

Postcards from Iraq

'Proud to be part
of this great team'

**By Susan Newby
Contract Specialist**

Gulf Region Division Central District

It's been almost six months since I landed in Baghdad. I came here with an open mind, willing to welcome any challenge that came my way. As a contract specialist, I'm expected to make sound business decisions as a fundamental requirement. Our office deals with hundreds of contracts that demand constant attention ensuring we are following the myriad of regulations and policies in place. The Iraqi way of doing business is definitely different but everyone has a great attitude and we work to find a common understanding so we can get the projects underway and successfully completed..

Iraqi engineers regularly visit my office. It's difficult to fully appreciate the dangers they and their families face every day. These are heroic individuals. There are times when they encounter unbelievably long lines at our checkpoints that require they leave their vehicles in the red zone and walk to the front gate where we pick them up. Those are the moments I thank the Good Lord my family does not have to face those same threatening elements.

One of the highlights of my tour was participating in a contracting and networking conference last fall attended by over 300 Iraqi contractors, many of those companies owned by women. Most of us believe that if people are gainfully employed they are more likely to be involved in their daily work than terrorism. Our projects employ Iraqis so it's good news not only during the construction phase but also when those road projects, sewer lift stations or water treatment plants are completed and benefiting local Iraqi families.

I believe that we live on this earth on borrowed time. What God has asked us to do is ultimately up to each of us. My dash is inundated by megapixels. One megapixel represents this special moment in my life.

I know we're making a difference here and I'm proud to be part of this great team. This is one of the most remarkable, personally rewarding journeys of my life. The work I'm involved in is now part of the fabric of this nation's history. I would not exchange this experience for anything.

**Susan Newby
Contract Specialist
Seattle District**



**Contract Specialist Susan Newby at networking conference
Involving over 300 Iraqi construction firms.**