

MAJOR R. TAYLOR BASYE

During his last deployment, U.S. Army Major R. Taylor Basye was assigned to a Motorized Transportation Regiment (MTR) of the Iraqi Army (IA), stationed in Kirkuk, Iraq.

Basye has served in the Army since being commissioned as an officer in 1999. The April 2008 to April 2009 was his second deployment to Iraq, following a 2003 deployment.

"It was a unique experience. I'd never done anything like that before," Basye said.

Being part of the MTR meant that Basye and 10 other U.S. soldiers not only worked with the Iraqi Army soldiers, they lived with them, too.

"It was by design that we would actually live with the [IA] units, rather than off with our American counterparts," said Basye. "In part to let them get to know us, and get to know them."

The purpose of being imbedded with the IA, he said was to "learn to see the world through their eyes."

"The first few weeks was just a getting to know you period. We had to earn their trust and vice versa...It was a good experience."

Basye is an ordnance officer, which he described as being "like a maintenance guy." He and the other U.S. soldiers on what was known as the "combat advising team" advised the maintenance company within the MTR on everything from vehicles to generators, weapons to radios. They were also responsible for getting the repair parts and picking up supplies and fuel for the division, Basye said, all things which fall under logistics as far as the U.S. Army is concerned.



Latham, NY
The Bronze Star

"It was a difficult job," Basye said.

"The Iraqi Army is very very capable," Basye said. They're willing to fight, brave soldiers."

The challenge, he explained, was to help the MTR stand up their own systems for managing these logistics, rather than rely on the non-standardized practices they had used in the past.

"Iraqi Military Doctrine says one thing, but in reality it works quite differently," Basye said. "The trick was to try and get the Iraqis to do it themselves through their own systems, and to get their systems to work."

"I think I really see that when I'd get into the higher level meetings," he said "A lot of the decision making has a lot more centralized leadership. It would take a two star [general] in the IA to make a decision that in the U.S. Army a captain would make."

The experience gave Basye a unique view into IA as well as into the Iraqi culture.

"It was eye opening. They aren't that different from we are," he said. "They're normal people that have lives, and just want to live in peace... "They're soldiers. And I'm a soldier too."

HEROES

Basye believe that getting to know him was equally illuminating for the IA soldiers.

The experience “definitely opened my eyes and my world view,” he said.

Basye still keeps in touch with his interpreter in Iraq from the deployment. “We talk once or twice a month,” he said.

The interpreter stays in touch with Basye’s former colleagues, his counterparts in the IA, and updates Basye who said he still wants to know how they are faring and if they are doing ok.

More than the countryside of Iraq, Basye said, “the people is what I will remember a lot more.”

Basye earned a Bronze Star for his service during this deployment.

