



Supporting the Mission...Becoming a Hero

The New York District is beginning a new mission, a mission to support not only our troops, but to build strong the infrastructure of Iraq in a way unparalleled in history. The North Atlantic Division has been chosen to support, as a sister District, the Gulf Region Central District (GRC). It has become New York District's mission to support GRC with volunteers who are willing to become the right people on the right bus at the right time. Inside you will find information on deployment and pictures of the living conditions at GRC. While we are looking for specific disciplines, I urge all of you to consult your supervisors if you have a desire to support GRC.

The professional opportunity to deploy is enormous. You will meet hundreds of people, who, like yourself, have made the commitment to hard work and long hours, in order to better the lives of others. Your skills in disciplines outside your immediate work will improve, your life skills and ability to cope under stressful conditions will also improve. You will come back to the New York District an asset even greater than when you left.

I know there are some of you who would like to deploy but are unable due to professional or personal obligations here at home. And for your willingness I thank you. That desire to support our nation and your colleagues is invaluable. Over the next few weeks we will be rolling out a recruitment campaign unlike any we've tried before. There will be brown bag lunches with previously deployed New York District Employees, posters, deployment specialists on hand to assist you, and access to deployment information at your fingertips. Inside this special issue of the District Times you will find some "Post Cards From Iraq", testaments of GRC employees, a few FAQ's, with many more to come at our Brown Bags, and some pictures of what your life would be like living at Camp Victory.

We will launch a new website with up to the minute opportunities and information. We are going to begin a Family Support Program; still in its planning stages, but sure to become a great asset to those who deploy, giving them comfort to know that their family at home has a fall back network. Thank you for considering deployment. Thank you to those who have deployed. Your colleagues, your soldiers, and the American people flourish when you support the mission, and become a hero.

Sincerely,

Col. Aniello L. Tortora

District Commander



Deployed Army Civilian works to set up Perimeter Lighting system in Taji Iraq. Photo courtesy of USACE Gulf Region Division



Fiscal Year 2008 End of Year Town Hall
17 October 2008

Welcome by LTC McDonald

Pledge of Allegiance

Year End Wrap Up Presentation

Gulf Region Central District Photo Presentation

New York District Team:

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank you, once again, for all of your hard work and dedication this past fiscal year. New York District did an outstanding job executing our mission. Without you, and your perseverance the mission would fail. For Fiscal Year 2009, let's keep BUILDING STRONG!

Colonel Tortora



Postcards from Iraq

Living in Iraq-a New Yorker's Perspective

Daniel Cahill, Contract Specialist
Central District Headquarters, Baghdad, Iraq
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)



I've spent over three years in Central Iraq – about half in Baghdad, the other half, in Al Anbar Province. Although I was born in Manhattan, besides living in New York City, I have also lived many years on Long Island, upstate New York, and elsewhere in the country and the world. New York is a far cry from Iraq but there are dangers there too which provide some interesting parallels at times.

While Iraq is still a dangerous place, there are no more incoming rockets or mortars these days and life for the US Army Corps of Engineer folks has gotten quite comfortable, relatively speaking. I have had the opportunity to associate with Iraqi citizens, Iraqi professionals, Iraqi workers, Iraqi sheikhs, as well as other foreign nationals from many countries in the same professions. In the Central District, Gulf Region Division Contracting

Office, we routinely work with all U.S military services, many governmental organizations and contractors from around the world. Like New York, Iraq is a microcosm of many cultures in a large multicultural, multiethnic city, but on a vastly different level. You have the opportunity to work with, socialize with, and yes, eat with, an enormous variety of people.

There is a lot of hard work, yes; frustration, yes; but the camaraderie and most of all, the satisfaction that you directly impacted the lives of many people, is well worth it in the long run. Work in Iraq is both rewarding and stressful; unlike anything else I have ever done. There have been numerous changes and life has gotten better for many Iraqis in many ways.

I must tell you that GRC's efforts contributed greatly to showing the Iraqi people that we were here not only to build prisons, which is what Al Qaida told Iraqis we were doing, but we build schools, medical facilities, and bring "clean drinking water" to villages residing only a few HUNDRED meters from the Euphrates River for the first time in their history! We showed Iraqis by example that we were trying to help them and that was worth more than bullets and bombs. There were many setbacks and terrible moments, but it slowly turned.

You may have heard of Sheikh Sattar Abu Risha being killed after meeting with President Bush last year. When he started the "Awakening Movement" with the Sunni Tribes in Al Anbar, he had been working with USACE and the Marines for over a year. As dangerous as it was, he had been to our GRC Area Office several times to meet with us. Back then, Al Anbar, Ramadi and Fallujah were some of the most dangerous places in Iraq.

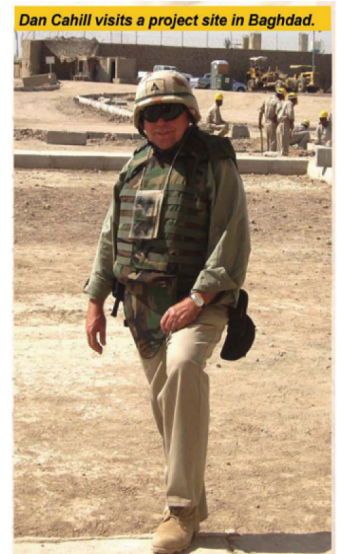


Dan confers with Sheikh Sattar and an Iraqi engineer during a contracting conference in Ramadi.

During the "SURGE," the "Awakening Movement" contributed greatly to the security efforts of our troops against Al Qaida and, unfortunately, much of that was unreported. Many of USACE's good works were also unreported in the American and foreign media.

USACE's early beginnings of setting goodwill examples greatly contributed to local tribes changing their opinions of America's intentions. When foreign fighters from Al Qaida tried to reverse those thoughts and opinions through brutal methods against Iraqis, men like Sheikh Sattar pulled the tribes together and welcomed our efforts to improve the security of our projects. They welcomed GRC USACE seminars and initiatives to improve their Province.

You have to experience the faces of appreciative Iraqis, especially the children, to understand that. I've no doubt there are others who are both excited and a bit apprehensive about a possible deployment here, but let me assure you, you will rise to the occasion.



Dan Cahill visits a project site in Baghdad.



Postcards from Iraq

This tree keeps growing in spite of all

Shirley Crowder, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
Gulf Region Division Central District (GRC) HQ,
Baghdad, Iraq



While my husband, Claude, has been with the USACE for the past 30 years, I decided to take a recent opportunity to come to Iraq. Claude did his first year in 2005 and his second year in 2007, but I am a new Corps employee as an Administrative Assistant serving the Baghdad Area Office. We have remote sites at the Loyalty and International Zone Resident Offices.



Shirley Crowder visits her tree at Victory Base in Baghdad.

I do not get to see all of my immediate coworkers every day, so I am delighted to interact with them when they pass through on their way for R&R, to come to work here in Baghdad or return to the United States.

USACE has always made tremendous contributions all over the world, whether it's Desert Storm or disaster relief. I am proud to have joined in the effort to make a difference in time and history for a great cause. Discovering Iraq is quite interesting. It's not just about the people that live here; it is also about the country. Iraq has a great deal of unique beauty, from the desert sands that I walk in daily to the palm trees, the delicious figs and the rivers that tell a different story...there is so much to appreciate about Iraq.

Since I have been here, I have seen the country in all its beauty; the moon seems to be brighter and the sunset, . . . aawwww, you have to see it to believe it, because the sunset is incredibly beautiful in Iraq.



Shirley Crowder sits on "Saddam's Chair" in Baghdad's Al Faw Palace.

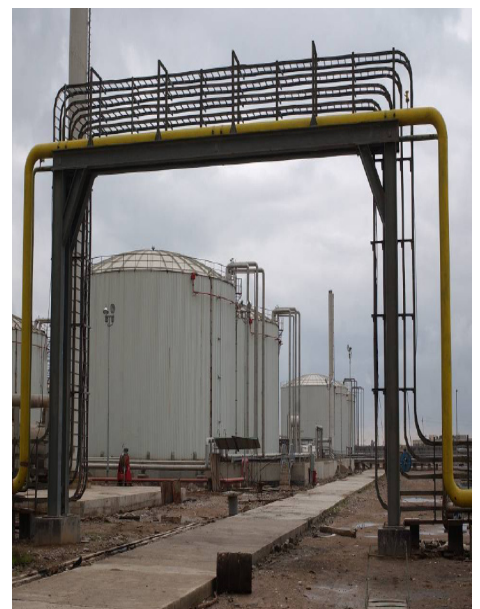
A special tree here on Victory Base tells a story of amazing strength because it was bent against its will at an immature age and still manages to sustain life while the roots remain strong and firm in the ground. Although this tree may never grow to the mature height of other trees, it shows no sign of weakness, regret or shame.

I have fallen in love with this tree because it shows what the people in Iraq are going through. I will have regrets when I leave, because that tree has become a part of me...just like the country of Iraq has.



Some FAQ's about Deployment

- Not to exceed a 179 day TDY, extensions and reassignments maybe possible
- Location differential, hazard pay and overtime pay all available
- Work day cannot exceed 10 hours and you may work only a half day on Fridays
- Work week in Iraq is Saturday-Wednesday with Thursday and Friday being the weekend
- You will be working on projects that range from water treatment to infrastructure development. Projects change and evolve; the work is interesting and challenging
- All employees who are TDY in Iraq or Afghanistan are temporarily reassigned from their home stations, either to the Transatlantic Programs Center or another command
- General Schedule (GS) employees have an annual limitation on premium pay. Their base salary and premium cannot exceed either GS-15, step 10, or Executive Schedule V (set at \$212,100 for 2007 and 2008), whichever is greater.
- Military chaplains provide religious services





Where We're Working

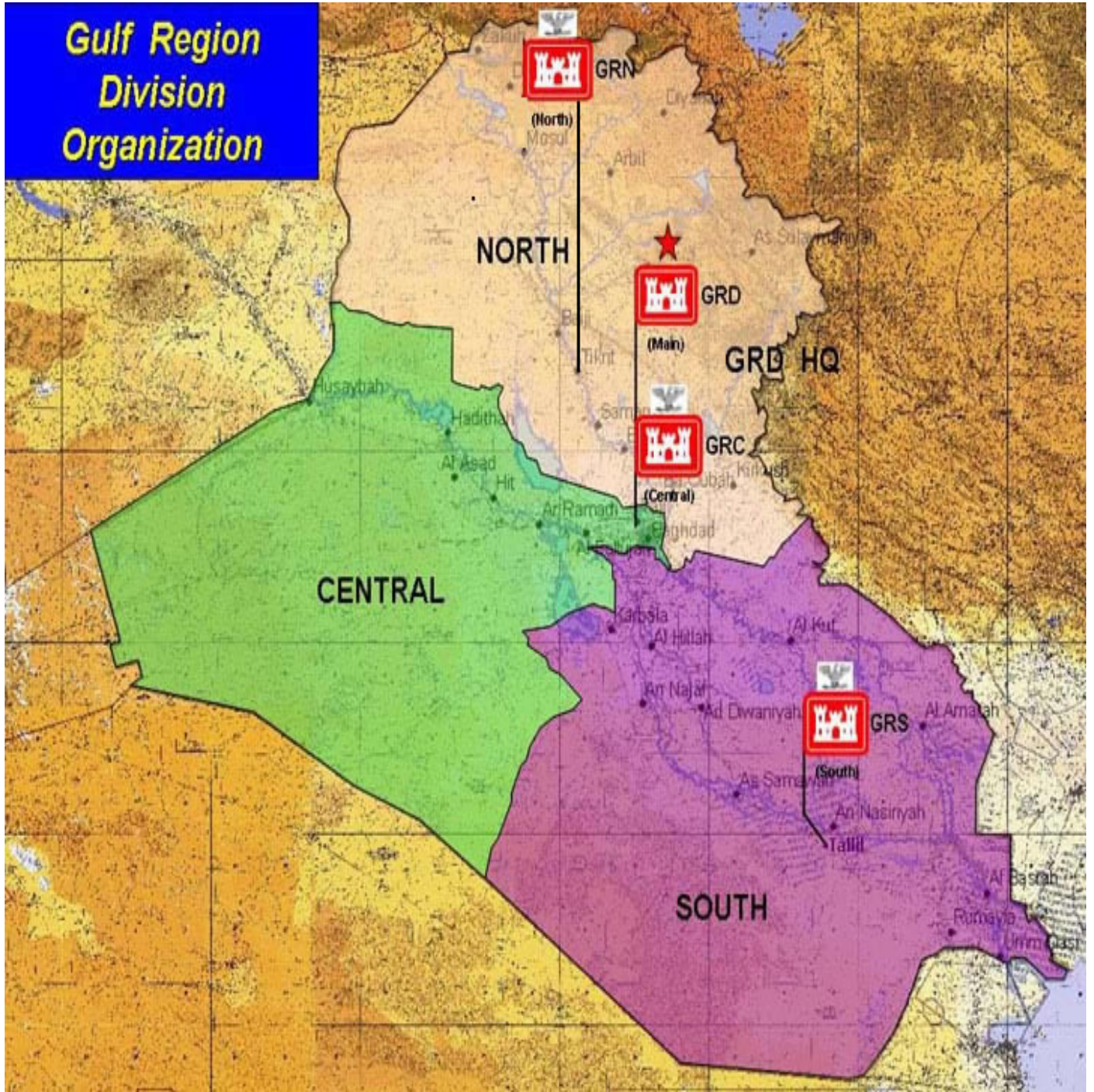




Photo Galleries

Typical housing and facilities found at GRC's Resident Offices.





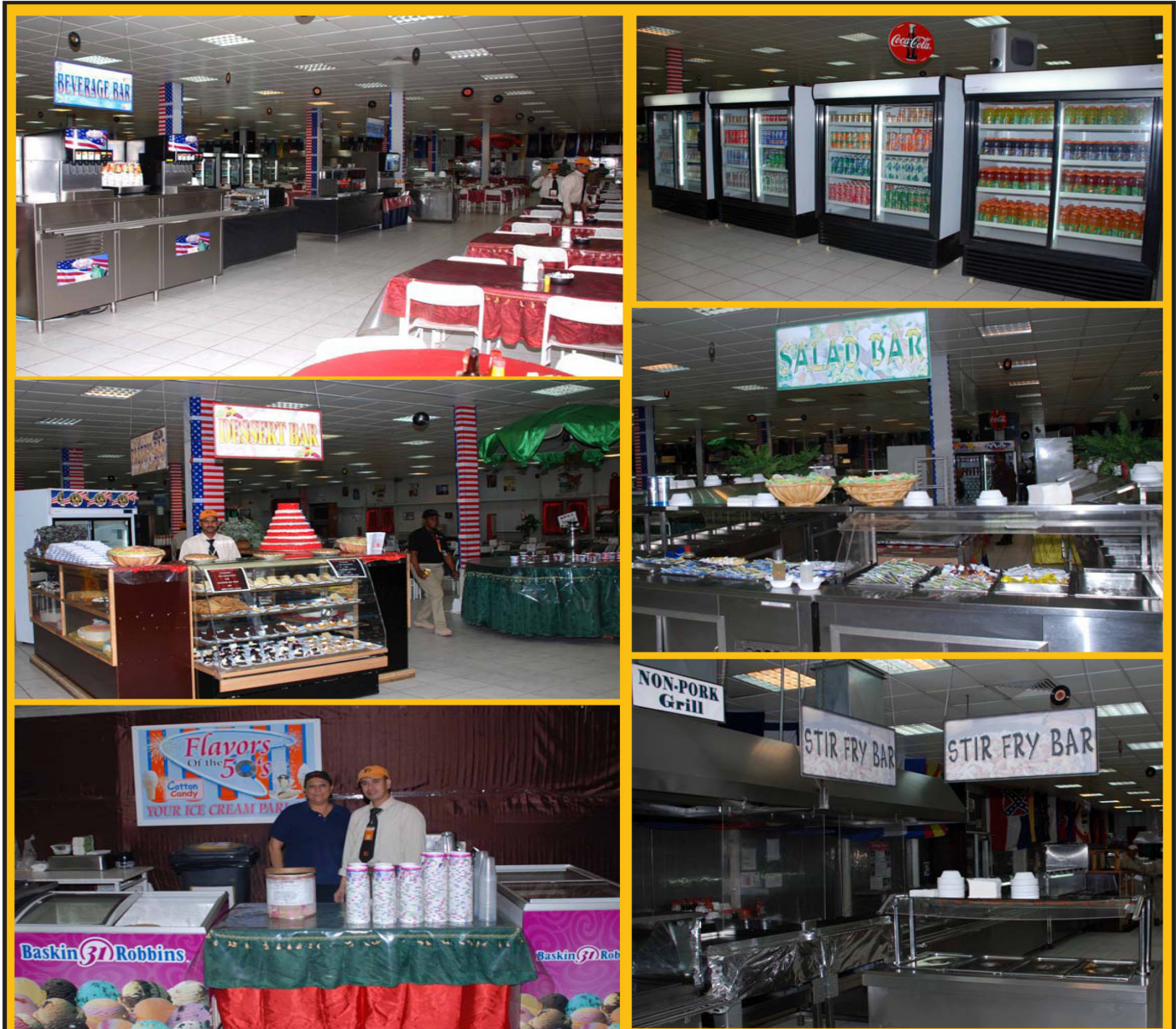
Photo Galleries

Typical housing and facilities found on each floor at GRC HQ on Victory Base Complex in Baghdad.





Photo Galleries



Typical Iraq Dining Facility (DFAC) with overhead cover for protection.





Photo Galleries





Many thanks to those who've deployed in support of the USACE Mission and the Nation





Find out what it's like to be somebody's hero.



Learn more about
deployment opportunities
and benefits at our
Brown Bag.

Date: October 22, 2008

Time: 12 noon

Place: Executive
Conference Room- 2115