



**3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command
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Civilians at Marez-East are important part of mission

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CONTINGENCY OPERATING SITE MAREZ-EAST, Iraq — Chris Kiefer and other civilians that work with the 16th Sustainment Brigade in Iraq are important members of the team.

Kiefer, a fielding site representative from Columbus, Ohio, has been deployed to Iraq for two years now and is currently assigned to the 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. He's also worked in Baghdad, Camp Victory, Liberty and Joint Base Balad.

Though Kiefer has never served in the military, he has enjoyed the experience of working for, and being around, Soldiers.

“It was nice to see how a civilian can be so easily accepted by the military,” Kiefer said.

For Chris the camaraderie that being in the military promotes is alien to a person who has only worked in the private sector.

“I appreciate how the units use my expertise and what I have to offer from the civilian side.”

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The 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion supports numerous missions in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 08-10, some of which would never be possible without the services of the little-known members of the unit.

Just like the support civilians provide back in garrison life, civilians continue to work with and deploy with military units in combat zones throughout Iraq. These civilians go through the same hardships as the Soldiers they work side by side with to keep the mission going.

Many of them have been deployed multiple times and have spent countless months away from family and friends. They are sitting beside Soldiers, eating in the DFAC and also enduring the same long hours of constant work and fatigue that the men and women in uniform experience day in and day out while deployed.

Randy Lewis, a native of Killeen, Texas, has the added advantage of being retired from the military, and is accustomed to the different life-style and mentality of military service.

“I love working with the military and this (job) brings back memories of being on active duty.”

Randy enjoys the camaraderie of the military and spends much of his down time lifting weights and playing basketball with the Soldiers of the 18th CSSB.

The wealth of knowledge and experience civilians like Randy and Chris bring the battalion are greatly appreciated by both the Soldiers and the chain of command. Randy and Chris plan on returning to the states this summer.



Randy Lewis (left) and Chris Kiefer, civilians that work with the 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, work on a vehicle engine at the unit's motorpool at Contingency Operating Site Marez-East, Iraq, Feb. 27, 2009. (Photo by Cpt. Natalia Mercedes-Williams)