



U.S. ARMY

CENTRAL

DESERT VOICE



**USARCENT
2016**

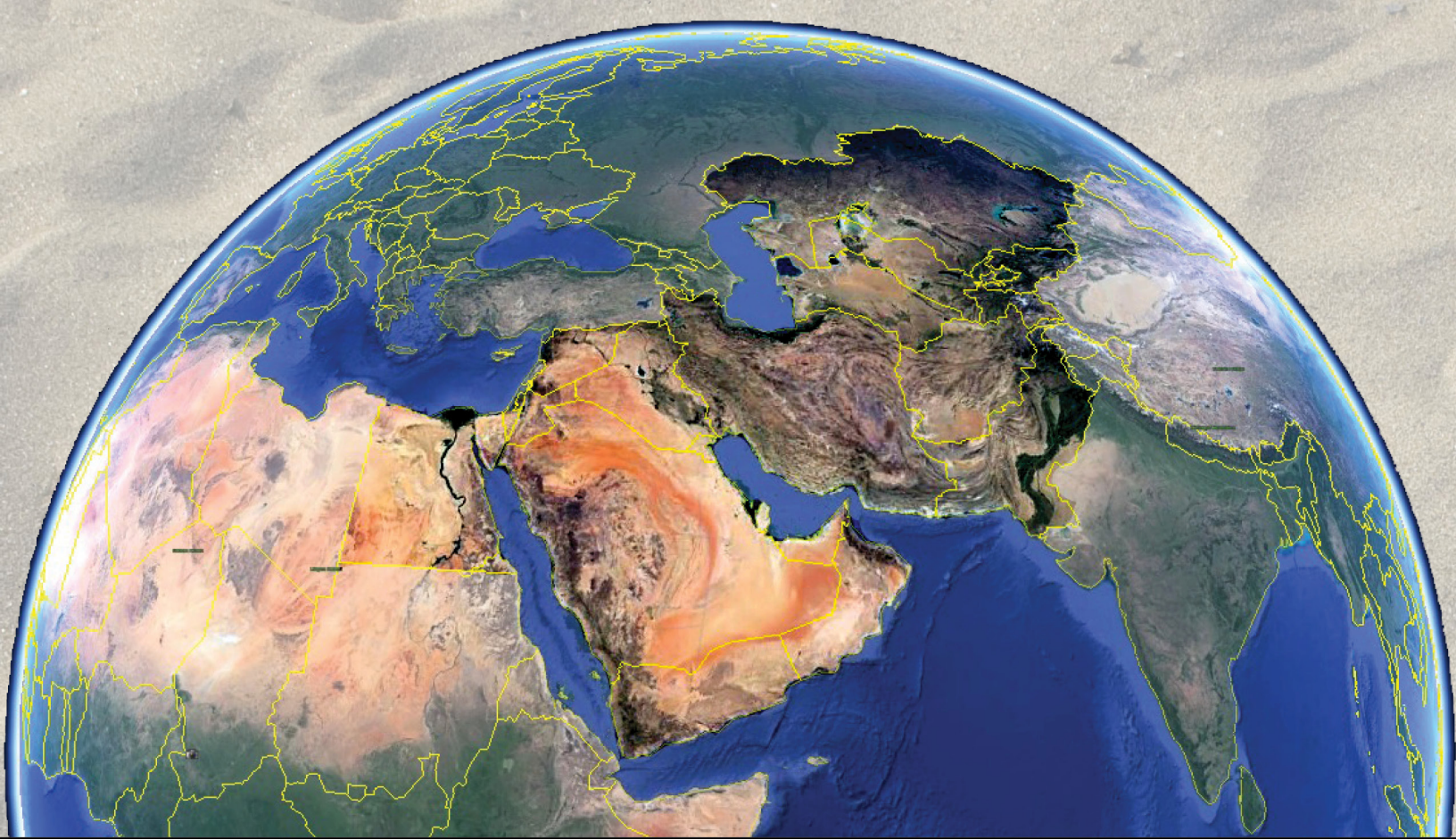
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U.S. ARMY CENTRAL

FALL 2016



<<On the Front Cover

Soldiers from the 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) wait for a 40th Combat Aviation Brigade Chinook helicopter to fly over them during sling load training Aug. 11, 2016 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. U.S. Army Central uses the helicopters to move troops and equipment throughout U.S. Central Command's area of operations. Photo by Sgt. Brandon Hubbard

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Lucky 6 On Point

First of all, thanks! To each and every one of you – Military, Civilian, and Contractors – who serve under many patches and in the many organizations throughout the USARCENT AOR. I am proud of you and the work you do on a daily basis. Your superb support provides the Combatant Commander and the Commanders of Joint Task Forces OIR and OFS with the operational and logistics forces required to make significant progress towards attaining their respective objectives and goals. Your support for our forces in Task Force Sinai has made a discernible difference in our force protection posture there. Your professional engagements with our partners in the AOR go a long way to shaping the environment and have considerably advanced our relationships. My sense is your efforts, especially those critical to our efforts in Operation Spartan Shield, have our military partnerships in the AO at their strongest point in recent history. In every endeavor you have truly set the standard – and I thank you.

In my previous articles, I provided a snapshot of where I saw the command and codified my command philosophy. I have also highlighted my priorities for the command – Readiness, Force Protection, Communication, and Transition. As we continually balance these priorities, our current focus is transition. Transition is internal, external and constant; whether it be changes in personnel, rotation of regionally aligned forces or an ever-changing complex operational environment. Great units transform with minimum friction or disruption of ongoing actions and activities. By identifying and mitigating the associated risks through continuous assessment, we can mitigate disruptions to the force. I need each of you to remain vigilant in seeking efficiencies during these transitions and to ensure we capture lessons that will improve our team and

others' efforts to successfully navigate change.

Within the Command, the influx of new leaders and staff from the summer rotation is nearly complete. We've welcomed our new Chief of Staff, BG Viet Luong, our new G3, BG Carl Alex, our new G6, BG Stephen Hager, and our new AREC, BG Leela Gray. These four key leaders, as well as all of the newly assigned, talented staff directors and subordinate brigade command teams, have already begun to make a difference in our steady-state operations. As we draw down to meet the new MTOE, our team remains strong, and our outlook remains incredibly positive.

For many serving in our forward locations, you know first-hand that we are engaged in the transition and full integration of the intermediate tactical headquarters. This requirement is initially being fulfilled by the 29th Infantry Division who will have a contingent from their HQ in Jordan and the remainder of the Division's staff in Kuwait. Later in 2017, the 35th Infantry Division will follow the 29th ID. This transition will take our collective effort and hard work to ensure that those functions formerly performed by the Operational Command Post are fully transferred.

Overall, we are progressing well. We have overcome some challenges and have more to face. We have established a formal communications strategy process, operationalized a Leader Development Program, and reinvigorated our sponsorship program. We need now to maintain our momentum in these areas and continue efforts to improve our systems and processes, relationships, and influence. As we focus on these areas going forward, you have my commitment that each and every day you will get my best effort and in return, I expect the same from you and your organizations. 🇺🇸

"Third, Always First"
LTG Mike Garrett

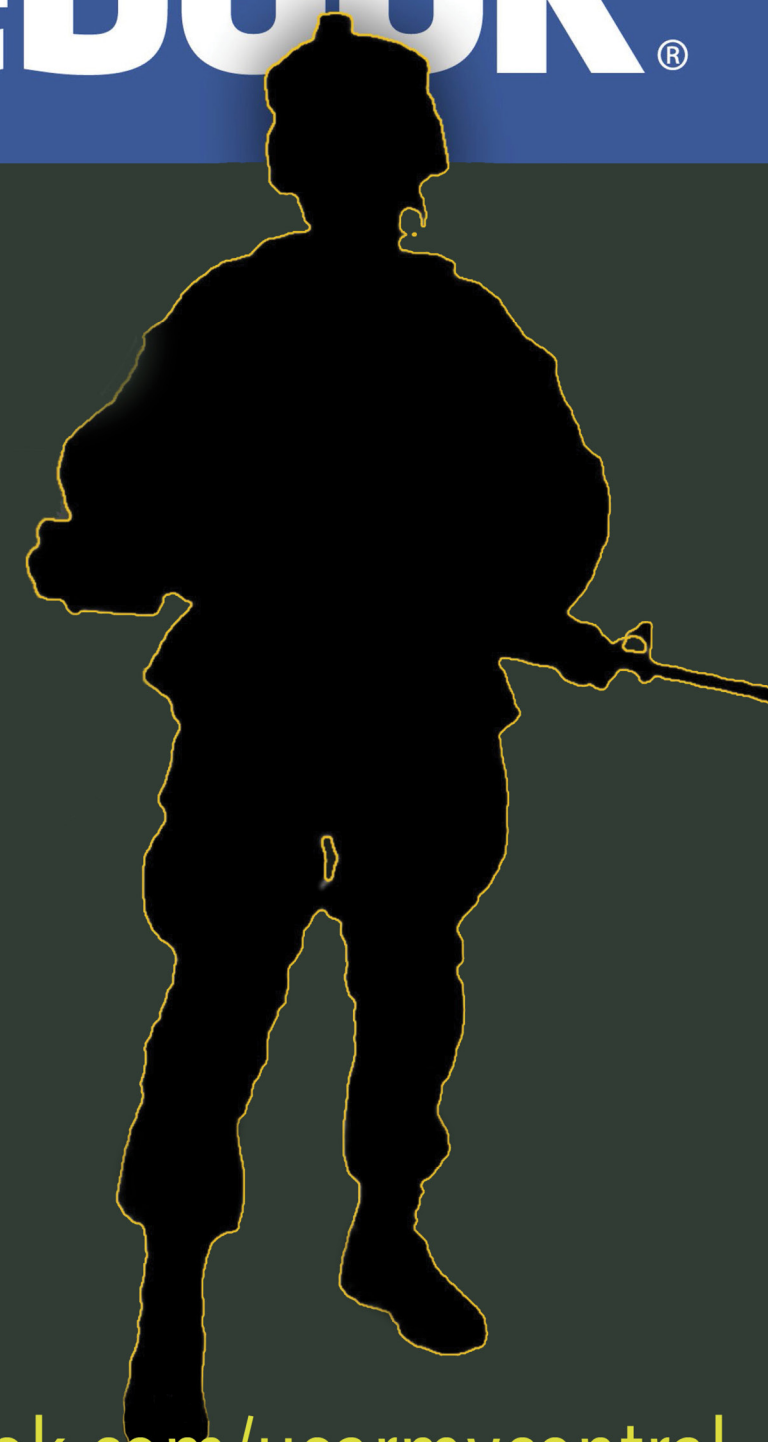
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**We live in an uncertain time
with an uncertain world
which is increasingly unstable
and at times insecure.**

— Brig. Martin Gamble, 60th Infantry Brigade,

Stanford Training Area, U.K., 2016 Multinational Soldiers participate in Steppe Eagle 16. The training brought together and pushed Soldiers to react to complex scenarios, like establishing base security, managing internally displaced persons, working with non-governmental agencies and conducting foot patrols. Steppe Eagle is an annual multinational training exercise focused on peacekeeping and peace support operations. Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Terra Gatti.



STEPPE EAGLE 16

Multinational troops unite in UK during summer peacekeeping exercise

STORY AND PHOTOS BY: SGT. 1ST CLASS TERRA GATTI



For two weeks, more than 700 Soldiers from five nations spread across 13 time zones lived, trained and learned together, reacting to rioters, protecting food and medical supplies from would-be looters, interacting with villagers and manning checkpoints. Together they dodged hurled potatoes, planned missions in poorly-lit village centers and protected their posts, all as part of the second phase of Steppe Eagle 16.

Now in its 13th year, Steppe Eagle is a U.S. Army Central led multinational training exercise that this year brought Soldiers from the United Kingdom, the United States, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to the British Army’s Stanford Training Area in the northeast corner of England. This year, like all years, Steppe Eagle focused on building and honing the peacekeeping and peace support capabilities of participating nations.

“We live in an uncertain time with an uncertain world which is increasingly unstable and at times insecure,” explained Brig. Martin Gamble, commander of the United Kingdom’s 160th Infantry Brigade. “Our

responsibility in that is to keep the peace and build a safe and secure environment.”

Steppe Eagle, like many USARCENT exercises, achieves many goals. The event aims to prepare the Kazakhstan Peacekeeping Battalion, or KAZBAT, for validation to deploy in support of global peacekeeping and peace support operations while working to strengthen the relationships between these nations, allowing Soldiers to find commonalities among their diverse cultures and to learn from one another.

“The most important thing that goes on in these exercises is yes, it’s building capability, but it’s also about building understanding, it’s building relationships, it’s building trust and you can’t build that overnight,” explained Maj. Gen. Giles Hill, commanding general of the 1st (United Kingdom) Division.

For Steppe Eagle, units were divided into two battalions, one primarily comprised of KAZBAT troops and the other multinational with Soldiers from all five participating nations. As the exercise began, battalion

leadership went to work on mission planning and operations development while Soldiers headed out to the field for four days of situational training lanes where they focused on reacting to public disturbances, conducting a cordon and search, securing an international border, and conducting civil military operations.

“The (situational training) prepared them for the field training exercise, or FTX,” explained Capt. Christopher Wille, of the 116th Military Engagement Team who worked as an observer/mentor during the exercise.

Maj. Cletis Derek Butler, who managed the civil military operations lane, explained that managing and working with displaced persons and locals is a big part of the job when Soldiers deploy in support of peacekeeping operations. He explained that the lanes helped lay the foundation of knowledge for the Soldiers and helped “key leaders to understand the relationship between civil organizations, governments and the military.”

Similarly, the tasks completed in the other training lanes mimicked the situations they would surely encounter

during the FTX and likely encounter were they to deploy in support of real-world peacekeeping operations.

Following the situational training, Soldiers took a day to reset and to partake in good-natured rivalry during a sporting competition. The event included a strong man competition, volleyball and football tournaments, a tug-of-war competition, and a relay race.

“I think my favorite part was probably the sporting competition,” said Maj. Benjamin Salt, of the United Kingdom’s 1st Battalion, The Rifles, who oversaw much of the exercise. “We do a lot of military stuff, obviously, but there’s another part to it and it’s about understanding each other. Sports day is a bit more relaxed, a bit more social, and people can actually talk and understand that our cultures aren’t that much different and that we all want the same thing.”

Overall, the Kazakhstanis took the win for Sports Day, with the British troops winning the football match, and the Americans taking the tug-of-war competition.

After that, it was back to work for the 700 troops

at Steppe Eagle. With the exception of only the exercise controllers, all Soldiers headed to various training villages scattered around the Stanford Training Area for a five-day FTX. There, the Soldiers encountered much of what they had experienced on the situational training lanes, only on a larger and more continuous scale.

“The KAZBAT staff collected, processed, analyzed and disseminated information from their higher headquarters, subordinate units and other sources,” explained Wille, who worked with the KAZBAT during the FTX. “Based on this information, leaders and staff

“We learned a lot from them, and I think everyone got a lot out of the exercise.”

— Maj. Eric Elliot, USARCENT

then planned and executed operations to improve security in their area of operations, disrupt illicit networks and provide humanitarian relief to the local populace.”

The local populace, in the case of Steppe Eagle, was played by British and American Soldiers who helped to add realism to the event. They played villagers and displaced persons, as well as humanitarian aid and assistance workers, mayors, and police chiefs.

“It was the most awesome experience I’ve had in my military career,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jackie Pace, a role player from the 116th Military Engagement Team. “It was working with the other Soldiers as role players as well as the Soldiers that were out there for the exercise. It was also the first time I’ve ever been arrested.”

At the FTX, the KAZBAT went through a sort of preliminary evaluation, with evaluators from NATO observing many of their training events to ensure they were on track to earn level one validation next year.

“I think it went really, really well,” Salt said. “The endstate of this is that they know their strengths and they know their weaknesses for next year when they go to their evaluation and we can now use our resources in an effective manner to really target the areas where they need improvement.”

On the final day of the FTX, July 28, nearly 60 distinguished visitors, along with representatives from the media, descended upon Eastmere Village, one of the primary training sites used throughout the exercise, to observe the culminating training event.

“I’m very impressed,” said the Right Honorable Mike Penning, Britain’s armed forces minister. “To see countries coming together, the good guys coming to-

gether and actually training so we can have the confidence to go out and actually protect and conduct peacekeeping activities around the world is simply thrilling.”

In addition to Penning, Gamble and Giles, other distinguished visitors included Lord Mohamed Sheikh, member of the United Kingdom’s House of Lords, and his wife, Lady Shaida Sheikh; Lt. Gen. Michael X. Garrett, commanding general of U.S. Army Central; His Excellency Erzhan Kazykhanov, the Kazakh Ambassador to the U.K.; Turdakun Sydykov, minister-counselor at the Kyrgyzstan embassy in London; and Lt. Col. Khotasho Kurbanov, the senior military representative from Tajikistan.

As the distinguished visitors watched from two stories up in the center of the village, American and KAZBAT Soldiers surrounded the area, forming an outer and inner cordon. British troops soon entered the village on foot, interacting with role players and gleaning bits of information from them as they patrolled through the town. They were after a suspected smuggler, all part of the training exercise, and soon shots rang out across the town square. Kazakhstani soldiers reacted, the target was identified and escorted out, but the villagers were angry with the rising violence in their town and started to riot. They built up a barricade as British and KAZBAT troops marched into the town with shields and protective equipment, pushed through the barricade and quickly dispersed the potato-throwing crowd in the final training event of Steppe Eagle.

“I was very impressed with the KAZBAT’s performance,” said Maj. Eric Elliott, USARCENT, who ran the scenarios and injects for the duration of the exercise. “We learned a lot from them, and I think everyone got a lot out of the exercise.”

Finally, Soldiers and distinguished guests gathered on the parade field to officially close Steppe Eagle 16.

“The aim of Steppe Eagle is to develop the expertise and experience of Kazakhstan’s peacekeepers and to strengthen operations between the forces of the countries involved,” Kazykhanov said during his remarks at the closing ceremony. “Both of these goals have been achieved over the last few days.”

At the close of the ceremony, Garrett saluted as a parade of Soldiers marched proudly past.

“The one thing I would ask all of you to remember and to not take for granted, is the ease of which professional militaries are able to come together and operate,” Garrett said. “It is something that is not replicated in any other profession that I know of. It’s one of those things that is very special about being a servant of our countries.”

FOCUSED ON DEVELOPMENT

Story and Photo by Staff Sgt. Jared Crain

Noncommissioned officers are considered the backbone of the Army. U.S. Army Central had the opportunity to showcase how the U.S. Army develops them during their second Multinational NCO Symposium Aug. 1-5, at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Partner nation NCOs and officers from the Arabian Peninsula, Greater Levant, and Central and South Asia joined USARCENT to discuss and learn how to better develop Soldiers and future NCOs. The symposium was hosted by Command Sgt. Maj. Eric C. Dostie, USARCENT command sergeant major.

“The importance of this symposium is really two-fold,” said Dostie. “One is to get the information across to our partners, and two is just coming together and having professional discussions, meeting with each other, and building relationships. That’s how we get the most value from these type of events.”

Sidney Curtis Sr., USARCENT multilateral events planner, said events like the symposium gives USARCENT the opportunity to meet with its counterparts from the U.S. Central Command area of operations to develop a great working relationship and help partner nations as they continue to develop their NCO Corps.

“We wanted to show the other countries how we develop and mentor our new Soldiers so that they can go back and develop their lower enlisted personnel,” said Curtis.

During the symposium, partner nations observed the U.S. Army’s process of recruiting and training

Soldiers. Participants observed how the U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System operates by touring the NCO Academy’s Basic Leaders Course, Advanced Leaders Course, Senior Leaders Course and Airborne School.

“We were able to show them the U.S. Army method of how we develop our NCO Corps and how we invest a lot of time and resources into building NCOs from the time we recruit them, to the time we pin them sergeant major and the many steps they go through,” said Dostie.

Partnered countries were also briefed on the different development classes and opportunities available to their soldiers in the United States.

“I took many positive things from the symposium,” said Sgt.

1st Class Assylbek Satybaldin, Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Defense special operations office NCO. “Seeing the briefs of other countries and how they develop their NCO Corps was very interesting and very informative.”

Partner nations briefed symposium attendees on the structure of their country’s NCO Corps and how they train and develop future leaders.

“The training was outstanding and a very good opportunity to share ideas and to learn from the others, which can help enhance the way you train your Soldiers and NCOs,” said Sgt. Maj. Mohammad Ismal Mohammad Al-Smadi, sergeant major of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army.



Sgt. Maj. Mohammad Ismal Mohammad Al-Smadi, sergeant major of the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab Army, left, and Command Sgt. Maj. Eric C. Dostie, command sergeant major of U.S. Army Central, participate in discussions during the second Multinational Noncommissioned Officer Symposium Aug. 1-5, 2016, at the U.S. Army Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning, Ga.

Watch The Deck

Story and Photo by Sgt. Jonathan Fernandez

A CH-47 Chinook helicopter flies over the United States Ship Ponce in the clear, blue seas of the Arabian Gulf. The pilot keeps constant communication with crewmembers on board as he prepares to land on deck after flying in from the deep desert of Kuwait.

Aviators from 1st Battalion, 111th Aviation Regiment, a Florida National Guard unit, qualified on landing their Chinook helicopters on the USS Ponce, Aug. 15.

This qualification and exercise with the Navy helps broaden U.S. Army Central's aviation capabilities, said Capt. Andrew Nestor, commander of Delta Company, 1-111th AR and native of St. Augustine, Florida.

The CH-47s can be used to resupply Army and Navy units out at sea.


"We can go out there and resupply them with fuel, ammo and food," he said.

This training not only benefits Army pilots, but also allows Navy crewmembers to work with different types of aircraft, like CH-47s, said Chief Petty Officer Cory Schwisow, a Navy chief working aboard the Ponce.

"It really benefits both the Army and Navy," said Schwisow. "It gives us the chance to practice with aircraft we don't usually work with."

Each pilot lands the helicopter on deck five times for a go/no-go rating. The detailed grading process, with commands from the air-traffic controller on board, ensures the pilots conduct the landing to standard.

The unit, after two days of qualifying, is better prepared to support the USARCENT and CENTCOM mission.

"We're the second National Guard unit to be able to conduct these deck landing qualifications," said Nestor. "It shows our proficiency as an aviation unit." 



A Caring Collaboration

U.S., Kuwaiti Soldiers team up to treat four legged friends

Story and Photos by Sgt. Angela Lorden

Veterinarians from the 72nd Medical Detachment (Veterinary Service Support) and the Kuwait army shared experiences and knowledge at the Kuwait Ministry of Defense's Military Equestrian Ranch, July 17, 2016.

"They have three Kuwait army veterinarians here that we work with on an every-other-week basis doing equine-medicine

work such as colic cases, lameness cases and pregnancy cases," said Maj. Jessica Huwa, the deputy commander and operations officer for the 72nd MED DET (VSS).

This enduring partnership was established around three years ago, said Huwa, a Prosperity, South Carolina, native.

"It increases our capability and it increases their capability," she said. "Together... We're increasing each other's capabilities"

Together, Camp Arifjan and Kuwaiti veterinarians have examined, assessed and treated animals at the ranch. The ranch, owned by the Kuwait military, is home to approximately 70 horses and 30 ponies.

"The Kuwait Ministry of Defense has an amazing equestrian program," Huwa said. "They participate and compete out in the civilian side of the house. They do endurance, jumping and a lot of the horses are used for ceremonial purposes. This center plays a major part in housing the animals as well as providing their veterinary care."

The Soldiers assist the Kuwaitis by providing their veterinary expertise even when they aren't physically there.

Maj. Ashraful Alam, a Bangladesh native and veterinarian with the Kuwait army, said that he sends photographs, x-rays and descriptions of patients and asks the Soldiers for their advice.

"There was a horse suffering from lameness," Alam said. "There was an x-ray that was confusing. They gave us a concrete solution. It was a great help to



Maj. Jessica Huwa, the deputy commander and operations officer for the 72nd Medical Detachment (Veterinary Service Support) provides veterinary care to a horse at the Kuwait Ministry of Defense's Military Equestrian Ranch, July 17, 2016.

us and the patient is now healed."

Capt. Robert Fathke, a Washington, D.C., native and a veterinarian for the 72nd MED DET (VSS) said that working together provides a mutual benefit.

"We help them with any cases they might have and by help, what I really mean is we collaborate with them," Fathke said.


"We have a lot of insight to share with them but they

also have a tremendous amount of insight to share with us. As veterinarians, it's a very rewarding experience for both parties to collaborate with each other and learn from one another."

It's this collaboration that strengthens the relationship between Soldiers and the Kuwaitis, he said.

"We're the United States Army here in Kuwait," Fathke said. "This is an integral effort. It's a very important part of maintaining good relationships with our host nation."

This opportunity is one of the many contributions Army veterinarians make to support the U.S. Army Central's mission at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, Huwa said.

"I think the opportunity should definitely be enduring," Huwa said. "It should be something that future rotations and future veterinary detachments continue to do. It only makes us better." 

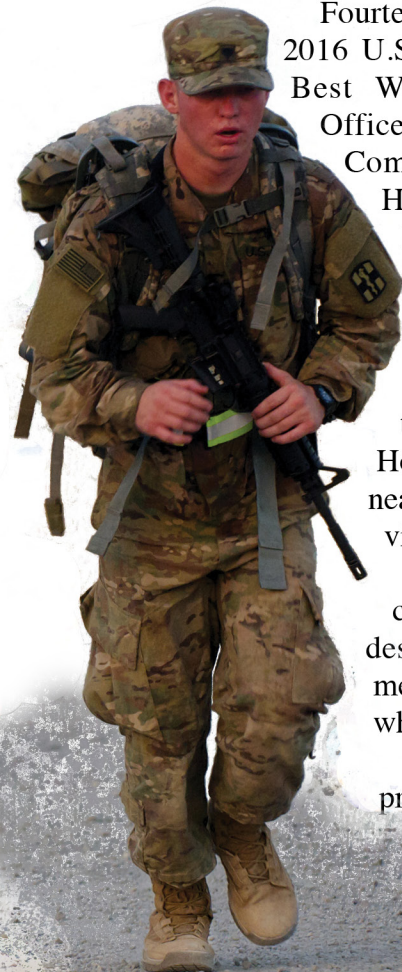


Veterinarians with the 72nd Medical Detachment (Veterinary Service Support) talk with Kuwait Army veterinarians at the Kuwait Ministry of Defense's Military Equestrian Ranch, July 17, 2016.

A Heated Competition

14 Soldiers competed to become 2016 USARCENT Best Warrior

Story and Photos by Sgt. Aaron Ellerman



Fourteen Soldiers faced off at the 2016 U.S. Army Central Command Best Warrior Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year Competition June 19-21. Sgt.

Hunter Bishop, a mental health specialist with the 88th Medical Deployment Support Command, and Spc. Armando Gobel, health care specialist with the 10th Combat Support Hospital, battled temperatures nearing 120 degrees to emerge victorious.

The competition was comprised of multiple events designed to test the Soldiers mental and physical capabilities while focusing on warrior tasks.

“Every competitor has a primary job that they do in the Army,” said Master Sgt.

Raymond Alston, noncommissioned officer in charge of the competition. “They are all Soldiers first and it’s critical for them to be able to excel at performing the basic Army warrior tasks, which is what this competition is all about.”

During the competition, Soldiers completed events that included: a six-mile ruck march, Army Physical Fitness Test, rifle qualification, two physical challenge events, a board appearance, written examination, combatives tournament, and warrior tasks.

Prior to the contest, Soldier-sponsors helped their competitors prepare by mentoring and training with them. The sponsors accompanied their Soldiers throughout the competition, cheering them on and motivating them to push past their limits.

“It’s important to be prepared for this competition because these Soldiers don’t get the chance to do this every day. This really gives them an opportunity to stand out and show all the things they’re capable of outside of their job scope,” said Staff Sgt. Kelly Collins, Soldier sponsor for Spc. Dayanna Sanchez, an operating room specialist with the 53d Head and Neck Surgery Team.

Collins said it was a great opportunity for the

sponsors to teach and learn from their Soldiers while having fun watching them succeed.

Preparation is often the key to success in most things and the competition was no exception.

“I prepared as much as possible for the event but in a competition like this, no matter what you do, it’s always going to be difficult to go above and beyond the standard set,” said Sgt. Giovanni Jimenez, competitor and practical nursing specialist with the 10th Combat Support Hospital.

Today’s Army is faced with constantly evolving operations and readiness is paramount for success in accomplishing the mission.

“For the past 16 years we’ve had operations going on in this region and for us to sustain them we have to stay proficient by constantly training ourselves and our Soldiers in the environment around us so when we come together collectively we can complete our mission,” said Jimenez.

The competition was unique being the only one of its kind held in a deployed environment. Managing an event like this was no small feat and the organizers overcame numerous obstacles to prepare it for the Soldiers.


Alston, who has been involved with events like this for the past seven years, said that it was important to hold this competition here because it keeps Soldiers active, engaged, and motivated.

“We’re training the next generation of the Army, so

I want to make sure they are better than my peers and I. They are the future,” said Alston.

The event promoted education, physical fitness and teamwork even though participants were competing against each other.

“The Soldiers really learned a lot by helping one another study they bettered each other throughout the competition despite having to compete against one another,” said Collins.

The winners will continue on to represent USARCENT at the U.S. Forces Command NCO and Soldier of the Year competition at Fort Bragg, N.C., held later this year. 



Sgt. Giovanni Jimenez, competitor and practical nursing specialist with the 10th Combat Support Hospital, plans a call for fire mission during the 2016 U.S. Army Central Command Best Warrior Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year Competition June 19-21, 2016.

Above: A competitor trots along on a 5k ruck march during the 2016 U.S. Army Central Best Warrior Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year Competition at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, June 19-21, 2016.

Right: A competitor low crawls through an obstacle during a physical challenge event at the 2016 U.S. Army Central Best Warrior Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year Competition held at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, June 19-21, 2016.



Story and Photos by | Sgt. Walter Lowell

IN FOR THE LONG HAUL

What does the U.S. Army do when it has to haul thousands of tons of equipment and vehicles across an ocean to operations in places like the Middle East? It calls upon its fleet of Logistical Support Vessels and Landing Craft Utility vessels.

Each of the Army's sturdy and rugged LSV's has over 10,000 square feet of deck space and has the ability to carry two-dozen M1A1 Abrams tanks. But Sailors do not run them, Soldiers do.

Any number of problems can happen when out to sea with no port in sight. So the Army trains Soldiers to maintain and repair these boats and they are as rugged and sophisticated as the equipment they work.

"We do it all ourselves," said Army Staff Sgt. Jeremy Avery, a watercraft engineer and an auxiliary non-commissioned officer assigned to the 1099th Transportation Detachment deployed to Kuwait. "All of our engineers can work every piece of equipment we have onboard the vessel. We do not have anyone that is specifically specialized in any one thing."

Pvt. Jacob Pivaroff, a watercraft engineer assigned to the 1099th TD, has been working as an engineman on LSV-6 for about six months. Before enlisting in the Army, Pivaroff was not very mechanically inclined but he read an article about Army watercraft and became interested in the program.

"We have to learn all the main systems below deck," said Pivaroff. "I can start the day working on plumbing, before lunch I can be working on electrical and generators, (and) by

close, I can be working on the main engine."

In addition to those systems, Pivaroff said the boat engineers have to be able to make repairs to the boat's hull, the air conditioning, heating and ventilation units, cranes, fire suppression system, water purifier and hydraulics while out to sea.

"Never know what is going to happen," said Spc. Winfield Maynard, a watercraft engineer with the 1099th TD. He has been in the Army for four years as an engineer. "You never expect something to break until it breaks."

Maynard went to college majoring in civil engineering before he enlisted. He has a vast knowledge of both mechanics and boating.

Due to the many complicated components onboard a vessel, engineers are required to take three additional schools after their basic combat training during their careers.

When a Soldier graduates basic, they go to Military Occupation Specialty schools or Advanced Individual Training. Once a Soldier is done with AIT they are what the crew calls a "10-level." From there, the service member can attend schools to develop their skills, said Avery. Each school, 20-school, 30-school and so on, becomes available as they go up in rank. Each school gives Soldiers more qualifications, which allows them to work on more advanced systems.

Avery, Pivaroff, and Maynard have distinct job identifiers. The engineers use this distinction to

delegate different tasks to other engineers.

Soldiers can complete their 10-school before being promoted and repair equipment that is typically worked on by higher-ranking service members.

These three Soldiers serve on LSV-6, the SP4 James A. Loux. Its home port is at Kuwait Naval Base, Kuwait. The beson class vessel is named after SP4 James Arthur Loux, a 21-year-old Soldier, who was killed in action in 1971 serving in Vietnam. The Army posthumously awarded Loux the Silver Star for bravery under fire.

LSV-6 is 273 feet long and 60

feet wide at the beam. It is propelled by two EMD 16-645E2 engines that produce 1,950 horsepower each. The craft can reach speeds over 11 knots, about 13 mph, with a full load and has an approximate range of over 6,000 nautical miles.

"You get to see a lot of different things and places," said Maynard.

He has been to Japan, Korea, Alaska, Washington, Maryland, Virginia, Maine and the Middle East.

Pivaroff shares Maynard's love of traveling.

"I don't hear other mechanics talking about going to more than two countries during deployment," he said jokingly. 🇺🇸



Spc. Dongbina Kwon, a watercraft engineer with the 1099th Transportation Detachment assigned to the SP4 James A. Loux, Logistical Support Vehicle-6, conducts a check of the engine room during a mission in the Persian Gulf March 1, 2016.

DESERT ICE

Story and Photos by Sgt. Brandon Hubbard



Players from the "Blue Team" of the 682nd Engineer Battalion, Minnesota National Guard, pose after winning their first game in the Kuwait City Desert Classic in an overtime shootout, Aug. 6, 2016. The game was part of a friendly tournament with the Kuwait national team to celebrate the winter sport of hockey with Kuwait and reinforce the relationship between the two countries.

After a nine-month deployment, playing a hockey tournament in the Kuwaiti Desert, no matter the 0-15 loss, will be a lasting memory for a battalion of the Minnesota National Guard Soldiers.

The 682nd Engineer Battalion – nicknamed Task Force Wild after the Minnesota Wild of the National Hockey League– played the Kuwait National Hockey Team in the first inaugural Desert Classic tournament Aug. 6 in downtown Kuwait City's Ice Skating Rink.

The tournament pitted three military teams, playing in red, white and blue uniforms supplied by the Kuwait Winter Games Club, in an elimination-format playoff.

It was a hockey dream on a final desert night for the cold-weather Soldiers getting ready to go back home.

"It is kind of surreal," said Sgt. Michael Goette, 24, of St. Paul, Minn. "(Minnesota) is the state of hockey. They came out here, saw we were Task Force Wild and asked if we wanted to play hockey. We didn't even know there was a rink in Kuwait, so it is pretty phenomenal."

The game was organized by U.S. Army Central Host Nation Affairs and Camp Arifjan Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center with the Kuwait Winter Sports Club, who support Kuwaiti national athletes in Olympic and International competition.

Some of the U.S. Soldiers had played hockey in high school, but many of the U.S. players were taking the ice for the first time in the friendly competition. The tournament was limited to light contact and shorter games.

The opening game set the stage for an exciting night.

After being down 5-3 the Blue Team mounted a comeback in the final minutes, tying the game and forcing an overtime shootout. The Blue Team would



A player from the Kuwait National Hockey Team takes a shot during the inaugural Desert Classic in downtown Kuwait City, Aug. 6, 2016.

win the first game in dramatic fashion in front of a packed arena and live on Kuwaiti national television.

Sgt. 1st Class Saara Loch, an operations sergeant in the 682nd Engineer Battalion, was playing her first night on ice as a goalie. When the final shot attempt came down to her, she stood her ground in the goal to win the opening game for the Blue Team.

"It was a once in a lifetime chance," Loch said about playing in the tournament.

Even suiting up was an experience for Loch, who was equipped with goalie pads from the Kuwaiti team before the game.

A teenage Kuwait team equipment manager helped Loch gear up.

"To me, it is really exciting working with the Kuwaiti players and staff," Loch said. "I would have never known how to get any of that stuff on, but the equipment manager just said 'sit' and he got me ready."

Loch said the tournament was a great way to get a break from her work routine and bond with the local Kuwaitis.

The Kuwait National Hockey Team took to the ice



Sgt. 1st Class Saara Loch, operations noncommissioned officer for the 682nd Engineer Battalion, Minnesota National Guard, suits up in goalie pads with the help of a Kuwaiti National Team equipment manager.

with class in the second match, unveiling a rink-width banner with a United States flag saying: "Thank you for your support throughout the years." The two nations have been continuing partners in the Middle East for more than two decades.

The Kuwaiti team showed the skills that make them an International Hockey Federation level team throughout the next two games with a strong offense and stingy defense, slapping an 8-0 win against the U.S. Red Team and winning 15-0 in the championship game against the Blue Team. The outcome was respectable considering in 2011 the Kuwaiti team defeated the Indian National Hockey Team, 39-2.

"We just played hockey in the summer, in the Kuwaiti desert when it is over 100 degrees outside – it was incredible," said Capt. Mike Lovas, the Headquarters and Headquarters Company commander for the 682nd Eng. Bn. "It doesn't matter what the score was. It was a good will event with a partner nation: they are an incredible team – incredible people – and we had a blast."

Hook It Up Haul It Out



Story and Photos by Sgt. Brandon Hubbard



Spc. Daniel Klages hangs out of the belly of a Chinook helicopter, wearing night vision goggles and calling directions to his pilots: two left, one up, down. Soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), 526th Brigade Support Battalion stand on top of a shipping container, Aug. 14, waiting to attach their cargo at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

Klages, a crew chief in Bravo Company of 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, 40th Combat Aviation Brigade, has the unique job of being strapped into the aircraft and physically spotting the cargo hook while it gets seated.

“You are up in the air and knowing you are just hanging out there – it is a pretty cool feeling,” Klages said.

Klages, along with other crew chiefs in his unit, is tasked with harnessing and climbing into the hole – a three-foot-square opening in the Chinook’s floor where the cargo hook is located. Once hanging in place, the crew chief becomes the eyes and ears of the cargo helicopter.

“Crew chiefs direct the helicopter over the load, because the pilots can’t see and so it is all on us to tell them what is going on,” he said.

The Oregon and Washington National Guard units,

who fall under the 40th CAB from the California National Guard, has previously been involved fighting wildfires in the western United States – sling loading a “bambi bucket” full of water from a river onto a burning mountainside.

In Kuwait, the crew faces dust storms and heat while transporting troops to different locations, as well as large artillery and trucks.

“With sling loads, we can take equipment almost anywhere,” Klages said. “We can get critical equipment like Humvees to forward operating bases and drop it off where people need it.”

The capability is a game-changer for U.S. Army Central, who has a 20-nation area of operations.

During the past eight months of deployment, Klages and his fellow crew members have been involved in a variety of operations – even a Helocast training exercise in the Persian Gulf, where the crew practiced

inserting into an area by jumping out of the hovering aircraft.

“We sling load a lot of stuff: guns, Humvees – we had to sling load a Black Hawk while we were here. We can even sling load (another Chinook),” he said. “So, if we have a Chinook go down, we can actually sling load it out.”

For the troops operating on the ground, the added capability is appreciated.

At the most recent sling load training at Camp Buehring, teams from the 101st Airborne Division transportation battalion practiced moving large containers to the flight line for transportation.

“It is very important to the overall mission,” said Sgt. Taler Myrick, of Nashville, Tennessee, and a motor transport operator with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 526th Brigade Support Battalion. “There are times where we can’t drive a load over the distance, but with the helicopter they can extend the range and fly over potentially dangerous areas. It gives us the ability to move our equipment pretty much anywhere we need to go.”



Soldiers from the 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) ready a load for pick-up by the 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, 40th Combat Aviation Brigade, during sling load training Aug. 11, 2016, at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

LESS & TOUGH MORE 'RUFF

Story and Photos by Sgt. Angela Lorden

The phone rang. A woman, Grace MacGregor, answered.

"Grace, I have your dog."

The phone call was from her friend, who was also a coordinator for a rescue organization in the United States. The rescue had shut down a puppy mill in 2010. Among the dogs rescued was a small, black Scottish terrier. He lived in a cage at the unlicensed-breeding facility for five years.



Sgt. 1st Class Melissa Kass, a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) specialist with the 126th Military Police Company holds MacGregor MacGregor, a Scottish terrier Human-Animal Bond dog and Red Cross volunteer, for the first time.

According to the dog's American Kennel Club paperwork, his registered name was MacGregor.

"We found it to be an omen," Grace said. "A MacGregor dog, five years old then, and MacGregor me. He became MacGregor MacGregor."

The small dog then traveled to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, to live out a larger purpose.

MacGregor MacGregor, the Scottish terrier, and Grace MacGregor, the dog's handler, volunteer at the Resiliency Center and the Combat Support Hospital to promote the welfare and resiliency of Servicemembers and civilians stationed at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

"I think MacGregor is another way for the military to care for people," Grace said. "The more people can relax and the more their life while deployed is normalized, the more they are likely to perform at their best," Grace said.

MacGregor's transition from a rescue dog to a volunteer animal began with Grace's participation in a club at Camp Arifjan.

"I was coming out here for Toastmasters," she said. "I was talk-

ing to the Red Cross staff and I mentioned I had a dog. They said, 'Oh, we need one out here so badly.' You can't really have dog living here. People began encouraging me to try and work my way through the paperwork. So I did."

New memorandums of understanding and exceptions to policy had to be written in order for MacGregor to become a Human-Animal Bond dog. He then had to pass a temperament test by the Army.

"The Army does excellent temperament tests for any animals that are going to be in contact with Soldiers," she said. "When he passed, we were able to get the rest of the paperwork wrapped up. A lot of people were involved."

MacGregor became part of the Army's Human-Animal Bond Program. The program, sponsored by the American Red Cross, facilitates animal companionship for Servicemembers, patients, families and visitors. MacGregor also serves as a resiliency mascot for Soldiers.

Master Sgt. Marvin Curtis, the Resiliency Center director and Master Resilience Training program co-

ordinator with the 1st Theater Sustainment Command, said he asked the Red Cross for permission to have MacGregor be the mascot for the Resiliency Team after seeing, first hand, how important the docile dog was to Servicemembers.

"The interesting part was how soothing he is to people," Curtis said. "That goes from privates I saw to O-6's... There's a lot of people, whether they're in the fight or in the rear areas that go through a lot and need support. That's what we try to offer at the resiliency center with the Red Cross."

Grace and MacGregor began providing Soldiers and civilians the opportunity to interact with the furry companion on a weekly basis.

"Early in his life he was not a loved dog," Grace said. "Now he's a loved-by-everybody dog."

Sgt. 1st Class Melissa Kass, a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) specialist with the 126th Military Police Company visited MacGregor for the first time July 1.



MacGregor MacGregor, a Scottish terrier Human-Animal Bond dog and Red Cross volunteer, poses for the camera July 1, 2016. MacGregor volunteers at the Resiliency Center and the Combat Support Hospital to promote the welfare and resiliency of Servicemembers and civilians at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

"Now he's a loved-by-everybody dog."

— Grace MacGregor, Caretaker

"Besides being proven statistically, I think there's something really comforting for Soldiers when they get to pet a dog," Kass said. "There's something about the unconditional love of a dog that eases the soul. All the stresses that go with a deployment, everything melts away. The dog doesn't judge me for anything."

They also began visiting patients and staff at the hospital here.

"With the patient's permission, we put him up on the bed and he just snuggles down so they can scratch him, cuddle him and talk to him," Grace said. "So many people have said when we leave, 'Thank you. I really needed this today.' It does make a difference."

Her husband, William Ostertag, was part of her inspiration to make a difference in Soldier's lives, she said. He passed away in 1999. He rests at the Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

"Sometimes I get a little misty about it," she said. "My husband was an Army colonel. He served his

country for 28 years. He was very much a commander who looked after his troops. It was one of the things I loved about him. I feel like I'm still carrying on part of his legacy."

Soldiers at Camp Arifjan are still part of her family, she said.

"When I look around at these Soldiers, I see the best of America," said Grace. "I see the Army values internalized in the Soldiers. I can come out here and I am unfailingly treated with courtesy and respect."

Grace and MacGregor have weekly scheduled visits at the resiliency center on late Monday afternoons and Friday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

? DID YOU KNOW...

The first official use of dogs for military purposes in the United States was during the Seminole Wars. Hounds were used in the American Civil War to protect, send messages, and guard prisoners. Dogs were also used as mascots in American World War I propaganda and recruiting posters. Today our four-legged friends still carry out vital roles within our ranks.





THE JOURNEY HERE

Story and Photos by Sgt. Jonathan Fernandez

“I came to the United States in political asylum,” said Spc. Dayanna Sanchez, a radiology specialist with the 53rd Head and Neck Surgical Team at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. “A few years later, I joined the Army, and I love it here.”

Sanchez, a native of Havana, Cuba, lives and works citing her family as the driving force of her success.

“I want to see them again,” said Sanchez. “It’s been years since I have seen them and I’m working hard to bring them to the United States, at least to visit.”

She left Cuba a few years after earning her bachelor’s degree in computer science with the goal to progress in her career and life, she recalled.

“She’s never satisfied with achieving just the standard,” said Staff Sgt. Kelly Collins, noncommissioned officer in charge of the 53rd HNST. “She’s always go, go, go. We need more people like that in the Army.”

Her tireless efforts follow her to the workplace.

“I never have to get on

her about doing her Army development courses,” said Collins, an operating room specialist who has known Sanchez for almost two years. “She is very motivated and always looks for other ways to get ahead in the Army and at work.”

Sanchez’ hard work recently afforded her a chance to compete in the U.S. Army Central Soldier and NCO of the Year competition.

“She was tough,” said Spc. Armando Gobel, a health care specialist with the 10th Combat Support Hospital and the 2016 USARCENT Soldier of the year. “We fought during the combative portion of the competition and she didn’t even seem to get tired.”



Sanchez, the only female Soldier participating in the competition, had one of the highest scores among competitors in the Army Physical Fitness Test. She scored a perfect 300 out of 300 possible points.

“When I start working out, I don’t stop,” said Sanchez.

A few of her favorite workouts include high intensity running workouts with sandbags.

“I also take boxing lessons at the gym to change things up,” she said excitedly. “I always have to be doing something.”

Her busy schedule working as a radiology specialist and working out is not enough for the 29 year old. Many of her nights are spent volunteering at the local USO, studying for a second bachelor’s degree and keeping up with her husband in Washington and the rest of her family in Cuba.

At the end of the day, she attributes all of her hard work to her family.

“I often think of my family back home,” she said holding back tears. “I’m doing this for them. I help them whenever I can.”



BUILDING ON WINNING VALUES

Story and Photo by Sgt. Victor Everhart

Physical training is a cornerstone to the foundation of the United States Army, but like any organization you have those who exceed expectations.

Maj. James Taylor, U.S. Army Central information operations exercise planner, is one such individual. He was crowned the National All Military Forces Open Heavyweight Division Champion and said, “The Army pays us to work out, so I gave them their money’s worth.”

Taylor’s physical goals evolved into a lifestyle. Regular visits to the gym turned into a passion.

“The hard work, drive and dedication required to do well and win a body building competition is strenuous and it takes a toll,” said Taylor. “The Army taught me how to work through adversity and how to be positive in the hard times. When I wouldn’t see the results I was expecting I would know that everything would come together because of the time and work I put into it.”

The National Physique Committee National All Military Forces Championships was held in Wilmington, North Carolina, June 10-11 for NPC members on active duty or with prior military service. With six different weight classes and 18 different competitions, there were many different ways for military members to compete. Taylor competed in the men’s bodybuilding heavyweight division with competitors weighing between 198 to 225 pounds.

Taylor wasn’t alone in his endeavor. He had the help of prior body building champion Lt. Col. Anthony Quinn, U.S. Army Central exercise planner.



Maj. James Taylor, U.S. Army Central information operations exercise planner, demonstrates an exercise Aug. 10, 2016, at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., that he believes best benefited his legs to win in the National Physique Committee National All Military Forces Championships. The competition was held in Wilmington, N.C., June 11, 2016.

“What I was able to help him with was posing and nutrition,” said Quinn. “I just wanted to be supportive and give whatever advice I could to help him succeed and achieve his goals.”

“(Lt. Col.) Quinn was a huge help in me winning,” said Taylor. “He showed me how much water to consume, and how to get my body into show shape. The work was done but there’s a few little things you can do to set yourself apart, being able to position your muscles to put the muscle groups in the best position to be displayed is huge and (Lt. Col.) Quinn was pivotal in my success.”

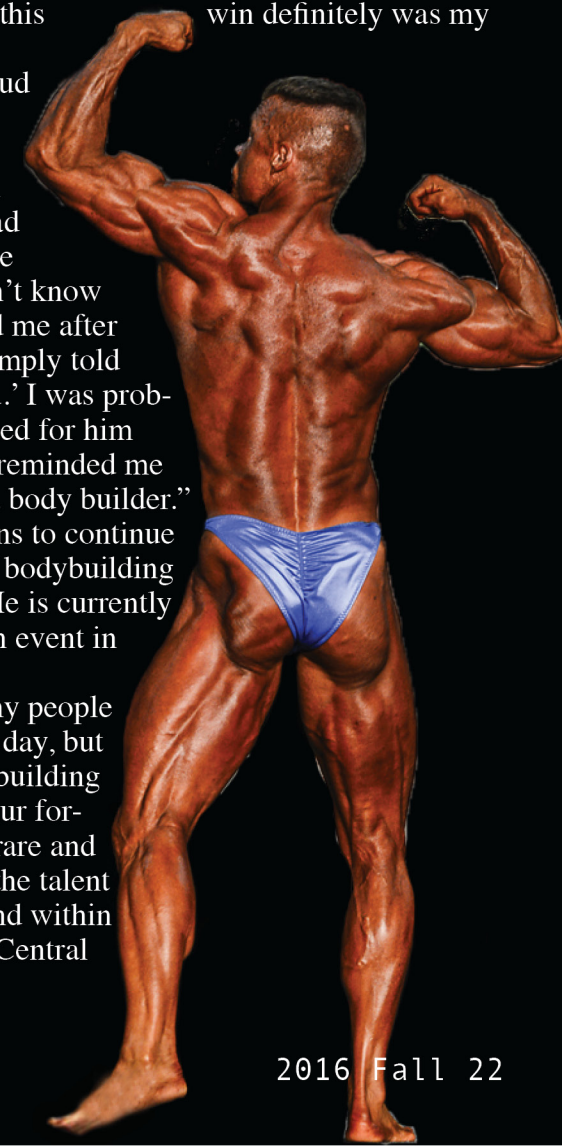
Hard work and dedication coupled with the Army value of teamwork helped Taylor achieve a goal that most people will never enjoy.

“This being my first overall show win was awesome,” said Taylor. “I’ve won honorable for best display of muscle groups and placed well over the last decade but this win definitely was my best.”

“I was proud of James,” said Quinn. “Before the competition I told him he had already won, the judges just didn’t know it yet. He called me after his win and I simply told him, ‘I told you.’ I was probably more excited for him than he was. It reminded me of my days as a body builder.”

Taylor plans to continue participating in bodybuilding competitions. He is currently preparing for an event in May 2017.

In the Army people work out every day, but finding a body building champion in your formation is very rare and only speaks to the talent that can be found within the U.S. Army Central formation.





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Lt. Gen Michael Garrett, the commander of U.S. Army Central, meets with several partner nation military personnel during his travels throughout the U.S. Army Central Command area of operations in the Summer of 2016. Photos by Sgt. Aaron Ellerman and Sgt. Jonathan Fernandez



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Soldiers from the 526th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) wait for a 40th Combat Aviation Brigade Chinook helicopter to fly over them during sling load training Aug. 11, 2016, at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. U.S. Army Central uses the helicopters to move troops and equipment throughout its area of operations. Photo by Sgt. Brandon Hubbard



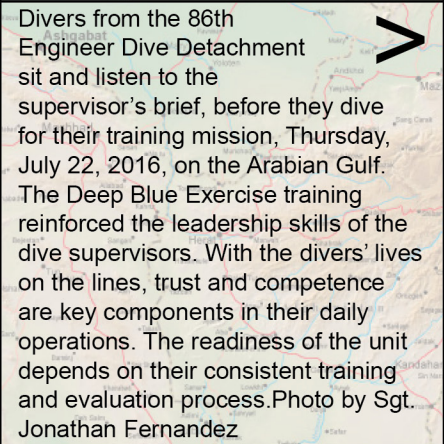
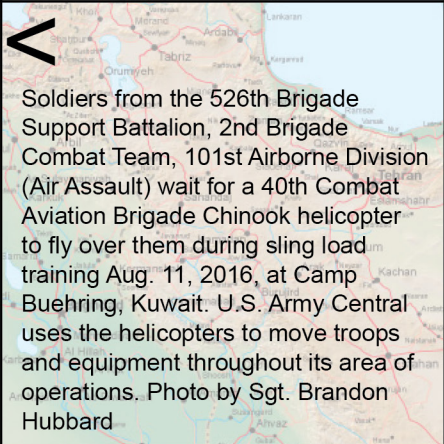
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Troops run a 10k race together in celebration of the U.S. Army's 241st Birthday on June 14, 2016, hosted by the MWR at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Servicemembers from all branches of our Armed Forces showcased their physical readiness by running, rucking and walking in honor of the U.S. Army's Birthday. Photo by Spc. Angela Lorden



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Chief Warrant Officer 2 Zachary Brubaker, from the 1st Armored Division, writes an evaluation of new food items Aug. 3, 2016, at the U.S. Army Central Food Service Management Board at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Testers from the board try new available items for a 28-day rotational menu to be served at dining facilities throughout the Middle East. Photo by Sgt. Brandon Hubbard



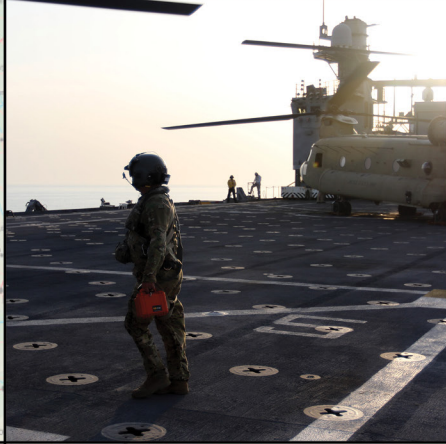
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Divers from the 86th Engineer Dive Detachment sit and listen to the supervisor's brief, before they dive for their training mission, Thursday, July 22, 2016, on the Arabian Gulf. The Deep Blue Exercise training reinforced the leadership skills of the dive supervisors. With the divers' lives on the lines, trust and competence are key components in their daily operations. The readiness of the unit depends on their consistent training and evaluation process. Photo by Sgt. Jonathan Fernandez



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Pilots from 1st Battalion, 111th Aviation Regiment, a Florida National Guard unit, conduct deck landing qualifications on the USNS Ponce, August 15, 2016, on the Arabian Gulf. The purpose of the deck landing qualifications started after a call for U.S. Army aircraft to provide support for Navy vessels operating in the region due to potential maritime threats. Photo by Sgt. Jonathan Fernandez



For these stories and more check out the USARCENT DVIDS page at <https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/USARCENT>

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Country music star Trace Adkins sings into the microphone during a concert to show his support for the United States military at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, as part of the USO's 75th Anniversary Concert Series, June 8, 2016. Adkins also spent time with the troops answering questions, signing autographs and posing for photos. Photo by Spc. Angela Lorden



HERE IT COMES

Family Disaster P

IF YOU EVACUATE

Take with you:

- Medicines and first aid kit
- Flashlight, radio and batteries
- Important documents and cash
- Blankets and extra clothes
- Personal sanitary items
- Any additional items you feel are needed

September is National Preparedness Month

During a disaster is no time to make a plan.
Think ahead and be prepared.

READY ...OR NOT?

Ready ... or Not is a call to action for leaders, Soldiers, Army Civilians and Family members to assess their readiness for what lies ahead - both the known and unknown.

Throughout our professional and personal lives, events happen all around us. We are often able to shape the outcome of those events, but many times we're not. Navigating life's challenges is all about decision-making.

So are **YOU** ready ... or not?

<https://safety.army.mil>

