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

August 1, 2007



Cover me...

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As the summer temperature goes up, so does the risk of fire.

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On the cover

Marine Lance Cpl. William Peeks, left, moves into position as Air Force Staff Sgt. Nathan Unger, center, and others provides cover, during a MOUT training exercise July 23 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. For the full story, turn to page 6.

Photo by Spc. Wes Landrum

Contact us

Comments, questions or suggestions? Call the Desert Voice editor at 430-6334 or e-mail him at giancarlo.t.casem@kuwait.swa.army.

Fire prevention saves lives

As the Commanding General of Third Army, I have many responsibilities, none more important than ensuring Servicemembers are as safe as possible as they carry out their missions.

I must also ensure that our servicemembers work in places that are as safe as they can be. We face many hazards as

we go about our daily business, but facing a fire where we live or work is probably one of the most frightening and dangerous.

Recently we've had a rash of tent fires that have cost us over \$500,000 in lost property, to include Soldiers' personal gear. While we have been extremely fortunate these fires have not killed or injured anyone, the impact on our mission has been enormous since we lost essential equipment that must now be replaced. That means time and money which could have been spent on operations must now be spent on replacing what was lost.

Commanders throughout Third Army have an obligation to train and inform personnel in the identification and elimination of fire hazards, enforce fire prevention regulations, and ensure the availability and usage of fire protection facilities and activities. All of us must recognize, support, and emphasize fire prevention at all levels.

Each building and work section is required to have an appointed building coordinator who is responsible for ensuring there is a fire prevention program



Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb
Third Army Commanding General

in place and that it is being executed. This program is not meant to inconvenience you; it is in place to save your life and safeguard the equipment you need to get your job done!

We need your help to ensure these fire prevention programs are in place and are being conducted. You can help in several ways.

Participate in scheduled fire drills; don't ignore them or take the attitude they aren't important. Historically, the more we train, the faster and more automatic our responses become. This quick response during a real fire could very well save your life one day. Also, make sure you know where the emergency exits are and how to use available fire extinguishers, and activate fire alarms. If a fire does occur, this knowledge will save precious time, equipment, facilities and maybe lives.

You can also help prevent fires by practicing fire-safe habits. Your fire prevention program personnel can help you identify risks. By doing such things as smoking only in designated smoking areas, not overloading electrical circuits, and turning off electrical appliances when not in use, you greatly reduce the risk of a fire.

We must continually be on guard against fires and work hard at preventing them. By practicing fire prevention, we protect our equipment, and more importantly, our people.

Patton's own!

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As temperatures climb so do fire risks

Story by
Charles Coffman
ASG-Kuwait Fire Prevention

Lately, there have been a rash of fires in the Kuwaiti theater, which have caused tents and the contents in them to burn to the ground.

Luckily, no one was hurt in these fires and that is because a working smoke detector saves lives.

Working here in Kuwait comes with its share of challenges, certainly the main one in the summer time is of course, the extreme heat.

Temperatures can reach well in excess of 110 degrees on a daily basis and this poses unique challenges to fire safety. These very dry, hot conditions put an even greater strain on the electrical system making electrical fires the number one cause of fires in the area.

The Area Support Group Kuwait Fire Prevention office has some specific measures to help ensure the electrical system stays intact and doesn't lead to an overload, or worse yet a fire.

These few simple preventive measures can make the difference between having an electrical fire or

having a normal day in the relative comfort of ones' work or living area.

1. First and foremost, ensure that fire protection equipment such as fire extinguishers and smoke detectors are in good working order. Function test portable smoke detectors monthly. Exchange out-of-service facility fire extinguishers at the Zone 1 Fire Station at Camp Arifjan or at the Command Cell Safety office for the desert camps.

2. Never "daisy-chain" surge protectors or extension cords together in order to gain extra outlets or additional length. A good general rule to follow is to make sure only one surge protector goes into an outlet.

3. Never overload an outlet by plugging "high amperage" items such as refrigerators, microwaves and coffee pots into surge protectors. High amperage items must be plugged directly into a wall outlet. Try to utilize a "joint break area." One big break area in work centers lessen the need for many individual high amperage appliances.

4. Always use certified rated and listed CE or UL products. Certifications labels can be found on all reputable electronic equipment.

Avoid using "hand me down" equipment that may have come from suspect sources.


5. Try to convert all 110 only equipment to 240 equipment if possible. This will reduce the reliance on transformers and will lessen the load on your electrical system.

6. Turn off or unplug all non-essential equipment when not in use. For example, a mobile phone charger will still continue to draw electricity plugged in, even if it is not in charging mode.

7. Always use certified electricians to do electrical work. "Homemade wiring" is a fire hazard and will cause fires in this dry, hot environment.

8. Have the facility manager or safety officer attend the Fire Prevention Facility Managers course given at the Zone 1 Fire Station, every Friday at 9 a.m. No appointment is necessary.

9. Always call 911 from a DSN phone or 389-9911 from a mobile phone to report any fire whether out or not and regardless of how small it is.

For further questions concerning fire safety, please contact the ASG Fire Prevention office at 430-3316/3154. 



Courtesy photo

Electrical fires could cost thousands of dollars in damages, countless man hours and more importantly human lives.

Camp Arifjan firefighters protect servicemembers



Firefighter Manoj Thakuri, of Fire Station 1, conducts a functions check on a circular saw. The saw is used to cut obstacles that could obstruct a rescue operation.



Story and photos by
Spc. Giancarlo Casem
Desert Voice editor

Emergency services around Camp Arifjan provide servicemembers with life-saving and force-protection measures while they are deployed to help protect the American way of life.

Servicemembers stationed at Camp Arifjan under Third Army/U.S. Army Central have the benefit of having full-time emergency services available to them. One of those services is the fire department.

"Being here is very important to us," said Capt. Donald Forward, a shift commander at Fire Station 1. "We're here to support the Army and Soldiers."

Forward, a native of Skaneateles, N.Y., is a member of the Air National Guard Fire Protection services, however he is stationed at Camp Arifjan as a civilian.

The majority of the firefighters at Station 1 are comprised of former servicemembers, said Charles Coffman, Fire Inspector/Investigator. That

connection between the firefighters and the servicemembers is a special bond, he said.

"A lot of us have a former military background," he said. "We know exactly what it's like (being deployed). So coming back here is something I truly enjoy."

The fire station responds to three to five calls or alarms each day. These usually include smaller situations like a fire alarm being pulled or a smoke alarm set off. However, the fire station is ready for the worst possible disasters. The station has the capability to scale its response accordingly to the emergency at hand, Forward said.

"We have different trucks with different capabilities," Forward said. "We have specialized vehicles with pumps and another for first aid. If we roll up and there are ambulances already there, our medical truck switches roles and its mission changes to taking care of us primarily."

The crewmembers at the station are all trained in basic first aid, Coffman said. This ensures maximum inter-

changeability. If the need arises, even the fire inspectors could be called to help out, he said.

To further ensure the station's capabilities, the firefighters conduct monthly training. Their training can include refresher courses on first aid to putting out a fire in a controlled environment.

Another service that the fire department offers is fire inspections. Coffman's section primarily handles inspections of buildings. They check if all buildings adhere to current fire-safety standards. He also inspects future construction sites and gives his input.

"Having been a firefighter, I know exactly what these guys need to get inside a building," Coffman said. "I can tell whoever is building to make windows more accessible or even where to put fire alarms."

Even though firefighters are known to put fires out, they can be more effective preventing them, Coffman said.

"Nobody wants a big emergency,"

Protect ours' lives



Firefighters Manoj Thakuri, left, and Dinesh Panta conduct a functions check on a positive pressure fan. The fan is used by firefighters to ventilate smoke out of a building by forcing air through it.

Forward said. “If we can save more lives preventing a fire then we do it, but if there was an emergency, we’ll be ready for it.”

The firefighters not only save lives but they also ensure that their equipment and government property is protected. Protecting the servicemembers and equipment is how the fire department contributes to force protection and helps make sure the Third Army’s mission succeeds.

“Having a fire department ensures facilities stay fire-safe and gives an additional sense of security,” Coffman said. “The less fires you have, the less deaths you have, a loss that degrades mission capabilities. If you have a fire, you could lose valuable equipment and lose a resource. You have to take time out to find other resources to repair or replace it.”

Being former servicemembers makes their job even sweeter for the firefighters. They see it as a way to pay



Matthew Gigliotti, left, the senior paramedic, explains various medical equipment to David Brock, a new paramedic at Fire Station 1 on Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

back the servicemembers currently deployed and their family back in the U.S. by keeping them safe. It is an extension of their military careers, Coffman said. However, saving lives is what being a firefighter is all about, Coffman said.

“The first mission is to save lives,” Coffman said. “Regardless of where

you are, that’s just being a firefighter. For those of us who wear the uniform, it’s enjoyable. It’s all about helping people, it is not just a job, it is a calling.”

Editor’s note: This is the first in a three-part series about emergency services in Kuwait. **A**

Practice ma

Story and photos by
Spc. Wes Landrum
Desert Voice staff writer



Air Force Staff Sgt. Nathan Unger, 387th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, leads a four-man team towards a house entrance. The "mission" was part of training at the Mobile MOUT site July 23 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

One by one the team crept along the wall. Once at the door, the team stops and waits. A slight nudge gets them going as they run through the door.

"Check the upstairs," the team leader shouts as women and children shout. "Check down the hall as well."

"Basement," a team member cries out.

With weapons trained, they walk to the basement door.

"Open it carefully," the leader says.

And so opens training at the Mobile Military Operations on Urban Training site at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. While this was just an exercise, for the members of the 387th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, it may mean real life.

"What we teach here is tactics that may be used in a real life situation," said Air Force Staff Sgt. William McCoy, the non commissioned officer in charge, Kuwait City International Airport. "Things like room-clearing procedures, hostage situations, or if a



Air Force Staff Sgt. Nathan Unger and Marine Lance Cpl. William Peeks demonstrate how to "pie" around a building corner during training at the Mobile MOUT site July 23 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

terrorist was holed up inside a house, we could go in and take him down.”

McCoy said the MOUT site is a fully automated area. Mannequins inside the building move, even the sounds of people talking, screaming and music emanate from speakers. Tech Sgt. Richard Webber, 387th ESFS said the training is helpful in many ways.

“It helps us to learn to work together,” he said. “We have Marines come down from up north to give us the latest intelligence on what’s working up there so we can hone our skills.”

During the training, the trainees use simulation rounds filled with paint, fired from their own weapons. Tech Sgt. Christopher Maddox, 387th ESFS, said they may be only simulation rounds, but they can still hurt.

“The last time I was out here, I got hit probably 30 or 40 times,” he said. “I had bruises all over my body.”

McCoy said teams only use MOUT sites once or twice a year. To get a chance to use one in the desert is even better.

“You can’t put a price tag on it,” he said. “We get to come out in an environment where you may actually have to use it and practice what we’ve learned.”

Maddox said the instructors have taught them a lot.

“They are great at their job,” Maddox said. “They are very thorough with their class. The information is invaluable.”

After going through the MOUT site once, the team goes back to the classroom and watches the footage. Video cameras recorded the team’s every move.

The footage helps team members see what they did right and wrong and how to correct their mistakes. Maddox said learning from a mistake can save a life – maybe their own.


“It’s life and death over here,” Maddox said. “This training will make you remember and not want to forget.” 



Photo by Sgt. Jacob McDonald

Air Force Staff Sgt. Nathan Unger, 387th Expeditionary Security Force Squadron, provides security for the rest of his squadron July 23 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.



Air Force Staff Sgt. Nathan Unger, 387th Expeditionary Security Force Squadron, moves through a door at the Mobile MOUT site July 23 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

Trading bullets for batteries



Servicemembers showcase their skills on the Engagement Skills Trainer 2000 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, July 24. The EST 2000 is a training system used by the military to train servicemembers in the use of every weapon in its arsenal without wasting valuable ammunition.

EST 2000 helps servicemembers plug in to simulated combat

Photos and story by
Pvt. Christopher T. Grammer
Desert Voice staff writer

“Nothing compares to actual combat, the heat, dehydration, lack of sleep, being cooped up together and the threat of IEDs,” said Sgt. 1st Class Dwayne Conkle, an EST 2000 instructor and a native of Colorado Springs, Co.

No amount of training can replace real life experience, but thanks to the technology of the Engagement Skills Trainer 2000, servicemembers can get as close as it comes to the real thing.

“If you treat it like it is real you will react and get an adrenaline rush as if it is really happening,” Conkle said.

The EST 2000 displays various scenarios on three large screens which

servicemembers react to according to unit standard operating procedures.

Camp Buehring, Kuwait, houses an EST 2000 to keep servicemembers up to speed on skills necessary for the success of war fighters in a combat environment.

Anywhere from 100 to 310 servicemembers use the EST 2000 each day. Ten Soldiers can participate in the training at a time with five in each lane, Conkle said.

The EST 2000 offers marksmanship training on every small arms, crew served and individual anti-tank weapon in the military’s arsenal from the MK-19 to the M-9, said Bruner Caudill, the Computer Sciences Corporation senior training facilitator from Grafenwoehr, Germany.

Marksmanship training on the EST

2000 saves valuable ammunition needed on the battlefield as well as costs of operating ranges.

The EST 2000 can also simulate real world situations. Attacks by insurgents using improvised explosive devices and an attack in a marketplace with small-arms fire are some of the scenarios featured among others.

The weapons kick and the sound of gunfire give the simulation a feel of really firing the weapon. The screen shows the insurgents moving into position and firing from windows and rooftops driving home the thought that they are a direct threat that must be neutralized.

Units passing through Camp Buehring for training prior to entering Iraq can use the EST 2000 to train as a team in a real-world environment, Conkle said. Team-

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Peter Caudill, the Computer Sciences Corporation semi-annual training facilitator in Grafenwoehr, Germany instructs servicemembers on how the Engagement Skills Trainer works at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, July 24.

work and unity can keep servicemembers alive by building trust between them. For a servicemember, being able to rely on team members can mean the difference between victory and defeat and save lives on the battlefield.

“They show a vast improvement from the first round to the third iteration,” Conkle said.

After the simulation ends the EST 2000 has the capability to replay and show the servicemembers where their rounds landed, how many rounds were fired and how many were lethal. This option allows servicemembers to evaluate whether or not they covered their own sector of fire and opens their eyes to basic information that warriors on the battlefield should know, Caudill said.

Caudill said he hopes troops carry the skills they acquire or reinforce with the EST 2000 into actual combat in Iraq.

“I hope if anything else they can remember back to what they did in the EST 2000,” he said.

The EST 2000 keeps servicemembers up to speed on their training and keeps bullets in their magazines. The presence of an EST 2000 in Kuwait ensures that servicemembers can get top-notch training even while deployed. **A**



The Engagement Skills Trainer 2000 can train ten servicemembers at a time with five in each lane. The kick of the weapons and the simulated back blast of the AT-4 add realism to the experience of the EST 2000.



The MK-19 automatic grenade launcher is one of the weapons available for use with the Engagement Skills Trainer 2000.

Fellow Soldiers honor fallen comrade

Story by
Sgt. 1st Class Paul Tuttle
640th Sus. Bde. Public Affairs

Scores of Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry Regiment of the California National Guard and other units pressed into Camp Virginia's Chapel to honor a fallen comrade in a memorial service July 21.

Sgt. Eric M. Holke, 31, died from wounds sustained in a non-combat related incident near An Nasariyah, Iraq July 15. He was promoted to sergeant posthumously.

Holke was a member of the 160th Infantry Regiment. The 160th deployed to Kuwait in June 2007 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Artesia, Calif., native was a gunner in a guntruck crew that provides escort security for supply convoys. This was his second mobilization to the Middle East.

Holke first entered the Army in February 2001 and deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom from November 2002 to May 2003 as a member of the 73rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division from Fort Bragg, N.C.

His commander, Capt. Edwin Rodriguez recalled Holke as "...a man of quiet confidence and selflessness rarely seen in our present day."

"He always had a positive outlook on life, with a clear purpose and a sense of resolve in our cause," he said. "He had a genuine personality, always willing and able to assist anyone that needs it."

Holke's squad leader, Staff Sgt. Victor Zavalza reminded everyone that Holke was a civilian as well as a Soldier. "Sgt. Holke, like all of us, chose his life as a citizen-Soldier," he said. "He loved kids and worked with autistic children as a civilian.

Not many knew him as a newly-wed who couldn't wait to give his stepson driving lessons."

After 1st Sgt. Christen Baity called the final roll and the report of the last round of the 21-gun salute echoed throughout the Chapel, the lonely, haunting notes of Taps reminded everyone of the loss of their friend and comrade.

The service ended as Soldiers from the Commanding General of Third Army, Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb, to the youngest private there rendered honors.

All rendered slow, reverent final salutes and many placed tokens of tribute on the display – some ripping their unit patches from their shoulders before somberly placing them next to his boots.

Holke was awarded the Bronze Star Medal posthumously.


He is survived by his wife, stepson and parents. 



Photo by Master Sgt. Michelle Hammonds

Soldiers of the 1st TSC render honors for Sgt. Eric Morgen Holke during a memorial ceremony for him July 21 at Camp Virginia, Kuwait. Holke died July 15 while serving as a gunner providing convoy security for a combat sustainment mission south of An Nasariyah, Muthanna Province, Iraq.



File photo

Wake Forest coach Skip Prosser talks with servicemembers during a time-out during an Operation Hardwood game, May 22.

In memoriam...Skip Prosser 1950-2007

Desert Voice staff

Skip Prosser coached the Wake Forest Demon Deacons men's basketball team for six years. He participated in the Operation Hardwood basketball

tournament as a head coach and his team won the tournament.

Prosser died of an apparent heart attack after his noon jog, July 26, he was 56. He is survived by his wife, Nancy, and sons Scott and Mark.



Hometown Hero

Lt. Col. Leonard D. Rusher
Army Central National Guard Affairs

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

"I have the opportunity to serve and say yes I was a part of history. I've stayed in the Army because the Army is all I know and I don't want to do something different just yet."

Just One Question...

"How do you stay motivated during deployment?"



"I think about the mission and how my job helps get it done."

Staff Sgt. Adrian Parker
Norfolk, Va.
Vehicle control officer
586th Area Support Group Det. 1



"Try to keep a positive attitude. I also try to keep busy."

Petty Officer 3rd Class Chris Gschwender
Green Bay Wis.
Camp support
Navy Mobile Construction Battalion 133



"I talk to my mom and wife as often as I can. I also make sure my Soldiers are taken care of."

Staff Sgt. Brett Blazicek
Des Moines, Iowa
Supply sergeant
1039th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion



"I listen to music. It keeps my mind straight. I also talk to my team to make sure their motivated."

Sgt. Jay Jordan
Chipley, Fla.
Convoy escort
7th Chemical Company



"I talk to my husband and my mom. I also go see my husband who's stationed on Camp Arifjan."

Sgt. Kimberly Alaniz
Circleville, Ohio
Liaison office NCOIC
38th Personnel support Battalion

What's happening around Kuwait ...



Dave Attell cracks jokes

Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew Hammonds, Jr.

(Above) Servicemembers enjoy the comedy show brought together by MWR and USO.

(Left) Comedian Dave Attell entertains servicemembers at the Camp Patriot MWR stage, July 24.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew Hammonds, Jr.

Alaska Governor Sarah Palin visits Soldiers of 3rd Battalion 297th Infantry Regiment Alaska National Guard at the Life Support Area, Kuwait Dining Facility July 24. Palin visited the Soldiers to learn about their mission in Kuwait.

Photo by Pvt. Christopher T. Grammer



Alaskan governor visits her troops



Photo by Sgt. Russell T. Hacecky.

CSM Ashe gets his Eagle card

(Above) Command Sgt. Maj. Franklin Ashe, Third Army command sergeant major (left), receives his Eagle Cash card from Sgt. James Sander, an Eagle Cash card Representative.

(Right) Senior Chief Petty Officer Marsha Burmeister, the leading Chief Petty Officer of Troop Medical Clinic, sits on the back of a camel during the camel ride event at the Zone One baseball field on Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, July 28.



Camels invade Camp Arifjan

Photo by Pvt. Christopher T. Grammer