

# Postcard from Iraq

## Inspired by Soldiers & the Iraqi people...

I asked for over a year to come to Iraq and was finally afforded the opportunity to stretch my understanding of the law and my strengths as a person. I am happy to say that I think I have successfully done both here in Iraq.

After a year and half of practicing real estate law at USACE Headquarters I came to Iraq and suddenly was exposed to the aspects of both a division and a district, and the myriad of issues that both offices address. The difference - this office is in a war zone. What does that mean? From what I understand, longer hours but less time to devote to each task, more stress, very limited movement, which results in limited recreational outlets, and constant wear from negative news. Despite all of these things, I have very mixed feeling about going home.

I cannot wait to see my friends and family, and excitedly look forward to what I used to take for granted but now recognize as flourishing life – greenery, children playing, dogs romping, and vast openness juxtaposed to dirt, the sight and sound of very, very few children, explosions and T-walls.

But I am going to miss the strength I see in every Iraqi with whom I work that comes into the International Zone everyday despite the risks to themselves and their families. I am going to miss being inspired by another's story of total heartbreak and unfathomably bad luck or

Here is a photo of me “chilling” at my desk going over a new tasker.

On the far right is a photo of me in one of Baghdad's many bombed out buildings...I think this one was an old parliament building.



circumstance, with which the person continues forward, and does so with generosity, love, warmth and a smile. I am going to miss hearing the call for prayer when walking to the chow hall for dinner, and the amazing people from our global community with whom I have had the opportunity to work.

I am going to miss the fact that life here is stripped down to its bare minimum, which causes people to be creative passing the time, and reach out to each other more than in most environments.

The first day that I arrived in Baghdad (actually at 0230 hours), I was impressed by how every military member with whom I drove into the IZ on the Rhino (a jacked-up Winnebago) immediately jumped out of the vehicle, and headed to the truck carrying luggage to form a line and start pulling all the cargo out. Nobody asked them to help, nobody directed them to act, it was instinct to come together and get whatever task at hand accomplished. I feel fortunate to have been able to experience that degree of cohesion, and will miss that level of team work with every mission as well as every simple task.

I will be returning to Washington, D.C. to be just another bureaucrat in



my nation's fare capitol. But I will never forget the Soldiers I met who lost buddies in battle, the doctors and nurses that cared for unthinkable injuries, the support I received from friends and strangers back home, or the people I met that made this experience so unique.

En sha'a alah, our efforts here make some small difference.

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