

We Support Our Troops

I get to talk to my Dad a couple of times a week on the telephone. Not many conversations pass without him sharing a reminder that I have not sent an update in quite some time. A Scottish proverb claims, "What may be done at any time will be done at no time." This line seems a fitting way to justify my email inbox full of unreturned notes from family and friends and the long gap between my last letter from Iraq and this one. Lucky for me, you all have been much more committed to communicating your support and well wishes. Thank you.

Albert Einstein once said, "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted." This quote perfectly sums up the frustration that makes it difficult to send this update. On one hand, I want to report that over the last 378 days our team has achieved terrific success and accomplished the tasks the surge force was designed to tackle. On the other hand, the intangible nature of this environment makes it irresponsible to explain the situation in overly optimistic terms. I guess my point is that we are working our a---s off to maintain the security situation so that the extremist b-----s who threaten the good order and discipline necessary to foster economic growth and sufficient essential services can flourish in this community.

By no means have we won, but our creative efforts certainly make this little part of the world a better place.

At the beginning of this deployment, groups dubbed "volunteers" or "concerned local citizens" by supporters of the idea and "American-recruited militias" by those opposed to the undertaking began to materialize across Iraq and especially in Baghdad. Based on the level of violence in our portion of the city and the quality of the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police forces that we partner with, we chose not to support the volunteer movement. Eventually, though, we decided that hiring young, unemployed men who sought to protect their community accomplished several important objectives. At our first recruiting event, the team of soldiers at the entrance to the site searched a young man and verified his credentials. Before he entered the building to start the application process, the man smiled and anxiously turned to wave to an older woman across the street. The woman nervously smiled back and waved and watched as her son selflessly committed himself to the dangerous cause. Rarely this year have we found individuals whose sphere of concern stretches much further than immediate family members. Unfortunately, it is hard to repair a community when there is so little connection between individuals.

The image of this proud mother and dedicated young man highlights the difficulty with measuring the tangible victories our team has achieved. No metric accurately captures the increased acceptance of the rule of law that this example family portrays and no data point fairly represents the reinvigorated desire that Iraqi people have to organize and unite for common good. Certainly, the pursuit of economic prosperity and professional development or the renewed faith in the professionalism of local Iraqi Security Forces remains uncounted in this smile between a son and a mother. In my mind, this smile is success and this smile is a stronger Iraq. Although Einstein's declaration about counting had nothing to do with the number of improvised explosive

devices detonated last month or the hours of electricity available everyday or the quality of Iraqi Policemen without badges, his sentiment remains spot on. The details easily collected and counted and charted and analyzed hold an important place in the decision making process, but the completely subjective and often emotional assessments may prove the truer measure of the situation in Iraq.

So know that the view from my desk, safely behind the walls shielding Camp Liberty from the rest of Western Baghdad is promising. Reports demonstrate consistent, but slow development across the civil, security and commercial sectors. More responsible public agencies or independent contractors aware of the capitalistic opportunities in the area are slowly providing some basic services that Coalition dollars once exclusively funded. The bureaucracy associated with many departments of the government remains counterproductive, but at the tactical level, the Iraqi Army is more capable, the Iraqi Police are more responsive, local officials are more accountable and individual citizens are more aware of the potential for a better quality of life that exists. All of these factors equate to a better place, still infested with terrorists, criminals and obstructionists, that America must remain dedicated to helping.

Thank you again for your constant prayers and support. Although impersonal, I do hope that this note finds you and your family well. We are scheduled to redeploy sometime in April . . . Jillian and I anxiously count the days!

Respectfully,

Woj

