

CONTINGENCY CONTRACTING CORNER

Voices From the Theater: Insiders' Perspectives of D

By *Jaclyn 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.

Bill Reines, DCMA Santa Ana quality assurance program analyst and former property administrator, various deployed locations

Communicator: How many times have you deployed?

Bill Reines: Ten times in the past 11 years — once each to Hungary, Egypt, Albania and Kuwait and three times

each to Bosnia and Iraq. ... I just got back from being in northern Iraq from Apr. 8 to Oct. 9, 2007.

C: Why did you decide to deploy?

BR: Originally, there were a couple of reasons. My first deployment was to Hungary and the Balkans. I had very strong beliefs the U.S. needed to act to stop what I believed to be genocide in that region of the world.

“ Each time I have learned something new about myself professionally and personally and have made new friends. ”

— Bill Reines



From left: Army Col. Jake Hansen, DCMA Iraq commander; Bill Reines, DCMA Santa Ana quality assurance program analyst and former property administrator, various deployed locations; and Army Lt. Col. Kevin Pope, DCMA Iraq, Southern Iraq Commander, at Camp Victory, Iraq, in May 2006.



Bill Reines, DCMA Santa Ana quality assurance program analyst and former property administrator, various deployed locations, stands on top of the Ziggurat overlooking the ancient Biblical city of Ur. This archaeological site is just outside the Tallil Airbase in Southern Iraq.

Deployment

As a civilian, this would be an active way I could do my part to help stop the genocide. I really believed we had a moral obligation to do something positive. And, in a way, I thought it would be an exciting adventure.

C: What were your living conditions like? Describe your typical day.

BR: I have lived in a tent with no floor with 11 other team members for six months, and I have lived in a hotel for three months. Usually, though, we live in a small trailer-like cubicle with one other individual or by ourselves. Our typical workday starts about 6 or 7 a.m. and lasts until about 8 or 9 p.m., seven days

a week. A six-month deployment sounds like a long time, but it does go by quickly.

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

BR: By far, the greatest challenge is being away from your family. You will miss birthdays, holidays, special occasions and the times you just want to see your family. Without good family support, a CCAS deployment can be very difficult. Deploying is not something you decide to do on your own; it directly affects your family before, during and after your deployment, and they need to be directly involved in your decision.

C: What did you miss most about home?

BR: Besides my family, there are a few things that I always miss when I deploy: walking on a sidewalk and not on gravel; roads without potholes; staying in bed on Sunday morning; watching television shows like "Meet the Press" and my wife's great cooking!

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

BR: 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, some place cool/warm to stay or sleep [and] hot water for a shower.

C: How would you describe your overall experience?

BR: Every time I deploy it is a new experience. Each time I have learned something new about myself professionally and personally and have made new friends. It can be a very difficult assignment and is not for everyone. The hours are long; it can be very frustrating at times; it can be lonely; it can be dangerous. But it can also be fun, exciting, fulfilling [and] a great learning experience, and you can be proud of what you can accomplish.

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

BR: Think long and hard before volunteering. Going on a CCAS mission is like golf — you either do not appreciate the game or you become a fanatic about it. Once people volunteer for a deployment, they either say they will never do

it again, or they are ready to sign up for another mission right away. A voluntary deployment is not for the faint of heart, but it can be a life-changing and professionally enhancing experience. ... Talk to others who have deployed before making the commitment. If you do decide to volunteer, remember to keep a sense of humor and to stay fluid because being flexible is too rigid.

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

BR: As we say at DCMA, we enable the warfighter to win. A CCAS deployment is a great opportunity to really make that statement become a reality. You have a chance to be part of history by working on the largest logistics contract in U.S. history. When all is considered, my CCAS deployments have been the highlight of my professional career.

**Cheryl Lang, DCMA
South Bay team leader
and former property
administrator, various
locations**

C: How long have you been with DCMA?

Cheryl Lang: It will be 24 years in July 2008.

C: How many times have you been deployed?

CL: Ten times: two deployments in Hungary, two in Bosnia, one each in Kosovo and Macedonia and four in Iraq, three of which were back-to-back. ... I was deployed to Iraq from September 2005 to April 2007.

C: Why did you decide to deploy?

CL: There was always a part of me that wanted to be in the military, but that just didn't happen for me, so, when this opportunity came around, I volunteered. I wanted to experience the adventures of the unknown, the excitement of the day-to-day challenges and the opportunity to give back something to our U.S. forces.

C: What is it like overseas?

CL: It is so beautiful in most of the areas I was in. In northern Iraq at Camp Mosul in the spring, the hills are green with lavender wildflowers blooming all over; it is really a sight to see. In the winter, they have some snow, and it gets very cold; the summers are hot. In Tikrit, the winter is cold with lots of rain, as in the southern parts of Iraq, with very hot summers.

C: Describe your typical day.

CL: My day started around 5:30 a.m., answering e-mails and reviewing lost, damaged and destroyed reports that were sent during the night. I worked very closely with the maintenance mechanics on the up-arming

“Every day was memorable in one way or another [and] I will never forget my military family.” — Cheryl Lang

of trucks and repairs to damaged vehicles. There were also meetings with the customers and contractors and emergency situations to deal with, so there were no typical days; you just worked the issues as they came in.

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

CL: Traveling from camp to camp to conduct my surveys. There were many times we could not travel due to the weather, or it may have been unsafe at the time.

C: What did you miss most about home?

CL: Other than my family and friends, I would have to say I missed walking barefoot on grass the most.

C: What is your most memorable experience?

CL: Every day was memorable in one way or another. I will never forget my military family — the times we worked together, shared letters or baked goodies from home or the Saturday nights we did laundry as we sat around and talked.

There were so many times soldiers would come into my office and ask for help or for something they needed just to meet quality of life standards. Just knowing that I could help them have a little part of home and seeing the smile on their faces made the long hours all worth it.

C: How would you describe your overall experience?

CL: Working for DCMA and providing support and services to our customers has been very gratifying for me, but to provide that same service and more to our customers firsthand is heartwarming. I now know the true meaning of “supporting the warfighters.” I have no regrets for all the deployments I have been on, and I would go again if they needed me.

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

CL: I think they should talk to someone who has deployed; you need to know what to expect. Deployment is not an easy decision to make. Talk to your family and friends, and make sure they support your decision because they will be the ones taking care of things for you while you

are deployed. If you do make the decision to deploy, you will never forget the everlasting experiences.

C: Do you believe DCMA civilians should voluntarily deploy?

CL: Yes; DCMA civilians have expertise in numerous functions and can assist the military in the many services the contractors provide.

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

CL: Yes, I would like to add that for all who have never seen our military operate in a combat environment, let me just say they are awesome. We need to support our military in any way we can, whether it is here in the U.S. ensuring a quality product is shipped on time or supporting them in a deployment status.

Also, these deployments would not have been possible or successful if my commander, Leslie Gregg, DCMA Santa Ana, was not such a big supporter of the CCAS mission. Thank you, Ms. Gregg, for allowing me this tremendous opportunity. To all my coworkers, thank you for your support and for taking on the additional work while I was deployed. 