

26 June 2008

We now have four days to complete the construction and turn over the site to the Iraqi Ministry of Interior. It does not look good. There is at least a week's work here to get this complete. We have to complete the inspection of the buildings and then correct any problems. This is not a happy management group. I am certainly not happy. We will probably have a meeting with the construction subcontractor by the time I finish this letter. It should be a pretty subdued meeting since he must realize by now that he will lose quite a bit of money by not finishing on time.

To make matters a bit worse, the internet went out early yesterday evening. It is still not working. Our IT guy is in the IZ. It takes three days to get a PSD for him to get out here to fix the system. If it needs a part it means that he will just come out here and trouble-shoot it and then come back with the part. On the bright side of that, the vendor should be able to come out there today and fix the system if it is his side that is broken. Ah, I just phoned our IT guy. He says all of the remote sites have the same problem. That means that the problem is likely to be a problem that the vendor can fix from his office and not have to come out here. Hopefully this is a good thing. I may actually be able to get this letter out today. You gotta love this place. Of course, I can no longer log onto earthlink.net so I cannot send this out to everyone. Maybe it is not just Iraq.

It has been hot and dusty. The daytime high is over 110F. It cools down to about 90F during the night. We have had about three days now without a dust storm. That is really great. This has been the dustiest summer that I can remember. It has actually been cooler too. It has taken a long time to get up to these sustained high temperatures. It is really miserable to have to go outside in all of that dust. You have no choice but to breathe it. It gets in your eyes and all over your skin. You rub your hand on your arm and you feel the dirt just clinging to you. Your throat is sore. And just when you think you are safe inside the buildings you see a coat of dust over the desks, tables, chairs, everything. It is not a fluffy type of dust. When you go to wipe it off it leaves scratch marks. Then you know why your eyes feel so gritty. Just when you feel it can't get much worse the wind changes a bit and the smoke from the Dora refinery across the river comes over the site. It is worse than it was back in Akron by the rubber factories when I was a kid. I am glad that the prevailing winds take the smoke away from here most of the time. Between the smoke from the refinery, the power plants and the cars, the air quality in Baghdad is pretty poor.

We took up a collection among the Tetra Tech ex-pats for one of our electrical engineers. You probably heard about the car bomb that was blown up in the market place and killed 51 people. Among those killed were his five sisters and six nieces and nephews. Just think if a car bomb killed nearly everyone in your family. It was so bad that his ten year old nephew had his body taken to one hospital and his head was found in another. As Mohammed pointed out, the bomb was set off by a remote control device. The person that detonated it had to see the women and children that he was going to kill when he pushed the button. These terrorists are not human. They are animals intent on killing human beings.

Mohammed also had a point that did not come to my mind. He said here was a case of Muslims killing Muslims and Christians offering aid to the bereaved families. Now that made me think. I

obviously am still thinking about it. Is it religion? Is it an American trait? Is it basic human nature? Why is it that we don't even think twice about helping someone regardless of differences in religion or anything else? Of course, on the other side of it, I can't see how the shia special groups and al quaeda can go ahead and kill all of these innocent people just to get them fighting each other. Surely they must realize that the Iraqi people are tired of all this killing and just want to live in peace. Iran is not endearing itself to the Iraqi people.

It is now the late afternoon. I am going to delay the completion date by one week. I feel better about that. We will now have time to finish the job and if something goes wrong when we fire up the generators we will have time to fix things if something goes wrong.

The US soldiers next door came over trying to get some material for a barbecue pit for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. We will lend them our small pit and build them another about the same size. Our pit is big enough for ten big T-bones. They will only have hamburgers but they will also have about 100 people they will be cooking for. They should be able to cook about fifty burgers at a time, maybe more. We are invited over. It should be a good time. They are going to see what they can find in the way of fireworks.

It has been five days since I started this letter. I just have to finish this thing now. The dust came back with a vengeance yesterday. It was so bad at times that you could not see a couple of meters ahead of you. It is not that bad right now but the visibility is about one kilometer. That is probably enough to keep the airport closed. Those people trying to get out will just have to wait another day. It is one of the problems trying to leave here and make connections in Dubai or Amman.

We are bidding on an environmental task order here in Iraq. It is on the US military FOB's. If we get it I just might stay for a little longer. The work is not that interesting but it is safe and the job should last for as long as I want to stay here. That should put me into the garbage business for a while.

That's it, no more. I am calling it quits on this letter. I have no earthlink.com account at the moment so not everyone will get this but that's the way it goes. I hope you enjoyed the read.

Jim