating Base (COB) Camp Adder in Dhi Qar, along with ongoing engagements with local doctors, the donation of medical books and equipment, and patient examinations at Samawa Hospital.

A second group of residents was also scheduled for similar cardiac training at the U.S. Army hospital at COB Adder.

The medical seminar focused on Advanced Cardiac Life Support training. The residents attended a series of lectures, participated in hands-on training with U.S. Army medical equipment, and toured the base's emergency room, x-ray lab, intensive care unit, and other medical facilities.

The day included a variety of new cultural experiences for the medical residents—from taking photos with the female U.S. Army medics on call in the ER to appreciating the efficiency of a compact, but modern, army field hospital.

Enhanced medical knowledge was not the only take-away from the day's activities. One of the medical residents from Samawa hospital was clearly smitten by female U.S. Army captain who was chief of the watch for the ER. During the ride to COB Adder's front gate at the end of the day, he announced to his colleagues in the car that he was prepared to seek her hand in marriage. (Khalid Kridy, a member of the PRT's local staff, was tasked to relay the difficult news that the captain is already happily married.)

Commenting on the training, Muthanna PRT Team Leader Paul O'Friel noted, "This seminar is a small component of the Coalition's active engagement in support of the local medical community."

Over the coming weeks, the PRT will facilitate several additional medical engagements. An upcoming visit by the PRT to Samawa General Hospital will allow Doctor Dove to deliver the second installment of a series of medical lectures that he began in March to physicians working in the hospital's cardiology ward.

Dr. Dove will also deliver a \$20,000 specialized treadmill for cardiac patients that will be donated to Samawa hospital from Dr. Dove's home base, the Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii. This donation will come on the heels of a gift of \$1,000 worth of medical textbooks to augment the hospital's collection.

The military surgeon will also co-sponsor, along with the Muthanna and Dhi Qar PRTs, and several local U.S. military medical facilities, a regional medical conference at COB Adder in May to be attended by more than 60 doctors from Muthanna and Dhi Qar provinces.

As well as emergency medical treatment by the U.S. Military, Iraqis are also benefiting from medical programs sponsored by U.S. Government departments like the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

While Iraq's traditional healthcare system was centered on large hospitals, USAID has focused on building and refurbishing local and regional clinics throughout the nation's 18 provinces. Of the \$834 million in U.S. funds spent on healthcare programs since 2003, fully one-quarter of that amount has gone to build over 140 Primary Healthcare Centers (PHCs) shifting the focus from hospital-based care to primary care that is more widely available.

These PHC and hospital improvements increased annual treatment capacity to 3.25 million patients in hospitals and 630,000 outpatients at the PHCs.

Emphasizing prevention, USAID has also partnered with the Iraqi Ministry of Health in a national measles, mumps and rubella immunization campaign that reduced measles cases by 90 percent by 2005. Polio and tetanus immunization drives reached 97 percent of the nation's children under five years of age or 4.56 million children.

Medical training to more than 2,800 healthcare providers and physicians was also provided by USAID.