

(July 1st) I enjoyed a nice leisurely day on Thursday. I went to the range for a little tactical shoot. We have people that go almost every Thursday and I have never taken advantage of it. We left camp at about 0600 in the morning. The morning was nice and cool. It must have been about 80 degrees out. After getting the range set up and allowing a few people to try to qualify with their pistols, it was our time to shoot. We were going to be shooting our M-16s as we walked toward the target. Once we ran out of ammo, we took cover and changed magazines and continued toward the target. After that ammo was gone, we switched to our pistols. We were supposed to count our shots so that we changed magazine while we still had one round in the chamber. I forgot to count. This was a realistic way to train. As I was walking toward the target, I could not keep it with in my sights. Your adrenaline starts to rush when you are shooting like this and the terrain plays a big part in the shooting because you are stepping on rocks. When we finished that portion of the range, it was time to fire our weapons on automatic. I took 4 clip of ammo and had them gone in less than 2 minutes. Then we got a chance to shoot an AK-47. The AK-47 is the preferred weapon of our enemy and makes a very distinct sound when fired upon you. After lunch I cleaned my weapon and then I was done for the day.

We made two more test pours on Tuesday and Wednesday to certify our new concrete supplier. We broke the cylinders and got the results on Friday morning. (July 2nd) The results were good. We were ready to place the concrete for the runway on Saturday at 0500. At about 2000 our regiment decided that they were not happy with the test results. They want to see more data. We have been testing concrete for over 3 months and now the regiment want to get involved and make decision from back in their offices. It gets very frustrating. I spend more time writing reports and creating chart than I do actually doing meaningful work. I told our officers to let the regiment certify the concrete and let me know when it is ready to go.

Saturdays cancelled concrete pour for our runway project opened up my time to help place a concrete pad for our new laundry in the camp. Master Chief Mead traded with one of the redi mix plants to get us the concrete. We had most of my shop out there to do the pour. We had a wheel barrow brigade set up to transport the concrete into the forms. It was a hot morning as usual, so the concrete was starting to cure quickly. We started pouring at about 0900 and finished at 1030. It was a good effort on our part to get this done. I let most of the guys have the afternoon off. They deserved it.

Today was my duty day again. Sundays are not the best day to have duty. We only work for half of the day. Some people work the mornings and some work the afternoon. It is hard to get everyone together. I did not go into work until 1030 so I made sure that I had talked to the people that needed to be on duty at 0800 yesterday. They were all aware that they had duty. I get into work today and EA1 Kramer was the duty driver. He was not supposed to me. My duty driver flew to Rawah this morning and did not tell me. So I had to have one of my other guys take care of it.

When I left at 1830, I was told that our duty bus was not running. I check to see if the driver was around, but I did not find her. Usually we have three buses to choose from.

There was only one bus at the compound, so I figured that she must have the bus somewhere. I check all over the place on base and could not find the bus. I went to dinner and made a phone call and then I went to look for her. As I was pulling out of the parking lot here came the bus driven by one of our chief and my duty driver sitting in the back. As she came walking up to the truck, she knew I was not happy. She thought that she only had to drive for lunch. We have only been here for 3 months now and she did not know what the schedule is. She felt bad and I could not yell at her because I would have made her cry. My half day of work turned into the day of hell. Hopefully, tomorrow will be better.

(July 8th) The 4th of July has come and past. We were able to get the whole day off. Many of our chiefs pushed hard to get us the day off. We are over half way done now so this was well deserved. After sleeping in until 0800, I got up for the day. I did not want to sleep the whole day away. Paula had sent me a boche ball set awhile ago, so we broke it out and played a few games. Normal this game would be play on a nice lawn while enjoying a few beers. We had to settle for the hard packed dirt between our cans and the Hesco barriers. There were a few rocks on the course which added to the challenge. We played until about 1230 and then the sun got to hot. We headed inside for a movie in the air conditioning. The battalion also had a cook out at the camp and some of the guys from the materials yard had a cook out at the cans. Just like back home, there is always plenty of food to go around.

Usually for the 4th, Paula and the boys either go up to the Crivitz area by her uncles or head up to Baileys Harbor to enjoy the day with the Funnells. This year there were no parades or fireworks for me. I can get the parade of military vehicles or C-130 fly over on any given day. It is important that we remember that it is a day to rejoice our freedoms not to just get together for a good time. There are many holidays that have a new meaning for me such as Memorial Day, Veterans Day and the 4th. I hope that our great country teaches the younger generations the true meaning of these important days.

Concrete has not started to flow for our project yet. We had several more cylinders to break from our samples. There cylinders were 7 day old cylinders which should yield roughly 75% of the strength that we need. Most of the cylinders broke substantially lower than what we needed. This was due to the fact that I do not have any capping compound to make a smooth top and bottom to the cylinders. I had several cylinders that split down the middle because there were small imperfections on the ends. We started to do more test pours yesterday. Now we are trying to finish the tops of the cylinders so they are perfect. We will have to wait to see what will happen. Hopefully, I will get my supplies in soon and this will not be an issue anymore.

Today was possibly the most interesting day that I have had in this country yet. I went on a mission to do the recon for future project. The project will be to repair two culverts that had been blown up. We traveled with 2nd Combat Engineering Battalion. They were performing a route clearing mission. They have a vehicle the drives on the shoulder of the road with a metal detector to try to identify IEDs. The only problem is that it needs to travel at about 10 MPH.

We left base at about 0700. Once outside the gate, we loaded the weapons and preceded to MSR Bronze which is a military and civilian road. We traveled through a small village on the way to Bronze. There were several kids outside waving at us. Traveling along Bronze is nice because for the first portion it follows the Euphrates River. It was so nice to see blue water. The landscape is relatively barren once you travel away from the river. It becomes a desert.

(July 10th) Most of the trip up was relatively boring. We stopped at about 1030 to stretch our legs. The next city that we were going to be traveling through has had some bad guys in it. The Marines wanted to make sure that we were on alert. Once back on the road, we travel down into Haditha. That is the city were some Marines supposedly killed some innocent people.

It was a very interesting trip through the city. There was a combination of young children that were waving to us along with older males that did not seem to happy that we were there. I am not sure how often US military troops travel through the city. Many Iraqis might be put off by the fact that they must pull over and clear that roads will we pass. This is for their safety and for ours. It helps determine who the bad guys are when they do not pull over.

The city looks very much like what you think a larger third world city might. There were several shops that line the street. Some of the shops sell fruits and vegetables, soda and canned goods. There are also butcher shops that have fresh butchered sheep hanging in the streets. Cars lined both sides of the road in the downtown area. Some areas were run down, but there were also many areas that had new houses built. Most of the houses are built out of rocks from the desert held together with mortar. Some of the houses were rather large and very beautiful.

We were planning on taking a bridge in Haditha that crossed the Euphrates but some of our vehicles would not fit across. Instead, we continued all the way through town and went to the Haditha dam for a lunch break. I was able to get some tourist pictures along the Euphrates along with the dam. The dam is huge and is a main power source for the area.

Once we finished lunch, it was back in the vehicles and on to the job site. We go to the culverts at 1500. Our job was to assess the damage and to take pictures and measurements to come up with a concept of operations to fix the culverts. Our Lieutenant that was along does not get outside of camp much. As soon as we got to the site, he jumps out and starts taking pictures. The rest of us stayed in the vehicle until the Marines finished doing a security sweep. It took a short time to take the measurements that we need.

While we were taking our measurements, our Marine Advisor, Master Sergeant Kasten, was performing a security sweep around the site. He ended up finding 2 Italian anti tank mines. He determined that they were only dangerous if you put pressure on top to activate

the mines. He came over to notify myself and the lieutenant to be careful were we walk. In a split second, I lost all respect for the Lieutenant. As soon as Master Sergeant mentioned the mine, he said "I am out of here" and ran back to the HUMMVE. The rest of continued to do what we were doing. We all went over to take a look at the mines and take pictures.

These mines were placed in an unusual place. They were about 25 yards off of the road in the desert. They were in an area that had been used as a bypass for the culverts. The Marines ended up bring the Buffalo over to investigate. This vehicle has a long arm on it with a camera so that it can take a look with out getting to close. They discovered that the mines were attached to two 120mm mortar shells. This is an average type of IED that the insurgent employ. EOD was called and they were on site in about 1 hour. They used their robot to do some investigations on the mines. Then they place some explosives on the mines and blew them in place. It was very neat to see this.

After all of this was over, we were back on the road by 1730. We once again stopped at the dam for a little rest. I got to see the sun as it was set on the lake. It was beautiful. We hit the road and made it back to base at 2140. We unloaded our equipment and got back to our cans at about 2245. I had a total of about 11 hours in the seat of the HUMMVE. My legs were killing me. Just imagine sitting Indian style for that long a time frame. Now it is onto figuring out the planes for the culverts.