

Postcards from Iraq

Helping Iraq move forward

**By SFC David "Doc" Johnson
Project Engineer, Fallujah Office
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

I am SFC David Johnson, a Combat Engineer from Sacramento California. I have been a proud member of the California Army National Guard for 17 years. During my deployment to Iraq, I have been lucky to be part of a diverse team in Al Anbar Province, working alongside the Army, Navy and Marine Corps in the reconstruction efforts in and around the city of Fallujah.

As a Project Engineer and the NCOIC of the Fallujah Sewer Project, I have been involved in several ongoing efforts including construction of clinics, schools and fire stations; however I am primarily responsible for the Fallujah Sewer System Project and the Fallujah Area Rural Water Program.

As the NCOIC for the Sewer System Project, I was responsible for coordination of movement for our project engineers, ensuring that they had what they needed to get their job done and overseeing our quality assurance team in the City. This project will bring a municipal sewer system to the City of Fallujah for the first time ever. The project will build the backbone infrastructure including a treatment plant, lift stations and trunk mains. Ultimately it will effect 200,000 residents of Fallujah who were using septic tanks that dumped raw sewage right into the streets.

As a Project Engineer for the Rural Water program I was responsible for 25 water treatment stations bringing clean fresh water to the people in small villages surrounding Fallujah. Prior to those new facilities going in, families there would chip in to have truckloads of potable water brought to their neighborhoods where they would hold it in tanks on their roofs. If the village was unable to pull together enough money to bring water to their village then they would take untreated water from the closest canal. These compact water treatment plants will have a direct positive impact on people who never had it before. The USACE Engineers taught me so much while I was here. Their dedication to this enterprise is astonishing. Working outside of their element and in a combat zone to bring a future to the country of Iraq, these engineers volunteer for often times multiple tours here to accomplish the mission. Their experience, resilience and work ethic under difficult and often discouraging conditions was an inspiration to all who interacted with them.

The Marines and especially 4th Civil Affairs Group were key to our mission. They allowed us to visit our projects in the rural areas, riding along on their combat patrols to evaluate our projects.

Above all, the real heroes are our Iraqi Quality Assurance Team who quietly risked their lives every day from Baghdad to Fallujah to show us what was happening on the sites from day to day. These individuals made the decision that they were going to make a difference and were dedicated to making their country better.

Most of all I want to thank My Family without whom I could not have done any of this. My wife Becky and our daughter Sage are my touchstone and have bore the brunt of this deployment. I look forward to rejoining them but I will never forget this experience of helping the people of Iraq.

**SFC David "Doc" Johnson
Engineer Brigade 40th Infantry Division
California Army National Guard
Sacramento**



SFC Doc Johnson checks electrical materials for Fallujah

