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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Army Engineers Help Deliver School Supplies to Iraqi Children

By Mohammed Aliwi
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AN NASIRIYAH, Iraq--Many Americans are collecting and shipping school supplies to the headquarters of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in an effort to support mission and help the people of Iraq rebuild their country.

Delivering school supplies does not only help the children who receive them, but the effort also helps the growth of education, which is an essential factor for the successful establishment of democracy in Iraq.

Asked if she thought this mission was important, Edmay Mayers, a program analyst with the southern district said, "Most definitely! Children need to be happy, as happy as possible and what we do here in GRS (Gulf Region South) enhances their happiness. This is thanks to the American people who so generously send boxes and boxes of items to help our mission."

Mayers said that she packs the supplies for each child individually and credits Boy Scout Troop 310 from Brooklyn, N. Y. "We appreciate all the scouts of Troop 310 and their troop leader, Michael Scarano, for caring so deeply and doing so much for the Iraqi teachers and students," she said.

Both teachers and students receive needed items to make their school days productive. While the children receive notebooks, pencils, color pencils, pens, a ruler, a metric set, oil pastels, a pencil sharpener, erasers, washable school glue, letter and animal shapes stencil, watercolor sets and teachers receive much-needed items such as chalks, papers, pencils, and calculators.

"I think we (the Corps), are doing a very good work here especially with the different projects we have been doing personally for the children's orphanages," said Staff Sgt. Jessica Harvey, 412th Engineering Command. "I am very pleased with how we come together as a team to do special things for the underprivileged children of Iraq. I am enjoying my tour and what I have been able to do for the Iraqi people. Be-



GRS employees package up donated school supplies. Standing (left to right) are Master Sgt. Charles Miller, Nick Ash, Staff Sgt. Jessica Harvey, Margaret Williams and Jenny Hughes. Sitting (left to right) are Ira Matthews, Bernice Chavez, Edmay Mayers and Lt. Col. Gene Griffin

[USACE PHOTO BY MOHAMMED ALIWI]

ing involved while deployed has shown me how I can be of help to the Iraqi children once I have redeployed to the States. I will continue helping with this mission upon my return home."

Mayers said that she asks that the Iraqi engineers, the administrative staff and maintenance crew give her lists about the ages, gender and numbers of children living with them. This includes nieces and nephews. Once she receives this list, a team gets together and bags up toys for them to take home.

"They all leave here thrilled knowing that they are going to make their children extremely happy with these gifts of toys. All our Iraqi associates are very grateful to us and are incredibly glad we are here in



[USACE PHOTO BY MOHAMMED ALIWI]

their country to help them." she said.

Jenny Hughes, the commander's executive secretary said, "You can't imagine how happy the Iraqi children are when they receive these supplies. For them, it is just like Christmas when they get a school bag full of crayons, a ruler, pencil sharpener, calculator, it is amazing."

She said that she enjoys helping packing up the supplies, even if she cannot go out and see the children personally due to the danger outside the wire.

"If anyone ever has the opportunity as I have to

see these children eye to eye, face to face, hold their hands, see the sparkle in their eyes, I guarantee their hearts will be stolen as mine was and they will be more than happy to take over this endeavor in their off-duty hours," said Mayers. "It is no picnic. It is a lot of hard work and it is done mainly on your own time, before work, during lunch, and after work."

Hughes said she would like to thank the people who have sent the supplies and added the items help the children to try and overcome their rough circumstances. "I just want to tell them how grateful everyone is over here (for their generosity) and that we all know that there are good-hearted people back home spending the time and money to organize and send the supplies over here so that it can distributed to the children." Hughes said.

Mayers said she recently sent a truckload of toys to the Basrah Children's Hospital project. "Actually, I just received an email from our Basrah office requesting more toys be sent to help with the poor children in that area," she said. "We will be sending more boxes to them in the near future."

Mayers said she would like to thank everyone who helps in this mission, from the commander and co-workers to the security teams, and the Iraqi associates who work for the Corps. For her, being able to assist the Iraqis personally makes her mission special.

Note: Mohammed Aliwi is a media relations officer with the Gulf Region South District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Iraq. For more information, contact Betsy Weiner, public affairs officer at (540) 542-1528 or email requests to CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil. For more information on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq, visit www.grd.usace.army.mil