

# Postcards from Iraq

## Looking back, looking forward

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Looking back at my time at Baghdad's Central District (GRC), it really was an amazing year. The contrast between the time I arrived and the time I left could not be greater, and the improvements since then have far exceeded my expectations. When I came to Baghdad in April 2007, I really didn't know what to expect. I was pleased to discover that the people of GRC were among the best the Army Corps of Engineers and our country have to offer. They helped me navigate the maze of contracting, technical evaluation boards, payroll, administration, finance, reports, and the weekly GRC staff meetings for a year. When I asked "why" things were done a certain way, everyone took the time out of their busy schedules to explain to me what had to be done and why it was important to follow the steps in that order. Thanks to everyone else's help, I became a productive member of the GRC team. This doesn't mean that I want to see another TEB anytime soon, though...

I also learned a lot about Baghdad and Iraq from the Iraqi Associates (IAs) at GRC. They gave me a lot of the local flavor of Baghdad and a better feel for the people who live there. There's no doubt that they have the toughest jobs at GRC, but they still manage to accomplish the work in spite of all the obstacles they face.

**Baghdad's children were a special photographic subject for Major Ed Liu.**



Since my return home, I've put together a small photo album showing some of the projects I visited during my tour with GRC. Most people back home aren't aware of where our money goes or the projects we build. Seeing the tangible results of our work, like the completion of a new building, and the intangible ones, such as the smile on a child's face when they attend their first day of class at their new school, gives people a better understanding of what's going on and what GRC does.

When people ask me what the toughest day I had in Iraq, I tell them that it was the day I left. This surprises quite a few of them. When they ask why would leaving be the toughest day, I tell them that it's leaving the people behind when you say goodbye that makes it tough. Walking away from something you've put so much into for a year when people you've come to know stay behind is never easy, especially when they've become your family away from home.

People ask me what we did in Iraq. Someday, I'd like to be able to answer that question by waving my hand around the Baghdad skyline and say, "Look about you." It's been an honor for me to have been a very small part of the GRC experience in 2007-2008.

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



**Major Liu prepares to visit a GRC project site near Baghdad, Iraq in a U.S. Humvee.**