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**BRITISH SOLDIERS FIND HUNDREDS OF WAYS TO BUILD
A NEW FUTURE FOR IRAQ**

British soldiers in Iraq have found over 400 ways to ensure a brighter, safer and healthier future for the people of Iraq.

Coalition forces under UK command based at Basrah in the south of the country, are currently involved in managing over 400 regeneration projects aimed at improving schools, healthcare, power and water distribution, police stations and court houses. The projects amount to an investment of almost £5.5 million, and the range of projects is set to expand in the future.

Known as Quick Impact Projects, they are part of a programme of commitment to Iraq by the British armed forces, to help build the peace, security and stability to enable the country to develop following the end of the former regime. Funded by the UK Government, they have also provided employment for thousands of local workers.

The projects currently include repair, reconstruction or refurbishment of:

- 100 education projects schools, colleges and universities.
- Five banks
- 37 health centres, hospitals and clinics
- 23 power projects such as generators, power supplies, sanitation facilities and telecommunications
- 37 water supply projects, such as pipelines and pumping stations
- 108 police stations, court houses and the supply of better equipment for these

Captain Steve Little, of the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers, said: “These projects have a quick impact on the local community, and we have just achieved our 100th school project, many of which were used as barracks or aircraft sites during the conflict. In some schools the playgrounds looked like soldiers had been juggling with mortar bombs as they were discarded everywhere.

“Since then the Royal Engineers have cleared the site of unexploded ammunition and the contractors refurbished the schools ready in time for the start of the new school year in September.”

The soldiers project-managing this work employ local contractors and use locally sourced materials whenever available.

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Sergeant Major Simon Ellis, of 1 Regiment Army Air Corps based in Germany has managed the rebuilding of 15 schools in three months. He said: "The first school we did – a girls' school – was just a shell. It had suffered years of neglect, had been looted, windows smashed, and doors ripped off. It was being used as a barracks during the war and there was unexploded ammunition everywhere. Needless to say, there had been little in the way of schooling for the children."

In went the British, and armed with \$50,000 dollars for that project alone, they found a local contractor and set about replacing the doors and windows, clearing the weaponry out, installing electricity and basic services, and cleaning up the furniture.

Simon added: "Our aim is minimum bureaucracy, maximum action. That first school opened in June and it was a fantastic occasion. About 200 children had had no formal education since March, so they they could resume schooling. The new Iraq education ministry were doubly pleased because the national state examination was also able to go ahead."

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Sgt Major Ellis and Captain Little are currently serving in Iraq as part of the Headquarters for Multi-National Division, South East