

Postcards from Iraq

Work that touches your heart

By Tommy Nason

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I'll conclude a 30-year career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers next spring with nearly half that time deployed overseas. I served three years in Afghanistan, two years in Egypt, short stints in Oman and United Arab Emirates, six years in Japan, and will complete two years as a Construction Representative with the Gulf Region Division South District's Adder Area Office in March 2009.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to oversee projects helping everyday people like you and me who are trying to provide the essentials to their children and grandchildren – healthy water, functioning sewers, reliable electric power, good schools, and access to medical care.

When I arrived in Iraq in February 2007, they asked me to manage the close out and commissioning of the largest project the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has in Iraq, the \$277 million Nasiriyah Water Treatment Plant that's capable of producing 44,000 gallons of fresh, drinkable water per hour along with over 60 miles of new transmission pipe, three booster pump stations, and five new elevated storage tanks. That facility is designed to serve over three-quarters of a million people in five cities -- it's a huge undertaking that was already nearly three years under construction and I was very pleased to have played a role in ensuring the Iraqi Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works was getting a quality product.

Apart from that project, I've overseen the construction of over a dozen smaller water treatment facilities for tiny villages which, in many cases, will have access to clean water for the first time ever. This is the kind of work that touches your heart and I'm proud to be part of this historic mission.

I'm also looking after a variety of projects benefiting our military including what some refer to as the "mother of all truck stops," a \$24.1 million project at Tallil Air Base. Located within hailing distance of Main Supply Route Tampa, it's a key link in the supply chain that starts in Kuwait and runs the length of Iraq. Major pieces include a Convoy Support Center capable of accommodating up to 3,600 trucks, a tactical Petroleum Terminal (with up to 10 million gallons fuel stored in large bladders), a dining facility that will serve 3,000 meals per cycle, a fire station, and space for sleeping quarters, restrooms, and showers to accommodate 2,100 people.

USACE is located in a small compound at Tallil. We live and work together as a team -- a family of very dedicated professionals trying to help Iraq move forward and enjoy its new freedoms.

My lovely wife Barbara and I have been married 26 years and we have three awesome children – Christina 25, Melissa 18, and James Nason III, 16. It's their support that's made all the difference in these long separations. I sincerely appreciate their steadfast love.

I'll soon be closing this chapter in my life, but the memories will be with me forever.

ESSAYONS!



Construction Representative Tommy Nason from the Hunstville Center checks on progress at the \$277 million Nasiriyah Water Treatment Plant, the largest USACE project in Iraq.