

## **A CASE STUDY IN CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION IN A TIME OF WAR**

### **The Ziggurat at Aqar Quf**

This presentation provides a first person summary of US Army activities during Task Force Iron Gimlet (TFIG) formed in Dec. 2008 to encourage community improvement efforts in the Abu Ghraib and Nassar Wa Salaam communities and surrounding areas west of Baghdad, Iraq. TFIG was intended to empower Iraqis to conduct community development projects themselves, with funding largely provided through Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) initiatives at the Battalion and below levels. Included in the projects TFIG conducted was a contract for improving the tourism infrastructure around the historic Ziggurat at Aqar Quf.

Stability and Support Operations (SOSO) and Civil-Military Operations (CMO) call for strategies for both cultural heritage preservation practices and economic development activities. The U.S. Army's CERP was developed in Iraq in 2003 to allow rapid response to localized problems at the lowest level possible. CERP provides opportunities for the local populace to obtain steady employment while at the same time encouraging shared cultural heritage identity through the protection of cultural heritage sites.

Many Iraqi small businesses and microenterprises were seriously disrupted as a result of the United States invasion in 2003. Over the course of the past 6 years the United States Army has been tasked not only to provide security, but to also participate in rebuilding much of the infrastructure of Iraq.

Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) in a Counterinsurgency (COIN) environment have a major impact on cultural heritage resource protection and related small business development. In the context of what the military calls Stability and Support Operations (SOSO) and Civil-Military Operations (CMO), strategies have been developed to support cultural heritage preservation work and economic development. CERP monies and similar initiatives are key components of a successful COIN operation. Providing opportunities for the local populace to obtain steady employment

while at the same time encouraging shared cultural heritage identity through the protection of cultural heritage sites is a classic win-win scenario.

The US Army's Commander's Emergency Response Program was developed in 2003 to allow rapid response to localized problems at the lowest level possible. *"CERP originated as a stabilizing tool that commanders could use to benefit the Iraqi people [1]."* By 2008 over \$500 million dollars annually was allocated to the program. The amount of money spent in Iraq for CERP in 2009 was more than Congress authorized for the entire U.S. Small Business Administration budget that year.

*"In late 2008 I was a liaison between the 926th EN BDE and the 1/21 IN for a roughly three-week period. Among the many community development projects I worked on, the most interesting one I assisted in scoping was the possibility of improving the tourism infrastructure around the Ziggurat at Aqar Quf."* The site had once enjoyed tourists from all around Iraq and abroad and it was obvious that Iraqis had worked to preserve much of the ziggurat and surrounding structures.

## **Lessons Learned**

- 1. The lack of subject matter experts in cultural resource management and preservation puts DOD at risk of being unable to identify and correct poor contractor performance, which could affect the cost, completion, and sustainability of CERP projects
- 2. CERP projects should be conducted keeping in mind that the lack of central government support leaves local community councils responsible for continuing the long term funding and maintenance for projects themselves.
- 3. Project control measures are necessary: I found projects that were executed by previous units in various states, for example, completed but not sustained by the Iraqi government, vandalized, or nonexistent.
- 4. No performance metrics exist for CERP. Plans that establish objective, quantifiable, and measurable performance are needed for each program.

## **Conclusion**

Through the creation of employment opportunities and economic stability, CERP projects address a key issue in U.S. Army's Counterinsurgency Field Manual;

"Fighters who have joined for money will probably become bandits once the fighting ends unless there are jobs for them" [2].

The future of heritage training in the military should be focused on what a former Battalion commander of mine called "strategic privates" [3], meaning that even the lowest ranking soldier on the battlefield can make decisions that have great strategic significance, especially in this day and age with twenty-four hour media coverage.

The CERP model is perfect for the inclusion of cultural resource protections practices in addition to community development goals. As the U.S. continues to conduct contingency operations globally, these programs should and will become mainstays of military strategy.

[1] [M. S. Martins, "The Commander's Emergency Response Program," Joint Force Quarterly, Issue 37, 2nd Quarter, 2005](#), p. 47.

[2] [F. U.S. Army Field Manual, Counterinsurgency \(FM 3-24\)](#), Headquarters, Department of the Army, December, 2006, Paragraph 1-45, p. 1.9.

[3] Personal communication: Hargett, Lieutenant Colonel Joe, "Strategic Privates", Battalion Commander, 890th Engineer Battalion (MS Army National Guard), 926th Engineer Brigade, Multinational Division, Baghdad, Iraq, OIF 08-10.

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