

Postcards from Iraq

All of the above ...

By Teresa Reinig
Project Manager

Environmental Remediation Branch, Omaha District

The most frequently asked question is “Why did you volunteer?” Five months later I still struggle with my response to this very simple question. My first mission was in support of the tasking to complete environmental baseline survey reports for eight Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). The answer at that point was a simple “to support the troops in a very small way for their very important mission”.

Five weeks later I moved to the International Zone (IZ) to assist the USAID Program Office (UPO) as a closeout manager /resident engineer. The mission is to closeout the \$2.3 billion Iraq Infrastructure Reconstruction Program. My hopes of visiting the reconstruction sites were dashed as most of the construction phase had been completed. Thus, back to the paper-pushing role for me. Mind you, this is still a very important function. Each piece of paper represents a step towards completion of a Job Order. When one of the Iraqi engineers would submit their Quality Assurance report, it was very evident that this was not a paper exercise. The pride demonstrated by the Iraqi engineers in ensuring that each aspect of the scope of work was completed allowed for the documentation to come alive for me.



GRC personnel assigned to the USAID Program Office in Baghdad include Joanne Gibbs, Mark Fleck, Stan Reese, and Teresa Reinig.

Yes, a new reason to be here ... in a small way I am able to improve the quality of life for the Iraqi citizens. Job Orders are no longer just a series of project numbers but actual water treatment plants, rural water distribution points, power generation and waste water treatment plants. Reviewing 4,000 submittals may be tedious but I am working without the fear of kidnapping. The daily risk encountered by each of the local Iraqis is beyond my comprehension. Their lives have been on hold for so many years and yet they have hope for a better future. Very inspiring! My hope for the Iraqi citizens is to identify themselves first and foremost as an Iraqi citizen – not as a member of a particular sect or tribe. One of my first observations about the USAID office is the numerous individuals who arrived from all over the world to work together for the Iraqi citizens. Hopefully, the Iraqis will witness how different countries have pooled their resources to re-establish the Iraqi nation for each and every Iraqi citizen. I figure for each day I spend here I will develop a new answer to the question of why did I volunteer. The simple answer is “all of the above.”

**Teresa Reinig, Gulf Region Division Central District
USAID Program Office Closeout Manager/Resident Engineer**