

Postcards from Iraq

Improvements continue at world's busiest trauma center

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By the time I got to Baghdad I was starting to think, my gosh this is a War Zone, is this what I want to do for the next four months? Well, it's been just over two years and I could not have volunteered for a more critical and rewarding job in my life.

I work at the Ibn Sina Hospital, better known as the "Baghdad ER" of HBO fame. It's a 43-year-old structure built in 1964. Saddam Hussein took it over in 1974 and made it his private clinic. After the invasion in 2003, the US Army took possession and we have been steadily making improvements to the place ever since. It is currently manned by the 28th Combat Support Hospital (CSH), from Ft. Bragg, NC.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manages the Operations and Maintenance (O&M), Repair and Improvements (R&I) contract for the 3rd Medical Command and I am the Engineering Technician on this project, responsible for some 30 buildings.

The CSH provides care to over 77,000 US and Coalition forces in Baghdad and Iraq. This hospital is the busiest Trauma Center in the World and there's no doubt in my mind our Army has the best Doctors and Nurses anywhere. When a fallen soldier comes through our doors they have a 96% chance of survival — that's a remarkable statistic. The hospital has handled over 13,000 emergency room visits, dispensed over 33,000 units of blood, taken over 60,000 x-rays, and air evacuated over 10,000 patients.

And we're constantly striving to improve this critical facility. We've constructed an outpatient clinic, a dental clinic, blood bank, "Return to Duty" barracks, a chapel, new oxygen storage building, installed a new central suction system and new CT scanner.

One of the bright spots here is that the hospital has delivered 20 newborns over the past year. I've included a photo of the newest arrival — a little boy. This facility truly is a "House of Angles." This is tremendously satisfying work, something I will never forget.

Dennis Graham
Seattle District

P.S. I was recently honored when the CSH presented me a "Commander's Award for Civilian Service" for the work we're overseeing here.



New outpatient clinic takes shape.



Surgical suite at Ibn Sina Hospital



Hundreds of Iraqi families live in the International Zone. Ibn Sina Hospital has delivered 20 newborns over the past year. This little boy weighed 2.8 kilos.