

Postcard from Iraq



Going home? Or leaving home?

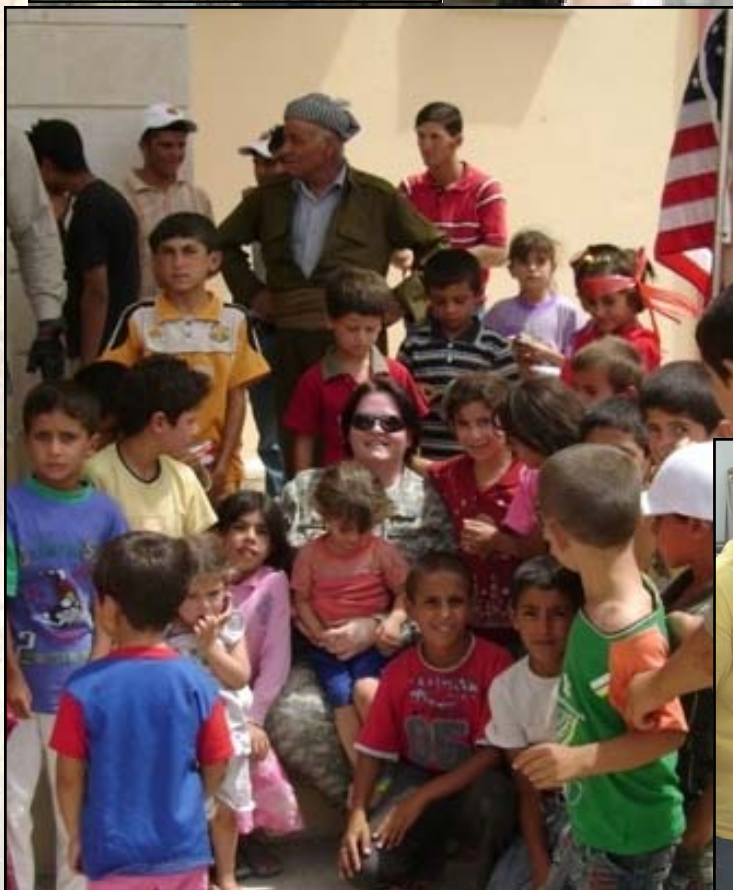


The first time I landed in Baghdad International Airport the only people in the terminal were those on the commercial flight from Jordan with me. I was greeted by no electricity, free flowing sewage, and my first-ever lost luggage. Was this a sign of what was to come? In January 2006 I landed in BIAP a second time, but this time I enjoyed a soda (with ice!) and a candy bar that I purchased from the snack shop in air conditioned comfort. I was nearing the end of my time as a contractor for the US Army Corps of Engineers, and looking forward to my hopeful next assignment as a USACE employee in Mosul. I wanted to see for myself what the USACE employees were telling me about with pride and accomplishment each time they arrived in Kuwait on their way for R&R/leave or re-deployment.

In the two years since arriving in Mosul, I've seen for myself...and then some. The fascinating people I've met include the man responsible for turning the airport into the gleaming project it is now...and the man who prosecuted Saddam Hussein. I've enjoyed every moment being part of the phenomenal team in the Mosul Area Office. Working with them has been a pleasure, as was my contact with other districts while performing my duties in such a diverse and ever-changing environment. My time in Mosul is over, and I've seen for myself all the good and wonderful things the Iraqis have benefitted from. I have met the Iraqi people whose lives are improved because of our presence. Because of this, I know our time and effort is not in vain. People have asked me, "Aren't you afraid"? Of course I've been afraid. Of course there have been some hairy moments. But I'm glad I didn't miss this experience for fear 'something bad *might* happen.'

I'm coming home. My family's support has been amazing. The people I've met are the heroes I will never forget, and I will never let my friends and family forget them. My father was concerned for me, but possibly the fact that I was deployed with the organization he retired from helped alleviate some of that concern. Master Sgt. Bobby T. White (Ret) has been a great sounding board for me while on this adventure, but he is very glad I'm coming home.

If you're considering a deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan, ask anyone who has done so and they will tell you it's a life-changing experience. The USACE team gave me the great opportunity to return home to my ordinary life knowing I participated in something extraordinary...and I can't wait for my next adventure!



Sarah