

American Contractor Brings Kitten Home From Iraq

Hope, a calico kitten rescued from war zone, adjusts to her new home.

By Soraya Gutierrez

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SPCA International helped Hope, a calico kitten, make the journey from Iraq to the United States. A U.S. contractor formed an unexpected bond while on the job in Northern Iraq. Hope, the calico kitten discovered by Bruce (whose name has been omitted because of security concerns), jumped out of a truck's engine compartment where she had been hiding for more than 18 miles.

Bruce sought medical help to treat a severe burn on the kitten's front left leg. The wound was so bad that it exposed the kitten's muscle tissue.

After three days and little improvement, Bruce took the kitten, whom he named Hope, to an emergency medical doctor for treatment with topical medication. As the days went by, Hope recovered under the care of her new guardian.

Bruce had little opportunity for entertainment or companionship because of the nature of his work, according to Stephanie Scroggs, spokeswoman for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Keeping the kitten around for company made a big difference to him during his time in Iraq, she says.

"This cat was just so important to him," Scroggs says. With the help of SPCA International's Operation Baghdad Pups, the cat was transported in April from the war zone to Bruce's home in the United States.

Since 2007, SPCA International has helped military personnel take animals they befriend in Iraq and Afghanistan out of the Middle East into new homes. Bruce contacted the organization because he didn't want to leave Hope the cat behind.

In his appeal for help from the organization, Bruce wrote, "She has become domesticated over these six months and lacks all the understanding of the wild survival techniques to take care of herself on her own. At this time it would be like me abandoning my own child."

Scroggs says a second cat, named Jasmine, also was rescued in April after she was found and taken in by a Marine serving in Iraq. Details about that story were not released because of security reasons.

Hope is adjusting to life with her new family, Bruce and his wife, Pam.

"My wife and I fully realize the scope of her trip," Bruce says. Every animal considered for the program undergoes extensive screening. A committed home must be ensured before being accepted.

SPCA International covers all program expenses through donations. For more information about the program, visit the SPCA International website.