

Postcards from Iraq

Ramadi — an awesome mission

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Every day I serve in this effort to rebuild Iraq, I see tangible results. The most rewarding part is getting out and meeting local townspeople and hearing from them how important this work is.

I'm serving as an engineer overseeing a variety of projects in and around Ramadi. We're currently managing 16 active projects valued at \$40.2 million and in the next couple months expect to award another 11 projects valued at \$125 million. These projects include new primary healthcare centers, repairing roads and bridges, rebuilding substations and upgrading electrical distribution networks. We're also installing rural water treatment facilities in small communities that had no fresh water before. They were just drinking raw, untreated water from the Euphrates River and you can imagine the health hazards they faced.



I recently was invited by a local sheik to an outdoor picnic he hosted at his home to celebrate fresh drinking water being available in his community for the first time ever. His genuine gratefulness and hospitality are a highlight of my tour here – a day I'll always remember. His message to us was how important the teamwork and friendship we were developing in Al Anbar Province was to the future of Iraq – he believes we're on the right road leading to a brighter future for his children and grandchildren.



A sheik hosted a picnic recently to celebrate the opening of a water treatment facility — first time ever families in his community had fresh, potable water.

I made a commitment to myself that day – seeing the challenges this sheik and his family were facing and how special sharing a meal can be. I vowed that when I return stateside, I'll never eat dinner in front of the TV again. Time is just too precious.

One of my biggest accomplishments during my first four months in country was supervising the rebuilding of the Al Anbar Provincial Government Center which had significant battle damage when Ramadi was a hotspot of insurgent activity. We fixed the windows, doors and ceilings, and also made electrical and air conditioning repairs. Gov. Mamoon officiated at a ribbon-cutting ceremony in September and personally thanked me for our efforts. As I left that project for the final time, I walked away thinking about how much history would come from the decisions the Provincial Council would be making in the coming months and years. That group had been unable to meet for most of the past year and they were now a functioning group again, just like any governmental entity in the United States, working hard for their constituents to make a tangible difference in the daily lives of thousands of families who make Al Anbar Province their home.

What I see here are people who are grateful that terror and intimidation have been significantly reduced. The workers on our various construction sites go to work every day knowing how much the local townspeople value what they do. I'm grateful to be part of the tremendous team here. We continue to make a difference.



Al Anbar Governor Mamoon expresses his thanks for our efforts to rebuild the Provincial Government Center in Ramadi during a ribbon cutting ceremony.