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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

AUSA COLEMAN AWARDED FOR SERVICE IN IRAQ

Acting United States Attorney Paul A. Murphy announced today that Assistant U.S. Attorney Major Coleman was presented with the Attorney General's Special Commendation Award for his service in Iraq. AUSA Coleman received the award in Washington, D.C. last week before returning to the Virgin Islands. Coleman served 14 months in Iraq as a resident legal advisor to the Iraqi judiciary and a multi-national task force of lawyers and investigators.

"I would have extended my time there if I could," Coleman said. "To go to a country that is trying to establish itself as an independent nation and make a difference – I know I made a difference."

Coleman came to the U.S. Attorney's Office on St. Thomas in 2004 from the Southern District of Indiana in Indianapolis. He serves as a criminal AUSA in the St. Thomas office. Coleman left St. Thomas in July 2007 and traveled to Washington, D.C. where he received several weeks of training in cultural awareness at the George Schultz School of Diplomacy, operated by the State Department. He received an additional two weeks of training at the U.S. Embassy in Iraq before he was assigned to a law and order task force in Rusafa, a suburb across the Tigris River outside of Bagdad.

While in Rusafa, Coleman stayed on a military base where he lived and worked. Whenever he left the military base, Coleman said he was transported in a security detail and had to wear full body armor, including a helmet.

During his first week in Iraq, Coleman said rockets were fired at the embassy where he was staying. One morning, he and his roommate were awakened when a rocket shook the walls of the building he was in and debris fell on the roof. Despite such incidents, Coleman said he enjoyed his time in Iraq and believes that the judicial system in Iraq will maintain “a good sense of judicial integrity.”

Coleman is married to Tanya E. Van Blake-Coleman.



Photo Caption

Assistant U.S. Attorney Major Coleman is presented with the Attorney General's Special Commendation Award by Assistant Attorney General Matthew Friedrich