

Postcards from Iraq

Working in a Multi-Partnership for Iraq's Reconstruction

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When I was given the opportunity to serve in Iraq, I quickly volunteered for the chance. My friends and family thought I was crazy since I was retirement eligible, but what better way to complete a successful Naval career than to serve your country forward-deployed in Iraq?

It wasn't until after I volunteered that I realized I was being assigned to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), an area completely foreign to my Navy technical specialty. Although I had heard of the Corps, I really had no idea what they would be doing in Iraq. I envisioned a unit comprised mostly of military personnel. Boy, was I wrong! Working with an organization that is essentially a civilian-staffed organization was challenging, but the days spent with them will never be forgotten.



Navy Chief Kenneth Baker views the Victory Over Iran parade grounds in Baghdad.



Navy Chief Kenneth Baker in Baghdad.

As the Noncommissioned Officer In Charge (NCOIC) of the USACE Victory Resident Office in Baghdad, I enjoyed working closely with the experienced construction and engineer staff. Together we developed a partnership with our Iraqi Associates. This partnership empowered the Iraqi people to take ownership of the reconstruction projects which directly affected their lives. Our close oversight and mentorship helped develop their skills and together we were able to achieve all of our goals.

The education that I received from my association with USACE and working with the Iraqi people has given me an additional level of confidence that will undoubtedly prove invaluable when I make the transition from the military to the civilian sector. I wish now I would have had the opportunity to serve with the Corps earlier in my career.

Chief Kenneth Baker

