

Postcards from Iraq

Challenges and Adventures in Iraq

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Life is sometimes full of challenges and a little adventure when you work for the Gulf Region Division, Central District, US Army Corps of Engineers. Working in Iraq has not been glamorous. Your plate is filled with hard work and a large heaping side of aggravation. The up-side is you get to work with some friendly, hard working and committed people.

The group at GRC works together to build something that as a Corp employee I can be proud to say I helped. Working here is not a life-changing event, but it does provide a different view of life, and can be a very broadening experience. (The dining facility cafeteria serves good food and great desserts!)

Patricia Mason says "Hello" to a Bradley Fighting Vehicle crew on Baghdad's Victory Base.



In the nine months I have been here, I have seen many changes both internal and external to the office. GRC has emphasized and enforced safety on construction sites, which is something new to the local work environment culture. Enforcing the wearing of hard hats and covered toe shoes/boots can be a challenge. There are no labor laws in Iraq so contractors will sometimes hire unskilled or underage workers to do risky jobs like high tension electric wiring or trench work. The result can be tragic. Central District is working every day on these issues. Posters in Arabic and English are provided to job sites and the command works hard to enforce safe working conditions.

We work seven days a week, 10 to 12 hours a day and half a day on Friday. The half day off is our weekend. For all the work and for all the great people here in Baghdad, I miss home. They say you don't know what you have until it's gone. Being here has crystallized for me how great home is.

The people I work with back home at USACE's Portland District are a fine group. They are kind and considerate; sometimes a quality that is severely lacking in a tough environment. The people here at GRC are dedicated to getting the mission done. We work closely with military personnel and I can truly say they are well-trained and dedicated to the GRC mission, a credit to the United States. They deserve a giant "Thank You" for all the work they have done and are doing.



Guess who beat all the boys on Poker Night?