



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**  
St. Louis District

# News Release

Release No. 23-09

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For Release: IMMEDIATE – July 16, 2009

## Park Hills man is bound for Iraq

Park Hills native Matt Rector is headed for Iraq. Rector, a 1996 graduate of Park Hills Central High School is going there for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, for which he has worked for approximately six months. The assignment in Iraq is for six months and is voluntary.

Rector, who worked for an engineering consulting firm in Dallas previously came to work for the St. Louis Engineer District as a way to return to his lifelong home in southeastern Missouri, and has been involved with hurricane restoration work in Louisiana since then. Before that he worked for MODOT for six months.

“I feel like my entire adult life has been a preparation for this. I want to make a difference. That’s why I joined the Marines. That’s why I became an engineer. I want to have a positive impact on the world and this offers just that opportunity,” he affirmed.

In addition to his education as an engineer and work experience employing his skills, Matt will take one other ability with him that should serve him and his co-workers well in Iraq. “I was an Arabic linguist in the Marine Corps,” he said. “I did well in language school and I have crammed with Rozetta Stone training and am surprised how much I have retained,” Matt said. “I don’t need Arabic to converse in Park Hills, but I am confident it is going to come back thoroughly once I am immersed in Iraq,” he said.

Rector headed away from Park Hills just three days after high school graduation, spending his post-high school summer in Marine Boot Camp. “I had a Marine haircut from my sophomore year on in High School, so I guess it was a predetermined path,” he said.

Matt met his future wife April, while they were both in the Marine Corps in Monterey, Calif., training as linguists. April was trained there in Spanish.

Following their Marine Corps tours, Matt and April moved to Texas, where she is from. “I went to school at Austin Community College and the University of Texas – Austin,” Matt said. But between the family, school and work, I was getting about two hours of sleep a night, and that wasn’t a long-term plan,” he said.

The Rectors moved back to Missouri where Matt continued his pursuit of an engineering degree at the then University of Missouri-Rolla, earning his BS in Civil Engineering in 2006. He completed his Masters in Engineering Management at the now-named Missouri University of Science and Technology in May.

Matt saw opportunities to deploy overseas with the Corps about the same time he started to work in St. Louis. “Then when our deputy, Lt. Col. Bayham sent out an email asking for volunteers, I threw my hat in,” he said.

“April and I discussed this at length and we’re comfortable with what lies ahead,” Matt said, his wife nodding affirmatively at his side. “He’s capable. He’s going to be with good people,” she agreed,

“and I’m not at all apprehensive,” she said. “We’ll take it one day at a time and my job will be to keep the budget and care for our boys,” she added.

Matt and his family are surrounded by his family, who will be there for them. Sons Matthew, Jr. – 11, Tyler – 9 and Andrew 7 are making their own preparations for their Dad to be gone. A map of the world is on the living room wall. Push pins show where their father’s journey will take them and they are all becoming familiar with that part of the world.

It is said that once a Marine, always a Marine. “And we’re both Marines,” April said. “We can do this. We will do this. This is what Matt wants to do and we will do this together,” she stated.

Matt’s journey will start with a flight to Winchester, Va., for processing before flying to Kuwait. Then he will be flown up to Baghdad. Managing construction projects from Camp Victory, near Baghdad, lies ahead for him. U.S. Forces recently withdrew from the Iraqi capital city of Baghdad and now operate from their base at the Camp.

But January promises a joyous homecoming in Park Hills. “I feel I have been getting ready to do this, again for all of my life – and now I’m going to do it,” Matt rector said. “I’m ready to make a difference.”

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Photo captions:

0837: April and Matt Rector are seen here in their Park Hills home shortly before Matt deployed to Iraq for a six month tour with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers there.  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo by Alan Dooley

0843: The Rector family of Park Hills is preparing for a six-month separation as (L) Matt gets ready to deploy for six months to Iraq to manage construction projects for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Seen here with Matt are his wife April and sons Tyler (9), Matthew, Jr. (11) and Andrew (7.) The world map on the wall behind them will help the boys keep track of Matt as he moves to the other side of the world.  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo by Alan Dooley