

DV

Desert Voice Magazine
Serving U.S. and Coalition Forces in Kuwait

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Special delivery

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On the cover

Crewmembers from the Buena Vista, a vessel operated by 97th Trans. Det., 1st Theater Sustainment Command, unload a Navy patrol boat into the waters of the Persian Gulf, July 9. For the full story, turn to page 4.

Photo by Spc. Giancarlo Casem

Contact us

Comments, questions or story suggestions? Call the Desert Voice editor at 430-6334.

No excuse for complacency

As Soldiers, we engage in high-risk activities every day because of the nature of our business. It is one thing to say a Soldier died leading his troops during combat operations or he died while putting the lives of others in front of his own, but when a Soldier is killed because of complacency and a lack of safety it's unacceptable.

Accidental deaths, most of the time, are preventable.

By not wearing seatbelts in tactical and non-tactical vehicles, not wearing helmets with the chinstrap fastened, not wearing reflective gear when you're out running and not keeping muzzle awareness on weapons, Soldiers are putting themselves and their buddies in jeopardy. There is no one safety issue out there that is more important than others, but the commonality to all of it is complacency or leadership failures.

Leadership and safety are united and the two cannot be separated. We don't do safety in addition to what we do; it's a part of what we do. Leaders are supposed to accomplish the mission and take care of their Soldiers, but sometimes they get so wrapped up in the mission part, they forget about the safety aspect.

Leaders have to make sure their Soldiers, as well as themselves, are conducting their business in a safe manner. One way to do this is by conducting correct troop leading



Command Sgt. Maj. Franklin G. Ashe
CFLCC Command Sergeant Major

procedures. We have to be careful about some of our procedures, because if we don't pay attention to exactly what we're doing, we reinforce bad habits.

An example of this is clearing barrels. The majority of negligent discharges occur at clearing barrels. One of the reasons this

happens is because no leader is present, making sure the Soldier is following the steps correctly. Another thing that happens is we're constantly clearing weapons in areas where they shouldn't be loaded anyway. Soldiers become used to clearing a weapon that doesn't have a magazine in it, so they go through the steps without thinking about it.

Safety is also part of force protection. Anytime we keep our Soldiers from getting killed or injured, we're protecting the force. Force protection has two meanings in a combat zone. One part is keeping people healthy and alive by doing things correctly and safely. Even by doing simple things like washing your hands so you don't get sick when you eat or making sure weapons are cleared and on safe, Soldiers have a hand in force protection.

The other part of force protection, of course, is the security measures we take to keep the enemy from getting any type of advantage on us. Information that pertains to operational security, whether it's when our missions are, where our missions are

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Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Jacob Bailey

Specialist Antoine Davis, from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division patrols Tal Afar, as an Iraqi child walks alongside. Soldiers must not be complacent and be aware of their surroundings at all times.

or how we do our operations, needs to be protected, and we can't take that for granted either.

Force protection also includes making sure our host-nation support personnel are wearing a badge where we can see them and they're in the right places with the right escort. We also have to make sure that sensitive information in our work spaces are properly secured and only being accessed by the right people.

The security we have protecting our bases provide force protection also. Security forces make sure the bases aren't breached by any unauthorized personnel, for whatever reason, whether it's to attack us, to steal or to gather information.

Safety and force protection are things we do constantly and they should always be in a leader's mind as well as in the minds of their troops.

We should be physically comfortable

in certain areas but we should never be mentally comfortable in terms of thinking "nothing can happen."

Complacency is like a cancer and it's killing Soldiers. It can be defined as a leadership failure, because it's up to leaders not to allow themselves or their Soldiers to become complacent. Leaders should realize when they think they've talked about safety or pre-checks too much, they've become complacent themselves. You can't place enough emphasis on safety.

Sometimes people think because we're in a combat zone, that makes it okay for them to do things they wouldn't be doing otherwise, and that's not true. This is when it becomes more important to do the right thing. You need to be going through all your proper checklists, making sure people are prepared to execute the mission to the standard and safely. When they see

something isn't quite right, leaders have the responsibility to correct it.

One of the concerns people have is "Oh, we have to start at this time" or "Oh, we have to get this done right now." None of it is worth killing or crippling someone else. Even if you check something a thousand times, that's all right. The one time you don't check it is when you have a breakdown. If you think you're losing time by stopping something for a brief period of time to fix it, just think about how much time you're going to lose when that piece of equipment is completely destroyed and the individuals using it are gone for good. It doesn't equal out.

When I hear about Soldiers dying from a preventable accident or because of an act of carelessness, it makes me sick.

We have to ensure our young Soldiers and young leaders don't get in their head "Hey, I'm not going to get hurt, I've done this before and nothing happened." The next thing you know their mom or dad, husband or wife is getting visited by a casualty assistance officer and chaplain and being told their loved one was killed in a situation that didn't have to happen.

We've had too many Soldiers killed in accidents. We don't have to just accept the fact all these Soldiers are dying, but what we can do is honor their memory by doing the right thing. When you see a Soldier doing something unsafe, don't allow it. Make sure they understand how wrong that is and how important safety is through some type of reinforcement.

Everybody is responsible for safety, regardless of their rank or position. In fact, we're obligated to say something and the person who's on the receiving end of that should stop and think about this. That person cares enough to correct you, so don't get angry about it, fix it.

Sometimes we have to go out of our way to stop something that's wrong and fix it. I'd rather be tired of stopping people from doing the wrong thing, than be refreshed and full of energy sitting in the chapel at a memorial service because another Soldier got killed in a needless and senseless accident. Once a Soldier is dead, that's it. There is no second chance.

Be safe.—PATTON'S OWN!

AVCRAD provides vital



(Above) Sergeant Kenneth King Jr., Task Force AVCRAD, from Lawrenceburg, Ky., prepares to shut off the fuel pump after pumping 12,000 gallons of fuel to an oil platform in the Persian Gulf, July 9. Coalition forces on the oil platform need the fuel to conduct operations in the area.

(Below) A Navy patrol boat is being moved by a crane onto the deck of the Buena Vista, a vessel operated by 97th Trans. Det., 1st Theater Sustainment Command, on the waters of the Persian Gulf, July 9.



*Story and photos by
Spc. Giancarlo Casem
Desert Voice editor*

Braving the open sea and possible enemy attack, Soldiers from Third Army/U.S. Army Central provided vital fuel for an oil platform in the Persian Gulf, July 9.

Soldiers from the Aviation Classification and Repair Activity Depot worked together with other Soldiers from the 97th Transportation Detachment. The success of the mission was hinged on the cooperation between the two units. Without one the fuel would have never made it to the oil platform.

"The mission was twofold - to provide fuel to an active working oil platform run by US military and civilian contract personnel and to deliver two navy patrol vessels to a second platform operated by multi-national forces," said Sgt. Kenneth King Jr., a petroleum supply specialist with Task Force AVCRAD.

The first platform pumped crude oil for docked tankers. The oil platform provides a source of income for the people of Iraq. It's defense is vital to the stability of the nation.

"The first part of the mission was vital from the standpoint that generators provide the only power to these platforms," King said. "Without fuel to power the generators, the entire mission at that particular site is compromised."

The second mission took place at another platform which served as an outpost for coalition forces. The Soldiers of the 97th Trans. Det., 1st Theater Sustainment Command, provided a way for the Navy personnel on the platform to switch out two patrol boats.

"The second part of the mission was necessary to replace vessels that had either needed servicing at a land-based shop, or were just past their prime on operability," said King, a native of Lawrenceburg, Ky.

The transportation services provided by the 97th were integral to both missions.

"We possess the only vessel that the fuel tanker can load up on and transfer the fuel up to the platforms," said Chief Patrick Wick, the boat master for the Buena Vista. The fuel tanker and the two Navy patrol boats were under his stead during the mission.

As a member of the 1st TSC, the 175 ft-long vessel and others like it provides a way for ma-

tal fuel to oil platform

teriel to be transported in and out of the Kuwaiti area of operations.

“We play a vital role for the Persian gulf,” said Wick, a native of Dundee, N.Y. “We can pretty much run the vessel into places where other ships can’t go. We can haul retro-grade out of theater down to Qatar and haul supplies back up north.”

During the first mission, massive fuel ships dwarfed the Buena Vista, but the boat’s mission was just as immense as the other ships’ girth.

“Without fuel to power the generators, the entire operation shuts down,” King said. “Obviously, there are no stationary fuel points available for a sea-based operation like this, so it’s up to us to load our tankers and take the POL (petroleum, oil and lubricant) assets to them. The platform has a limited capability for fuel storage. All fuel is stored in 55-gallon drums on the platform itself. It’s our job to replenish that fuel supply every time it starts to run low.”

When the Buena Vista approached the platform, crews on board the vessel tied down. Once the boat was docked with the platform, crews on the platform lowered a hose which King’s crew attached to theirs. King and his crew worked quickly to get their fuel tanker ready to pump the fuel. After the thumbs-up signal from the oil platform crew, King began to let the fuel flow through the hose and up to the platform where crews proceeded to fill fuel drums.

During the fuel pumping, as the four-digit mark became within reach, the meter stopped briefly at 999 gallons. A loud, collective groan was heard throughout the Buena Vista. Then the meter began again and at the end, the meter read 1,200 gallons, well beyond any of the fuelers’ expectations, King said

The second mission took place at another platform. Two Navy patrol boats onboard the Buena Vista were dropped off while another two were loaded onto the boat. The second platform’s crew used a crane to move the boats.

“The rig itself also serves as an outpost



Sergeant Kenneth King Jr., Task Force AVCRAD, from Lawrenceburg, Ky., waits for the signal to start pumping fuel to an oil platform in the Persian Gulf, July 9.

for our forces within the theater,” King said. “By keeping the rigs operational, we help to continue their specific duties there as part of the overall mission.”

By utilizing what both units have to offer, the 97th Trans. and TF AVCRAD accomplished both missions. A good working relationship between TF AVCRAD and the 97th Trans. provides

a means for fuelers to accomplish their mission, King said.

“It gives us the capability to take our tankers to areas that we otherwise would have no way to get to,” King said. “I’ve been around these big tankers for a long time and I’ve never had the opportunity to see one float yet. I don’t think I’ll be trying it anytime soon, either.” **A**

221st EOD disposes UXO



Sergeant Joshua W. Berry, EOD technician for the 221st Ordnance Company, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, guides a forklift as it adds a pallet of 155mm High Explosive Rocket Assist artillery rounds to the stockpile of ordnance for disposal. With the support of Navy and Air force EOD, the 221st EOD disposed of more than 10,000 pounds of Ordnance at Udairi Range, July 6.

*Story and photos by
Pvt. Christopher Grammer
Desert Voice staff writer*

The desert air cools as the sun sets over Udairi Range, Kuwait. A brilliant flash bursts into the calm of the

evening, spawning a thunderous crack and a shockwave that could knock a man to the ground.

More than 10,000 pounds of explosives consisting of various unserviceable munitions were rigged with more than 5,000 pounds of aerated C-4 to

dispose of them. The 221st Ordnance Company, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, disposes of unserviceable munitions, improvised explosive devices and any other ordnance in the Third Army area of operations, said 1st Sgt. James B. Kendrick, 221st EOD.



An intense explosion rocks Udairi Range as the 221st EOD disposes of more than 10,000 pounds of unserviceable munitions July 6.



“Disposing of the ordnance here enables us to get more hands on experience,” said Sgt. 1st Class Michael S. Morgan, a Jacksonville, Fla., native, and the response non-commissioned officer for the 221st EOD.

Unserviceable munitions, referred to as Code-H munitions, are any ordnance that are out of date, damaged, or can no longer be guaranteed to function as designed, said Kendrick.

The ordnance can either be shipped back to the U.S. or taken to ranges such as Udairi here in Kuwait for disposal. Shipping ordnance back to the U.S. costs large amounts of money to dispose of a very small amount of ordnance. Ordnance disposal at Udairi Range costs very little and gets rid of large amounts of unexploded ordnance. Disposal of ordnance also provides the opportunity for EOD training, demolition operations training, and training in safety operations, Kendrick said.

Ordnance that is slated for disposal is taken to Udairi range and is ar-raigned with an M58 Mine Clearing Line Charge. A MICLIC is a long string of satchels each containing 2.5 pounds of aerated C-4 to make a total of 1,750 pounds of C-4 per MICLIC. The MICLIC is then fixed with an electric blasting cap enabling remote detonation of the ordnance.

When handling explosives, safety

is the main consideration of the 221st EOD. The net weight of the ordnance is calculated as well as the blast and fragmentation radius, Morgan said. Fragments quickly lose their velocity, however the blast travels a much greater distance. The 221st EOD personnel, stood about a mile away from the explosion, well outside the blast and fragmentation radius.

“The main safety consideration is not to become complacent,” Kendrick said. “Complacency is the number one killer.”

Ordnance from the first Gulf War may still be present at Udairi. The 221st EOD also takes into consideration the possibility of UXO.

The 221st EOD works alongside the Navy, Air Force and, in special cases, the Kuwaiti military while disposing of IEDs and UXO from Iraq. This helps keep the roads clear of hazards and enables safe travel for convoys heading to or from Iraq.

“Sometimes you get self-satisfaction knowing that you got rid of something that could have hurt or killed someone,” Morgan said.

Camp Arifjan stores approximately two million pounds of unserviceable ordnance consolidated from all over the Third Army AOR. The continued use of IEDs in Iraq, and Afghanistan, ensures that the 221st EOD still has a



A warning sign attached to a pallet of 155mm HERA artillery rounds shows the importance of handling explosive material with care.

job to do.

As convoys continue to make their runs to supply troops downrange the 221st EOD help keep their passage safe and ensure that the mission gets completed. IEDs and UXO disposed of at Udairi Range could have killed servicemembers in Iraq or resulted in an ambush in Afghanistan. When the 221st completes its mission so do the servicemembers downrange. **A**



SMA Preston visits Third Arm



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston talks to Soldiers about the transformation of the Army during an open discussion in the Zone One chapel at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait July 18.

Story and photos by
Pvt. Christopher T. Grammer
Desert Voice staff writer

Sergeant Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston visited Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, Wednesday to address certain issues with enlisted Soldiers.

Soldiers filed into the chapel and waited anxiously for the arrival of the sergeant major of the Army. Soldiers were given a chance to ask questions about their concerns and the future of the Army in a town hall discussion.

"I think it's a good thing when he can come here with the Soldiers and we can hear what's going on in today's Army from the top leaders," said Sgt. 1st Class Jermaine Britton, the non-commissioned officer in charge of information management for 1st Theatre Support Command.

During Preston's opening comments he stated the importance of the National Guard and Army Reserve's role in

today's Army. Approximately 72,000 National Guard and Reserve Soldiers are currently mobilized, Preston said.

"We could not do what we do as a nation without our citizen Soldiers," Preston said.

Preston stated that the Army's number one mission is to support the War on Terror and its secondary mission is Army transformation. He continued to speak on the importance of Army transformation throughout the discussion, explaining that the Army was making units more modular and becoming a more continental U.S.-based Army by getting Soldiers back from overseas and keeping them, and their families, in one place for longer periods of time.

The Army's transformation is all about making it more expeditionary by reorganization and increasing stability, and predictability of deployments, Preston said.

Reorganization has increased the

number of brigades in the Army and is slated to grow. Of the 48 brigades combat teams to be reshaped, 40 have already been fielded. Another two are slated to be ready by the end of next year.

More and more Soldiers are re-enlisting and choosing to stay with the Army, Preston said. The National Guard has been so successful with retaining Soldiers they are currently over the amount of Soldiers authorized. Retention is a large part of the Army's plan to stabilize deployments.

Preston touched on the transformation of the conscripted Army of the past into the all volunteer Army of today and praised Soldiers for choosing to serve their country during the War on Terror.

"Only three out of 10 people are physically and morally qualified to wear the uniform," said Preston. "Only half of those qualified are even willing to join."

As questions were raised by Soldiers,

ny/U.S. Army Central Soldiers

many different topics were discussed. However, lengthened deployments were the main concern. Preston reassured the Soldiers that the announcement by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in April to extend deployments to no longer than 15 months was intended to increase dwell time at home stations to at least 12 months.

The extension of tours affects all active duty units in the Central Command area of operations.

Preston asked one thing of the Soldiers present.

“When you get home you need to help tell the Soldiers story,” Preston said. “Americans only know about Soldiers from what they see on television.”

With schools being built in Iraq as well as water and electricity being provided to its citizens, Americans rarely see these victories. Attacks with improvised explosive devices and beheadings dominate the media’s attention, Preston said.

Americans are distracted from the strengthened Iraqi economy and the Soldiers who make it home safe, Preston said.



Sgt. Joseph C. Gose Jr., a chaplain assistant, asks a question to Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston during an open discussion at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, July 18.

The Soldiers at Camp Arifjan had only good things to say about Preston’s visit.

“I think it is great that he is here,” said Sgt. 1st Class Esther Burchell, the

non-commissioned officer in charge of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Area Support Group logistical medical warehouse. “It shows that he cares about our opinion.” **A**



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston watches as Soldiers recite the Soldiers Creed during an open discussion at the Zone One chapel at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, July 18.

And the winner is . . . **'Big Mama'**

Story by
Spc. Wes Landrum
Desert Voice staff writer

Connie Brannock has had many titles throughout her lifetime – singer, advocate, athlete, biker and first sergeant. Now, Brannock can add another accomplishment to her legacy, award winner.

Brannock, first sergeant for 222nd Transportation Company, was given the League of United Latin American Citizens Excellence in Military Service Award. She was given the award for her service to the Latin American community in her hometown of Tucson, Ariz. Brannock said winning the award is truly an honor for her.

"To be recognized by the Latino community in this fashion is a great accomplishment for me," Brannock said. "It means that you have been a positive force in the community and worked hard for what is right."

Known affectionately by her Soldiers as "Big Mama," Brannock was nominated for the LULAC award through her volunteer work. She has worked for over a decade with the Arizona National Guard Drug Demand and Reduction Program. She has worked with friend David Kha on a bike repair program. The volunteer group brought bicycles to the children and helped repair them. Then they gave the children the bicycles to use for recreation and transportation. An avid biker, Brannock was nicknamed "The Bike Lady" by the children in the area because of the bike program. Big Mama said she had submitted a packet for the LULAC in 2006 but did not win. Brannock said she thought it was over. Her commanding officer, though, had other ideas.

"She (Lt. Col. Leslie Montgomery) knew that I had the opportunity to interact with the Latino community and the African-American Community through my Guard work or through

the Human Relations Commission work or my volunteer work," Big Mama said. "So we're over here doing missions and all of a sudden, through technology, she e-mails me and asks me to submit a packet for this year. I did a little research and found some articles that had

been written on me by the local newspapers. I submitted everything I had, and the next thing you know, I'm selected. I was shocked because there are so many wonderful volunteers out there."

Prior to her military career, Brannock was also a blues singer. She reached the mainstream blues genre when she signed a contract with MCA records. However, her career was short-lived.

"I had an MCA recording contract that did not amount to a hill of beans. I had a demo 45 (record) that was used as a Frisbee from the A&R director's office over to the coffee break area," she said. "That's about as far as I got promoted. You don't think about that when you're first signed, you're like 'Oh, contract!'"

Spc. Eloisa Lucero, 222nd Transportation Company, said her first impression of Big Mama was one of a tough, no-nonsense non-commissioned officer. Lucero said that all changed in one meeting.

"Coming out of AIT, you're taught 'Parade Rest when you're talking to an NCO' and 'Be respectful to your superiors.'" Lucero said. "We were cleaning up the motor pool and I went to talk to her and stood at parade rest. She smiled and said



1st Sgt. Connie "Big Mama" Brannock

"Knock it off."

Big Mama joined the Arizona National Guard in 1990, one week before she turned 35. When she took the oath, she entered a world where she was the oldest person in her basic training class and in many of her subsequent military classes.

When she would run with her fellow Soldiers, she received the nickname "The Running Wrinkle." Her scores, however, would put anyone to shame.

"I've never scored less than a 272," Brannock said. "The instructors were not impressed."

Brannock said the instructors thought she could not make it in the military. However, it took one deed to show her younger platoon mates that she could, indeed, hack military life.

"We were on a battalion run and this girl fell out," Big Mama recalled. "The girl was ready to just pass out. I fell back to stay with her and one of the drill sergeants made a comment about me lagging behind."

"I told the girl to get on my back and I carried her the last two miles of that run," Big Mama continued. "After that, I never had a problem from anyone."

Lucero said there's no one more deserving of the LULAC than Big Mama.

"She's the heart of the company," Lucero said. "We have people from other units and battalions here with us. They're like 'oh, you guys have Big Mama. We love your first sergeant.' They love the fact that she cares, not just for her Soldiers, but



Courtesy photo

1st Sgt. Connie Brannock, 222nd Transportation Company, plays drums with her band, the Tall Boys. Brannock, a former jazz artist, received the LULAC Award for her contributions to the Latino community.

also the Soldiers that are outside her company.”

Big Mama is a friend to everyone, officer and enlisted, Lucero said. She said Brannock’s hard work has paid off with the award.

“I’m pretty sure being a first sergeant is not easy but, the way she treats her (commander) and the people around her, if you’re going to sit there and bust your butt and accomplish the things

she has, why not get rewarded for your hard work?”

Big Mama said she’s tried to live by one simple rule her whole life.

“You have to treat everyone with respect,” she said. “Never disregard their basic humanity and they will try harder for you. They will strive to perfect themselves when they see that you really do care about them and the unit.” 



Hometown Hero

**Sgt. 1st Class Clarence Renfro
Third Army, U.S. Army Central**

**The Holt, Mich., native
explains why he decided to
join the military.**

**“I’m happy to be here to
make the working and
living environment as
comfortable as possible,
and to support the troops
fighting in Iraq and Af-
ghanistan. I just enjoy
being in the military.”**

Just One Question...

**“If you could win one award, what
would it be?”**



**“Academy Award for lead
actor, because only a few
black actors have ever been
awarded it.”**

Air Force Staff Sgt. Brian Lee
Miami, Fla.
Truck commander
424th Medium Truck Company



**“A Bronze Star, it’s just
something to aim for.”**

1st Lt. Charles Tomasiak
Morgantown, W. Va.
Contracting representative assistant
485th Chemical Battalion



**“Just an Army Commenda-
tion Medal would be fine.”**

Spc. Peter Shinn
London, England
Electronic warfare officer
3rd Battalion, 43 Air Defense Artillery



**“The world’s best husband
and dad. It would have to be
in one award though.”**

Petty Officer 3rd Class Jesse Marler
Gulf Port, Miss.
Construction electrician
Naval Mobile Construction Battalion



**“A Bronze Star. It’s some-
thing different and hard to
get.”**

Sgt. 1st Class Darrell Briggs
Louisville, Ky.
Supply NCO
Task Force AVCRAD



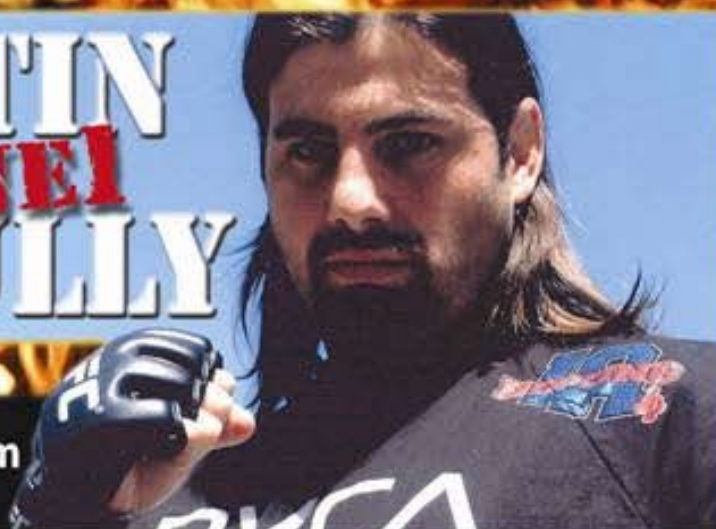
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