

My Tour in Iraq 2008

My name is Kurt. I graduated from the Nurse Anesthesia Program at Medical College Of GA. I joined the United States Army Reserves a year after graduating MCG. In the time I've been a member of the Reserves, I have been deployed to Landstuhl Medical Center , Germany, Martin Army Community Hospital, Fort Benning, Columbus, GA, Task Force Medical Falcon, Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, and most recently as part of the 325th /345th Combat Support Hospital, Camp Speicher, Iraq. As a CRNA, I am deployed for a 90 day rotation in theater.

My deployment started with a trip to Ft. Benning. There I was issued all appropriate equipment for the Iraqi combat zone. This comprised about 250 pounds of gear including uniforms, cold weather gear, combat packs, body armor, sleeping bags, a 9 mm pistol, etc. Many of the items I was issued, I never used. All the providers being deployed had to weigh the "better to have it and not need it" mentality against having to carry 4 duffle bags of gear from GA to Iraq and back.

At Ft Benning, I was given classes on general military operations, weapons qualifications, and generally processed onto active duty. After an intense week, I boarded the Freedom Flight to Kuwait. I spent a few days in Kuwait doing more specific training for deployment to Iraq. This included learning the army medical computer system and improvised explosive device (IED) recognition.

From Kuwait, I flew on a fully loaded C-130 military transport to contingency operating base (COB) Speicher near Tikrit. A short orientation at the 325th CSH later, myself and the group of doctors and CRNAs replacing the previous group were ready to care for friend and foe.

Our caseload consisted of emergent, in theater, cases. We did an external fixator for a soldier having broken his femur playing football on uneven ground and continuing care for Iraqi citizens under our care.

I was involved in care for wounded soldiers that were greater than the number of patients our facility was able to care for at one time. The Army calls this situation a Mass Cal. Gratefully, I was only involved in one such situation. I was truly grateful for the low number of casualties I cared for. I also cared for a detainee that was apprehended during a combat event. The detainee was given the same care as anyone brought to us.

After 6 weeks at Speicher, I was attached to a small unit south of Baghdad. In my time there, I cared for a 6-year-old snakebite victim. She was the daughter of a local police officer. She was bitten by a viper with hemolytic venom and needed a fasciotomy. We cared for several other Iraqi and American civilian personnel while I was there.

I feel that I was able to provide a service to my country and make a small contribution to the effort we make in Iraq. When called upon again, I will gladly answer.

Kurt Ochsenknecht, CPT, AN