

Baghdad bound...

December 27, 2003

Family and Friends,

I haven't talked to many of you in a while...sorry for the mass email. Hope you all are having a great holiday season. I wanted to let everyone know that I've been activated to deploy to Iraq (for sure this time). I'll be leaving in early January 2004, most likely for 15 months and "possibly" up to 18 months, meaning I'll probably be back around March 2005.

As far as what I'll be doing, I've been assigned as a front line medical provider in downtown Baghdad and pretty much the only U. S. doctor on the west side of the city (close to the Red Cross building that was recently bombed). I'm apparently the sole doctor for about 1200 troops. I'll be based out of a building that U.S. troops recently ransacked. This will function as more of an "aid station" than a hospital. This aid station will be front line to the hospital. Medically speaking, immediate life saving maneuvers will be all I can perform; I won't have xray capabilities etc. (that will be in the hospital). I'll be on call 24/7 for 15-18 months--and I was complaining about residency????

A few times per week I'll be in a tank (M577) that goes on raids to catch the 12 or so remaining people on the "deck of cards". My tank follows the front line tanks by about 1000 meters. If there are any injuries the patients are brought to my tank where I stabilize them and arrange evacuation to the hospital. This is probably the most dangerous part of my deployment.

I will be in the 1st Cavalry Division; we are replacing the 1st Armored Division, which has been occupying Baghdad since the start of the war. In a sense my deployment will be easier than for the initial group because I'll have buildings with electricity, but my friends in Baghdad tell me that now is the worst time to go as far as safety is concerned. (Much of the injuries like amputations, paralysis, blindness, etc. aren't reported).

The biggest enemy out there is boredom. Moments of sheer boredom interspersed with moments of sheer terror when mortar rounds hit too close for comfort. I will be confined in one building for about 15 months. Hopefully I'll have internet and I will be counting heavily on my friends to keep my sanity!!!

I don't know exactly when I'm leaving; I'll be given 48 hours advance warning of the date of my departure. We will fly a military aircraft into Kuwait, where I'll be for about 1 month qualifying on my M16, practicing raids, etc. Then we will go by tank into Baghdad. This is supposed to be one of the most dangerous parts since we will take constant enemy fire on the way.

While in Kuwait I should find out my address in Baghdad and will send it to everyone via internet (hopefully). I plan to take a digital camera and will send photos of Baghdad for your viewing pleasure. I will be thinking of you guys daily. Please keep me updated with your lives out here!