Iraq - humanitarian relief and reconstruction

Tenix preferred tenderer for Navy’s new ships

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Kiwi engineers in Iraq: humanitarian relief and reconstruction

New Zealand Army engineers in Basra, Iraq, returned to work on April 26 after being confined to their base following several suicide bombings in the city.

The engineers, who are in Iraq to help with humanitarian relief and reconstruction, have completed 40 projects since they arrived last year. The projects range from the construction of a 6km domestic water pipeline providing drinking water to a village, to routine bridge maintenance to allow local Iraqis access to a significant section of the city.

Working alongside the British 77 Armoured Engineer squadron, the Kiwi engineers helped build a reverse osmosis plant in the village of Al Tunnunah, providing fresh drinking water to more than 200,00 people. The project, which began late last year, cost about $190,000 and was funded by the Coalition Provisional Authority. A local company, ZAMZAM Water Treatment Systems carried out most of the construction work, with the project being run and managed by the New Zealand soldiers.

The reverse osmosis plant was one of eight donated by the Kuwaiti government.

New Zealand pledged $5.5 million in 2003 to help reconstruction efforts in Iraq. At that time it was assumed that the money would be spent on projects undertaken by the New Zealand engineers in Basra, and the NZDF was accordingly allocated $5 million by NZAid.

Most of the projects being undertaken by the New Zealanders however, are being funded by other organisations such as donor governments and NGOs.

Any NZAid money not spent by the engineers will be reallocated.

The NZDF is identifying other appropriate projects on which to spend the funding, and expects to have spent $2.5 million before its return to New Zealand in October this year.

New Zealand Defence personnel, are at all times under New Zealand National Command. The New Zealand Chief of Defence Force retains full command of all NZDF personnel in Iraq, and an NZDF senior national officer vets all proposed tasks in advance for compliance with New Zealand government policy. Legal arrangements with the UK also make it clear that New Zealand personnel will not carry out tasks that are inconsistent with the original deployment parameters, New Zealand law and international law.

A New Zealand ammunition technician is posted within the 49th bomb disposal squadron. He is clearing unexploded ordnance and mines as a service to the Iraqi population, and before reconstruction work can be done in a school or hospital any left over ordnance needs to be cleared for everyone’s safety.

The NZ Engineer contingent includes geospatial technicians who are identifying and cordoning mined areas to protect the local population, and to enable demining to take place in the future.

The Kiwis are based in Fortress Lines Detachment.

The New Zealanders play their part in maintaining the equipment they borrow from their British counterparts.

The contingent uses Land Rovers and trucks from a pool of British Army general purpose vehicles. A RNZN engineer has joined the British combat support boat crew, which operates an inflatable boat to move stores and equipment when roads are impassable and work is needed on bridge building and repair.

Long-term humanitarian reconstruction work requires the continual support and confidence of the local people, and one way for confidence to be built up is to undertake high-value, high-visibility projects that can be achieved quickly. Restoring the daily necessities of life as quickly as possible is considered a key humanitarian task.

For this reason, many of the projects undertaken by the New Zealanders have focused on providing drinking water to the local population, a “quick-fix” project that has a significant impact on the living conditions of local Iraqis.

Conveniently these projects are more suited to the size and composition of the NZ Engineer detachment.
The conflict in the Middle East may be constantly in the news in New Zealand, but it’s “pretty much business as usual” for New Zealand military observers based there, says the NZDF senior national officer in Jerusalem, WGCDR Marc Roberts.

UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation) includes eight NZDF military observers who help monitor the truce between Israel and the bordering countries of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt.

WGCDR Roberts says he and the other New Zealanders take all the security precautions they can, and are always alert to the possibilities the area presents. They are unarmed.

While he says it’s business as usual, the carnage wrought by the various factions is televised where he lives, too, and it seldom leaves him unaffected.

“You can never numb yourself to the number of casualties you hear about daily. It’s tragic, but our neutrality is vital to ensure the truce is monitored. There are always tensions here,” he says, “but our mission is to report on issues or infringements on the borders we monitor. We are mandated by both parties, and are completely neutral.”

UNTSO is the longest-running UN mission and was established after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Most of the 153 military observers are based in the areas of separation between Israel and South Lebanon, and Israel and Syria on the Golan Heights. The observers, from 23 countries, are spread among Lebanon, Syria, Israel and Egypt, with 17 of them at the UNTSO headquarters in Jerusalem.

WGCDR Roberts is UNTSO’s Chief Military Personal Officer, and oversees the personnel administration for all the mission’s military officers. The New Zealand officers, who are from the Navy, Army and Air Force, seldom see each other as they are each teamed up with observers from other nations, in order to avoid claims of complicity.

“The Kiwis use all their military skills over here,” he says. “Their main role though is observing and reporting, so their integrity and neutrality is very important.”

Security is a significant issue. “All the observers are aware of the risks and places to avoid, and we are kept informed of significant developments, such as the recent Hamas assassination, sometimes every 30 minutes or so. We don’t travel on public transport, and stay away from crowded areas, such as cafes.”

Flight Lieutenant Rob Arrowsmith has been in the Middle East with UNTSO since March, and is based in Tiberius.

“The priority at the observation post is to spend as much time as possible observing and reporting activity in and around the cease-fire lines,” he says.

“Due to the stable nature of the cold war between Israel and Syria this usually does not involve significant military hardware, and is more commonly Syrian civilians that stray too close to the sometimes twitchy IDF positions and security fence. It is not an UNMO’s role to get involved in an incident, but to impartially observe and report what happens for other authorities to separate or mediate.

“The most important thing the UN is doing in the Golan is providing a presence that reminds both parties of their most recent 1974 cease-fire agreements and ensures an escalation in tension is rapidly noticed and acted on by the international community before it escalates significantly.”

Land mines are an ever-present problem in the area, says FLTLT Arrowsmith. “A week ago a sheep detonated an anti-personal mine in front of an OP and then just a few days later I was observing farmers prodding the ground just metres from the site with long stakes while digging up thistles. You cringe just watching.”
New Territorial Force legislation
- a boost for employers and employees

New Zealand’s part-time Defence Force personnel received a boost recently when legislation was introduced which will protect their civilian jobs should they deploy overseas.

When Wellington policeman John McGrail arrived on the turbulent Weather Coast in Solomon Islands late last year he found himself caught up in a flurry of tribal conflict, crime investigations, and exhumations. And at night he went home to a dirt-floored grass hut and a ration pack for dinner.

“It was challenging and used all the skills I could muster. It wasn’t easy, but none of us ever expected it would be.”

His usual job - patrolling Wellington’s highways, and being a member of the Police specialist search team - gave him insight for the Solomon Islands task, but his Territorial Force training, he says, stood him in excellent stead.

“The environment and the work were difficult, and the negotiations skills I have learned in the police, but particularly the experiences I have gained as a territorial were put to use.”

Senior Constable McGrail has been a part-time soldier for 20 years, and a policeman for 15. He has served as a territorial force soldier in missions to East Timor and Bougainville, and exercises regularly with his battalion in New Zealand.

While he deployed to Solomon Islands as part of the police contingent there, his deployments in all three missions saw him involved in negotiations, weapons disarmament, and “hearts and minds” patrols amongst the various factions involved in the conflict.

His policing and military skills are complementary, he says, but he has Territorial Force friends who put their military skills to use in civilian life. “Some own businesses or are supervisors, and they use their management, leadership and motivation skills all the time.”

John McGrail’s employer, the New Zealand Police, is supportive of his work in the Territorial Force, allowing him to take leave without pay for most of his time in East Timor and Bougainville.

Not all employers of other territorial soldiers who deployed to East Timor were so accommodating. Some part-timers had no job to return to after their East Timor deployment.

The new legislation - the Volunteers Employment Protection Act - is designed to work in two ways to support employers and employees. It sets out both parties’ rights, and provides an opportunity for
negotiation. It also provides an education programme to enable employers to make decisions about the employment of part-time soldiers or naval reservists.

The Government is to appoint a Territorial Forces Employer Support Council which will include representatives of everyone who has an interest in part-time military service—employer and employee representatives, government departments, the education sector, the New Zealand Defence Force, among others.

Brigadier Tim Brewer, a litigation lawyer in civilian life, is a long-time Territorial Force officer, and director of the Defence Employer Support Programme.

The legislation, he says, is significant in that for the first time it provides for mutual support for employers and employees.

“We can now forge a cooperative relationship with employers. As well as providing a framework which sets out the legal requirements of both employer and employee, it provides an opportunity for negotiation, understanding and the creation of situations where both parties benefit.”

The Territorial Forces Employer Support Council will show employers what territorials do, will advise the Minister of Defence what can be done to make the reservist system more employer-friendly, and will provide a mediation service to try to resolve problems employers and employees may have.

Part-time military service has traditionally attracted young men and women who are action-oriented and looking for adventure, or who want to test the water before committing to a career in the Regular forces.

Part-time military personnel, says John McGrail, are occasionally viewed cynically by friends and work colleagues who perceive their commitment to be “for fun”.

They’re right to a certain extent, he says, but along with the fun, part-time soldiers learn a strong work ethic, values, a sense of responsibility, and the value of physical and mental fitness. “And you can’t place a value on the camaraderie.”

They train for a minimum of 20 days a year, and have been deployed on many of the several missions throughout the world to which New Zealand has contributed in recent years, including East Timor, Bougainville, and the Middle East. The NZDF’s current senior officer in Iraq, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Howie, is a Territorial Force soldier.

Brigadier Brewer: “Employers cannot be forced not to discriminate against part-time military personnel. But if someone is tossing up whether to employ a territorial force soldier, I’d ask them if they want an employee who is fit, has good work habits, and is being trained in leadership and management skills. Instead of the employer paying for their employee to attend training programmes to get these skills, the Navy or Army will pay for them when they are a part-time member of the Defence Force.”

The Territorial Forces are the New Zealand Defence Force’s expansion base, he says.

“The demands placed on a modern military go beyond the ability of full timers to react and deal with it all the time. If you’re going to sustain a regular force, if you’re going to provide depth and breadth to what the military can do, you need reservists. And if you’re going to attract people with the skills needed to be reservists then you have to have an organisation that is relevant to them. The new legislation, which has the support of all political parties, will go some considerable way towards that goal.”
Project Protector will provide New Zealand’s Navy and civilian agencies with a multi-role vessel capable of undertaking such tasks as tactical sealift and disaster relief in the Pacific, and patrol vessels to meet our inshore and offshore requirements.

The ships will allow the Navy to patrol New Zealand’s EEZ more effectively, working in partnership with other agencies such as Fisheries and Customs, to protect the country’s borders.

The Tenix bid will provide very significant local and domestic industry involvement.

Tenix, based in Melbourne, has been involved with the Anzac frigate project for 12 years. Project Protector is expected to offer the opportunity for continuing economic flow-through.

Project Protector fleet requirements were outlined in the 2002 Maritime Forces Review, conducted by Defence, working in close cooperation with a number of other agencies to identify their requirements for surface patrol. This involved extensive work with MFAT, the Ministry of Fisheries, Customs, Treasury, the Maritime Safety Authority, and Police, among others.

The review detailed the need for sealift capability, inshore and offshore patrol matched to New Zealand’s demanding maritime environments, and the ability to conduct at-sea Naval training. All the vessels purchased under Project Protector will be designed and purpose built to meet these needs.

The Ministry of Defence is to negotiate the final options for fleet composition and clarify technical matters with Tenix prior to final confirmation of the multi-role vessel supplier. The Minister of Defence will then take a final proposal to Cabinet for approval.

“Our defence personnel are known around the world for their outstanding work and professionalism. They deserve a systematic and ongoing acquisition plan that will keep them well equipped for the extensive variety of tasks they are called upon to undertake,” said Defence Minister Mark Burton.
Navy change of command

A unique double ceremony was held on April 7 when the Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral Peter McHaffie and the Maritime Component Commander, Commodore David Ledson handed over their commands. The ceremony, held at Devonport Naval Base, included a formal parade incorporating inherited traditions and elements of New Zealand’s cultural heritage. During the first part of the ceremony Commodore Jack Steer replaced Commodore Ledson as the Maritime Component Commander. The Maritime Component Commander heads all of the RNZN’s operational elements. The second command change saw Rear Admiral McHaffie, who retired from the Navy after 37 years service, hand over control of the RNZN to Commodore Ledson. Commodore Ledson now heads the Navy in the rank of Rear Admiral.

Te Mana departs

Royal New Zealand Navy frigate HMNZS Te Mana sailed earlier this month for its second deployment to the Middle East to support OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM.

HMNZS Te Mana left Fremantle on April 7, 2004 for the Gulf of Oman. She will patrol for approximately four months, returning to New Zealand in September 2004.

Commanding Officer, Commander Andy Watts said he and the ship’s company were looking forward to the mission and building on the success achieved last year.

Light operational vehicles for Army

One hundred and eighty-eight new Pinzgauer Light Operational Vehicles will soon to be delivered to the New Zealand Defence Force.

The vehicles are the first tranche of a total fleet of 321, and will replace the Army’s current fleet of ageing Landrovers. The total cost of the project is estimated at $60 - $110 million, and delivery is scheduled to begin in October 2004.

At the signing of the contract with suppliers Automotive Technik Ltd, Minister of Defence Mark Burton said the government had taken another significant step towards achieving the goal of a modernised, well equipped, and sustainable Defence Force across all three services.

“Purchasing these new vehicles reinforces the positive progress we are making in re-equipping all three services of the NZDF. These 188 vehicles are just the first tranche of LOVs, with a second, armoured component yet to come. Along with new field communications systems, Light Armoured Vehicles, weaponry, and technology upgrades, this government has already invested close to $1 billion in the Army alone.”

Skytrain

Exercise Skytrain, the Air Force exercise which focuses on low level flying, parachuting equipment, supplies and people, and landing on small, unprepared airfields, was held this month.

Aircraft participating in Skytrain included two C-130 Hercules, one French CASA 235 (from New Caledonia) and one Iroquois Helicopter.

In addition to the aircrew, maintenance and support personnel, soldiers from NZ Army units were also involved.

Joint venture to manage dockyard

The NZDF has selected a joint venture between the UK based VT Integrated Services plc and Fitzroy Engineering Ltd of New Plymouth to manage the Navy’s Dockyard at Devonport Naval Base for the next ten years.

Babcock New Zealand Limited has managed the existing contract since 1994.

The joint venture, to be known as VTF, will conduct due diligence, and is expected to employ all or most of the existing workforce when it takes over on 1 July. A change of contract manager will oversee the name change, and some senior managers replaced. Apart from these changes, it will be business as usual for the Dockyard.

UK Air chief visits

The Royal Air Force Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, visited the Royal New Zealand Air Force earlier this month. His visit was hosted by RNZAF Chief of Air Force, Air Vice Marshal John Hamilton. ACM Stirrup met with Defence officials and senior RNZAF officers, before visiting RNZAF Base Auckland.
The courage and sacrifice of all those who have served New Zealand in armed conflict, particularly those who went ashore at ANZAC Cove in Gallipoli in 1915 was commemorated on April 25, Anzac Day. NZDF missions throughout the world marked the occasion in various ways throughout New Zealand, and service personnel and civilians from the Navy, Army and Air Force were out in force on Friday April 23 collecting donations from New Zealanders in exchange for a poppy. Poppy Day is organised by the Royal New Zealand Returned Services Association to raise funds to help New Zealand returned servicemen and women.

Sixty-one NZDF personnel (58 Army, one RNZN and two RNZAF) are in southern Iraq providing support to post-conflict humanitarian aid and reconstruction projects. Based in Basra, they are helping reconstruct and repair schools, power stations and bridges in the nearby city. LCpl Kevin Rolleston, above, helps to restore water to a local school.

NZ DEFENCE FORCE OPERATIONS

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