

# Postcards from Iraq

## From High Heels to Combat Boots

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**W**hy would an Executive Secretary volunteer to go to Iraq? *Do you realize you are going into a war zone!?* Do you realize Combat Boots do not have High Heels!? What kind of contribution can an admin person possibly make to the Iraqi people? All of these questions were asked of me at least a dozen times prior to my deployment to the Gulf Region Division. My initial response was "I have volunteered because I want the experience of helping to make a difference in whatever way I can!"

It is currently my pleasure, and job if you will, to welcome all new personnel to the Gulf Region Division. My position involves performing the legwork for all the preliminary administrative paperwork that will allow these personnel access to offices, briefings, and even remote sites outside the International Zone in our effort to help rebuild the country of Iraq.

As one of the first faces they see when entering the International Zone, I feel it is important to offer a friendly smile and "Welcome to Baghdad!" Later in the week they receive the Newcomer's Briefings given by senior staff members – briefings which allow each of us to realize how very important our role is, no matter how small we may think our contribution, and convinces us that volunteering was the RIGHT thing to do for each of us on behalf of the United States and the Iraqi people.

**So, how does an Executive Secretary make a contribution to the Iraqi People?** We begin by facilitating the transition from civilian in the U.S. to GRD team member in Iraq! Next, obtain the all-important Badge that allows travel to job sites to connect power and water systems that are so critical to Iraqi citizens and the reconstruction effort. Then accept the responsibility of driving a truck full of coworkers and bags to billeting trailers with such exotic names as **Embassy Estates, Riverside Villas, and Poolside Suites** and finally all those duffel bags that were issued at Ft. Bliss, lined up for countless inspections, and carried or dragged through numerous airports can be unpacked for the duration of the tour! Recently, when a new badging policy memo was released by the RSO in the International Zone (IZ), I assisted Contractors in getting IZ Badges for their Local National employees – another way of helping the Iraqi people make a better life for themselves and their families.

In conclusion, allow me to say that as a secretary who exchanged high heels for combat boots and the privilege of driving a Ford F-250, I have met and am working with many wonderful people - civilian and military; US citizens and non-US citizens – who, but for the Corps of Engineers and a reconstruction effort in Iraq, I would never have been Blessed to meet! I am convinced that it does not matter what **career position** one holds - **ONE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE** when willing to raise a hand and accept the challenge!! This truly is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

ESSAYONS, Teammates!



**Ruby Pierce and the Ford F-250 she uses to take GRD personnel to their 'home away from home' in Iraq.** (Photo provided by Ruby Pierce)