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\$2 BILLION IN PROJECTS PLANNED IN IRAQ PROVINCES OVERSEEN BY V CORPS' 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION

1st Infantry Division release

TIKRIT, Iraq — Within the next few months, \$2 billion will be spent on projects throughout the four provinces that V Corps' 1st Infantry Division oversees, announced Maj. Gen. John R.S. Batiste, the division's during a press conference following a monthly Governor's Conference hosted by the division here.

"This is a huge amount of money and a gift from the U.S. taxpayers," Batiste said. How the money will be spent will be decided by each provincial council, he added.

During the monthly conference, Charlie Hess, director of the Project Coordination Office, said more 200 projects within Kirkuk, Diyala, As Sulaymaniyah and Salah Ad Din provinces are slated to begin by the middle of October. Those projects include water systems, schools, medical clinics, bridges, load work and electric facilities.

Kirkuk Provincial Governor Abdul Rahman Mustafa hailed the move to give local leadership a voice in the projects, saying "this is a good step. We must have a say in what projects are undertaken in Kirkuk."

By the end of the year, Hess said, more than 1,000 projects throughout Iraq are expected to start.

"I appreciate the patience of the good people of Iraq," Batiste said during the press conference. "Good things are about to happen."

During the conference a number of topics were discussed, including: the situation in Samarra; the status of Iraqi security forces in the region; the resettlement of Iraqis in displaced persons camps; improvements to the country's infrastructure and quality of life, and the creation of jobs.

Governor Hamud Shukti of Salah Ad Din and Batiste reiterated their commitment to finding a peaceful solution to the security concerns in Samarra. "The province of Salah Ad Din has suffered from being associated with the former regime," said Shukti. "We know that the only way to move forward is to make the city of Samarra safe for the people."

Officials say Samarra stands to gain millions of dollars in reconstruction projects and quality of life initiatives when a safe and secure environment has been restored.

"We all look forward to the increase in projects," Batiste said.

Diyala Governor Abdullah Hassan Rasheed referred to the expansive province as "little Iraq" for its multi-ethnic make-up of Shia, Sunni, Kurds, Turkomen and Arabs and their ability to work together in partnership. "We are all united in our effort to improve security and bring jobs to the people," said Rasheed.

