

In His Own Words: A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

I still remember the day I was in a meeting at Huntsville Center and someone said the World Trade Center had been hit by a plane. The reaction of everyone in the meeting was something like “that’s too bad” and then we continued work. Then about an hour later, someone said a second plane had hit the other tower and, all of a sudden, everything that we knew had changed and our normal complacent life in the US would never be the same.

There had been previous opportunities to apply for jobs in Iraq, but I decided that was too dangerous. So, when this offer came for Afghanistan, it was like a second chance. I feel good that I did the right thing although I will be the first to admit that I miss the good, normal life that I gave up to come over here.

Knowing we are going to help improve our soldiers’ quality of life is one reason why I decided to come over here to work. As the program manager for the US/Coalition Forces projects, I am responsible for the design/construction of projects such as our barracks work at Bagram and Kandahar Airfields. In Kandahar, which is located in

southern Afghanistan, we are completing large barracks that will house 4,500 troops, a combination of US and other coalition forces. And at



Bagram, we are installing a 400 person housing project with relocatable trailers.

I have gone on numerous visits to project sites where US troops are stationed and where the Corps has construction projects to improve their facilities and quality of life. The troops stay in tents on cots with sleeping bags and live out of their duffle bags, eat at the dining facilities and have to walk to bathroom facilities. There is constant dust in the air, which affects your breathing, because the roads are all dust or gravel and there is very little green area.

Obviously I don’t even have to mention the two biggest sacrifices that military personnel have made (voluntarily or not) to be over here- being away from their families and many of them making a big financial sacrifice by being away from their regular jobs.

One moment probably defines my four months in Afghanistan better than any other. During a recent visit to Bagram Airfield, we drove along the flight line while a bunch of helicopters were landing. One of them had a military person get out holding an injured Afghan child. I assume it was her father walking next to the military person. There were four of us in our vehicle and we just stared as they walked toward us from the helicopter. I mentioned to the other guys that I



want to get a picture but I really didn’t want to invade on the privacy of the child. I felt I had to take the picture so I rolled down the window and took it although I really felt guilty about it.

After downloading the picture later and looking at it, I immediately thought this was why I volunteered to come here in the first place and why the US military is in Afghanistan. Everyone who has seen the picture has been moved by it and thanked me for sending it. I immediately sent the picture to several of my friends and relatives back in the states with the narrative that one picture was worth a thousand words and this is why we are here. I was lucky enough to witness it in person and just happened to have my camera with me.