



## ***From Destruction to Construction with little time Between***

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Tom Clarkson  
Gulf Region Division  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Baghdad, Iraq – His first time through, this ‘neighborhood’ was a very “destructive experience . . . the mood was markedly different, and Iraqi citizens were afraid of Americans.” But that was back in early 2003.

Then, Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Jorge Gutierrez was attached to the 101st Airborne Division as the battalion CSM of the 37th Engineer Battalion out of Fort Bragg, NC. His job was primarily one of aggressively engaging an enemy in combat – not particularly ‘warm and fuzzy.’

Now, finishing a second tour in-country as the CSM for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Gulf Region Division (GRD), he has had the enjoyable privilege of being integrally involved in the reconstruction and rebuilding of the country. He describes the work he has observed, throughout the GRD team, as a “tangible re-writing of the definition of the word commitment. The intensity and focus I see in the eyes of both men and women in uniform and Civilians alike truly humbles me.”



“The exhaustingly long hours these professionals give, day in and day out, requires a great love for others and a sincere desire to share our ideals with those who are in need. Now, throughout the Corps, and beyond, we have a new breed – a balanced amalgam of patriot warrior and American citizen.”

This 44 year old, senior Soldier may wax almost poetic when describing GRD’s work, but he is, to the core, a Soldier’s Soldier. His wife Lori, 12-½-year-old daughter Megan, and 10-½-year-old son Jacob can certainly attest to that. They’ve seen very little of him for over two years due to his response to the call to duty.

First deploying to Iraq in March of 2003, he, his Battalion Commander and driver spent the better part of eight months sleeping on their vehicle, washing their

uniforms when and wherever they might find water and hanging them to dry on whatever was available. So grueling was the duty that he lost thirty pounds.

No sooner had it appeared that his tour of duty may be close to an end than, as a result of his keen leadership skills, the CSM was asked to report immediately to yet another unaccompanied tour. This, time he was to soldier in Afghanistan, with the 25th Infantry Division, where he discovered the awesome quality of the tropic lighting warriors, and the true grit and determination of the Afghan people.

He undertook these duties, from March through October of 2004 in what he describes as a "really great experience with an outstanding military team." But no garrison duty was on the immediate horizon, for as the end of this assignment came ever closer, he was asked by Brig. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick to return to Iraq and accept his current post as the USACE GRD CSM.

Though difficult to imagine, Gutierrez has had a degree of permanence and a life with a family back in the States. In fact, at Fort Bragg, NC, he went through the ranks from Private to 1st Sgt with the 82nd Airborne – a unit he still holds near and dear to his heart. It is apparent that there is no little pride in his voice when he cites how he has occupied every NCO leadership position available in an airborne unit. He culminated these duties as a CSM for both an airborne battalion and a light Sapper battalion. In the vernacular of the Army, this man is a "trooper!"

As his third unaccompanied tour wraps up and he heads for yet another senior post – but now with family – in Hawaii, he pauses to reflect one last time on the accomplishments of the USACE in Iraq.

With infectious enthusiasm he exclaims, "Rebuilding Iraq began with the Soldiers. Then organizations like the Corps of Engineers, the Project and Contracting Office and USAID assumed the mantle of reconstruction efforts on a broader, more organized plane. Tremendous change is underway.

"Repeatedly I have seen American generosity directed at the youngsters of this country. This is good. The children will be the beneficiaries of these acts of kindness and all of the reconstruction work. They are, after all, the future of Iraq."

If the coalition's efforts here in Iraq are successful, to a very great degree, it is because of professionals who put service significantly ahead of any manner of personal interest, such as this outstanding veteran of 25 years of military service, CSM Jorge Gutierrez.