

Postcards from Iraq

Iraq duty gratifying work

By Irena Williams

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After serving 24 years of active duty in the U.S. Army, I still had the desire to contribute to my country and make a difference in an area deprived of liberty and basic essentials of living.

My joy is going the extra mile and changing our environment for the better, so I made the decision to volunteer for deployment to Iraq. Being a team player for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) that is overseeing a variety of infrastructure improvements in Iraq has truly been a rewarding and gratifying experience. I've had a hand in helping renovate schools and hospitals, build fire stations and courthouses, install new water and sewer lines, and put in new electrical distribution networks.

We took on duties here that would be assigned to several people in the States. In Iraq, because we were understaffed, I found I was not only involved in logistics, but emergency medical assistance, admin, and a variety of other actions as required. In the past 18 months, I can proudly say that I enjoyed bonding with the Iraqi people and its culture as we strived to complete our

mission. We worked shoulder to shoulder overcoming a variety of challenges to get the projects completed. This assignment stands out above all others in my many years of service.

I worked as the Logistics Management Specialist at the USACE Loyalty Resident Office in east Baghdad with responsibility for planning, coordinating, and directing a combination of supply functions including warehouse control of electrical equipment valued at \$92 million.

During my time in Iraq, my Iraqi associates have been a privilege and inspiration to work with. The courage and character they demonstrate reporting to work every day is truly remarkable. These special individuals have made a commitment to step forward and help rebuild their country to provide a brighter future for their children and grandchildren. They definitely want peace and cherish their newfound freedoms. I hope and pray that someday harmony will come to this nation.

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