

Dispatch 3: Back to Tikrit

Monday, March 20, 2006



Evidence of Saddam's decadent and ostentatious lifestyle is everywhere in the Green Zone: huge palaces (29 in Baghdad, 600 countrywide), fountains, pools - it seems like half the world's marble supply must be in Baghdad!

While Saddam was squandering Iraq's wealth, it's evident he didn't give a squat about its people. Housing is run down and vital infrastructure such as power and water systems have been neglected for 30 years. Appallingly inadequate education and healthcare are rampant. Across the board, technology was embargoed by Saddam's government. Iraq is at least 30 years behind the rest of us.

Take a look around your home and office and notice the conveniences that we now deem necessary to our daily lives. Then consider how many of these items didn't exist three decades ago. That's where the Iraqis are today. And when you apply that to technology involved in microchips, computer sciences, healthcare, etc., the disparity compounds itself tenfold.

Technologically speaking, Iraq is behind by at least several generations.

So, anyone expecting a quick fix to the problems here is being unrealistic. Technology in Iraq can be brought up to snuff. The people I have met are willing to step up ... but they can't do it without our help.

Time in Baghdad was short. Hopping a bird to head back north to Tikrit. Operation Swarmer has kicked off and the troopers of the 101st are aggressively working with the Iraqi Army to clear an area near Sammarra of insurgents. Heading back to Brigade HQ then to Sammarra. Then it's on to Remagen when Operation Swarmer wraps up.

Next stop: Sammarra/Remagen