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ENGINEERS OF V CORPS' 1ST ARMORED DIVISION PROVIDE FUNDS FOR RENOVATION OF 'ADOPTED' KARBALA SCHOOLS

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KARBALA, Iraq – Years of neglect, looting and the recent violence have left several schools here run down, damaged and unsafe.

But with help from V Corps' Company A, 16th Engineer Battalion, many pupils in Karbala will have a better environment in which to learn.



PFC BRYCE DUBEE

Iraqi students study for upcoming tests in a recently renovated classroom in Karbala, Iraq. Soldiers from the 16th Engineer Battalion of V Corps' 1st Armored Division helped renovate several schools in the city.

The battalion, part of the 1st Brigade Combat Team of the corps' Task Force 1st Armored Division, adopted four schools in Karbala and has provided more than \$126,000 to clean and repair them.

“We have agreements with three contractors who have all done excellent work,” said 1st Lt. Rob McMahon, Company A's 2nd platoon leader. “It is surprising how quickly they got started and their progress is unbelievable.”

The new contracts were granted using Commander's Emergency Relief Program funds and just days later, vast improvement to the school grounds and buildings can be seen.

"We are cleaning and painting the classrooms, repairing the plumbing in the bathrooms, replacing broken windows, and dealing with electrical problems," McMahon said. "Looters had stripped most of the wiring out of the buildings, so that has been a big challenge to replace."

Two schools will be fully renovation and one will also have a new wall built around it.

The contractors are employing local labor and "on many levels it has a great effect, helping to jump-start the local economy," McMahon said. "Our overall goal was to improve as much as possible, and I feel that we have increased the standard of living for these kids probably by 200 percent."

Alpha Company has had many missions while stationed in Karbala.

"Our unit was here for the fighting," McMahon said. "No people were in the streets due to the violence, but now there is activity. People are out and about cleaning up their neighborhoods. We have seen vast improvements since then. There has been an amazing change here in the last two weeks."

Many schools are closed for summer break, so workmen are using the time to repair holes in walls, removing rubble and waste, and installing ceiling fans to improve air circulation.

"I am glad to be a part of all this," McMahon said. "It improves the community and helps build support for the coalition."

