



Editorial

>> Marc Cheves, LS

THE American Surveyor

A FOOT IN THE PAST... AN EYE TO THE FUTURE

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Helping Iraq's Surveyors

In our June 2005 issue we ran an article that detailed efforts by SGE, a Rhode Island company, to work with Iraqis in Baghdad. As a follow-up to see how the Baghdad project was progressing, we recently touched base with the company again and were pleased to learn that two of the Iraqis who were either featured or mentioned in the June article – Ferris and Mary – were in the United States for training. Part of their itinerary included a visit to Washington, D.C. to meet with Rhode Island Senator Lincoln Chafee to share an Iraqi perspective on



(L-R) Rhode Island Senator Lincoln Chafee, SGE Senior Surveying Engineer Ferris, SGE Director of Business Development C.J. Wolfe, SGE Senior Environmental Civil Engineer Mary.



The marvels of Photoshop. The photo of Mary and Ferris was taken in Union Station in Washington, D.C. The colorful background photo is one of the hallways in the Senate side of the U.S. Capitol.

the current situation in their country. Ferris is a surveyor, and Mary is a civil engineer. Mary's son is studying to be a civil engineer at Baghdad University, and works for SGE as a surveyor.

We were fortunate to get to spend the day with them in Washington, and to be invited along with the group on a private tour of the U.S. Capitol. Having lived in the Washington area for nearly twenty years, I have had

several occasions in which to tour the Capitol, and it never ceases to amaze me at what an unbelievably beautiful building it is. While there, the Iraqis witnessed first-hand a session of the Senate. Senator Barbara Boxer happened to be making a speech about Iraq while they were there.

Because we were able to spend so much time with the Iraqis, talk naturally turned to the war. While there are no

easy answers to the current situation, the Iraqis remain very energetic and eager to adopt new technology. As a surveyor who shares their excitement about such things, I asked them if there was anything *we* (meaning people in our profession) could do to help Iraqi surveyors. They told us that there is a genuine need in their education system. Even under Saddam Hussein, Iraq was one of the most highly educated countries in the Middle East. Today there is an institute that provides a two-year degree in surveying, in addition to Baghdad University, which has a four-year program. The problem they are having, however, is a complete lack of modern equipment with which to train the students.

Several years ago I participated with another group of colleagues to meet a similar need in Afghanistan. In that case, the Ministry of Public Works in Kabul had much work to do in rebuilding the country's war-torn infrastructure, but had no surveying equipment: it had been stolen. Much to our initial surprise they didn't want anything electronic, a request that soon became perfectly clear because of the unreliability of electricity. Leica graciously stepped up and donated a T-16 opto-mechanical theodolite and an auto-level (and all the tripods and rods).

Electricity and security are two areas that still need much work in Iraq, but electricity is available at least part of the time.

A Drum Roll, Please!

It therefore pleases me greatly to announce that **Leica Geosystems**, **Topcon**, and **Trimble** have agreed to donate not only modern total stations but also complete GPS systems to Baghdad University for use in its surveying programs. Courtesy of the U.S. Military and NGS, a highly useful CORS system has been established for Iraq (see a story about this in our November 2005 issue), and SGE is making wide use of the system. Ferris indicated that the Iraqi surveying community is "rarin' to go" to start using the system to rebuild the country's infrastructure. It is with our deepest appreciation that we offer congratulations to these companies for reaching out in an effort to help our fellow surveyors in Iraq. As we work through the logistics of the donation, we will keep our readers posted as to its progress. *A*