

Postcards from Iraq

My time in Iraq

By CPT Patrick Powe, Assistant Operations Officer
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I've learned a few things during my deployment to Iraq with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. What I know today after spending nearly a year here is that Iraqis have come a long, long way. It's no longer a beehive of insurgent activity — things here have dramatically improved.

My job as Assistant Operations Officer for Gulf Region South District (GRS) provided me an opportunity to interact with local Iraqis on a daily basis. One such person was my interpreter. He was a family man just like me. He has a wife and three children -- I have a wife and two children. We were a lot alike and wanted similar things for our families (a good home, food, a quality education for our kids). When I traveled and talked to townspeople in other locations, I would get similar responses.

Iraqis, who were stifled by Saddam's regime, are now enjoying some hard-earned peace and newfound freedoms. My interpreter has satellite TV, a cell phone and internet in his house — he along with families throughout the country are now connected to the outside world. They are seeing how Arabs and Muslims in other countries live. They and their children have higher expectations and are seeking additional opportunities. This is how a free society evolves and it's great to see.

Although things are better, there is still much work to be done. Infrastructure that was neglected for decades will still require billions to improve — things we in America often take for granted such as clean water when we turn on the faucet, functioning sewers, electricity when we flip a light switch, access to medical care. GRS is currently overseeing nearly 200 construction projects in Iraq's nine southern provinces to address some of the country's essential service needs. We're making a difference.



CPT Patrick Powe and Iraqi interpreter Najem

I want to thank my wife and family for their continued support and understanding during my time away. I'm definitely looking forward to coming home!

I'm proud to have been part of the USACE team supporting their great mission. It's been an awesome experience, one I will never forget.

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Iraqis warmly greet us whenever we get a chance to go out in the community.



Local Iraqi construction firms are leading the effort to improve essential services in their communities.