

Journal Entries from Iraq

International Zone
Baghdad, Iraq

Every day is progress ... although the workers change, the demand remains unchanged.

Every morning I go to my office in the International Zone, Baghdad, Iraq. I greet everyone and receive a smile from each and a "good morning" from all in return. As time passes, more and more of these greetings are also coming from Iraqi citizens. They are very motivated to perform contract administration tasks and are gradually assuming more and more of the workload.

Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) Central Iraq has actively participated in this gradual transition to a more self-sustaining Iraq. Since October 2004, our role as contract administrators has significantly impacted the Iraqi people's quality of life, the safety of U.S. and coalition forces and the independence of the Iraqi people.

One of DCMA Iraq's primary customers is the Joint Contracting Command - Iraq/Afghanistan (JCC-I/A). Their main mission is to augment the Department of State's Iraq Project and Contracting Office in support of the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office. DCMA administers contracts that provide services and supplies for the various offices. Tasks are divided into sectors: electricity, oil infrastructure, water resources/public works, facilities and transportation, and security and justice.

During the last six months, Maj. Gen. Darryl A. Scott (the previous DCMA director) addressed JCC-I/A. His comments reinforced the importance of our mission as contract administrators and put it in a more global perspective. He reminded everyone how contracting directly affects the lives and livelihood of the people and country of Iraq. What a wonderful way to look at things! When you don't always see the direct fruits of your labor, that new perspective serves to boost everyone's morale.

The whole contracting process may not seem very fast or even very glamorous - especially when you are working hard to coordinate with a contracting officer's representative, reconciling a contract or tracking down an inspection and receiving report. But that all changes when a turbine is finally delivered, spare parts arrive on time, magazines for a children's hospital are made available or a Coalition/Iraqi security force member is protected by body armor you supplied. When that happens, you can't help but feel you are at the top of your game. At that moment, you know you have made a real difference in people's lives.

This activity introduced yet another evolving need required by our customers. In this environment, everything is not as neat and organized as we are accustomed to in the United States. We don't have all the high-tech programs and tools. Despite that limitation, we all help and mentor each other on a daily basis in order to get the job done.

Each day, we all interact with our host country coworkers. We all take pride mentoring and sharing what we know with them. When DCMA finally transitions from Iraq, we will feel confident that our work is done here and that it is in the capable hands of the Iraqi people.

The time will come when DCMA will completely transition their workload to their Iraqi counterparts. DCMA is now working to prepare the host nationals to manage contracting programs in a way that supports fairness, progress and prosperity and enriches the lives of the Iraqi citizenry. Once that is done, our mission here will be finished, and we can head home with a heightened appreciation for our freedoms and the progress we've been able to pass on to the Iraqi people.

- Ms. Karen Parris, Administrative Contracting Officer, DCMA Central Iraq



An aerial view of the International Zone in Baghdad, Iraq, location of the JCC-I/A headquarters. (DCMA staff photo)

(Right) Army Spc. Alejandro Guevara, from the 223rd Maintenance Company, at Camp Taji, Iraq, builds an armored box for a five-ton truck to protect Iraqi soldiers. DCMA has a quality assurance representative assigned to the Taji National Depot and Radio/Communications Warehouse located at Camp Taji, Iraq. These facilities process weapons, uniforms, vehicles, tools, radio communication equipment and many other supplies used by the Iraqi military. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. David Foley)



(Below) Army Spc. Rambo Rapu, a communications specialist from the 3rd Infantry Division, installs Internet cable in the server room of Camp Taji, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Mr. Brian P. Henretta)

Camp Taji, Iraq

The Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) has a quality assurance representative (QAR) assigned to the Taji National Depot and Radio/Communications Warehouse located at Camp Taji, Iraq. These warehouses process weapons, uniforms, vehicles, tools, radio communication equipment and many other supplies used by the Iraqi military.

The U.S. Army provides training to the Iraqi Army and instructs them on how to perform depot operations. DCMA coordinates with the U.S. Army and the Iraqi Army as equipment is readied for distribution. As an on-site DCMA QAR, I provide contract/quality guidance to the U.S. and Iraqi Army depot personnel.

The receipt of supplies at the warehouses poses some problems. When supplies are received, there are definite language barriers that must be overcome. Working with the Iraqi truck drivers (who make the deliveries) and the Iraqi Army (who receive the deliveries) is a challenge. Assisting the Iraqis can be awkward due to the language differences. This is overcome by using interpreters to communicate between the U.S. Army, DCMA and the Iraqi Army.

By learning and understanding cultural differences, DCMA has fostered teamwork and esprit de corps with the locals. I work through interpreters to instruct the Iraqi Army on the importance of contract requirements. I do this to ensure that only supplies meeting contract specifications will be accepted.

I also communicate with Iraqi and other foreign contractors regarding incoming material and delivery concerns. Not all supplies meet contract requirements. As a result, I instruct the Iraqi Army Depot personnel on how to return defective products to the contractor. Friendships are formed during the day-to-day working environment with the Iraqi Army. Oh yes, and my Arabic is coming along nicely, too!

— Richard Coffman, Quality Assurance Representative, DCMA Central Iraq

