

**LTC Garrett Yee's Update #8  
(October 3, 2006 - October 13, 2006)  
Happy Birthday Alissa!**

Dear Family and Friends,

This letter begins on Tuesday, October 3, 2006. Yes, today is Alissa's 13th birthday. I hope the package that I sent her gets to her today. This is Alissa's second birthday in a row that I've missed. She is a super trooper, but she reminded me the other day that I will need to spend lots of time with her at the mall shopping to make up for all the time I've missed... I actually do look forward to making up for lost time with all the kids, including my Buddy Gal. From my last letter, I just returned from a trip down to Al Hillah in the Babil Province. The day after a trip is always a breather day. I got a good night's rest and had breakfast with my neighbor, William (LTC Alvarado). On Tuesday's the chaplain has a lunch time bible study, which a friend invited me to some time back. It has been helpful and so I attend when I'm in the area. Before going to bed that day, I called home to wish Alissa a happy birthday. It was a good day because it was Alissa's birthday, but a little sad since I could not be there in person. This is a photo of Alissa and me the last day that I saw her (and her saw me) back in July before heading off to Iraq.



The next morning, I went for run around Lost Lake. I'm moving slow, but hey, at least I'm moving. My first appointments are to meet with the Military History Detachments that are located near our life support area. These are three-person units that deploy to the war zone to collect information on the war. These detachments are similar to CALL, but they have a different purpose. It's a good meeting. Later in the day, I get a \$3 haircut from Camp Slayer—long needed, although it is shorter than I normally wear it back home. Camp Slayer is an interesting place with lakes where the Hershey Kiss shaped "Perfume Palace" is located. At dinner, it is seafood night at the Coalition Café, so of course, I see Skip there who joins us. Skip leaves Iraq this Friday.

His one year is up, and he looks ready to go. Skip and I have lots of good memories from our prior assignments. Skip was the first one that I met in Iraq-- he was the one that picked me up from BIAP (remember Baghdad International Air Port?) when I first got here. It seems like such a long time ago. I finally leave work about 2230.

Some days back home, you just wonder where the day went. No different out here. I got in to work earlier than normal this morning and now as I write into my journal, I wonder where the day went—almost 16 hours later. I finished up the draft of my work from the past weekend, had a



teleconference back to Fort Leavenworth, planned for a flight this upcoming weekend, responded to requests for information, and somewhere in between, ate lunch and dinner. Today, I had sinus drainage all day—I think it is related to all the dust in the air. Each night, the moon grows fuller as we enter further into the season of Ramadan.

On Friday, the moon was full and it lit up the night sky. I was waiting to find out what time I was leaving in the morning, and the way it works out here is that you don't know what time you are flying with the Air Force until late the day before. As we looked out over Baghdad, you could see the moon light casting shadows. At 2230, I came back in off the balcony and found



out that my flight departs the next morning at 0745, which means I need to get to the PAX terminal by 0645, which means I need to leave at 0600. Ross will drop me off at the airport in the morning, so I need to get some sleep.

Saturday, October 8th is travel day. I got up at 0500 to get a ride to BIAP. I am scheduled to fly from BIAP to Qatar, spend the night, then fly to Ali Al Saleem (Kuwait), then to Q-West (northern Iraq), and then to Mosul (northern Iraq). I get to the Pax terminal (which is just a big tent)

and see if there is room available on a special flight that flies direct--I get placed on stand-by. One hour later, I'm booked for the special flight.

Two hours later I am sitting on a C-130 flying north to Mosul direct and skipping all the places in between. I get to Mosul just before lunch, hitch a ride to the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) compound, then grab some lunch. I'm here to look at the military convoys that support the PRTs and I find out that just that morning, a PRT convoy was hit with a road side bomb while traveling towards Erbil. Fortunately only the vehicle was damaged. I find out later in the day, another unit got hit by a bomb and lost a Soldier. At that time, the FOB goes into a communications black-out, which means no outbound calls so that no one talks about the loss of the Soldier before the family finds out.



At the PRT, I get a CHU (sounds like "chew" container housing unit) with a TV and refrigerator. I met up with the individuals at the PRT and get a day's head start on my objectives. I met with the Deputy Commander of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, LTC Fred Johnson—good guy. He gave me some good insight from their perspective in working with the PRT. I sat in on the operations brief, which covers movements for the next several days out, and then I sit in on the Operations Order delivered to the platoon. The Platoon Leader is First Lieutenant Manwaring, a solid young man from Utah.

I'm trying to fight this sinus congestion that I have, so I head in early for the evening.



The next day, I get up and watch the convoys head out. I was scheduled to go out to Erbil, but got bumped the night before due to a mission change. No sweat, I was able to take care of some business on the FOB that will save me time later. I meet with the Platoon Leader and Platoon Sergeant to discuss military movement teams when transporting civilians. We come up with some considerations, such as the fact that civilians don't have weapons and can't fire back if fired upon, etc. Therefore, we need to respond to enemy fire a little bit differently than if all the

occupants were military. This is one of the primary reasons that I'm up here. Although not very exciting, the day was productive. Throughout the day, you could hear explosions off in the distance. This is the same back at Baghdad, but some of these seem closer to the FOB. I think it is because the area is smaller and more rural, so the sound carries. It is still dangerous outside the wire, but the mission continues. Daily, Soldiers place their lives in danger just by traveling outside the FOB. That's the way it is out here.

Convoy Day. This morning, I meet the convoy at the front of the Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team headquarters. We take a long convoy out to the town of Tal Afar, which is west of the city of Mosul towards the Syrian border. We drive through Mosul, avoiding certain routes due to recent attacks, and make it to Tal Afar without any issues. Well, there was one issue. A car bomb attack occurred along our route just before we got there, so we had to drive through the wreckage and remains of the vehicle that blew up in the street. We got lucky.



Tal Afar is an old town and we meet our contact at an agreed upon location and link up with other units since the site remains secure. We move out from the link-up point to the "castle." The castle is old and very interesting. It is a 14th century Ottoman castle, which today is currently used as a staging area for the military. Since the area continues to take mortar attacks, we use keep our protective gear on at all times. Throughout the day I get to meet some interesting individuals, to include the Mayor, the civil court judge, and he city police chief.



I also get to see the detention facility where they keep the detainees. Due to the court system, justice is slow. I also meet a kid who is hanging out at the “city hall” near the office of the mayor. He is about 12 years old and speaks English fairly well--he writes his name on my hand: Anim. He then writes my last name, from my name tag onto his arm. He points to me and says “Yee.” He points to himself and says, “Anim.” Here, the mayor’s office is not much to speak of,

neither are the facilities. As the water runs down the middle of the street, our guide reminds us that it is raw sewage. We had lunch with the mayor, who described Iraq as 200 years behind the United States. He then described his own town as 50 years behind Iraq. Even though it is Ramadan and Muslims do not eat during the day, the mayor, who is Muslim, had lunch brought in for us. When we tried to decline, he insisted and stated that Ramadan was his celebration, not ours.



We are able to walk around the town a little bit and see kids playing, who probably should be in school. But hey, this is Iraq. While at the mayor’s office, I meet SSG Quinton Williams, who I knew from many years ago. He thought he was out of the Army, but he got recalled last year and now he is here. Go figure. On the way back we stop and walk into an area to see an Iraqi Police Station. We hear pop pop pop, which was the sound of gun shots. We take immediate cover, can’t see where it’s coming from, so we get back to the vehicles and move out.



Travel day back. Today is a travel day, and fortunately for me, I am able to catch the special flight from Mosul direct to BIAP. I have a 0830 show time for a 1030 flight. I met a guy named LTC Ed Carter who works in Da Huk Province, near the Turkish Border. The flight is uneventful and fortunately Ross is able to pick me up from the airport. I drop my gear off in my hooch and head into work. I am able to catch up on a few emails and get a few things done. Tonight, things seem quite as we sit on the balcony watching for fireworks, but when I get to my hooch, we get pounded by mortar fire.

The ground and our hooches shake pretty hard for some time. Hopefully, this will end soon.

Back at the Victory Base Camp. I wake up tired—could you guess? I head off to the Special Forces Headquarters compound to meet up with the Iraqi Lessons Learned officers. It turns out they are in another part of Victory Base Complex and so I head over to the Iraqi Special Forces Headquarters. I meet with the Special Forces advisor and then speak with my Iraqi officers to



get things going before I head off back to Victory. After dinner, I go back to work for a VTC (Video Tele-Conference) with the Corps Commanding General (3 stars). I am not used to sitting in the same room as the CG, let alone 3 seats down on the same table. Anyway, there was good information there and I'm glad I attended. I left work early about 2130. The following day, I drove to the Iraqi Special Operations Forces compound and meet with the Iraqi officers that I left there yesterday. Based on the conversation, things went well. Back at Victory, our network froze up, so we chatted a bit before heading in for the day around 2200. On the way back to the hooch, it was so dusty; you could taste it in the air.

Friday, October 13, 2006. I tried to sleep in, but had to get up and hit the restroom. My bladder can't hold that much I guess. By the time you get up, walk 150 paces to the restroom, you may as well brush your teeth and shave. I tried to work all day, but the day just seemed to pass by. I did get work done, but it took until 11:30 pm for me to finish all that I set out to do. I did finish a few things that I felt good about. Things are moving along, but the next two months are going to zip by too fast for me to finish all that I'd like to finish. As I walked to dinner, a dust storm kicked up and filled our work area with dust. On the way back from dinner, it was sprinkles of water and lots of dust. We got a quarter inch of rain and half-inch of dust.

In closing, I know that many of you wonder how things really are because you know that what you see on television is not necessarily the complete picture—it's what makes the news. The longer you are here, the more you understand how complicated this all is and that there is no simple quick fix. I can tell you that there are a lot of good things happening, such as reconstruction and the establishment of provincial governments, which did not previously exist. I can also tell you that there are many brave young men and women, and not so young men and women that are making extraordinary sacrifices. I see them in the dining facilities and in the places that I visit. I don't hear any complaints—rather, I hear just the opposite. They say they are proud serve, just as I am. Tomorrow I head off to Taji to see the Estonian contingent. So...I got to hit the hay. That's it for now. Best wishes,

Garrett

