

17 Aug 09

Hey all! This is 1SG Michael D. Gadzinski AKA Kim's husband, you might have noticed that I have not been around in a while. Well I am back at it again in Kirkuk, Iraq. Last time I was assigned to the 425th Civil Affairs Battalion out of California, now I am assigned to the 414th Civil Affairs Battalion out of Southfield, two completely different battalions and I end up not only on the same base, but the same exact building and office I was in two years ago. This time around I am the First Sergeant of a company of 32 soldiers and I get to choose the missions I go out on. The last three months were spent at Fort Dix training the soldiers in the common tasks associated with being a soldier; rifle qualification, machine gun ranges, grenade ranges and the like, very much like a mild basic training of sorts.

In July we flew to Kuwait and spent another two weeks training in 120+ degree heat mostly in the new MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicle. This is the new vehicle replacing the HUMMER. It is way better against IED's, RPG's and other explosives that would normally destroy a HUMMER. We arrived in Kirkuk the first week of August and for all you Vietnam Vet's the C-130 is still the preferred method when flying into a combat zone, complete with the negative G's and vomit associated with a combat landing. So far it has been relatively quiet by Iraq standards, we have only been mortared once which the bad guys over shot the base, one IED explosion and a Car Bomb which killed a few locals in town. My company is located next to the base perimeter wall close enough that I sat on the roof of our building (in the dark) the other night and watched the kids playing in their back yards under the porch lights, I could throw stuff to the kids we are that close.

The military is supposed to be pulling back from the major cities, and for the most part we have but here in Kirkuk we are still very active in patrolling and conducting joint patrols with the Iraqi Army. Kirkuk is the largest oil producing city in the northern region of the country and is in the middle of a tug of war between the Arabs and Kurdish so things can go bad real fast. Every morning smells like burnt engine oil since we are close to the refineries which are located on the outskirts of Kirkuk. The refineries burn the impurities out of the oil similar to the natural gas fires you would see in Sarnia. Unlike natural gas the smoke coming out of these fires is black and there are dozens of them, at night the skyline is lit up from the fires and from a Blackhawk helicopter it looks like you are flying into the burning pits of hell.

Well I better sign off for now, I will periodically send a letter to the Legion so everyone knows the latest info from the front. I will be home in September for my two weeks leave then back here for another seven months. If anyone is interested in passing on any info I would be more than happy, my address here is:

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