



## Chief Warrant Officer's Quest Culminates With Education Center Opening

By Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith  
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CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE BASRA, Iraq, June 19, 2009 - Weeks of planning and hard work came to fruition as the Basra Education Center officially opened here June 15.



*Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert L. Meeks, left, discusses education center programs with soldiers at Contingency Operating Base Basra, Iraq, June 15, 2009. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith*

Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert L. Meeks, 41st Fires Brigade, said it took weeks of sunup to sundown work to bring his vision to life. Working with the outgoing British forces' education office and going to various division sections, Meeks was able to accumulate the tools to fulfill a need that may have remained unrealized had he not made it his personal mission.

"This is for the soldiers," the Baltimore native said. "There was a need, and I wanted to make sure it happened."

The three-building complex is located next to the post office and finance office, in front of the Shining Star gift shop. It includes an office, a computer lab and a testing center to allow servicemembers here to advance their education.

Services at the education center include college enrollment and classes, exam proctoring and tuition assistance, said Meeks, who acts as the center's administrator.

Meeks earned his bachelor's degree in criminal justice and is working on his master's degree. He teaches criminal justice and military science courses here through Central Texas College, and he encourages soldiers to take advantage of every educational program the Army offers.

"I do it for the soldiers, because I know how hard it is to get a degree while you're deployed," Meeks said. "If you're going to spend so much time away from home, at least you can come out with something positive."

Classes scheduled at the center include "Terrorism in the Middle East," "Gangs in the Military" and "Investigation of Sexual Assault." The center also offers the popular Functional Academic Skills Training course to improve soldiers' general technical scores, which help in warrant officer candidacy and changing military occupational specialties.

Meeks, who expects to redeploy in two weeks, said he's looking for motivated servicemembers to assist with the center's programs. He said volunteers should have good research skills and be highly motivated, and that they don't need a degree. All that's required, he said, is "the desire to help soldiers."

"This is a job that has to be done because you like to do it," he said. "It's about soldiers."

(Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith serves in Multinational Division South.)