

# Postcards from Iraq

## Hitting the ground running in Iraq

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I arrived at my duty station, Forward Operating Base Speicher, Thanksgiving Day, planning to spend the day in my room because of the long trip and the fact I didn't know anyone. I didn't want to feel like an outsider.

I didn't have to worry though. I was shown my room and taken to lunch where I met the people who would become my new co-workers. They even dragged me off to play volleyball, and I discovered immediately that I wouldn't be allowed to hide in my room! It didn't take long before I realized I had met not only my new co-workers but people who would become good friends.

The work is interesting because I've never helped build a project from the ground up. The main project I am working on is a division headquarters building for the U.S. Army. I am doing the quality assurance (QA) on the project. This involves working with the contractor to ensure the specifications are followed, checking test results and verifying progress. The project consists of a 35 by 150 meter steel fabricated building, built with concrete masonry block sides. It will house offices for the division staff and will have a state-of-the-art information distribution system.



Billie Guille oversees the construction of concrete forms at her project in northern Iraq. (Photos provided by GRN)



Doing the QA on this project is a real learning experience. Both the contractors and my fellow USACE co-workers are professional and a pleasure to work with.

I'm looking forward to starting a new project in the vicinity of Tuz, Iraq where my job will be the same (QA) but with a much broader scope. Soon we will be building a division support complex for the New Iraqi Army. This will include a new headquarters, barracks, shower buildings, as well as fencing, berms, security lighting and new roads. The first phase of construction is expected to be complete in July so it will be a very fast paced project and will offer many challenges. The result will give the New Iraqi Army a secure place to train and work.

Working with people from other cultures and learning to work around the language barrier is challenging, rewarding and often amusing for everyone involved. While there are many things I will remember about my trip to Iraq, it will be the laughter and teamwork of everyone involved working to make a difference that I will keep with me.

Billie Guille

Local Iraqi workers smooth concrete footings for a new military facility in Iraq.