

Postcards from Iraq

Making a difference

by Elizabeth Hilliard
Savannah District

It is my belief that everything in life happens for a reason. I was compelled to come to Iraq but before I left home I was not so confident in my decision to come. I have come to the conclusion, after almost two months here, that I definitely made the right decision. The work here is very challenging yet extremely rewarding. I feel a great sense of pride in helping the people of Iraq and, in the process, working with the some of the best bunch of people I have ever met.

I am currently working as a Program Analyst in Gulf Region Division, Restore Iraqi Electricity (RIE) Directorate. My job is to help manage the funds for the RIE program. This is a large job, indeed, since RIE contracts total over a \$1 US billion dollars in work. Also, I am the advisor to the Senior Project manager on funding related issues and the data analyst for program information internally and to other Federal and non-Federal agencies.

The RIE mission, to which I feel privileged to be a part, is to put megawatts on the Iraqi power grid. I have come to learn that adding electricity to Iraqi households not only adds the obvious comfort to the lives of these long impoverished people, but helps with the security here as those individuals who have power could be less likely to be violent in the streets. To date RIE has added over 1500 MW to the Iraqi grid. To put this into perspective, one megawatt generates enough power for about 3000 homes. Therefore, RIE has added enough power to supply to over 4.5 million Iraqi homes. That cumulative effort is something for us all in GRD to be very proud of!

The real reason why I have enjoyed my tour so much is in large part due to the people here in the Gulf Region Division. There are volunteers here from across the US and the world all of which are very dedicated to the reconstruction of this country and to their jobs. The people here are some of the best I have ever met in my over 7 years with the US Army Corps of Engineers. During my tour here, I have made some very good friends and contacts from Corps Districts from coast to coast. Many of the people I have met here, and especially those in RIE, have touched my heart in a special way which I will never forget.

In conclusion, I am very proud to be a part of the reconstructive efforts here in Iraq and part of the RIE Directorate. I will not forget the times I spent here and the good people have met. I pray that we all are making a difference in the lives of the people of Iraq like this tour has made a difference in my life.

Essayons!



Beth Hilliard, program analyst for the Restore Iraqi Electricity Directorate of the Gulf Region Division, poses in front of the new Qudas Power Plant located north of Baghdad.
(Photo provided by Beth Hilliard)