

Postcards from Iraq

YES It Matters!!

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Many of us that volunteered and deployed to Iraq spend the entirety of our tours confined to a military Installation that in many ways resemble stateside locations.

We may have come here with visions of interactions with Iraqi citizens or opportunities to see some of the amazing places in this cradle of civilization only to find out the “outside” is off limits without an absolute need to be there.

If you, like me, see nothing during your tour in Iraq other than “inside the wire” at some Forward Operating Base or another, or what can be viewed through the windows of a helicopter; should it make you feel like maybe your contribution is somehow “less than” that of others?

I can tell you that I have discovered the answer is definitely **NO**. What each of us is able to accomplish wherever we are assigned **IS** important. I am in some ways sad that I have come half way around the world to a location that is so incredibly rich in ancient history and I will not see any of the palaces and beautiful places except in pictures. I will also not see much of the effects of war. I do not, however, feel like I am wasting my time here; that I am not contributing.

I was fortunate to help out with a **HUGE** year end push to award almost 200 projects in support of the reconstruction effort including roads, schools, water projects, health clinics, etc. I saw reports and photographs of these as they progressed and I am grateful I had a part in them and so very proud of my country for caring about the quality of life of the people of this land.

After the fiscal New Year end, I returned to the construction field in which I have worked most of my life. While in Iraq at the Anaconda Area Office, I was very fortunate to work as Project Engineer and Contract Administrator (and wherever else was needed) on all different types of Military Construction projects that directly support the troops and civilians deployed there and enhance the mission capabilities. These include a new hospital, an incinerator facility, offices, a new perimeter security fence, airfield improvements, etc... Many of the tasks I performed were not what one would call exciting, but each was challenging and rewarding.

I have met people that I will never forget. I have always appreciated our Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen for all that they offer for our freedom, but the sacrifices are so much more than I had ever imagined. I feel like I have been able to make a difference in the mission's success and personally, it has meant a lot to me to be able to contribute. We never know how our encounters with others will have an effect, but I have learned that..... **YES**—it does matter.

Essays!



Anaconda Incinerator Units 1 & 2—This Military Construction project is one piece of a solid waste management plan for LSA Anaconda. Once the plan is fully implemented, it will provide a means of disposal of camp trash that is now being burned in an open pit. This will greatly enhance the health and quality of life for the Anaconda residents as well as the nearby villages. GRN file photo.