

**LTC Garrett Yee's Update #6  
(September 11, 2006 – September 23, 2006)  
Life on the FOB**

Monday, September 11, 2006 (day 49)

Today marks the 5th anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center. First thing in the morning, I attend the memorial ceremony where the Ambassador and Corps Commanding General give speeches. Following the ceremony, I get to have my picture taken with both the Ambassador and Corps Commanding General. This is the highlight of the day. I take some time out of the day to write a message to Boy Scout Troop 176, which has their court of honor on the same day. I make good progress on my notes from the trip and good progress on the publication that I'm putting together. After making a few calls to the states, I get out of the office just before midnight.



Aside from the daily mortar and rocket attacks, life on the FOB is some times not that bad. Sure it's hot, but it's hot every where. Sure it's dusty, but its dusty everywhere. Sure you have to walk everywhere, to include the bathrooms and showers, but you have to do that everywhere. The only thing is that everything seems so much harder for some reason. So you look for the little things in your daily life that helps to make the journey more interesting. So, on this particular day, on the way into work, I see the local ducks taking a walk around the lake (rather than paddling across the

lake). I guess it was a good morning for a walk...That made my day interesting.

It's now mid-September and the morning weather is comfortable as I walk into work. I struggle through writing recommendations based on my visits to the various Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). I take a break and walk over to the Coalition Forces building to see where my neighbor LTC William Alvarado from El Salvador works. I take Champe with me since he is training his replacement and he wanted to give him some time on his own. It is actually a good day for a walk since it is only around 100 degrees. We then walk over to COL Georgi's office, which is a trailer on the other side of the Chapel. At lunch, I sit down with a sergeant first class from the Kansas National Guard, who is in works with the Base Defense Operation Center, (BDOC). They capture all the information about mortars and rockets that come into Victory Base and send out a daily report that is very telling of what is going on. It is not as safe as it sounds since we get used to the sounds of small arms fire and rockets. You just get used to it. My day ends around 2215.



One day, after lunch, we fed the fish off the bridge that goes out over the lake to the Al Faw Palace. Remember the little things? This fish are HUNGRY! Mostly Nile Carp and Asian Catfish I'm told for you fishermen and aquarium owners out there. After work, Champe, Ross (Champe's replacement pictured right) and



I walked out to the balcony to watch the evening sky, the artillery fire, and the flairs shooting off helicopters—this happens when they get “painted” by some form of tracking device, such as an anti-aircraft missile. This is ongoing every night, but we only step out to watch from time to time. The weather was perfect.



Before hitting the gym one morning, I'm leaving the bathroom trailer and someone calls out Colonel Yee. I turn around and the gentleman looks familiar. He says “Craig Best” and now I remember. I worked with him at Fort Bliss in 2005, before he got reassigned and sent off to Iraq...Oh yeah, I'm in Iraq now. Small Iraq. Another day of more of the same as the day before. This is the most number of days that I've been on the FOB without heading off somewhere. Kind of nice. Today is Friday, which means it is seafood night! Surf and turf, except I pass on the Turf and go for the extra seafood. Remember, the little things. I've been working on a few projects and making good progress. Tonight, I try to take a shower but no water comes out. Oh well.



I'm in the process of trying to arrange visits for the Iraqi Lessons Learned Center, so I head over to the Coalition Liaison Office to meet with the Polish Liaison Officer to arrange a visit with the central southern part of Iraq—it will take some time. Later that day, Champe and I drive out to the Special Operations section of the base camp. Through a series of wrong turns and getting lost a few times, we finally make it there—of course the long way. The Special Ops folks have their own area, which is very interesting. I'll leave it at that. We go into their facility and meet with the Operations Officer and Sergeant Major—both great guys. While we were there, they got a call from a unit in the area with a lead on one of the bad guys they have been tracking. This caused a minor stir as they worked the issue-- Champe and I found the whole thing quite interesting.



Our HMMWV driver was SGT Dorden, a 22 year old woman in the Army Reserve from Arkansas. In her civilian career, she is a hair dresser. I took



her photo and sent it to Alissa so she could see women in the Army. Our day at the IZ started off with attending the Battle Update Assessment (BUA) in the Strategic Operations Center (SOC), followed by a meeting with the Chief of Staff (CoS) of the National Coordination Team (NCT) in the US Embassy. I meet with a few other folks in the Embassy and get a quick haircut before lunch. We take the NTV, which stands for Non-Tactical Vehicle (also known as an SUV), to get around. I need to make a few mandatory visits, but on the way to our first destination, we stop in at the now famous El Rashied Hotel. We walk inside and browse around the shops in the lobby area. The

hotel is eerily quiet except for a few Arab sheiks that walk through the lobby.

I pick up a few souvenir items then we drive on over to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to meet with the Iraqi Lessons Learned Center. This is the organization that I'm supporting for the time being—it requires working with the Iraqis to help them learn from themselves. I'll be working with a Special Forces Major and a Major from Portugal. We then work our way to the Agnon Palace to meet with key members to help a unit prepare for deployment to Iraq. My meeting runs late so we rush back over to the Embassy so that we can catch our convoy back to Victory. It was close, but we made it. We take the convoy back to Camp Victory, grab dinner and get back to work. Full but good day.



Got up and went for a run around lost lake. It was actually cool this morning (70's) and I kept the AC off all night for the first time since I've been here. Today, I linked up with the new CALL officer that will be working at the 4th Infantry Division at Camp Liberty. I got him his laptops and took him on a tour of the Al Faw Palace and gave him some initial guidance, then sent him on his way. At dinner, I sat down with Yuri, an Air Force Captain from the Ukraine. He is 30 years old and will be here for a year helping to plan operations with the Ukraine forces in the southern part of Iraq. Late into the evening, Champe, the Marine Corps Colonel, and I head out to the 3rd floor balcony to watch the late night sky. We see lots of activity tonight. Explosions, air craft flairs, and artillery illumination rounds light up the sky while the sounds of helicopters, generators, and gun fire rounds can be heard off in the distance. At first when you get here, it is a bit unsettling, and then you get used to it. We head back to the hooch about 1130.

Got up and hit the gym before heading into work today. I'm starting to get into a regular routine. I had an office call at 1000 with LTC Michael Hess, who is an officer that retired 10 years ago and came back onto active duty after September 11, 2001. Sound familiar? Next morning, I got up and I dropped off my laundry on the way into work.



After getting settled into work, Champe wanted to go the Camp Slayer to get a hair cut, so I went along. I bought a bunch of stuff for friends and family. I got Alissa some earrings for her birthday, got Maria a card, and my dad a hat. I also got an Icee—always good when it’s hot. At lunch, I sat with a 22 year-old sailor from the Bronx. He works in the admin section of the 4-star general. I asked if he liked the shore duty of sea duty better, and he said he liked sea duty because he could always look out to sea and daydream. There is nothing to look out to here in Baghdad. That evening, I met Skip for dinner. He is getting ready to leave and wanted to discuss a little career development prior to his pending departure. I went back into work after dinner to take care of some emails, then headed to the hooch around 2200 in order to get ready for my trip to the IZ the next day.



The next day, I got up and caught the convoy into the International Zone. I met a few Iraqi expats at breakfast and had a good conversation. At 1000 I had a meeting with MG (retired) Eric “Rick” Olson and discussed what I had been doing with PRTs. It’s looking good so far. After the meeting, I rush over to the NATO Center driving an NTV. I’m starting to get the hang of driving around this part of Baghdad with the roundabouts and no real lanes. It is awkward at first, then you get used to it. I make it to the NATO Center on time and meet MAJ Hank Smith (Army Special Forces working with NATO), and MAJ Luis Neto (Portugal working with NATO) and have lunch in the NATO

DFAC. I meet BG Angeleli from the Italian Army, who oversees part of the Iraqi Lessons Learned program. After lunch, I meet with Iraqi Brigadier General Munir and Staff Colonel Salmon with Hank, Luis, and a Iraqi translator. I take the convoy back to Victory, drop my gear in the hooch, and head back into work. Lots to do. I finally get back to the hooch around midnight. Long day.

Saturday, September 23, 2006. Tired all day long. Today Champe flies out so after I get in and get some work done, Ross and I take Champe out the Baghdad International Airport (BIAP). Champe has mixed feelings. Part of him wants to stay and another part of him wants to go home. He says he is ready to go home, but you can tell he enjoyed having the opportunity to serve and do his part. Part of Ross and I wish we could go back, but we know it is not our time. We get to BIAP and Champe checks in and they tell him that they will have a formation in 50 minutes, followed by loading baggage, and subsequent loading onto the plane.

I take a picture of Champe by the exit terminal. We tell each other we will keep in touch. I’m sure we will. Champe is a good guy.



That’s it for now,  
Best wishes,

Garrett