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

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Training for turbulent times

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The U.S. Army National Guard turns 371.

On the cover

British soldiers evacuate a casualty during mock urban patrol training at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. The British troops who are assigned to the 1st Merican Battalion based out of Europe went through week-long training at Buehring in preparation of their six-month rotation to Iraq.

Photo by Master Sgt. Michele R. Hammonds

The Inspector General Bulletin



Support of Family Members



All Soldiers have a legal and moral responsibility to provide financial support to dependents, stay in contact with them, and comply with any court orders, agreements or Army regulations for support.

FROM AT LEAST 1996, non-support is the number one request for Inspector General (IG) assistance **across the entire Army**. In many cases, the Soldier's direct leadership (most NCOs, company and field grade officers, and Army civilian leaders serve at the direct leadership level), is aware of some family difficulties but are uncertain how to handle the situation.

REFERENCE - Army Regulation (AR) 608-99, Family Support, Child Custody, and Paternity, provides direction to Soldiers, Commanders, and their Legal Assistance personnel on Soldiers' responsibilities for providing financial and other types of support to family members; as well as the processes for Commanders to follow when addressing complaints that their Soldier is not fulfilling his/her support obligations. Example – a Cdr is required to notify a dependent in writing 14 days after a request for dependent support is provided.

WHY? If the Army has a regulation on Family Support, why in FY 2007 did IGs receive 5,819 non-support request for assistance? One fact bearing on the problem is that the absence of an in-place written support agreement between Soldiers and their dependents exacerbates non-support problems.

THE ANSWER. If you don't know - we'll help you find out. On 26 October 2007, The Inspector General of the Army directed an inspection of the Application and effect of the Army Policy on Financial Support to Family Members. The inspection will specifically assess issues related to financial support for family members when no written or legal agreement is in place for Active Army (AC) and Reserve Component (RC) Soldiers serving in Title 10 status.

REGULATORY CHANGES ARE LIKELY ON THE WAY. What do you do until then? Continue to consult the current version of AR 608-99. Commanders receiving an IG non-support inquiry should follow the guidance given in AR 608-99, Chapter 3.

REFERENCES: AR 608-99, Family Support, Child Custody, and Paternity
DOD 7000-14-R, Vol 7A, Pay and Entitlements Manual

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Message to drivers: expect the unexpected

Story by Col. Will Merrill
Third Army Safety Office

Over 40,000 Americans die each year in car accidents — the leading cause of death for people under the age of 35. Safety belts can prevent death in about half of these accidents. If you know this and are still not wearing a safety belt, you may need to ask yourself why not. But first, let's look at what happens when a car crashes.

The human collision

Imagine running as fast as you can into a wall. You would expect to get hurt.

Do you think you could stop yourself if the wall suddenly loomed up when you were two feet away from it?

This is exactly the situation you face when the front of your car hits something at only 15 miles an hour.

The car stops in the first tenth of a second, but you keep on at the same rate until something stops you such as the steering wheel, dashboard or windshield if you're not wearing your safety belt.

It's bad enough at 15 miles an hour, but at 30 miles an hour you hit "the wall" four times as hard as you would at 15. Or to put it another way, with the same impact, you would feel as if you fell off a three-story building. A properly worn safety belt keeps the second "human collision" from happening.

Wear it right

A "properly worn" seatbelt means with both straps snugly fitted to transfer the impact of the collision to the parts of your body that can take it — your hipbones and shoulder bones.

With just the shoulder strap on, you can still slide out from under it and be strangled, while the lap belt alone doesn't keep your face from hitting the steering wheel.



Photo by Spc. Wes D. Landrum

According to statistics from the National Transportation Safety Administration, more than 40,000 people die in auto accidents each year.

What's your reason for not wearing one

There are several excuses for not wearing a seatbelt.

"I'm only going to the PX." Actually, this is the best time to wear a safety belt, since 80 percent of traffic fatalities occur within 25 miles of "home" and under 40 miles an hour.

"I won't be in an accident; I'm a good driver." Your good driving record will certainly help you avoid accidents. But even if you're a good driver, a bad driver may still hit you.

"I'll just brace myself." Even if you had the split-second timing to do this, the force of the impact would shatter the arm or leg you used to brace yourself.

"I'm afraid the belt will trap me in the car." Statistically, the best place to be during an accident is

in your car. If you're thrown out of the car, you're 25 times more likely to die. And if you need to get out of the car in a hurry, as in the extremely tiny percent of accidents involving fire or submergence, you can get out a lot faster if you aren't unconscious inside your car.

"They're uncomfortable." Actually, modern safety belts can be made so comfortable that you may wonder if they really work. Most of them give when you move. A device locks them in place only when the car stops suddenly. You certainly won't be comfortable in a hospital bed.

"I don't need a belt — I've got an airbag." An airbag increases the effectiveness of a safety belt by 40 percent. But airbags were never meant to be used in place of safety belts, since they don't protect against side impacts at all. 

A gift from the heart

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

One woman wanted to give a gift from the heart that would provide encouragement to Soldiers of the 1st Sustainment Command (Theater).

Tina Patterson, wife of Lt. Col. Richard Patterson, came up with the idea of providing an Army Combat Uniform bandana with Psalm 91 inscribed on it to every 1st TSC Soldier deployed to Kuwait.

"I saw a sample of the bandanas at Village Baptist Church in Fayetteville, N.C., and I was told to call Mary Gray, an entrepreneur," said Tina in an e-mail. "I got in contact with her and decided that every Soldier who went forward with the 1st TSC deserved to have one."

Excited at the prospect that the bandanas would be well received by Soldiers in her husband's unit, she set out on a mission to raise \$1,500 – the cost of 500 bandanas.

While her husband deployed to Kuwait to head up the 1st TSC Public Affairs Office, Tina networked with people to raise money to pay for the bandanas.

"I sent out a letter to Family, friends, church members and the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary asking for donations to cover the cost of getting enough bandanas for every Soldier," Tina said.

Tina, a native of Fayetteville, purchased the bandanas, through Gray, who coordinates with various chaplains on Fort Bragg to send them overseas to U.S. Soldiers serving in the Middle East.

The result was members from the Fort Bragg and Fayetteville communities helped Tina prepare the bandanas for shipment.

"Once I raised the money, several friends helped Mary and I fold about 1,500 bandanas for other Soldiers, and she gave me the 500 bandanas for the 1st TSC. I took them to the post



1st TSC Chaplain (Col.) Chester H. Lanious (right) holds up a Psalm 91 bandana for Master Sgt. Yolanda Jackson, a chaplain's assistant. Tina Patterson, wife of Lt. Col. Richard Patterson, shipped 1,500 bandanas to Soldiers deployed to Kuwait.

office and mailed them to Chaplain [Chester H.] Lanious [1st TSC chaplain]," Tina said.

Shipments of the bandanas arrived at the 1st TSC Chaplain's Office in early October.

"They have a spiritual message that's highly valued by most Soldiers," Lanious said. "The bandanas are a reminder of God's watchful care and keeping and is also a reminder of home – kind of a promise that says, 'I will return home safely.'"

Lanious and his chaplain staff have begun distributing the Psalm 91 bandanas to 1st TSC Soldiers.

Sergeant 1st Class Clayton Outlaw, 1st TSC Special General Staff, was happy when he found out a shipment of bandanas had just arrived. Outlaw said he finds comfort in reading Psalm 91.

"Psalm 91 is a very unique psalm; it has quite a bit of meaning to it. It means a lot to me. I heard the chaplain say, 'you should keep it on your person every day,'" said Outlaw, a Pensacola, Fla., resident. "That is a

scripture I read before I come to work every day. Psalm 91 ... is a protection prayer. You read that ... and you feel like you are safe before you come to work."

Instead of providing support just to her husband, as she waits for his safe return home, Tina wanted to make a difference in the lives of other 1st TSC Soldiers. After sending 500 bandanas, she sent an additional 900 bandanas.

"Everyone who is a part of the 1st TSC will be able to say that they have bandanas," Lanious said. "This expression of love and care from home is a very strong, palpable thing that reminds us that we have people waiting for us, we are constantly in their prayers and that our safety is on their minds."

For Tina, 1st TSC Soldiers have a special place in her heart and not just because she is married to one.

"They deserve them for the wonderful hard work they do," Tina said. I pray every day that every Soldier is protected and returns home safe." 

Thinking of home this holiday season

Story by Spc. Wes Landrum
Desert Voice staff writer

It's time to put up the lights, decorate the tree and enjoy all that the Christmas season brings. For servicemembers overseas, however, there is no smell of Christmas cookies baking or the taste of egg nog. But that does not keep them from reaching into their sack of memories to remember Christmases past.

Staff Sgt. Billy W. Davison, 1175th Heavy Equipment Transport Company, said he's been deployed all over the world, however, this is his first Christmas away from Family. At this time of year, traditions are an important part of the Christmas season. Davison said things like setting up the tree are memories he'll be thinking of while deployed to the Third Army/U.S. Army Central area of operations.

"My wife and daughter usually set up the tree," Davison said. "I love Christmas time but it's different this year."

According to the Web site www.californiamall.com, throughout history, the United States has been called a "melting pot" of sorts, where all nations and traditions blend together. That would ring true with Christmas. Americans sing Christmas carols that originated from England and Australia. The Christmas tree comes from Germany. Santa Claus, or Kris Kringle as he is called by some countries, got his beginnings in Scandinavia with his arrival through the chimney to fill stockings originating in the Netherlands.

Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Blair, 1st Battalion, 167th Infantry, Joint Task Force 1144, said the thing he misses the most is putting up the tree with Family.

"We always do that as a Family," Blair said. "Every time I'm not there, I think about it and miss it. I know they miss me."

Petty Officer 3rd Class Joseph Sousa, Unit 202, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, said the thing he



Courtesy Photo

Some Christmas traditions began as ways to ward off evil spirits or to wish someone good luck in the next year.

will miss most about being deployed during is Christmas is not the gift-giving or even decorating the tree. He said people must not forget the real reason for the season.

"We attend a church service prior to Christmas Day," Sousa said. "It is a celebration thanking God for sending his only son that first Christmas night."

All three servicemembers agreed that while their stocking will not be hung on the chimney with care next to their Families, they will still be thinking of home when Dec. 25 rolls around.

"In my mind, I'll still be watching the kids open presents Christmas morning," Blair said. Christmas, however, is not the only holiday being celebrated in December.

Hanukkak starts on the 25th day of the Jewish calendar month of Kislev. This holiday lasts for eight days and nights.

Also known as the festival of lights, Hanukkak began on Dec. 4 and ended Dec. 12. While a minor holiday in the Jewish year, Hanukkak's similarity to Christmas has brought a lot of attention on the holiday and its gift-giving tradition.

Hanukkak celebrates the victories — both religious and military — of Jewish heroes.

The lighting of the menorah, known

in Hebrew as the hanukiya, is the most important Hanukkah tradition.

A menorah is a candlestand with nine branches. Usually eight candles — one for each day of Hanukkah — are of the same height, with a taller one in the middle, the shamash ("servant"), which is used to light the others. Each evening of Hanukkah, one more candle is lit, with a special blessing.

The menorah symbolizes the burning light in the temple, as well as marking the eight days of the Hanukkah festival. Some say it also celebrates the light of freedom won by the Maccabees for the Jewish people.

Kwanzaa is another holiday that is celebrated in December. Running from Dec. 26 until Jan. 1, Kwanzaa is a unique celebration that focuses on traditional African values. Those values are Family, community responsibility, commerce and self-improvement. While neither religious nor political, Kwanzaa is not a substitute for Christmas. Celebrated by more than 18 million, according to www.tike.com/celeb-kw, Kwanzaa means "first fruits of the harvest."

Regardless of what holiday servicemembers celebrate during this season, it is a time for tradition and celebration recognized around the world. 



British troops assigned to the 1st Mercian Battalion based out of Germany went through week-long training at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, in preparation for their six-month rotation in Iraq.

British soldiers train up for urban patrol

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

British soldiers hit the streets of a local village searching for insurgents. They stumbled upon a man who was not authorized to carry a weapon. When they continued their mission, one of their vehicles was penetrated by an improvised explosive device. The loud blast sent a huge plume of smoke into the air. Shouts and cries of "I've been hit!" could be heard in the distance.

A British soldier rounded the corner and saw one of his comrades lying on the ground; he quickly checked his vital signs. He yelled, "He's dead." Another soldier came over and yelled, "You cannot make that call. Evacuate him now!" A truck pulled up nearby and the soldiers dragged the wounded to the vehicle. Others helped pick him up and lift him in before it sped off.

Meanwhile, a crowd of villag-

ers gathered. Men and women from the local neighborhood poured onto the streets. They shook their fists in the air and shouted. Several British soldiers gently tried to push back the crowd.



A British soldier speaks with a "villager" in a training village during an urban patrol exercise at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

However, the crowd became more aggressive and louder as another vehicle came around a corner and stopped to pick up yet another British casualty. Men and women ran up to the vehicle, shouting, as a couple of British soldiers tried to prevent them from interfering with the patient evacuation. Another coalition soldier banged on the back of the vehicle and yelled, "Open the door!" Someone opened the door as others quickly moved the patient inside.

Fortunately the British soldiers did not suffer any injuries or loss of life. Rather, the events were part of a scenario for civil disturbance training before going north to Iraq.

This group were part of the more than 4,500 British troops going through training at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, before they begin their six-month rotation in Iraq. The British troops, assigned to the 1st Mercian Battalion



British troops place a “wounded” comrade into an ambulance during the exercise.



A British soldier patrols the streets of a training village in search of insurgents during an exercise at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

based in Germany, went through the civil disturbance training at a makeshift town located at one of the training facilities on Camp Buehring. Instructors were on hand to observe the training and make sure the coalition soldiers trained to standards.

“The soldiers that went through this morning did very well and they only had a couple of minor points to work on. They got the casualties off the ground with speed,” said British Warrant Officer Michael Heaton, training command sergeant major of 1st Mercian Bn. “They got them into the vehicles and moved away from the vulnerable point in that specific area of danger rather quickly. They needed to get out of there straight away as their casualties were their main priority.”

Heaton emphasized how realistic the mobile patrol training scenario was for his soldiers. Heaton and his soldiers completed much training in the United Kingdom prior to com-

ing to Kuwait.

“I think as a battle group and also as a battalion we are ready to go. And we are ready to go into whatever we have got to do,” said Heaton, of Cheshire, England.

“And whatever tasks the commander has given to us, I am sure we will do to the best of our abilities,” Heaton said.

Sgt. Carl Fleming, of the 1st Mercian Bn. from Wigan, Lancashire, England, was the multiple commander for the patrol that just finished. During the scenario, as the troops cleared the buildings, Fleming observed them.

“I made sure they performed the drills and skills correctly,” said Fleming.

After the IED attack, Fleming said the British troops sprang into action.

“They kept the crowd back using only a minimal amount of force and they did not have to shoot any warning shots to control the locals,”

he said. “We did a dash back to get the casualties back for medical care.”

Heaton said the support they received from the 1st Sustainment Command (Theater)’s Task Force Gator since they arrived at Camp Buehring had been very helpful.

“It all adds to the training support we have gotten from the Americans and the [contractor] teams and the training facility,” Heaton said.

British Lance Cpl. Daniel Rocco, of the Fiji Islands, helped to evacuate casualties while conducting a dismounted patrol during the scenario. Rocco, an infantryman, was able to put his training to use as he helped move the casualties and afterwards kept the crowd at a distance.

“We did our job, and I think we are improving regarding evacuating casualties from the danger area quicker,” said Rocco. “This training with an IED was very realistic in terms of where we are going.” 



(above) Leeann Tweeden, master of ceremonies for the Sergeant Major of the Army's Hope and Freedom Show, interacts with the audience at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, Dec. 14. The show brought a mix of music and comedy to more than 5,000 servicemembers in attendance.

(left) Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders Dara McFarlane (foreground) and Becca Gambel Perform a dance routine for the servicemembers. This year's show was the first to feature as many as four of the cheerleaders.

Hope and Freedom Tour rocks Kuwait



Sgt. Maj. Mercy Diez, a member of the Army Band "Pershing's Own" ensemble Downrange, sings "Welcome To The Jungle" at the concert. The group consists of Soldiers who sing, dance and play musical instruments for the troops.

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

The crowd's expression shifted between excitement, laughter and empathy during the Sergeant Major of the Army's Hope and Freedom Tour Dec. 14 at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Various entertainers sang, danced, told jokes and showed appreciation for the valor servicemembers have shown in service to their nation.

Starting off the show was the U.S. Army Band Downrange, the singing, dancing, instrument playing entertainers from Fort Myer, Va., performing their renditions of such classics as "Welcome to The Jungle," "Barracuda," "My Sacrifice" and "Living in America."

After being introduced by master of ceremonies Leeann Tweeden, comedian Vince Morris followed with his own brand of thought provoking comedy that had the audience laughing non stop.

The Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders, who have been performing at USO shows since 1979, did a dance routine that enthralled the

audience.

Performances by comedian Sheryl Underwood, country music artists Keni Thomas, who is a combat veteran, and Darryl Worley followed to close the show.

"I love listening to Darryl Worley," said Staff Sgt. Pamela Johnson, with Third Army/U.S. Army Central G-4.

With more than 5,000 servicemembers attending, the show was a huge success, said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston. Troops bussed to Camp Arifjan from nearby installations just to see the show.

"It was a once in a lifetime experience," said Staff Sgt. Anita Gipson, a logistician for Third Army/U.S. Army Central. "I've been all over the place and I have never attended a USO show like that."

Some of the entertainers are veterans of USO shows and have been entertaining troops for many years such as Leeann Tweeden who has eight shows under her belt.

"Many of (the entertainers) volunteer to do this because they are very patriotic," Preston said. "This is their way to show their appreciation to the troops." 



Members of the U.S. Army Band “Pershing’s Own” perform at the Sergeant Major of the Army’s Hope and Freedom Show. The Army musicians provided backup for the various musicians performing at the show.



Country music star Keni Thomas performs during the Sergeant Major of the Army’s Hope and Freedom Tour. Thomas is an Army Ranger veteran of the battle of Mogadishu and a recipient of the Bronze Star for valor in combat.



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston opens the show by sharing a joke with the crowd. Preston has been sponsoring the Hope and Freedom Tour for six years since he took up the position of sergeant major of the Army.



Maj. Gen. Gus Hargett (left), adjutant general of the Tennessee National Guard, looks on as a Soldier explains the operation of the control center of a Humvee during his visit to the 1175th Transportation Company of the Tennessee National Guard at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, Dec. 11.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Anishka Calder

National Guard Celebrates 371 years

*By Pfc. Christopher T. Grammer
Desert Voice staff writer*

On Dec. 13, 1636, the National Guard was born.

Originally organized as state militia, the National Guard didn't mature into the force we know today until 1903.

"On this date, in the Massachusetts Bay colony, the governor of Massachusetts called forth those that would be brave enough to pick up a weapon and accouter themselves in some sort of uniform to provide security," said Maj. Gen. Harold Cross, adjutant general for the Mississippi National Guard. "It started a long tradition in what is now the United States of America to call on that courage, call on that small percentage, that real infinitesimal number of people in the population, that had courage to stand up to a threat but would also come back and have character and peace. These we now call our Citizen-Soldiers."

The oldest branch of America's armed forces is the National Guard. Its Soldiers held a birthday celebration Dec. 13 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, in honor of the National Guards 371 years defending the United States.

In attendance at the birthday

celebration as a guest speaker was Maj. Gen. Gus Hargett, adjutant general of the Tennessee National Guard.

After opening remarks from Lt. Col. Hollie Crissy, commander of the 176th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, Hargett shared a few words of appreciation for the service of his fellow Guardsman and some of his own experiences in the National Guard.

"The best career decision I ever made in my life was the day I joined the Guard," Hargett said.

In his speech Hargett praised the Guardsmen who chose to "stay Guard" and welcomed those who had recently answered the call to service.

"I believe the citizen-Soldier is the most important thing in America," said Hargett. "They have jobs and Families yet they always answer the call to protect freedom."

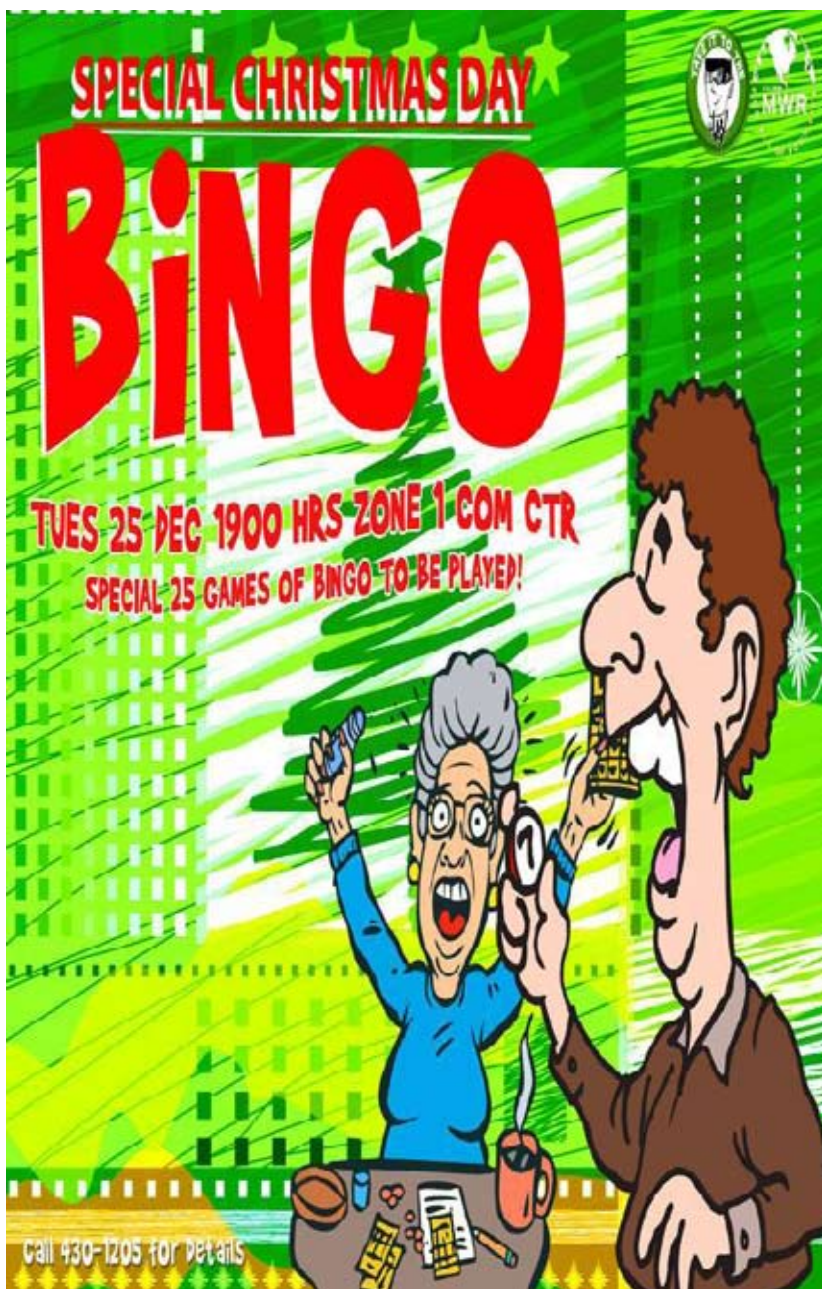
Aside from fighting in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, the National Guard also assisted in rescue efforts and provided security after the devastation left by hurricane Katrina.

About future Guardsman Hargett had one thing to say, "Come and try us, there are so many things to like, you pick your reason to stay." 



Photo by Pfc. Christopher T. Grammer

(from left) Lt. Col. Walt Mercer, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 183rd Cavalry Regiment; Maj. Gen. Gus Hargett, Adjutant General of the Tennessee national Guard; and Command Sgt. Maj. William A. Tabor, the command sergeant major of the battalion, assist cutting the cake during the National Guard's 371st birthday celebration at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Dec. 13.



Just One Question...

"What is your favorite Christmas tradition?"



"We have a big Christmas dinner and the whole Family comes down."

Staff Sgt. Kevin White
6th Bn 64th Battalion Supprt Brigade
Maintenance chief
Miami



"Go home and ride four-wheelers."

Sgt. Justin Blankenship
168th Combat Arms Battalion
Abrams tank maintenance
Alton, Va.



"Watching my kids open up their presents."

Sgt. Erik Helms
316th Expeditionary Sustainment Command
Mobile gun system gunner
Oklahoma City



"Decorating the Christmas tree while listening to Christmas music with my parents."

Petty Officer 2nd Class Denise Hernandez
Medical Task Force - Kuwait
Crystal Lake, Ill.



"I have so many. My favorite is decorating the Christmas tree."

Petty Officer 1st Class Lisa Strom
Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Group,
Bristol, Conn.

Why I serve:

Lt. Cmdr. Bennett Solberg
Medical Task Force - Kuwait
Deputy director of resources



The Rockville, Md., native explains why he chose to join the military.

"I saw a great chance to further my education. I have two undergraduate, two master and a doctorate degree thanks to the Navy."

Whats happening around Kuwait...

Breakfast-time praises



Photo by Spc. Wes Landrum

A gubernatorial handshake



Photo by Pfc Christopher T. Grammer

Staff Sgt. Tim Jenson from Rapid City, S.D., meets with South Dakota Governor M. Michael Rounds in the dining facility at Life Support Area, Kuwait, Dec. 11.

(left) Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) Douglas Carver, the 22nd chief of chaplains, sings "There is a Fountain" during a prayer breakfast at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, Dec. 14. The chaplain's visit to the desert installation completed his first tour of the Middle East as chief of chaplains.



In honor of ...

Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Matthew Magee

Navy Capt. Charles Stuppard (left), commander of Task Force 56.6 Navy IA Support Unit, and Navy Capt. Jeff McKenzie, commanding officer Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center, unveil photos and a biography dedicated to the memory of Cmdr. Phillip Murphy-Sweet at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, Dec. 14. The Warrior Transition Center was named for Murphy-Sweet in a dedication ceremony here.