

Postcards from Iraq

A USACE deployment hard to match

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This was my first deployment, and I have to say, it'll be hard for any other deployment to match this. I consider it a distinct honor to have served as a Human Resource Specialist with the men and women of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers here in the Central District, Gulf Region Division (GRC). As part of a joint operation, I had to learn about all the various Army and Navy personnel programs and had to find answers to all the myriad questions that come with those programs. I filled the position of an Army Human Resource Specialist, though I'm actually an Air Force Personnel Craftsman. The jobs are the same, but the processes are far different. It was a great learning experience for me and I was able to meet and work with some great people. The Command Sergeant Major, one of the busiest people in the compound, picked me up personally at the airport when I first arrived in Iraq!



The Air Force Smiths (Robert and Jocelyn) stroll through Baghdad's Al Faw Palace.

While I was here, GRC underwent a Change of Command and I was happily included. I actually got to be the standard bearer in the color guard and handed the Corps Flag off for presentation to the new commander. I also got the chance to help with the changes that come with new command. It was a very interesting and exciting time for all of us. Aside from the work I did, I was exposed to all of the great reconstruction efforts going on out here. The media in the States doesn't cover the positive things we're doing as well as they should. I had no idea about all the work going on out here. Schools, libraries, police stations, hospitals, sewer systems, water treatment plants; I could go on and on, but I didn't hear about these things until I got to Iraq. I count myself very fortunate to have been a part of these efforts.

I was also fortunate, in that there was a period of about two months that my wife was here, completing her deployment in Iraq. Our overlapping deployments placed extra strain on us, due to the separation, but the command here was very understanding and made sure to give us time to spend together. Not many people can say that they strolled through Al Faw Palace in Iraq with their spouse!

As an Air Force Personnel Craftsman, I never expected to be deployed to support the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In the six months that I've been here, I've really come to understand how the Army and the Corps works and conducts business. I'm very impressed by the camaraderie and cooperation I see here. We really are one big family; whether Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine, civilian, or contractor. From the first day I got here, I've felt welcomed and like a valued member of this family and I've felt proud to serve my country.

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



Air Force Staff Sgt Robert Smith stands by REVAs (South African armored vehicles) used in Iraq.

