

Enhancing Engineering Capacity In Iraq

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“What’s a neuroscientist doing at the Department of Defense (DOD)?” friends asked Ivy Estabrooke. “I had fellowship offers that were more in line with my background,” she explains. “Going with DOD was a risk but also an opportunity I might not have had, except through the AAAS Fellowship.”

That leap led to a placement at the Office of Naval Research (ONR) Global. Ivy’s supervisor and mentor was former AAAS Fellow Melissa Flagg (Diplomacy, 2001-2003), director of the ONR Global International Liaison Office, who credits her own fellowship with launching her government career. Melissa stressed that, “It’s important to expose S&T Policy Fellows to opportunities to interact with senior officials, to work on committees, and to engage with individuals in leadership positions, even if they aren’t working in areas directly related to the fellowship assignment.”

As a result of that exposure, Ivy was tasked by the Chief of Naval Research “to figure out how ONR could support the Iraqi Navy. I spent several months learning what challenges the Iraqi Navy was facing that science and

technology could address,” she explains. “I then had to determine what ONR could do, what resources and capabilities could be brought to bear from other parts of the Navy and interagency partners, and come up with strategies.”

One outcome is a public-private partnership exchange program for Iraqi engineers to come to the U.S. for fellowships at universities or small engineering firms. The goals, which Ivy helped establish, are to enhance the civil and mechanical engineering capacity of the Iraqis; fulfill a public diplomacy role by giving a group of Iraqis a chance to know the U.S.; and to support the policy role of reconstruction efforts in Iraq under a science and technology umbrella.

Ivy is now a program manager in the Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare and Combating Terrorism Department at ONR. “I accepted the position because I enjoyed my experience at ONR and

it allows me to be directly involved in my technical area, something I didn’t anticipate when I first accepted a fellowship at DOD,”

she says.

“Taking risks and keeping an open mind about applying science to policy has forged an exciting new path.”

