

Postcards from Iraq

A Sailor's Last Deployment is with the US Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq



Master Chief Warren Hendon enjoys a trip to a Taji-area Iraqi school.

My first Navy deployment was to Vietnam on a World War II Destroyer, the USS Sarsfield. Way back then, I couldn't have imagined a better way to end my 38-year Navy career than spending my last deployment with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Gulf Region Central (GRC) district in Iraq.

Often referred to as the cradle of civilization, Iraq has the potential to be a truly great country. Before being deployed, I knew Iraq was rich in oil, but I was surprised to learn how fertile the soil is and how available the Tigris River water could be for many purposes.

It has been rewarding to see the good things the Coalition forces are doing that don't always make their way to Headline News in the States. I have never been more proud of our country and the Armed Services. As most of my time was spent at Taji, a base most of the big USO shows can't get to, I had the honor of doing my hobby, standup comedy, for the troops there. We have a lot a great young people serving in Iraq who are making the hard sacrifices for which all Americans should be very proud.

The greatest thrill for me, unlike my ship-board deployments, was getting to know and work with the local Iraqi people. I really enjoyed visiting the Taji area schools and meeting the children, and working with local nationals who faced the

constant threat of retaliation if it were learned they worked with us. Many Iraqis are risking it all to make their country better.

Finally, I especially thank all those at GRC, my friends, family and my command back in States, NOSC North Island, for their support and the opportunity to serve in such a noble cause.

**Navy Master Chief Warren J. Hendon
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Chief Hendon gives a local boy a gift.