

CONTINGENCY CONTRACTING CORNER

Voices From the Theater: Insiders' Perspectives of Deployment

By *Jaelyn G. Pitts, Staff Writer*

For most people, making the decision to voluntarily deploy is not easy.

Family matters or concerns about the dangers associated with deploying may prevent one from making this type of commitment. However, those who have embraced the opportunity to deploy with the Defense Contract Management Agency Contingency Contracting Administrative Services describe it as one of the most fulfilling experiences of their lives. We spoke with two more DCMA employees who have gone through this experience to get their thoughts and perspectives on being deployed.

Cynthia Roseberry-Andrews, DCMA Headquarters Military Human Resources program manager, and former Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration Operations supply officer, Kuwait

Communicator: How many times have you deployed?

Cynthia Roseberry-Andrews: I deployed to Kuwait once from Sept. 2, 2006, through March 3, 2007.

C: Why did you decide to deploy?

CR: I am an Air Force Reserve Individual Mobilization Augmentee assigned to DCMA Headquarters. My career field is military human resources, and I knew that, as an IMA, I would not be involuntarily deployed overseas. I wanted to deploy at least once in my military career.

C: What is it like overseas? Describe your typical day.

CR: I thought that Kuwait was beautiful. It was full of culture, the art and architecture were incredible, the Kuwaitis were very nice and helpful, and it was a life-



Cynthia Roseberry-Andrews, program manager, DCMA Military Human Resources, and former Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration Operations supply officer, Kuwait, sits on a camel at the Kuwait Advocates for Western-Arab Relations Center's semi-annual Bedouin Day Camp, Feb. 15, 2007. (Photo courtesy of Cynthia Roseberry-Andrews, DCMA Headquarters)



Cynthia Roseberry-Andrews stands in front of the Ali Al Salem Air Base main gate entrance sign, Dec. 23, 2006. (Photo courtesy of Cynthia Roseberry-Andrews, DCMA Headquarters)

“I believe that civilian employees should volunteer to deploy, provided that they are properly trained and are prepared to work long hard hours. — Cynthia Roseberry-Andrews

changing experience. My situation was significantly different than the majority of DCMA's deployees. I was on the DCMA Bayan house operations team. The Bayan house is a large row house in Kuwait that DCMA rents from a Kuwaiti landlord. We executed the reception, staging, onward movement and integration mission for DCMA. In other words, I was responsible for picking DCMA deployees up at the Kuwait International Airport and taking them to the Bayan house until they could get on their scheduled military flight into theater. After the deployments were completed, the process was reversed for a redeployment flight back home.

I was also responsible for tactical supply and DCMA's weapons.

C: What were your living conditions like?

CR: Very nice; I lived in a suite in the DCMA Bayan house, which is located across the street from the American Embassy in Kuwait City.

C: What were some of the greatest challenges you faced?

CR: The greatest challenge that I faced was the lack of sleep during the entire deployment. Due to the nature of the mission, it was common to have problems with the military

flights. Flights were cancelled, diverted, showed up when they were supposed to be cancelled, among other issues. As much as DCMA's operations officers would try to keep everyone abreast of the flight schedules, there were problems. Hence, it was common to have an Ali Al Salem Air Base run at 4:30 a.m. — drive 40 minutes to the base to pick



Cynthia Roseberry-Andrews meets U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at the American Embassy in Kuwait, January 2007. (Photo courtesy of Cynthia Roseberry-Andrews, DCMA Headquarters)

up someone, 40 minutes back to the Bayan house and go back to bed, and then get a call from an operations officer in Afghanistan or Iraq to pick someone up at 8 a.m. and noon and another that same evening.

C: What did you miss most about home?

CR: My daughter, Steph, Mom and Pops, twin nieces, Mikah and Madalyn, my church and my three pups.

C: What is the most valuable thing you feel that you have gained from your deployment experiences?

CR: We often lose sight of what our real goals are in DCMA when we sit in an office and perform our normal daily activities. When you deploy, you get an opportunity to work on a project from the beginning to the end — sometimes in only a matter of a few days. This is a great feeling of accomplishment. You can be proud that your actions are making life a little better for the warfighters when they return to their bases — making sure they have a hot meal, someplace cool/warm to stay or sleep [and] hot water for a shower.

C: How would you describe your overall experience? Would you do it all over again?

CR: My overall experience was professionally developing, educational and rewarding. I would definitely deploy again — even to Kuwait — but I would not want

to do the same job. I need a more consistent sleep cycle and schedule.

C: What was your most memorable experience?

CR: The friendships that I developed in Kuwait and meeting U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during the celebration of the Kuwaiti women winning their right to vote.

C: What advice do you have for civilians who are considering doing a voluntary deployment?

CR: Have the correct motive for deploying, and when they get to their theater duty location, understand that it is a wartime environment.

C: Do you believe DCMA civilians should voluntarily deploy?

CR: I believe that civilian employees should volunteer to deploy, provided that they are properly trained and are prepared to work long, hard hours.

C: Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences?

CR: Volunteer — it's a great experience — do it!

Charles Sivels, DCMA Pratt and Whitney quality assurance specialist, and current quality assurance representative, Afghanistan, deployed until Aug. 30, 2008

C: How many times have you deployed?

Charles Sivels: Twice.

C: Why did you decide to deploy?

CS: Since working in the Middle East for five years, Europe, South Africa and Iraq for three years and my past three years as an enlisted Marine with the United States Marine Corps, it was my feeling that all my experience put together could be helpful to DCMA to support the mission and troops firsthand in the warfighter zone.

C: What is it like overseas?

CS: As a non-resident quality assurance representative, my quality assurance tasks require me to conduct audits of operation and maintenance services weekly at one of nine forward operating bases throughout Afghanistan. There's

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an element of danger because the military has to escort DCMA [personnel] to each FOB, traveling by fixed- or rotary-wing [aircraft] and/or short vehicular convoys. There's a limited quality of life at each warzone area FOB that is simply below the living standards that Americans are used to.

C: What are your living conditions like?

CS: My living conditions at each FOB differ, with some locations being better than others. For example, with the exception of the 20-foot office/sleeping accommodation provided during my stopover on the main FOB I'm assigned to, when I'm conducting weekly site visits at other down-range [FOB] sites, the living conditions are much less comfortable as I'm sleeping in a B-hut or tent open bay with more than a dozen unknown military soldiers and Department of Defense civilians. It's not really bad or really good but simply a taste of what it could be like when embedded in the warzone with our U.S. armed forces.

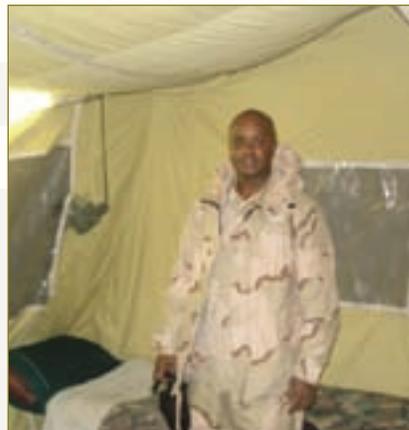
C: Describe your typical day.

CS: My day, depending on which FOB I'm working at, involves the following: wake up at 5:30 a.m. and go take a light wash-up and breakfast thereafter; inform operation officer that I'm present for the day at the specific working area; check e-mails and respond accordingly; arrange

transport and conduct other logistics necessary for a site visit at one of the assigned nine FOBs; conduct independent processes or product audits of either operation and maintenance services or product examinations; and collect personal mail from on-site U.S. post office. After completing the workday, sometimes I go to the [Army exchange] to purchase personal items needed. Then, every other day, I go to the gym for physical fitness and then take a nice, hot shower. I then set my alarm clock, do some reading while listening to some nice jazzy, rhythm and blues or gospel music or maybe watch a movie to find myself waking up to the loud alarm the next morning.

C: What are some of the greatest challenges you faced?

CS: Adjusting my breathing to the high mountain elevation of more



Charles Sivels, DCMA Afghanistan quality assurance representative, ready to leave his tent to begin audits of operation and maintenance services at Forward Operating Base Warrior in Afghanistan, Dec. 23, 2007. (Photo courtesy of Charles Sivels, DCMA Pratt and Whitney)

than 3,000 to 8,000 feet as well as the very cold weather conditions that have reached below zero this winter. Another challenge has been catching rotary wings and vehicular convoys to down-range FOBs each week versus being assigned to work at only one FOB throughout my prior six-month tour. It has also been difficult being on deployment for six months straight without having a close connection to my loved one and missing the up-close relationship with my immediate family members. Additionally, it has been challenging sleeping among strangers in an open-bay, bedded B-hut instead of having accommodations with a secured door.

C: What do you miss most about home?

CS: My immediate family members, the quality of life, the freedom to go about anywhere in a civilized society and, of course, my co-workers at DCMA.

C: What is your most memorable experience?

CS: An inspirational letter that was sent to DCMA Public Affairs from U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Matthew Mitzel on Jan. 23, 2008, pertaining to an event that occurred with a military client and DCMA during my first deployment in June 2006. Mitzel's inspirational letter reads:

To Whom It May Concern: I recently Googled my name, and your article appeared, its title is "DCMA Quality

Assurance Specialist and Three-Time Lifesaver.” It’s been a year since I’ve redeployed, and I completely forgot about my encounter with Mr. Sivels. Seeing that article reminded me about that quick conversation. You have to understand that where I come from, a handshake beats a million verbal thank yous. Whoever got my route clearance team that RG-31 [mine-protected vehicle] is forever in my prayers. That vehicle has saved my soldiers’ lives time and time again, and, as for my own, I’ve survived a [rocket-propelled grenade] strike, mine strike and four [improvised explosive device] detonations. I hope my brief handshake justifies the hard work that Mr. Sivels put towards his company’s mission. — Staff Sgt. Matthew Mitzel, RTI Instructor, Combat Engineer Camp, Grafton, North Dakota.

C: How would you describe your overall experience thus far? Would you do it all over again? Why/why not?

CS: Working with different DCMA professionals from various civil military operations or agencies [is very similar] to when I’m back in the U.S. working with team members. Every team member is seen through my eyes as having plenty of energy and pride when it comes to making sure that the contractor continues to provide the military clients with the highest quality operation and maintenance services and incoming products. More importantly, I’m thankful to be part of what is taking place in theater by this current team of military, contractor, Afghani and

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[Department of Defense] individuals, as well as those in the U.S. making things happen for better tomorrows and years ahead. My plan would be to return for a third deployment whenever DCMA decides to request my services. Additionally, I have two nephews, ages 19 and 20, who went into the U.S. Army, and my goal is to help them and many other young people by providing the best quality oversight over contractors. With that said, my plan is to continue being proactive by stepping forward to steadfastly provide the quality support that the military clients have requested from the DCMA team.

C: What advice do you have for civilians who are thinking about doing a voluntary deployment in the future?

CS: Future DCMA members must be certain to give much thought prior to making the commitment to depart the U.S. to support the warfighter in theater. Start exercising at a local gym before you come to theater and continue to do so upon reaching your assigned work area(s) up to three times or more each week. Show at all times your respectfulness, professionalism and integrity and others will naturally come to know

you by those great characteristics. Respect others and you will get the same in return. Have a very positive attitude when it comes to dealing with military clients, contractors, co-workers and other parties. Be prepared to work long hours and know that six months away from the U.S. is a very long time away from the civilized setting you are coming from. Be prepared mentally, physically and spiritually as you adjust to your new surroundings and what will be expected of you. Contact your loved ones for support and remember that they need the same while you are away. Eat enough food during meal hours and continue to monitor your food intake daily.

C: Do you believe DCMA civilians should voluntarily deploy?

CS: My opinion is that whether to voluntarily deploy or not is an individual decision based on one’s understanding or circumstances of what is going on in [one’s] life. Additionally, DCMA personnel not wanting to deploy can at least say or know that what they are doing is, in fact, in one way or another a support of both the Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom efforts. 