

Postcard from Iraq

What the heck are you doing in Iraq?!?

I've been to all corners of the country but Iraq is the last place I thought I would run into one of my kids...but Melany and I are here on LSA Anaconda, in Balad, Iraq. Melany Melendez-Quñones is an E-4 Specialist—a medic with the 546th ASMC—from Fort Hood, Texas. She was at Fort Hood for about 20 months before her unit deployed here in August.

We didn't expect to run into family in Iraq but we arrived here within two weeks of each other. We get together a couple of times a week for lunch or dinner, or just visit at the Phipps Troop Medical Clinic where she works taking care of sick and wounded Soldiers. Her current Army commitment ends in June 2009 but she plans to reenlist while deployed here. And, Melany's long term plans are to remain in the medical profession, perhaps eventually becoming a nurse.

I'm a Department of Army Civilian—a field project engineer at the Anaconda Area Office, with the US Army Corps of Engineers; deployed here for a year from my permanent district in Louisville, Ky. Our Gulf Region Division here has project and construction management responsibility for over 4,000 reconstruction projects throughout Iraq. The Reconstruction mission here is more than bricks and mortar, though.

It's reconstructing the young Government of Iraq's capability to become self-sufficient and to sustain through the reconstruction of its infrastructure. We don't have to extend the post-construction timeline on a facility in the United States as we do here. Here we continue with coaching, teaching and mentoring the Iraqi government on the proper use and maintenance of the facility.

This is a special opportunity for Melany and me to catch up on each others lives, and it's a wonderful experience that we will share the rest of our lives. We're enjoying the more moderate November temperatures...and we wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Iraq!

Henry and Melany



Together on LSA
Anaconda,
Balad, Iraq,
2007