

## The Iraqi Navy moves toward self-sufficiency with Coalition help

*Iraqi Officers and Sailors grateful for Coalition training and advice*

(Umm Qasr, Iraq) – The Iraqi Navy is quickly expanding and beginning to take control of Iraqi territorial waters. While Iraq's coastline is only around fifty kilometers long, Iraqi territorial waters contain the primary tanker terminals to export oil. The regular and safe functioning of these offshore pumping stations is critical to the rebuilding of Iraq, and is one of the new Iraqi Navy's primary responsibilities.



The new Iraqi Navy was constituted in 2003 and began with four officers, zero sailors, and zero ships. Today the Umm Qasr Naval Base has over 800 officers and sailors in addition to 300 Iraqi Marines. There are five large coastal patrol ships, with three new ships of the Al-Faw class nearing completion, and twenty smaller craft for training and patrolling around the port. The Iraqi Navy recently placed orders for several



additional ships to expand their capabilities further that will arrive in 2008.

Commodore Thamir is the commander of the Umm Qasr Naval Base and is a twenty year veteran of the Iraqi Navy. He attended the Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth, England and has served as the director of the Iraqi Naval Staff College and

the Naval Chief of Staff during his career. He has been working with the Coalition's Naval Transition team. "We trained on operations; we trained on ship handling, seamanship, navigation, man overboard, firefighting, and damage control. We have a team with the US Marines, they have trained us how to do searches and secure the base as well."



The US Marines, along with the US Coast Guard and Royal Marines have been training the Iraqi Marines to secure the off



shore oil terminals and conducting search and seizure operations at sea in addition to their work in ensuring the safety of the base.

Commodore Thamir looks forward to the day that the Iraqi Navy can assume full responsibility for her coasts and he can say to the Coalition Naval forces "thank you very much for your help and you can stand behind now."

*Story by Adriel Domenech, U.S. Department of State, Public Affairs GO Team. Photos by Adriel Domenech and Naval Transition Team.*