

447th EXPEDITIONARY COMMUNICATIONS SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

447th Expeditionary Communications Squadron

STATIONS

Sather AB, Iraq

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Airmen at Baghdad International Airport worked for two days rebuilding and improving the communications infrastructure there. A team of 447th Air Expeditionary Group cable maintenance shop and telephone systems Airmen started the job April 3. "We were asked to come out here and establish high-speed computer and satellite-communications capability to the airport," said Tech. Sgt. Christopher Thomas, NCO in charge of the 447th ECS cable maintenance shop.

The contractor responsible for bringing the entire airport up to international- commercial standards, recently ran short on some supplies and tools. Through a meeting with the Air Force group's leaders, officials determined the communications squadron had the right materials to assist, said Mr. Eric Huppert, the company's deputy program director in Iraq, and a retired lieutenant colonel. Saddam Hussein's regime had wired the airport -- but not properly, said Chris Lebiedz, the company's assistant information manager at the airport. The communications lines were run too far off without equipment to boost the signals. The regime also used substandard materials among other problems, he said. Some of the wires were run right across the roof tops, which in the summer heat would melt.

The Air Force donated surplus fiber-optic cable, cable connectors, tools, media converters and communication switches. Training Iraqi employees who will maintain the system after contractors and the U.S. forces are gone is a key part of the joint effort. To that end, Iraqis followed the Airmen through every task, from running cables through floors to attaching equipment to the cabling. "All this stuff is so new to me, but I'm learning quickly," said Sarah Izet, a contracted information technician and Baghdad native. After poking through ceilings, cracks, air ducts and crawling through dusty rooms, the team discovered security was tight throughout the airport.

Getting doors unlocked was quite a challenge, Sergeant Powell said. The Airmen said they are proud of the time they spent working side by- side with the Iraqis to rebuild their country, said Staff Sgt. Shawn German, a telephone systems switch technician. Especially heartwarming was the welcome the Airmen felt from most of the Iraqis, he said. "Once, we were running some cable outside and this older man came over for no reason at all and brought us some tea," Sergeant German said. "That is something I will remember for years to come."

The Iraqis are grateful for the Americans' help, Ms. Izet said. "I'm glad everything is so good now," she said. "We needed the change, and this is for the better." Mr. Huppert added, "Communications is our lifeblood. All our other operations hinge on the ability to communicate both internally and externally."

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.
Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.