

# Postcards from Iraq

## Corps Still Standing Tall in Iraq

by Steven E. Wright  
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I'm just finishing my second Iraqi Freedom tour and glad that I was able come back and work for the Gulf Region Division. Things have changed here over the last year. Iraq is a more dangerous place than it was immediately after the invasion in 2003. The bad guys have reorganized and making our work more difficult.

In spite of this change, we're moving forward and accomplishing the mission of helping to reconstruct Iraq. Just two years ago, there were political leaders who said that the Army Corps of Engineers needed to get out of the civil works business and concentrate only on military construction.

Then, 9/11 happened and the US Army Corps of Engineers civilian and military members deployed with the troops to Afghanistan and Iraq to help those nations rebuild. The ability of our Corps of Engineers to engage in nation building should have been obvious after we successfully deployed to Kuwait after the first Gulf War, and helped that nation restore its infrastructure, but memories are often all too short. Regardless, our civil works capabilities are critical element of the US Government foreign policy, and we are being absolutely successful in Iraq.

Here are several examples of successes large and small in Iraq:

- Huntington District's FEST team while working on schools asked the principal of the Al Furssan School what was needed for the school. The principal showed them a canal behind the school that students crossed by walking on with two 30-foot steel I-beams. The team used reach back to Huntington's engineering section for a bridge design and specifications. Today, the students at Al Furssan School have a foot bridge to safely get to school.
- Trash had not been collected in Baghdad for years and built up into almost every vacant area. We built a landfill and the Army's First Cavalry Division made the suggestion that the cleanup contractor not use heavy equipment to remove the mountains of trash in Baghdad, but use people power instead. We estimated we needed a thousand people to do the project and then doubled the amount to hire two thousand. Five thousand workers showed up. Point is that unemployment in Iraq is as high as 50 percent and people are desperate for work, the 1st CAV had the right idea, hire people and people working are less inclined to cause problems for our Soldiers.
- My last item is the Corps success in increasing power production in Iraq. Power production in Iraq is a major issue. In a critical infrastructure area with less than stellar success, the Corps of Engineers is the one agency that successfully accomplished its electricity mission of putting megawatts on the grid. This success is due to a very aggressive construction management and problem solving approach by the Corps.

I'm darn proud of the Corps of Engineers. My prediction is that our continued success in Iraq will be obvious and more and more, work will be given to the Corps in Iraq because be accomplish the jobs we are given. Essays!



**Steve Wright (left) poses with USACE Command Sgt. Major Michael Balch. Wright served his second tour in Iraq as Chief of Public Affairs for the Gulf Region Division. It was his third tour in Southwest Asia as Wright also served in the Kuwait Emergency Reconstruction Office (KERO) following the Persian Gulf War during the early 1990s.**  
(GRD PA Photo)