

## **Iraq Political Districts**

Rick Burns from Elk Horn was the speaker on February 7. Rick is a Lieutenant Colonel in the 418 Civil Affairs Battalion of the Army. He has been on two tours of duty in Iraq, one North of Baghdad and one to the Southeast part of Baghdad. He returned home in November 2008 from working in the Karadah Political District. He was accompanied by his son Daniel Burns, a Junior at Elk Horn, Kimballton High School.

Rick worked with the people in the Karadah district on a variety of infrastructure, education, governance, and economic development projects. He was the Brigade's liaison with the district council. The council was composed of educated people who met weekly. They are mainly Shia, but the council also included two Christians and one Sunni.

In the district they have the Karadah Beladiya, similar to a Public Works Department. However, the district council has no budget for Public Works. All expenses must be approved by the centralized Baghdad public works department, whose head is appointed by the Prime Minister. Therefore, it is difficult to get money when it is needed.

Factories are just learning to operate without a centrally controlled Government. Therefore, they have no sales force, only manufacturing what is ordered. Even though the country produces a lot of oil, they import petroleum products for plastics from Saudi Arabia.

Since Iraq was under sanctions before the war, their technology, infrastructure, and ideas are 30-50 years old. The people have had little exposure to modern ideas. Therefore, Rick Burns is working to set up a Sister City relationship between Council Bluffs and his district. The people there need information exchanges and he is working to bring 10-20 Iraqis to Council Bluffs and Omaha this summer to show them how factories, government departments, and businesses operate in this country. The four areas of emphasis will be Public Works, Governance, Higher Education, and Economic Development.

The Iraqis are very hard working and determined. The two things they need are economic stability and peace.

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