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PRESS RELEASE

Social Worker Dedicates American Flag to Los Angeles County Foster Children While Serving in Middle East

When Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Social Worker Napoleon Sadsad signed up for the Naval Reserves in 1985, he had no idea he would one day be sitting in a military convoy in Iraq being shot at. Sadsad served in Kuwait and Iraq from February 2003 through last August as part of the Naval Reserve Seabees in charge of heavy equipment operation assigned to the Marines.

On a daily basis, Sadsad and his fellow Reserves traveled with Marine convoys moving personnel and equipment throughout Iraq. Under the motto of "We Build – We Fight," the Seabees also helped remove physical barriers for the Marines, helped to reconstruct bridges that had been destroyed and built the infrastructures for camps. Occasionally, there was gunfire and manual labor in 120-degree heat, and through it all Sadsad said he always kept the people back home in his mind.

So when the opportunity came to show dedication and honor toward the children in Los Angeles County foster care, Sadsad didn't hesitate. As part of a military flag dedication program, Sadsad raised an American flag last April in honor of Los Angeles County foster children and had it formally dedicated.

The flag flew over Camp 93 in Kuwait where Sadsad was stationed with the Marines during Operation Iraqi Freedom. "I thought it would be a neat thing to do," he said. "I wanted to show support for the Department and support for the children and families we serve."

Shortly after its dedication, the flag and an official certificate marking the event was shipped back to the DCFS Pasadena office where Sadsad works. Staff is looking into plans to mount the flag in the office.

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Sadsad said his social work skills came in handy while serving in the Middle East. He dealt with many Iraqi children who would routinely surround the convoys begging for food and water. He also said that a great level of teamwork was involved in getting jobs done and the quick ability to assess situations was a skill he used frequently. Like being a social worker, Sadsad experienced a range of emotions as a soldier, from the fear of unknown, potentially violent situations to the satisfaction of helping children in need.

Sadsad will continue in the Reserves, serving one weekend a month and two weeks a year. He will also continue serving the children and families on his caseload with a renewed sense of dedication. "I feel I am a voice for the children," he said. "This is something I've always wanted to do. It is very fulfilling and I've always rooted for the underdog."

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