

MAJOR WILLIAM LOUIE

When Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) go off they destroy roadways, vehicles, and often lives. But after the explosions someone needs to repair what damage they can.

That's when Soldiers like U.S. Army Major William Louie step in.

During his 2005 to 2006 deployment MAJ Louie served as the Company Commander for an Equipment Platoon charged with repairing the roads where IEDs had exploded.

Stationed in Balad, Iraq, the team repaired roadways within a 40 mile radius around Balad.

"That kept us pretty busy for almost a whole year," Louie said.

The team took care of potholes and other holes in the road, he said, but it was the damage from IEDs that was the most challenging to fix.

"They were truly craters," Louie said. "They would be really huge. They could span the whole width of the road and be three to four feet deep."

By the time his team got there, any wreck that had taken place would have already been removed, he said. And while he did receive a report about what had happened at each site, he tried not to dwell on what it said.

"We'd just get there, get it done, and get out of there," he said.

The team would repair up to four craters a trip.

"We'd have to bring in gravel and dirt to fill it," he said. They would then cover the gravel and dirt with concrete.

Unlike some of the other teams doing repairs on the roads, Louie was lucky; his team never encountered any active IEDs when they were out. Traveling with tanks and a team to provide security helped, he said.

"As an officer I had a class about road design," he said. And the Soldiers in the platoon had also been trained in the specifics of mixing cement. They also benefitted from tips left from the Soldiers who'd been there before them, he said.

Louie said he was proud of the work that he did making the roads of Iraq safer for travel.

"You felt like you were directly contributing to the effort," he said.



Throughout the deployment the team saw that as they fixed some part of a road, more IEDs might go off nearby, bringing them back to repair nearby places again.

"By the end of the year, we will filling in more than were popping up," he said.

Louie earned a Bronze Star for his service during the deployment.