

Postcards from Iraq

Working ourselves out of a job....

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The more things stay the same, the more they change. That may sound backwards to the cliché most folks say, but it is appropriate here in Iraq. As I complete my third tour in Iraq, and after having spent portions of four of the last five years as part of the efforts on the ground in Iraq, I leave here –again—with a sense of pride in not only my organization, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – but another verification of my belief that the Iraqi people are some of the most wonderful people on the face of this earth.

I know when I go home I'll be asked the questions: "What was it like?" "How bad is it?" "Why are we there?" "Why do you keep going back?" The answers will be the same. "Not as bad as you hear on TV." "Was an incredible experience." "We're there to help these amazing people build a foundation for freedom." "Because I believe in the mission and we should be there."

When they get past the questions that they would not still be asking if this effort was being properly conveyed by the national media, I'll also tell them that I saw incredible progress on this last tour. Not only are Iraqis taking the lead in the construction and management of essential services, not only is their infant government working through the kinks of managing billion dollar budgets and coordinating activities across the nation, but with respect to my lane – the Iraqis are taking the lead in communicating to Iraqis on the progress on the ground.

This tour I was fortunate to work with more and more Iraqi patriots who challenge the threat of public identification and face the fear instilled by criminal militant gangs. As a public affairs officer, the more the Iraqi people that can communicate the story, the less there is need for me on the ground here to assist.



I have never been more proud to be worked out of a job.

This is still the greatest story not being told. The U.S. should not only be proud of our troops, but proud of the job they are doing, and succeeding here on the ground.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is breaking ground and continues to show progress four years past the liberation of Iraq. More than 3,000 projects completed, 1,000 more ongoing or planned. Hundreds of schools renovated, nearly two dozen hospital projects, more than 100 primary health centers being constructed, 75 percent of the country with twice as much power than ever before ... the progress on the ground is a laundry list of sweat, tears and blood by coalition and Iraqi servants.

I am proud, damn proud, to be a part of it.

ESSAYONS!

Press conferences like this one illustrate how much more the story of Iraq is being told to Iraqis by Iraqis. (Photo by PAO Lee)



The 'Tony Snow for Iraq', Dr. Ali Aldabbagh, Spokesman for the Government of Iraq, is a prime example of the leaps forward made by the Gol to manage their own country, and communicate themselves, the progress on the ground. Much different than in the past, the US role is now to support Gol functions.