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

September 19, 2007



Tongans train tough

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On the cover

Marines from the Kingdom of Tonga conduct military operations in urban terrain training at a training facility near Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Sept. 8. For the full story turn to page 6.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Paul Tuttle

Contact us

Comments, questions, suggestions story ideas? Call the Desert Voice editor at 430-6334 or e-mail at desertvoice@arifjan.arcent.army.mil.

Good posture prevents lower back injuries

By
Lt. Col. Ingrid Moertl
1st TSC Safety Officer

Many of our Soldiers spend long hours sitting in a cramped, slouched position driving a vehicle.

Recent injury reports indicate this may be taking a toll on our soldiers' lower backs. Back pain is easy to get and can be avoided by applying some personal safety precautions.

The seats in the 915's, M1114's and HETs encourages poor posture like that in Photo A. Our spinal column is a series of bones with discs in between that are mostly made of water. These discs serve as a shock absorber. Poor seating can cause changes which decrease the ability of the spine to absorb shock.

Tactical vehicles jolt, jar and bounce Soldiers while they drive their missions,

increasing the chances for a lower back injury.

Some newer vehicles have adjustable seats so you can improve your posture like Photo B. I want to ensure you understand how you can make a difference in your seating posture. Everyday items like a pillow or a book can be placed under you to raise your hips. For gunners, a back correction like the mesh sling in Photo C could help.

As the Army evolves, changes should make the seats less susceptible to the jolting, jarring and bouncing that can cause lower back problems.

A team at Camp Arifjan is working to identify solutions that may minimize the safety hazards of driving long hours in tactical vehicles that jolt, jar and bounce soldiers into lower back pain. You may be asked to help that team find better driving seats. 



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Third Army honors 9/11 victims during Patriot's Day

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

Lilly Rivera was working at a surgery clinic in Fayetteville, N.C., when she saw it on the television, the first plane crashed into the South Tower of the World Trade Center. Then the second one crashed into the North Tower. Six years ago, more than 3,000 people perished in the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington D.C.

More than 100 Third Army/U.S. Army Central personnel gathered for an observance ceremony at a chapel on Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, Sept. 11. The ceremony honored the memories of the fallen and marked the sixth anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

The hour-long event began with a timeline of the events leading up to the tragic attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Rivera, a contract employee from Fayetteville, N.C., said to rehear the minutes and hours during a timeline reading was heartbreaking.

"To hear when the first tower fell. Then the second one. The Pentagon," she said. "It touched me."

Chaplain (Col.) Chet Lanious, 1st Sustainment Command (Theater) command chaplain, said people are reminded today that there are families that still grieve, spouses who weep and children who can't feel the warmth of a touch because a parent is only remembered in pictures.

"Today, we remember the lives lost in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania, not to morbidly relive the suffering of our nation and families, nor to relive the ugliness of the hatred and bitterness of an ideology that moved a group of men to commit these atrocities," Lanious said. "We remember because, in pursuit of justice, no action of our hand or intention of our heart will be driven by the cancer and disease of revenge."

Rivera said, of that long day six years ago, she cried out because of those that had been hurt. She said she



Lilly Rivera, a civilian contractor from Fayetteville, N.C., sheds tears for victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center during a memorial ceremony at a chapel on Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, Sept. 11.

viewed the victims as an extension of her family and she mourned along with the victim's families. She was also keeping a watchful eye for someone very close to her family.

"My daughter's best friend, Nikki Santiago, was working on the first floor at the towers," she said. "When the towers were hit, we called her immediately to check on her. Luckily she got sick and called in that day."

Lanious said he was attending a chaplain training session in Pasau, Germany when he found out about the attacks. He said the mood was one of disbelief.

"We had a break in the session," Lanious said. "One of the guys came running back to the room and said 'you need to turn the TV on.'"

Lanious said the group watched the news coverage of the Sept. 11 attacks

and convened the conference at that point.

"We needed to get back to our communities to help out," Lanious said.

Lanious told the crowd, that over the course of history, the U.S. has been drawn into wars by similar acts of aggression. However, he said, this war must be about building rather than destroying.

"We must heal rather than harm and must bridge rather than alienate," Lanious said. "We remember today because this must never happen again in New York or Washington or Pennsylvania or anywhere else."

"We also remember today because it is the blood of America's sons and daughters being shed in this noble cause. This is our commitment to the fallen. This is why we remember." 



Pfc. Michael Burgner, 2nd SCR, a native of Oswego, Ill., drives a Stryker equipped with the new Remote Weapon System and the anti-RPG Slat Armor at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. The equipment upgrades were performed using Third Army/U.S. Army Central facilities.

Strykers roll through Arifjan for upgrades

*Story and photo by
Master Sgt. Michele R. Hammonds
1st TSC Public Affairs*

Members of the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment recently became the first Army unit to have the new Remote Weapon Systems refitted and mounted on their Stryker vehicles.

The installations were performed at Camp Arifjan before the unit's movement into Iraq. The installations were conducted at Third Army/U.S. Army Central facilities.

The RWS is the Army's latest advancement in weapon systems. The system has a new laser range finder for its .50-caliber mounted machine gun. Before 2nd SCR Soldiers deployed to Iraq the new systems were mounted on Strykers in Germany and Kuwait.

"I think the new weapon system will increase the survivability of all Soldiers and coalition forces on the battlefield," said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Bright of 2nd SCR's Regimental Headquarters and Headquarters Troop. "I am 100 percent confident the new weapon systems will be more effective on the battlefield."

The RWS is a remote controlled weapon station for medium and light caliber weapons that can be put in or on any type of sea or land-based vehicles or platforms. The weapon systems have been installed on Strykers bound for duty in Iraq allowing the gunner to remain shielded by the protection of the vehicle.

Another new Stryker component is the Storm system. Storm is a component of the RWS that provides stabilization so gunners can shoot on the move. The stabilizer has a built-in laser range finder, which has a more accurate balance between the weapon and the target.

The majority of the Strykers assigned to the 2nd SCR were recently fitted with the new Storm system in Vilseck, Germany, prior to unit deployment. The remainder of the Strykers received the Storm system once the vehicles arrived in Kuwait.

"Once we got here, they made some adjustments to the Storm system and tested it all," said Bright, a native of Walton, W.Va. "The Storm is part of the gun system. All components put to-

gether helps stabilize the gun system," Bright said. "It helps us to shoot on the move."

Pfc. Michael Burgner, 21, likes the idea of being able to shoot on the move. Burgner, is a driver and training to become a vehicle commander for the 2nd SCR. He said the RWS operates faster and more efficiently.

"It is good to know improvements will be there when I become a vehicle commander," said Burgner, an Oswego, Ill., native. "I definitely feel safer and I will be able to support the men on the ground. I think with this new weapons system I can bring more men home."

Spc. Christopher Whitlow of Roxboro, N.C., a Stryker driver for the 2nd SCR, feels confident using the new system.

"I love the system. It takes less time to locate the target. The laser range finder gives us an accurate reading of the target," said Whitlow, who had fond memories of using the old weapon system. "When using the old system, I had to guess at the range of the target."

(Editor's note: Sgt. Major Rich Greene contributed to this article.) **A**

Army inducts newly promoted Soldiers into NCO corps

Story and photo by
Master Sgt. Michele Hammonds
1st TSC Public Affairs

The Army inducted 31 newly promoted sergeants into the Noncommissioned Officer Corps at an NCO Induction Ceremony before a packed crowd at Camp Virginia, Kuwait, Sept. 7.

More than 200 Soldiers observed the sergeants' induction into the NCO Corps. These Soldiers are assigned to the 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry, 312th Adjutant Postal, and 349th, 38th and 40th Personal Security Detail. They are all trace units of the 1st Sustainment Command (Theater) which supports Third Army/U.S. Army Central.

"The tradition of observing the passing of a Soldier to the Noncommissioned Officer Corps can be traced to the army of Frederick the Great," said Master Sgt. Pedro Mercado, 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry Regiment. "Today we recognize our newest lead-

ers into the ranks of the time honored United States Army Noncommissioned Officer Corps."

Members of the 160th Infantry Regiment did a short skit to demonstrate how Soldiers from the army of Frederick the Great stood three watches as part of their requirements before receiving official recognition as NCOs.

"Today's rite of passage is a celebration of the newly promoted – joining the ranks of our professional Noncommissioned Officer Corps – emphasizes the pride we all share as members of such an elite corps," said Mercado, a Bronx, N.Y., native, who officiated the induction ceremony.

Command Sgt. Maj. Phillip Brown, the 335th Signal command sergeant major, offered words of wisdom to the inductees as the guest speaker for the ceremony.

"These Soldiers are the future that is coming up. You will take the old guy's place like me in the future," said

Brown. "(Taking) care of your Soldiers is the only job you have. That is what leadership is all about."

Brown challenged the Soldiers to always set the example for their junior troops.

"Live, and live by the Army values," he said.

Sgt. Javier Beltran, A Company, 160th Infantry Regiment, said he now aims at being a leader.

"Before, my camaraderie was closer with my subordinates, and now as an NCO, I look to be a leader rather than a follower," said Beltran, a National Guard Soldier and a sales representative for United Parcel Service. He is a native of San Diego, Calif.

Beltran, 33, is a gun truck commander and has two younger Soldiers assigned to him. He and his fellow Soldiers escort civilian trucks.

"It is challenging and it takes a lot of discipline and bravery, especially for two of my younger Soldiers who ride in the truck with me on convoy missions," said Beltran, a combat engineer.

Beltran said it's important to let young Soldiers coming up the ranks know if they strive and achieve they too can become NCOs, he said. "My unit is tasked out to a very dangerous mission and I am honored we are tasked out to make sure that happens."

Near the end of the ceremony, Camp Virginia Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence E. Canada, rendered a special charge to the new inductees when he asked them to repeat the NCO creed.

"Today our newest noncommissioned officers will affirm their commitment to the professionalism of our corps, and become a part of the 'Backbone of the Army,'" Mercado said.

All 31 new inductees raised their right hands and recited the NCO Creed. The command sergeant major panel along with the audience, welcomed them as the newest members of the NCO Corps to conclude the ceremony. **A**



Soldiers recite the Noncommissioned Officer's Creed during the NCO Induction Ceremony at Camp Virginia, Kuwait, Sept. 7.



Marines from the Kingdom of Tonga rush into a room during a live-fire exercise during close-quarters battle training at a training facility near Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Sept. 8.

Ready an



Tongan Marines train for Iraq duty

*Story and photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Paul Tuttle
1st TSC Public Affairs*

Mention a tropical paradise in the South Pacific and most people would conjure up a vision of balmy islands, wonderful food, warm and sultry nights and gentle people. The last thing they would think of would be hardened, trained warriors getting ready to fight in a hot, arid land.

But that's exactly what a contingent of the Royal Marines from the Kingdom of Tonga is doing.

The Marines hit the desert near Camp Buehring the first week of September ready to polish up their training before they go to Iraq to augment force protection personnel in the Baghdad area.

Task Force Gator of the 1st Sustainment Command (Theater) is the facilitator for training the Marines and other coalition forces. The 1st TSC supports Third Army/U.S. Army Central in its logistical mission in support of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom.

Cpl. Jason Scott, a member of Task Force Gator, said the Marines get trained in convoy operations, detecting roadside bombs and conducting checkpoint operations. They receive combat training in an urban environment – how to enter buildings and clear rooms under close-quarters fighting conditions. They also study cultural awareness and receive medical training.

“(This) range is one of the harshest deserts in the world,” he said, “and it’s one of the most unique training ranges.”

The range is open, flat and desolate. Live-fire exercises are conducted there with little risk to others so it’s ideal to train coalition forces by simulating combat conditions before they go north to Iraq, he said.

One of Scott’s responsibilities is to make sure his charges adapt to life in the desert.

“It will peak around 120 degrees in the afternoon,” said the Madison, Wis., native. “We make sure they stay hydrated by drinking water. We stress through their chain of command that they are drinking water.”

Capt. Toni Fonokalafi, contingent commander for the Tongan Defense Services, said that his Marines knew the desert would be tough.

“We thought this (would be) hot, but

and willing



Marines from the Kingdom of Tonga practice techniques for searching enemy prisoners of war at a training facility near Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Sept. 6.

(Background) Marines from the Kingdom of Tonga react to commands to engage targets during close-quarters battle training at a training facility near Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Sept. 8.

never expected to be this hot,” he said. “The last three days was good, acclimating the boys to be adapted to this type of weather.”

Capt. Soane Aholeler, of the Tonga Royal Guards serving as a platoon commander for the Marines, agreed with Fonokalafi.

“When we arrived, we acclimatized ourselves,” Aholeler said. “We got to do a bit of PT in the hot Kuwaiti heat and now we are slowly adjusting to moving around in full kit.”

Their training requires just that. They move, run and shoot in full combat gear.

“We’ve done a bit of small weapons handling drills,” Aholeler said, “and now we are doing mission focused training.”

The Marines believe they came well prepared for this type of training. Fonokalafi said they trained with the U.S. Marines at Camp Pendleton, Calif., before coming to Kuwait.

He said the Tongan Marines have trained with the Marines’ 1st Division since the early 1980’s and they conduct military exercises with them every two years.

U.S. Marines from the Marine 1st Division came to Tonga for a two week pre-deployment train-up, Aholeler said.

“We went through the basics, through cultural briefs, through small unit tactics,” he said. “It was foundation training before we flew to Pendleton. We followed on through the basic training that we conducted at home.”

Working with U.S. Marines is nothing new. Tongan Marines fought with the 1st Division in the Solomon Islands and at Guadalcanal during World War II.

Scott is appreciative of the opportunity to work with troops from other countries.

“It’s a rare experience,” he said. “A lot of people in our country don’t know where Tonga is on the map. Now we

work next to them.”

He counts himself lucky to learn about other peoples.

“We converse openly. We talk about each other’s cultures,” he said. “It’s a great learning experience.”

Spc. Jason Udan, TF Gator, of San Diego, Calif., put it in a different way. “We treat them like any other U.S. Soldier,” he said. “They’re brothers from another country. They’re going to go to someplace that’s dangerous. We train them to survive.”

Fonokalafi is glad to receive the training his Marines are getting and is proud to be a part of the coalition. “As you know, we are maybe the smallest military in the world, but being affiliated with the most powerful nation in the world – we feel great about it.”

Editor’s note: This is the first in a two-part series on Tongan Marines training for Iraq. 

U.S., Kuwaiti Soldiers make bond

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

Members of the 44th Chemical Company traveled to Al-Tareer Kuwait Military Base, to train with Kuwait National Guard's Chemical Defense team, Aug. 29.

The purpose of the training was to share chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear knowledge, technology and techniques used to detect radiological contaminants.

The training shows the Kuwaiti Soldiers what is out there in terms of equipment, said Capt. Tim Graber, 44th Chemical Company commander.

The 44th Chemical Company provides CBRN-related services to Third Army/U.S. Army Central.

He said the Kuwaiti Soldiers have limited chemical detection capabilities and training. The classes show them different methods to detect chemical contamination.

The class was taught in three parts. The first part was on the use of Hand Held Assays. In the class, Soldiers of the 44th showed their Kuwaiti counterparts how to use the HHAs to collect biological samples and how to test for contaminants in the soil.

The second part of the class was on how to use the AN/UDR-13 detecting device. The device is used to detect beta and gamma radiation rays, said Spc. Matthew Long, 44th Chemical Co.

"With the UDR-13, you can put it on your person and it will detect the radiation levels while you're working," Long said.

The last part of the class was on the maintenance and use of the PDR-77.

Staff Sgt. Larry D. Jones, the non-commissioned officer-in-charge of the group, said this device is used to detect alpha, beta, gamma, and x-ray radiation rays. Jones said it's impor-



Staff Sgt. Larry D. Jones, 44th Chemical Company, drops solution into testing plates to determine radiation levels. This was part of joint chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear training between American and Kuwaiti soldiers.

tant to detect these radiation rays because they can hinder a mission.

"The rays are very harmful to Soldiers," Jones said. "Depending on the amount of radiation that is absorbed by the individual, the mission could be in jeopardy because the Soldier can't perform his mission."

More than 30 Kuwaiti Soldiers attended the training. Fresh ideas and new methods are always welcome, Cpl. Hashim Abbul Al-Ousl Shehab, Kuwait National Guard.

"It was good to learn about new equipment," Hashim said. "Especially equipment we are not familiar

with. The equipment is necessary especially these days with the certain circumstances going on in the world."

Jones said he had two goals during the training. First, he wanted the Soldiers of the 44th Chemical Company to gain experience teaching classes. Secondly, he wanted to deliver the material in a way that the Kuwaiti Soldiers could understand on a personal level. The latter goal meant the U.S. Soldiers had to get face-to-face with their Kuwaiti counterparts. Long said teaching the classes gave him pride in the fact that he helped

ds – chemically



mine the level of contamination in a substance. The demonstration between American and Kuwaiti forces, Aug. 29.



Sgt. Ali Al-Ajmi, a sergeant with the Kuwaiti National Guard, handles a UDR-13 detection device during training between American and Kuwaiti forces, Aug. 29. The UDR-13 detects different levels of harmful radiation such as beta and gamma radiation.

increase the Kuwaitis' knowledge of CBRN.

"It gives me satisfaction knowing that they've learned something and that I've helped their army and their country," Long said.

Long said he hopes training, like the classes, continue. He said joint endeavors like this helps strengthen ties as allies.

"It's important to do training like this because if the U.S. can get its allies and all of these smaller countries on the same page, we can work together to deter the terrorist threat that we have in the world today." 



Sp. Matthew Long, 44th Chemical Company, prepares a kit for demonstration during joint American and Kuwaiti training, Aug. 29..

Kuwait expresses gratitude with new DFAC

Story and photos by
Pfc. David Choi
Third Army/USARCENT Public Affairs

A new dining facility officially opened during a ceremony at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Sept. 9.

The Kuwait Ministry of Defense planned and constructed the dining facility for Third Army/U.S. Army Central servicemembers deployed to Camp Buehring as well as other servicemembers traveling through Kuwait.

"We are honored to provide this facility for our American colleagues here", said the Undersecretary for Kuwait Minister of Defense, Arch. Sheikh Sabah Al Naser.

Construction for the new facility began on Feb. 25, and was completed in six months. The construction of the new dining facility was part of a program called "Assistance in Kind." The program provides a commodity or service, rather than money.

"This (dining facility) is an example of great cooperation between Kuwait and the U.S.," said Col. John Alexander, Area Support Group-Kuwait command-



Servicemembers pick various food items as they make their way through the service line at the new dining facility at Camp Buehring, Sept. 9.

er. "This gesture is very much appreciated."

The new dining facility was symbolic and meant more than just a new place for servicemembers to eat.

"Kuwait plays a strategic role in the (Global War on Terrorism)," said Lt. Col.

Rodney Rose, ASG-Kuwait, host nation affairs director. "We are glad to grow and build on our mutual relationship. With this world-class (dining facility), servicemembers enjoy having their spirits lifted and enjoy camaraderie before heading back or from theater." **A**



A cake commemorates the grand opening of the new dining facility at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Sept. 9.

I Want You

-Don't Eat
-Don't Drink

-Don't Chew
Gum
-Don't Smoke



To Be Considerate

Remember, Ramadan is from Sep. 12 to Oct. 13.
From sunrise to sunset, obey the law!

When you are off-post, including inside vehicles, remember these laws. These laws apply to all U.S. servicemembers, contractors and civilians.

Why I serve:

Petty Officer 1st Class Anthony Ware
Utilitiesman
Navy Mobile Construction Battalion 40



The Wartrace, Tenn., native explains why he chose to join the military.

"It was back in 1988, I had just finished highschool and I just thought about doing something to make a difference. I've thought about getting out before, but there's not much better out there."

Just One Question...

"What would you like to see on the dining facility menu?"



"Something different like real Chinese food."

Master Sgt. Marcus Elsworth
Indianapolis, Ind.
Support operations NCOIC
1188th Terminal Transportation Bn.



"I'd like some lobster bisque, or real Filipino food."

Sgt. Christina Chan
Claremont, Calif.
Supply clerk
160th Infantry Regiment



"Fajitas and nachos, more Mexican food."

Pfc. Rafael Ortiz
Niles, Mich.
Vehicle operator
109th Transportation Company



"They have everything I want for the most part, and I have to have my surf and turf."

Petty Officer 2nd Class Kevin Jamison
Effingham, Ill.
Military police officer
Theater Field Confinement Facility



"Different types of lettuce other than iceberg like Romane and bibb."

Commander Michael Weiner
Washington, D.C.
Physician
Centcom Surgeon Team

What's happening around Kuwait ...



A special visit

Photo by Gunnery Sgt. Chris W. Cox

General Robert Magnus, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, presents one of his official coins to Sgt. Christopher Copehaver, a radio operator with 3rd Bn., 8th Marine Regt., currently deployed with the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Force (Special Operations capable), at Third Army/U.S. Army Central's U.S. Military Hospital-Kuwait, on Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, Sept. 13. Copehaver, who hails from Winchester, Va., was recovering from a leg injury when the ACMC toured the facility on his way to Iraq.



Remember the fallen

Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Chris Krieg

SeaBees from Navy Mobile Construction Battalion 40 raise a U.S. flag during a flag raising ceremony at Camp Arifjan, Sept. 11. The ceremony took place at 3:46 p.m. local time coinciding with the first attack on the World Trade Center in New York City, Sept. 11, 2001. The SeaBees hosted all other Sailors on Camp Arifjan during the event. Other remembrances took place within the Third Army/U.S. Army Central area of responsibility, for a related story turn to page 3.

SAY "HI" FOR THE HOLIDAYS, SEND A SHOUT OUT!



SHOUT OUTS ARE A GREAT WAY TO WISH A HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY IN THE UNITED STATES. LOOK FOR FILM CREWS AT YOUR CAMP ON THE FOLLOWING DATES:

LOCATION	DATE AND TIMES
CAMP BUEHRING	SEP. 17-18 AND OCT. 1-2
CAMP VIRGINIA	SEP. 20-21 AND OCT. 4-5
CAMP PATRIOT	SEP. 24 AND OCT. 8
SPOD	SEP. 25 AND OCT. 9
CAMP ARIFJAN	SEP. 24-28 AND OCT. 8-12

ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST BE IN DUTY UNIFORM (NO PT UNIFORMS) CREWS WILL SHOOT OUTSIDE THE COMMUNITY CENTER WHEN NOT AT UNIT LOCATIONS AND OUTSIDE THE DINING FACILITIES DURING MEALS. UNITS CAN SCHEDULE TIMES FOR CREWS TO COME TO THEIR LOCATION DURING THE DAY BY CALLING 318-430-6364 OR EMAIL SGT. JACOB McDONALD JACOB.A.MCDONALD@KUWAIT.SWA.ARMY.MIL