



3d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)

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Sustainment brigade takes on Iraqi water issues

By Keith M. Anderson
16th SB Public Affairs

AL-QAYARRAH, Iraq – The 16th Sustainment Brigade took a major step in its effort to get water to the drought-prone Ninawa province in northern Iraq Nov. 5.

Soldiers and contractors from contingency operating base Q-West began installation of a second high-capacity, multi-stage centrifugal water-pump at the Al-Qayyarah pump house at the Tigris River. The pump house, which provides water to many communities in the province as well as Q-West, has been shut down since September.

The ongoing effort, spearheaded by the 16th Sust. Bde. will replace failing water pumps and lines, repair a concrete, raw-water storage area and build additional water reservoirs, and coordinate Iraqi and U.S. involvement in day-to-day operations and security to provide water to regional Iraqi communities and to Q-West, said Lt. Col. Eric Fleming, deputy commander, 16th Sust. Bde.

“It’s not only important for the brigade, but also for the base, for its life support and mission support in northern Iraq, and it has the added benefit of supporting the local

community with water, so it's a good outreach and relationship-building project," said Fleming.

The infrastructure projects to get water to the region are expected to cost close to one million dollars when complete, said Lt. Col. Eric Fleming, deputy commander, 16th Sust. Bde.

Q-West, formerly an Iraqi Air Force base under Saddam Hussein, shares water from the pump house with the town of Al-Qayyarah and smaller villages and hasn't been immune to the region's water woes.

"Water has been an ongoing issue for us here at Q-West for many years," said Lt. Col. Keith Dinn, commander, 76th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, and outgoing COB mayor. "We are aggressively pursuing every viable option available, with varying degrees of success."

The Bamberg, Germany-based sustainment brigade is coordinating projects with an Air Force facilities engineering team, the Army Corps of Engineers, Iraqi Army, police and provincial leadership, U.S. contractors, Defense Contract Management Agency, and others through a "water working group."

The pump house needed major repairs.

Soldiers and contractors have repaired and reinstalled the four lift pumps that pump water from the river into a cistern, though they plan to replace them soon. They have had to make “from scratch” specialized equipment to remove silt and other materials from the 70-foot-deep cistern.

They had to remove water from the flooded pump house, patch the leaks, and wench out the heavy, defective pumps and motors. Inside the pump house there were eight pumps that fed two separate water lines, most worn-out and un-repairable.

Four of the pumps, pumps that feed a 12-inch water line that provides water primarily to the nearby city of Al-Qayyarah through a water treatment plant, were replaced by an Air Force facilities engineering team. Another four pumps at the treatment plant will be replaced to ensure Al-Qayyarah receives treated water.

The remaining four pumps at the pump house fed a 16-inch line that runs 25 kilometers to COB Q-West, though several villages and communities have tapped into the untreated-water line.

Base water planners have had water shipped in from nearby Army installations and local national businesses to fill the gap since the pump house was shut down. After the two new pumps have been installed, taps will be turned on at the pump house again.

“With these two pumps, and two more that are on order, we can start providing enough water to meet the needs of the citizens of Al-Qayyarah and other villages that use water

from the line, as well as Q-West,” said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Roach, water operations non-commissioned officer in charge, 76th Brigade Special Troops Battalion and Q-West Mayor’s Cell.

One contractor was grateful for the new pumps and parts.

“They’ll make a difference,” said David Baker, a 46-year-old master plumber “We have all-new stuff to work with. I was making bearing shims out of aluminum cans and hacksaw-blade pieces just to keep the bearings from flying off the motor shaft.”

The improvements to the pump house are only part of the solution, said Maj. Roger Jackson, engineering projects officer, 16th Sust. Bde.

Besides the 16 pumps being replaced, at a cost of more than \$600,000, the brigade plans to line “Lake Wisconsin,” a 30-million-gallon water reservoir at Q-West, to prevent seepage-loss, and to deepen existing reservoirs and dig an additional one to store more water.

“By the time all these lakes are finished we’ll have five lakes with a capability of 100 million gallons of water storage,” Jackson said.

Jackson was optimistic about the progress the brigade is making since it started the water working group in August 2008.

“I don’t have a crystal ball, but if everything is working properly, by the end of December we should see a major increase in the amount of water we’re receiving,” he said.

Jackson said he couldn’t understate the importance of getting water to the base and region.

“For a base to remain open there has to be a consistent water source,” he said. “If Q-West is going to increase its water supply, it has to be solved. Water is important for the morale, health and well-being of Soldiers. And water and electricity infrastructure projects improve the overall well-being of people in Iraq, and contribute to a more stable country.”



Sgt. 1st Class Robert Roach, water operations non-commissioned officer in charge, 76th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, and contractors wench a new, high-capacity, multi-stage centrifugal water pump into place at the Al Qayyarah pump house at the Tigris River Nov. 5, as part of a massive, joint project overseen by the 16th Sustainment Brigade to build water infrastructure in the drought-prone Ninawa region in northern Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Keith M. Anderson)



Contractors wench a new motor for a high-capacity, multi-stage centrifugal water pump into place at the Al Qayyarah pump house at the Tigris River Nov. 5, as part of a massive, joint project overseen by the 16th Sustainment Brigade to build water infrastructure in the drought-prone Ninawa region in northern Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Keith M. Anderson)



Contractors check the refurbished lift pumps at the lift station of the Al-Qayyarah pump house at the Tigris River Nov. 5. Soldiers and contractors were at the pump house to install a second high-capacity, multi-stage centrifugal water pump, as part of a massive, joint project to build water infrastructure in the drought-prone Ninawa region in northern Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Keith M. Anderson)

PHOTOS AND STORY BY SGT. KEITH M. ANDERSON, 16TH SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

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