

Postcards from Iraq

Being part of something important and real

I believe I have made a difference in Iraq by being a part of something important and real. This is largely an Engineers' War where we have to change hearts and minds by providing security and basic civil services; clean water, sewage treatment, electricity, trash pickup, etc. The infrastructure we build can, and will, make a great difference to the welfare of Iraq and its people. While the construction process is slow, we remain hopeful and determined in accomplishing the goals. Being a part of USACE helped my personal efforts in making a difference.

I still find time to really think about issues that are most important and sacred to me. There are no distractions (although they are greatly missed) of the crazy D.C. traffic, worrying about mowing the lawn, or having to take the kids to basketball games. It is in the quiet moments that I find myself focusing, contemplating, and reorganizing subjects and issues in my life. I have a saying; "What you say you will do, should match the results you see." This is what I kept telling myself before I came to Iraq. Ten months have passed, and here I am ready to go home. Yet I still wonder "What have I really learned?"

People who serve in Iraq come from all nationalities, diverse backgrounds, and a wide-range of ages. There are civilians and military, males and females, from different regions of the U.S. and various socio-economic backgrounds. There is

one simple virtue we all have in common, however, and that is courage. We are responsible for management and quality control of billions of dollars in reconstruction and new construction throughout Iraq. The projects range from critical infrastructure of essential utility services such as reliable electricity and clean water, to smaller but vital projects to provide quality healthcare, transportation, and education facilities. It is not easy to work effectively in a War Zone and yet we manage to accomplish great things.

The Iraqis are concerned and worried about the future of their nation. Like any other human being, they are often motivated by a natural instinct to protect what they, their tribes, and families need. This is why our work in Iraq is more important than most people realize.

Here, I recall one of my friends telling me that he learned important lessons from this assignment and asked me if I had done the same. My hope and confidence is that I have. I think the majority of people truly share the basic fundamentals and foundations of ideas. We use different communication methods in order to explain and clarify our thoughts, issues, wants, and needs. The heart holds many similarities which may be lost in the translation of words and actions. What I have learned is that the world is more alike than it is different.

As I return to ACSIM in the Pentagon, I feel very honored to have served in Iraq and to have been a part of the incredible work the Corps of Engineers is doing!

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