



## ALASKA COAST GUARDSMAN RETURNS HOME AFTER TOUR OF DUTY IN IRAQ

By Petty Officer Sara Francis and Petty Officer Kip Wadlow

Many of Alaska's military men and women continue to serve their country overseas. Sunday, Coast Guard Marine Science Technician Second Class Craig Sears returned to Anchorage after completing a six month tour of duty as part of the Coast Guard's supporting role in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

PORTSMOUTH, Va. - Coast Guard Petty Officer Craig Sears stands at ease during an awards ceremony at the Atlantic Area Headquarters, here, Monday, Nov. 19, 2007. USCG photo by Petty Officer Kip Wadlow

Sears was a member of the Coast Guard Redeployment Assistance and Inspection Detachment (RAID) VI team tasked with assisting the U.S.

Army in ensuring the safe and expedient redeployment of containerized cargo and hazardous materials (HAZMAT) returning from OIF and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Sears team was assigned to Army Redeployable Support Teams (RST) where their work included training Army Unit Movement Officers (UMO) and Hazardous Material Officers.

Their role often involved working at Forward Operating Bases (FOB) situated in combat zones. RAID efforts have proven indispensable to the smooth transition of DOD containers, equipment, vehicles and personnel gear returning from Iraq. RAID VI played an integral role inspecting cargo slated for redeployment and ensured a wide variety of safety/HAZMAT discrepancies were corrected prior to shipping. Cargo can be very vulnerable to tampering; either to disrupt commerce and operations or covertly transfer un-manifested goods.

Sears served as one of the RAID Team Inspectors forward deployed to multiple temporary missions at various Forward Operating Bases. Sears demonstrated outstanding knowledge of container inspection and assisted Army personnel in creating flawless HAZMAT paperwork to reduce frustrations at the port.

Sears lived within a wide variety of conditions, including a royal palace, rat infested containers and a mausoleum. At all Forward Operating Bases, he experienced constant mortar and rocket attacks while conducting missions.

Some locations had great living quarters and showers. In other locations, it was not uncommon to stand in a half-foot of muddy water while showering. Regardless of sustained sub-civilized conditions, RAID members never complain.



After returning from duty, Sears was awarded the Army Commendation Medal, GWOT Expeditionary Medal, and the Iraq Campaign Medal. Sears is a resident of Plattsburgh, New York.

PORTSMOUTH, Va. - Coast Guard Petty Officer Craig Sears stands at ease during an awards ceremony at the Atlantic Area Headquarters, here, Monday, Nov. 19, 2007. Vice Adm. D. Brian Peterman, Commander Coast Guard Atlantic Area congratulated Sears for his work and recent safe return from Iraq. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer Kip Wadlow)