

## Second Month at TAJI

The second month at TAJI is remarkable for the change of authority to the Iraqi Ministry of Justice (Gov of Iraq) for the TIFRC (Theater Internment Facility Rehabilitation Center). Hip, Hip, Hooray...mission nearly complete. It was a proud moment for all and covered by 5 Satellite TV Stations from Baghdad including Al Jazerra and Armed Forces Network (so I guess we can talk about it). The picture below shows the key to the front gate....you should see the gate!

Since I am deployed with the Iowa Guard, I will never hear the end of the victory of Northern Iowa Univ over KU in the NCAA Tourney. My only hope is K-State redeeming the basketball loar of old in the Sweet 16.

A real highlight for me was organizing a school assembly presentation for the Heartland School in Omaha. The director of the school is a friend (Scott Carlson) and we were able to use skype to have Soldiers and Sailors discuss deployment and the difference joining the military has had on their lives. Those of you not familiar with skype should know that it is all the rage of deployed service members as a cheap way to communicate by computer with home by audio and video (provided it is working). The Navy is running a MWR (Morale, Welfare, Recreation) Center called the "Burn Pit" near where we work and live. It is our lifeline to the outside world and home. The cost is very reasonable to use phones and computers with connection to skype.

Understanding the science of "Burn Pits" and temp inversion will be a lingering memory seared in all the memories of those serving on this part of the Taji FOB (Forward Operating Base). It seems every time we have a front move through and the temp inverts and we get a nasty smoke that hovers over the area we work and live. The warmer temps and stronger winds are welcome by all. I appear to be recovering from a nasty pneumonia thanks to Doc Olsen.

LTC Steve Olsen is a 67 yo physician from Iowa that has served 46 yrs in the Guard and is trying to get an extension to continue serving. He was deployed with the Iowa Guard in 2004 when I was with them, so it has been a real pleasure to serve with him again. He put his extension packet together while he was here and it will be going up to the SecDef for approval. This is his 4<sup>th</sup> deployment and he has 13 combat patches. See picture below of Doc Olsen, myself and the Gov of Iowa.



Maj. Gen. David E. Quantock, deputy commanding general for detainee operations, U.S. Forces - Iraq, turns over the ceremonial key to Dara Nour al-Deen, Iraq Minister of Justice, signifying the official transfer of the detention facility to the Government of Iraq.(GRD photo by M. Abdulrazzaq)



LTC Steve Olsen, Gov Chet Culver (Iowa) and COL Daryl Callahan