

# Postcards from Iraq

## Building Partnerships

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*"We have learned that we cannot live alone, at peace; that our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations, far away."*  
Franklin Delano Roosevelt , Fourth Inaugural Address, January 20, 1945

With these words, President Roosevelt succinctly stated a profound lesson of the Second World War and introduced America's modern era of global engagement. In committing the United States to an "internationalist" foreign policy, Roosevelt put his mark on a debate that had lingered since the earliest days of our country.

Though much has changed since 1945, global engagement remains central to American foreign policy. In particular, today, to me serving in the Navy, a key ingredient to our Maritime Strategy is fostering and sustaining cooperative relationships with international partners. That is why I am in Baghdad working for the Central District of USACE. I believe this service is a noble calling and the privilege of a lifetime.

Since my arrival six months ago, I have had the unique opportunity to lead 10 Americans and 28 Iraqis. Together, we worked on more than 60 projects (including four hospitals, seven schools, and 15 water/sewage systems) totaling more than \$500 million. The reconstruction mission in Iraq involves more than dollars, concrete and steel. It also involves more than being a guardian and a warrior. It involves being a diplomat, fostering trust and cooperation with international partners.



*Baghdad children near a school share a moment with Cmdr Darlene Grasdock.*

Although our forces can surge when necessary to respond to crises, trust and cooperation cannot be surged. We are building that trust and cooperation in Iraq. For example, I had an opportunity to meet an Iraqi lady in a recently renovated hospital. She was very thankful for the new facilities that enabled her to safely give birth to a daughter. Only oneday after giving birth, she handed me her daughter to hold. That is trust. I have many other similar experiences, but in summary, the Iraqis are taking pride in reconstruction efforts and they are taking ownership so they can continue building a better Iraq after we leave.

Iraq is a much safer place than when I first arrived, however, there are still many dangers, and we still suffer tragic losses. I am constantly amazed at the willingness of our civilian contractors, Sailors, Soldiers, Airmen, and Marines to sacrifice and perform under difficult circumstances. They are very much willing to be a part of something bigger than themselves. They don't ask for more money, they don't ask for more time off, they simply do their job and smile. Their extraordinary acts of courage should not surprise us however, because this is who we are. We are professionals---we will support our foreign policy and we will help build partnerships for a better Iraq, and for a better America.

May God Bless you, and may God continue to Bless America.

For more information on challenging GRC jobs in Iraq visit: <http://cpolwapp.belvoir.army.mil/coe-gwot/>



*Cmdr Darlene Grasdock holds a newborn at a Baghdad maternity hospital; below, a project conference discusses progress.*

