

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

STUDENT JOURNALISTS BRIDGE GAP BETWEEN UNITED STATES AND IRAQ

**Project sponsored by U.S. Dept. of State creates first student newspaper in Iraq;
Lakewood St. Edward High School only American school to participate**

As part of Iraq's first high school newsletter initiative, students from St. Edward High School and Baghdad's Mansour High School for Boys have partnered in a program, developed and funded by the Provincial Reconstruction Team-Baghdad (PRT-B), to introduce a democratic press in Iraq. The PRT-B is staffed by U.S. Dept. of State personnel charged with building civil capacity in Iraq.

Working with Leslie Sabbagh, Special Advisor Media Relations for PRT-B, the editorial staff of the *Edsman*, St. Edward's student newspaper, and its faculty advisor, Mr. Tom Glasenapp, have developed a schedule to communicate several times per week via the Internet with their counterparts at Mansour High School to mentor and coach them in the production of their first newsletter.

The program's objectives include

- Encouraging friendship and appreciation of each other's culture;
- Instilling an early love of journalism and discernment of what entails balanced reporting;
- Training faculty and teachers to produce quality journalism;
- Promoting collegiality through peer-to-peer collaborations;
- Developing marketing and sales skills by selling ad space thus encouraging self-reliance.

The project addresses several public diplomacy goals, including engaging with youth, cultural exchange, and media development and has sparked the interest of the U.S. Embassy in Iraq. Following this week's briefing of embassy personnel, an embassy official commented, "Gen. Odierno was ecstatic. He commented on the value of this exchange as being what is needed in Iraq to carry this country into the future."

While most of their communication has been by e-mail so far, St. Edward and Mansour students did meet and exchange ideas via a teleconference (Skype) earlier this month, "The opportunity to meet our counterparts personally and speak with them was exciting for everyone. Our Iraqi colleagues were as enthusiastic as we were," commented Tom Glasenapp, *Edsman* advisor. This was the first of many such conferences planned for the future.

Additional comment about this project may be found by contacting the U.S. Dept. of State in Washington. Press information is available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/index.htm>. Also, contact the *Edsman* at edsmanstaff@gmail.com for more information.

###