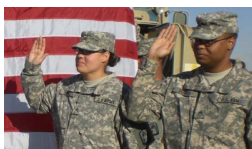


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THE Desert Talon



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Photo by Sgt. Dale Sweetnam

Airborne

Chief Warrant Office 2 Galen Durbin, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force 49, watches the ball pop out of his glove during his team's game on March 8. See Page 7 for more on the opening of softball season.

Tour extended for Task Force 49 HQ

PAO STAFF REPORT

The tour of duty for elements of Fort Wainwright's aviation Task Force 49, which deployed Nov. 17 for eight months, has been extended by five months, according to Department of the Army officials.

They are now expected to redeploy to Alaska in December.

The unit is being extended to retain a fourth aviation brigade headquarters in theater through the end of the year.

"An increased Army priority here, now, will be to ensure we're taking care of the families of those deployed Soldiers," said Maj. Gen. Stephen R. Layfield, U.S. Army Alaska commanding general. "We know they will be facing some hardships, some changes in plans, and we will be there to support them and get them through it," he said.

Task Force 49 sent about 130 Soldiers to Iraq to serve as the Multi-National Corps-Iraq combat aviation brigade headquarters in Balad, providing a full spectrum of combat aviation support to the corps.

Soldiers from the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division; 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment; 6th Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment; Headquarters, U.S. Army Alaska; and the headquarters of U. S. Army Pacific were also assigned to the unit.

"The announcement that the Secretary of Defense had approved an extension of our deployment came as no great surprise," said Col. Chandler "Skip" Sherrell, Task Force 49 commander. "Having fought alongside the other aviation brigades in theater for the past four months, the operational impact of our presence was clear."

See *Extension*, Page 12

2-159 missions range far and wide over Iraq

By SGT. 1ST CLASS ERIC REINHARDT
Task Force 49 PAO

By the time they leave Iraq, the Gunslingers of 2nd Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment (Attack) will have flown more than 20,000 hours throughout Iraq.

As the attack helicopter battalion for Multi-National Corps - Iraq, their mileage covers most of the country.

Unlike other attack helicopter formations in theater, they aren't bound to a specific region. They support operations with coalition forces

anywhere they're needed in Iraq. The aviators of 2-159 fly their AH-64D Apache Longbows on attack missions, ground support, VIP escort, area reconnaissance and convoy escort.

"I've gone everywhere from Nasariyah to [Contingency Operating Base] Speicher, eastern Iraq and out west to the Ramadi area," said Maj. Kit Martin, a plans officer in the battalion's operations section.

Though he's a staff officer, Martin said he's able to spend about a third of his time in the cockpit.

See *Gunslingers*, Page 12



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

Maj. Kit Martin completes pre-flight preparations in the cockpit of an Apache AH-64D Longbow.

Talon 6 sends . . . Making a difference

Soldiers and Families of Task Force 49:

Greetings from an increasingly busy, dusty, and warm Iraq. It has become that time of year here where the big orange ball in the sky has decided to work. Temperatures here have been in the mid-80s recently with some days reaching into the 90s. This is just the beginning of the heat and dust we associate with the summer months. The rainy season that limited some of our flying has gone and now the wind and dust have taken its place. Even amidst the elements your Soldiers are out there day after day accomplishing the mission to the highest standard. I am proud of them as I am sure you are too.

Over the past several weeks operations have picked up in intensity and volume. We have been asked to do more and are meeting that challenge all across Iraq. With several areas of the country facing increasing challenges, I am proud that you all have responded to that call. The President has defined operations in Basra as "a defining moment" for the Iraqi government. Rest assured, Task Force 49 will assist however possible to make operations in Iraq's second largest city successful. When you hear praise from the Iraqi



government for the assistance of U.S. forces, know that you are front and center among those thanked.

As violence has spiked, we once again see, it is Army Aviation that can respond the quickest to threats in theater and can have an immediate impact on decreasing that threat, providing assistance to those in need, and evacuating those wounded. I expect the next several weeks to be just as challenging and know we will

adapt and maintain extended operations until no longer needed.

This past month we also had the opportunity to meet with the new Corps leadership. The Deputy Corps Commanders, Maj. Gen. Flynn and Brig. Gen. Ferriter, both got to spend some time with the Soldiers here in the Task Force. They were very pleased at the job that our Soldiers are doing on a day-to-day basis and sang high praise for the support the Brigade provides to the Corps.

As everyone should know by now, the Task Force Headquarters has been extended here in Iraq. Although this decision has been disheartening, your Soldiers here have picked each other up and are driving on; knowing that we have a mission here to complete. It is my goal as well, as the Army Leadership's intent, to have all Soldiers back home before Christmas. We appreciate the support from all of you, the families, and from the FRG leadership in supporting the Soldiers and each other during this time. Your Soldiers' efforts here are valued, appreciated and making a difference.

One Team! Arctic Talons!
Col. Chandler C. Sherrell
Commander, Task Force 49

Editor's note

Hometown news forms - an easy way to get Soldiers recognized

A Hometown New Release Information form, DD Form 2266, only takes a few minutes to complete, but it's a great way to get Soldiers recognized for their achievements.

Leaders: be sure your Soldiers have the opportunity to fill them out for awards, promotions, re-enlistments, or any other significant milestones in their careers. Participation is voluntary, but remember that it means a lot to loved ones back home to see news of their Soldiers' achievements over here.

The Task Force 49 Public Affairs Office can now submit Hometown New Release forms directly to the Army & Air Force Hometown News Service, based in San Antonio, Texas. The service uses the information you provide on the form to generate news releases and market them to media outlets in the communities listed on the form.

More than 14,000 newspapers, radio stations and television stations subscribe to Hometown's free news service, extending coverage of soldiers to all 50 states and U.S. territories.

That means your Soldiers' achievements get the spotlight where it matters most; in their hometowns where families and friends can see them.

Keeping the American people informed about what their sons, daughters, husbands, wives and friends are doing here is a crucial part of the Army Public Affairs mission, and we need your help to accomplish it.

Please don't hesitate to contact our office if you have any questions or concerns about the Hometown News program.

Task Force 49 Commander
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Task Force 49 Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. Richard A. Mitchell

Task Force 49 Public Affairs Officer
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This issue of The Desert Talon and back issues can be found on the Task Force 49 website at:
http://www.wainwright.army.mil/49TF/BDE_WEB/

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Talon 7 sends . . . Keep up the great work

Well, it's been just over four months since Task Force 49 deployed to Balad Iraq. In that short time we have become a crucial and trusted asset to Multi-National Corps-Iraq. Our missions have taken us to nearly every corner of Iraq, providing vital support to our troops on the ground every day, around the clock. I'm extremely proud of each and every one of you and the amazing things you accomplish each and every day.

This month we learned that the Task Force 49 headquarters is being extended until December. Even though our initial deployment here was to be eight months, the extension comes as no surprise to most of us. We're still fortunate that it's not as long as it could have been. I'm very proud of the way our Soldiers and families have handled the news of the extension. I know we would all like to be able to return to Alaska to be with our families, but in spite of that you're maintaining high morale and professionalism here, while our families and friends back in Alaska are continuing to provide us outstanding support on the homefront.

Because LSA Anaconda is a major logistics hub for Iraq, we get our fair share of VIP visits here. This month, Vice President Cheney stopped here during his recent tour of the Middle East to speak to more than 4,000 Soldiers and Airmen and to express his and President Bush's appreciation for the great work you all do. Last week we also welcomed the new Deputy



Commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq, Brig. Gen. Michael Ferriter, during his visit to our headquarters.

This month we held the 2nd Quarter Brigade Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter Board. I was very impressed by the quality and professionalism of our young Soldiers and NCOs. The competition was very close in both categories, but unfortunately there can be only one winner in each category. The Brigade Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter is Sergeant Elicia Terrell of E Company, 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment. The Brigade Soldier of the Quarter is Specialist Jessica Archuleta of E Company, 2nd Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment. Both the NCO and

Soldier received Army Commendation Medals, certificates of achievement, and \$50 gift certificates from the brigade Family Readiness Group.

I'd like to also congratulate the 77 Soldiers from Task Force Ready and 412th Aviation Support Battalion who were inducted into the NCO Corps during a ceremony at the Sustainer Theater March 28th. The ceremony was a reminder to all of us of the importance of our roles as NCOs and our responsibility to accomplish the mission and take care of our Soldiers. Kudos to the Task Force Ready and 412th ASB for putting together such a great event.

The weather is getting warmer and pretty soon the Iraq summer is going to be upon us. Leaders, make sure you're doing all you can to prevent heat injuries. Make sure your Soldiers are drinking plenty of water and getting enough rest between work and activities.

To our families and friends back home; thank you for your strength and support, it's more important now than ever. I'd also like to thank the Fort Wainwright garrison for all they're doing and taking care of our families back home.

May God bless you, your families, our Soldiers and our great Nation!

Talon 7 Out!
CSM Richard A. Mitchell
Command Sergeant Major
Task Force 49

Task Force 49 NCO and Soldier of the Quarter



Sgt. Elicia Terrell
NCO of the Quarter

Sgt. Elicia Terrell serves as a logistics NCO with E Company, 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment. The Pembroke, N.C., native began her Army career in 1995.

Her deployments include Bosnia, from 1997 to 1998; Baghdad, Iraq, from 2004 to 2005; and her current deployment here at LSA Anaconda where she has

served since July 2007.

She is married to Staff Sgt. Tyrrell Terrell also at LSA Anaconda with the 412th Aviation Support Battalion.

She holds a bachelor's in business from the University of Maryland. Her short-term goal is to be promoted to staff sergeant before leaving Iraq. Her long-term goal is to continue advancing in her military career and to receive a master's degree in marketing.



Spc. Jessica Archuleta
Soldier of the Quarter

Spc. Jessica Archuleta serves as an ammunition specialist with E Company, 2nd Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment.

She joined the Army in 2005. She has been deployed to LSA Anaconda since July 2007.

Her goals are to earn a degree in chemistry and to become an officer

through the Army's Green to Gold program. The Pueblo, Colo., native's interests include skateboarding, rollerblading, snowboarding, soccer and the technical aspects of theater production.

Soldier's project aims to brighten Iraqi smiles

By SGT. 1ST CLASS ERIC REINHARDT
Task Force 49 PAO

Lately, when Capt. Scott Sorquist hears the slogan "support the troops," he thinks of the people back home who are helping him to help the children of Iraq.

Sorquist, who works on Task Force 49's operations staff, has begun a service project to collect donations of basic dental supplies like toothbrushes, floss and toothpaste for Iraqi children.

We might take those things for granted, but Sorquist said he's learned those things can be relatively scarce in the local economy.

After this deployment he's planning to go back to school to become a dentist and go right back into the Army to begin his new profession, hence his interest in the project.

"I wanted to do something related to dentistry," Sorquist said, "and I wanted to help improve the lives of Iraqi children - that was my initial thought."

He has enlisted the help of family and friends from all across the United States. He said his wife, Robin, who's in Alaska with their 8-month-old daughter, Josephine, has been instrumental in building support for the project on the homefront.

"She told friends of hers and they wanted to help through church groups and other organizations," Sorquist said.

He has received packages of dental supplies from a retired couple, Bob and Evie, in Sun City, Ariz., who "adopted" Sorquist through a troop-support program during his last deployment to Iraq in 2005 and sent care packages to him and his Soldiers. When he deployed this time, they asked what they could send. He wrote them back about his project and Evie told her social group, "The Sun City Grannies," and soon a large package of supplies was in the mail.

Sorquist has been involved in the medical profession throughout his military career.

A MEDEVAC pilot by trade and a former enlisted pharmacy specialist, he is on his second tour of Iraq. His first time over here he was a MEDEVAC team leader, based at Forward Operating Base Caldwell in central Iraq, about 10 miles from the Iranian border.

Throughout the school application process, he's been trying to learn as much as he can

about dentistry. He has volunteered with military dentists here at LSA Anaconda and attended professional development classes for Army dentists at Camp Victory in Baghdad. Several local Iraqi dentists also attend the seminars, so it has also been an opportunity to find ways to distribute the supplies to the local community.

"They're the people who would know where dental supplies are needed most in the community," Sorquist said.

In his conversations with the Iraqi dentists, he also found that are eager to learn about new techniques and procedures in the profession.

"They're very interested in what they can learn from us about things like restorative dentistry techniques and possibilities for prosthodontics," he said. "One of the needs they identified is for current dental texts."

He contacted Dr. D. Dennee Thomas, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs at The University of Texas Health Science Center Dental School in San Antonio, Texas - to gauge interest in donating dental textbooks.

"The first shipment of books has already arrived," he said.

Thomas has also informed her colleagues about Sorquist's project, and reports that there's much interest in it.

"A lot of people back home are eager to do something for the people over here," Sorquist said, "so the project keeps growing day by day."



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt
Capt. Scott Sorquist displays some of the donated dental supplies he's received from supporters in the States.



(Above) At a continuing education seminar for U.S. Army and Iraqi dentists March 19 in Baghdad, Capt. Scott Sorquist bags donated dental items to distribute to local children. (Background) Some of the many items donated to the cause.

Married couple re-ups for family

By SGT. DALE SWEETNAM
Task Force 49 PAO

Army life isn't for everyone, but for some Soldiers, it's the only life that makes sense.

On March 5, married Soldiers Staff Sgt. Tyrrell Terrell, 412th Aviation Support Battalion and Sgt. Elicia Terrell, 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment extended their commitment to the Army together.

The Terrells, who are deployed together for the first time, made the decision to reenlist so they can continue to support their four children and eventually provide support for their parents.

The two originally didn't plan to reenlist together. Elicia Terrell had decided to get out to be with the couple's children, but at the last minute, she changed her mind and decided to continue serving her country.

"I decided to reenlist because both of our parents aren't getting any younger and we'll be better off financially to take care of our kids and help our parents," Elicia Terrell said.

By reenlisting, the Terrells truly demonstrated their commitment to the country. Tyrrell Terrell had already deployed three times prior to this tour in Iraq. Elicia Terrell had already deployed twice. Despite all the deployments, the couple felt that the Army was the best life for the family.

"After some long thinking, we decided that it would be best for our family for the both of us continuing to serve the military, to set an example for our children and family," Tyrrell Terrell said.

The Terrells left their children, three girls and one boy ages 7, 10, 11 and 12, behind with their respective biological mothers in Texas and New York.

Although the family has been broken into three different sections, the couple does all it can to stay close to their children.

"I speak to the kids at least twice a week for about 10 minutes each," Tyrrell Terrell said. "We also send them cards weekly and monthly to let them know that they are always in our prayers and thoughts."



Courtesy Photos



(Top) Married Soldiers Staff Sgt. Tyrrell Terrell, 412th Aviation Support Battalion and Sgt. Elicia Terrell, 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment reenlist together during a ceremony on March 5 at LAS Anaconda. The Terrells, deployed together for the first time, didn't originally intend to reenlist together. Elicia had planned to get out. But after some long talks, the couple decided to reenlist together to better provide for their families.

(Left) The Terrells hold their reenlistment flag after their ceremony on March 5th. The couple left behind their four children when they deployed last summer. When they redeploy, the couple plans to reunite with their children and move forward to their next duty station.

Elicia says she misses her children, but she knows how lucky she is to share her deployment with her husband.

"It would have been a lot harder being away from the kids and being away from each other," she said.

The Terrells were originally scheduled to take leave in July, but Elicia Terrell said since it was so close to their unit's redeployment, they decided to pass on the opportunity and just load up on 45 days of leave when they get back to their home station.

When the couple returns to their home station in Germany, they will have not seen their children for 15 months. They will have

missed multiple birthdays, a full year of school and countless holidays, but despite all of these sacrifices, they chose to continue to wear the uniform and continue to defend their country during a time of war.

"I am proud to have served my country, and I will continue to serve with pride, and continue to uphold the Army values now and in life after the military," Tyrrell Terrell said.

Both Terrells said they understand the strain deployments put on their family, but they are convinced their children will grow up stronger individuals having dealt

with sacrifice and loss early in life.

"We want them to grow and to be strong and independent," Elicia Terrell said. "We want them to realize that everything isn't always fair, somebody has to do it."

Tyrrell said he hopes his children learn how important it is to live your life so that others may succeed.

"We want them to always choose the right over the wrong, the good over the bad," Tyrrell Terrell said. "Sometimes you have to make personal sacrifices for others. The easy way is not always the best way to live your life."

Don't be willing to stay 'thrown'

BY CHAPLAIN (CAPT.) CODY VEST
2-159 Chaplain

The story is told that Andrew Jackson's boyhood friends just couldn't understand how he became a famous general and then the President of the United States.

They knew of other men who had greater talent but who never succeeded. One of Jackson's friends said, "Why, Jim Brown, who lived right down the pike from Jackson, was not only smarter but he could throw Andy three times out of four in a wrestling match. But look where Andy is now."

Another friend responded, "How did there happen to be a fourth time? Didn't they usually say three times and out? Sure, they were supposed to, but not Andy. He would never admit he was beat — he would never stay 'thrown.' Jim Brown would get tired, and on the fourth try Andrew

Jackson would throw him and be the winner."

Picking up on that idea, someone has said, "The thing that counts is not how many times you are 'thrown,' but whether you are willing to stay 'thrown.'"



Chaplain
Cody Vest

During this deployment, I would bet that most of you have had several stressful events happen in your lives. You may even be going through a time of trials right now. The truth is, we can not control many of the events in our lives, but we can control how we will react to them.

I just finished reading the book of Genesis. As I studied the life of Joseph, I wondered how I would react in his circumstances. He was sold into slavery by his own brothers then thrown into jail

on false accusations by his master's wife.

He was set back time and time again. But he continued to rely upon

God. He continued to persevere and was eventually made the second in command of Egypt, right under Pharaoh.

Joseph refused to "stay thrown." He looked to see how God was working in his life, and even though life was hard, Joseph focused on Him. When his brothers finally came to Egypt (not knowing Joseph was in charge) and wanted to purchase food during a famine.

Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. He told them not to be afraid of him and his position because, "As for you, you meant to harm me, but God intended it for a good purpose, so he could preserve the lives of many people, as you can see this day." (Genesis 50:20)

When we get wrestled to the ground because of our circumstances, instead of staying down, let's get up, look to where God is working in our lives and what He wants us to learn from the circumstances. What others have intended for evil, He can intend for your good.

Repair shops keep flight gear mission-ready

BY SGT. BRANDON LITTLE
Task Force XII PAO

Imagine having to walk around for hours with a rock in your shoe and not being able to remove it.

An aviator can experience that kind of nagging pain during a mission if a piece of equipment — such as a helmet — needs to be fixed or just doesn't fit properly.

Task Force Ready's Aviation Life Support Equipment shop is responsible for inspecting and repairing this equipment for Task Force 49 and 12th Combat Aviation Brigade aviators. Not only does it ensure the aviators' comfort; it could help save their lives during a mission.

"If a crew member has a helmet that doesn't fit right, or is just uncomfortable, flying around for hours with it on can be unbelievably painful," said Sgt. David Shafer, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the ALSE shop for D Company. "That bad helmet could also fail to protect the pilot during an in-flight emergency."

In addition to servicing their flight gear, the ALSE shop is also responsible for inspecting safety equipment such as seatbelts, fire extinguishers and first aid kits, he said.

Just like most equipment in the military, flight gear



Sgt. David Shafer (left), the noncommissioned officer in charge of the Aviation Life Support Equipment (ALSE) shop for D Company 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, shows a Soldier the proper way to inspect his helmet.

and safety equipment must be inspected on a regular basis to ensure that it is working properly. The ALSE shops in Logistical Support Area Anaconda and Taji are responsible for maintaining this equipment for nearly 500 aviators.

"But in the event something breaks, or needs to be serviced immediately, we'll take the item and try to have it ready to go as soon as possible," said Shafer, a native of Zion, Ill.

D Company's quality assurance and production control NCO, Sgt. 1st Class Jeffery Long, said he's impressed by the ALSE shop's efficiency.

"I think those guys do an awesome job and their turnaround time is unbelievably fast," said Long, a native of Elko, Nev. "They could definitely ask for more time to service the equipment, but they know how important that gear is to the mission; they work overtime to get those aviators back in the air with equipment that works."

Not only does the ALSE shop service their flight gear, and safety equipment, they also show the crew members the proper way to use it.

"We give them the basic class on how to use the equipment and how to perform [preventative

maintenance checks and services] on the gear," said Shafer. "This class is especially helpful to those Soldiers who have been recently cross-trained as door gunners, because many of them have had little interaction with aviation equipment."

During those classes, Shafer also gives them refresher lessons in survival, evasion, resistance and escape tactics.

"We teach them how to egress from the aircraft when they land on water and when the aircraft is underwater," he said. "I also show them cool things like how to take Vaseline gauzes and make a small stove that can provide enough heat to keep a cockpit warm for several hours."

Currently, there is not a specific Military Occupational Specialty for Soldiers who work in ALSE shops; they must train at Fort Rucker, Ala., for several weeks and take additional courses to keep themselves updated with equipment changes, said Long.

"Without the ALSE shop, we couldn't continue to fly the way we do and be safe," said Sgt. Christopher Zedan, a crew chief in A Company, 5th Bn., 158th Avn. Reg. "They do a great job keeping our equipment up to standard and working the way it should."

Spring ushers in softball season

■ Task Force 49 Soldiers combat the stresses of war by taking the field

BY SGT. DALE SWEETNAM
Task Force 49 PAO

There is no shortage of dirt at LSA Anaconda, but add some Soldier athletes equipped with gloves, aluminum bats and softballs, and that dust and dirt becomes a little less dreary.

The Task Force 49 softball team kicked off the season by breezing through the first few rounds of the Combat Sustainment Support Battalion

13th

Annual
Tournament
on March
1 to 2
and
March 8
to 9

before
falling in
the semifinals.

Head coach Capt. Robert Herrera, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force 49, said the team's strong showing in the tournament was just a hint of what's to come.

"The team is performing quite well," Herrera said. "I feel that we will definitely be a contender throughout the season."

The team kicked off the regular season with a win March 15. The Arctic Talons will play every Saturday all the way through May.

Herrera said the opportunity to play softball every weekend not only allows the team to exercise their competitive muscles, it also gives the Soldiers a break from the daily deployment grind.

"Being deployed is tough, especially for those who have families," Herrera said. "Playing softball allows the players to get away from their duties and responsibilities for an hour or two. It is a great way to relieve stress. Playing on our team also allows us to

get to know each other better. We have players that were different units five

"Deployed? I forgot I was deployed Saturday. I don't know about the rest of the team, but it was my best day here yet."

Sgt. Timothy Garrison

months ago and now we are side by side."

Pitcher Sgt. Timothy Garrison, HHC, Task Force 49 said he is grateful that he's getting the chance to play while he's out here.

"We are really fortunate to have this opportunity," he said. "The thought of where I was and how crazy it was that I was playing softball didn't even cross my mind."



Photos by Sgt. Dale Sweetnam

Capt. Jason Swanson, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force 49 scoops up a routine grounder at shortstop during his team's tournament game on March 8 at LSA Anaconda. Following the tournament, the team won its season opener on March 15.

Herrera has a team of 20 plus Soldiers, but he said it won't be a problem distributing bats to all the Soldiers on the team.

"We will try to rotate everyone into the game as the game situation dictates," he said. "Due to the length of the season and our team members pulling missions, duty, etc., our players will have plenty of opportunities to get seasoned."

Herrera said the issues of wins and playing time will all work out in the end; the important thing is that the team gets some time to relax and have fun.

"The team is having a great time playing and practicing together," Herrera said. "We should have a fun, productive season and I encourage HHC Task

Force 49 to come and lend their support to the Arctic Talons."

Perhaps the most important thing about this softball season is that it puts the team somewhere else for a few hours.

Back home, spring training has closed and Major League teams are making their ways to their respective cities to begin the baseball season.

Here, Soldiers are fighting the wind, heat and the long hours to keep the country safe, but for a few hours every Saturday, the heat becomes a little less oppressive, and the sun a little more comforting.

Baseball season has started back home, but softball season has started here.

"Deployed? I forgot I was deployed Saturday," Garrison said. "I don't know about the rest of the team, but it was my best day here yet."



Spc. Becky Haynes, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force 49 takes a cut during her team's game on March 15. HHC won the game 15-0.



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

Gunslingers showcase

The Soldiers of Task Force 49's 2nd Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment took their talent to the stage March 21 to celebrate Women's History Month. Among the talent performing for a packed house at MWR West, (above) Spc. Paris Jerido portrays a young Tina Turner with a dance routine to "Proud Mary." (Right) Spc. Kevin Evans holds down the beat on a cover of Pink Floyd's "Time." Even after the show officially ended, Evans and his bandmates, Staff Sgt. Joseph Fincher on vocals and guitar; 1st Sgt. William Anthony on guitar; Sgt. 1st Class Dighton Bates on bass, kept the crowd rocking with an impromptu encore.



DFAC Soldiers do more than meets the eye

By SGT. DALE SWEETNAM
Task Force 49 PAO

Clicking, counting and watching.

To the untrained eye, these appear to be the only responsibilities of the dining facility staff at Dining Facility 4, but there's more to their mission than the average Soldier sees on a daily basis.

"Everyone who comes in here says all they see the cooks doing is clicking or standing [with the guards], but it's way more than that," said Sgt. 1st Class Shunnie Nuniss, Task Force 49 Brigade Food Service Advisor.

Nuniss said the duties of the dining facility Soldiers include dozens of behind the scene tasks that keep the Soldiers of LSA Anaconda healthy and safe.

Some of the tasks of dining facility Soldiers include monitoring the preparation of the food, monitoring the food setup, supervising the unloading of food trucks, working along side Ugandan guards outside the building and monitoring food distribution.

Spc. David Olson, 2nd Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment, said one of the Soldiers' jobs is to communicate with the third country nationals cooking

the food and make sure they are preparing everything to standard.

"If it doesn't taste right, we have no problem saying you can't serve that," he said.

The dining facility Soldiers are an easy target for criticism, but Nuniss said if it wasn't for her Soldiers and their ability to make on-the-spot corrections and watch for deficiencies in food preparation, the entire mission here at LSA Anaconda would be compromised.

The dining facility staff serves more than 21,000 individuals a day, so it's not hard to imagine how many missions would be adversely affected by contaminated food.

The 24-hour a day operation at DFAC 4 is not the only operation the dining facility staff is responsible for. The 33 Soldiers working under Nuniss also run the Convoy Café and provide food for MEDEVAC Soldiers.

The Soldiers are rotated around the three food locations to give them experience running each area.

Sgt. Jean Lesperance, 412th Aviation Support Battalion, currently provides food for MEDEVAC Soldiers. He said this deployment helps each Soldier get an



Photo by Sgt. Dale Sweetnam

Pfc. Latoya Morning works with a third country national worker as they prepare cheese pizzas for lunch at DFAC 4 March 17.

idea of what goes in to making a dining facility run smoothly.

"We're learning the ins and outs of management," he said. "We're learning how to run a DFAC and how to look for mistakes."

When it comes to hygiene and quality control, Nuniss said any degree of complacency can be devastating. Nuniss makes sure her Soldiers stay

involved in every step of the food preparation process.

While the dining facility Soldiers say they catch their fair share of flack from fellow Soldiers, each dining facility Soldier understands the importance and their job and Nuniss backs them every step of the way.

"Everyone looks at us like we're not doing anything, but we have a very important job here," she said.



Tax rebate answers

By CAPT. KRISTIN HANSEN
Task Force 49 Legal Assistance Officer

Are you eligible for a tax rebate?

Starting in May, the U.S. Treasury will begin sending economic stimulus payments - or tax rebates - to qualifying U.S. households. Eligible singles will receive up to \$600. Married couples will receive up to \$1200, and parents will receive an additional \$300 for each eligible child younger than 17. You may click on this link to estimate how much your rebate should be: <http://www.irs.gov/app/espcc>. You will need your 2007 tax return to use the calculator.

Eligibility requirements

To be eligible for the rebate a person/family must meet the following requirements for 2007:

- * Earned or received \$3,000 in qualifying income;
- * Possess a valid Social Security Number;
- * Cannot be claimed as a dependent or be eligible to be claimed as a dependent on another's tax return.
- * File a 2007 tax return.

Most Task Force 49 service members will meet these qualifications; however, if either you or your spouse files with an ITIN, you may be disqualified.

What do I have to do?

To receive your rebate, all you need to do is file a federal income tax return for 2007. You do not need to calculate the amount of the stimulus payment or submit any special forms. If you qualify, the IRS will automatically figure your rebate and send it to you. The IRS will also send you a notice showing how much your payment will be. Even if you normally do not file a tax return, you must file a 2007 return in order to receive the rebate.

When will I receive my rebate?

Service members serving in a combat zone normally have an automatic 180-day extension to file their taxes after leaving a combat zone. If you were planning on taking advantage of the extension and filing your taxes when you get back to the rear, you can still do so. However, to receive the rebate in 2008, combat zone personnel or their spouses must file a 2007 income tax

return by October 15. If you don't file by October 15, 2008, you can still claim the economic stimulus payment on next year's income tax return and get credit for your rebate in 2009.

If you electronically file your 2007 taxes by April 15, 2008, and use direct deposit, you are considered an early-filer and you will receive your rebate beginning on May 1. The date you will receive your payment is based on the last two digits of your social security number. If your social security number ends in 00 through 20, you'll get your payment on May 2. If your social security number ends in 21-75, you'll get your payment on May 9. If your social security number ends in 76-99, you'll get your payment on May 16. If you mailed in your tax return on a paper form, the payments will be mailed to you between May 2 and July 11.

In sum, if you meet all the requirements and you file your tax return by April 15, watch your bank account in May for a little extra cash to save or spend as you choose. To see the full details on the rebate, take a look at <http://www.irs.gov/irs/article/0,,id=177937,00.html>

Be, Know, Do

Soldiers from 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment and the 412th Aviation Support Battalion are inducted into the Noncommissioned Officer Corps March 28 at the Sustainer Theater.

The ceremony ushered 77 new corporals and sergeants into the NCO ranks and emphasized the importance of their new roles as leaders. In his keynote remarks, Command Sgt. Maj. H. Lee Kennedy, of the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, used examples from American military history to highlight the importance of the NCO charge to accomplish the mission and take care of Soldiers.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

Trouble with 'one-uppers' and grammar

By MAJ. JAMES JONES
Task Force 49 Executive Officer

Again another month has passed and again I find myself helping those who are less fortunate than most to have the common sense to actually ask someone who knows the right answer. This week's questions actually were submitted by fellow readers like you who have too much time on their hands and actually read a column written by another individual who obviously has way too much time on his hands. Please keep the letters and e-mails coming, since I truly enjoy the pure power of influencing the lives of so many in such a short time. Issues are truly my calling since I have so many myself.



Ask the XO

Dear XO,

I have a small problem in my staff section of about 12 Soldiers. I have one Soldier, we will call him "one-upper," who continues to take every comment made and has to outdo it with a story of his own. If someone has a bad day he has had a worse day. If they once caught a 20-pound salmon, he caught a 30-pound salmon. If you have an itch, he has a rash. How do we deal with such a person?

-Fed-up and Frustrated

Dear FF: Wow, a staff section of 12? Please; I once had a staff of 300 and a whole platoon of "one-uppers" in my unit. We used to call them the "upper deck" on account that you always wanted to punch them. And trust me; you don't know what a bad day is. Back in the day we had it so hard it makes today's Army look like the girl scouts. We used to have to ruck-march to PT, just so

we could ruck-march for PT. A 30-pound salmon, Hah! That's nothing. I once caught an 80-pound salmon on 5-pound test. It was so big they couldn't even mount it, 'cause they don't make mounts that big. And you want to talk about a rash; my uncle Fester had a rash so bad it made his junk fall off. We used to call him "the Big Eunuch" on account that he used to pitch in the church league. Got kicked out of a couple of games though, 'cause the rash cream he used to spread all over his body allowed him to put some funky spin on the ball. How do you deal with your problem "one-upper"? That's a tough one, those guys are annoying.

Dear XO,

What is the origin of the flat-top haircut?

-Pvt. 2 Gerald Curl

Dear Jeri Curl: That's a great question. The flat top haircut originated back in the early days when Japanese Samarai, after many cups of sake, would then play a game of who-can-chop-off-the-topknot. Routinely, this game did not end well. But when quarters haven't been minted yet, what other options do you have for a drinking game?

History also tells us that flattops were a prevalent hair style for the early pioneers. These haircuts were usually free of charge whether you wanted one or not. This fashion style seemed to disappear after the first Lenscrafters store opened up west of the Mississippi, when the scalped top became the new fashion; however, they were still free!

Just recently the resurgence of the flat top has manifested itself in today's military. It has been noted that the size of the flat top is usually indirectly

proportional to the size of the man. Not saying they are trying to compensate for anything, just the way it usually works out. The larger the man, usually the smaller the flat top and vice versa; and generally, the older the man the grayer the flat top. Hence the wide gray flat top will be worn by small old guy trying to compensate for something. One only has to look around the military today to see examples of these types. Prominent flat top wearers of today include Lt. Col. McCurry, Lt. Col. Alford, and Col. Edens. Not saying which category they fall into, just that they have flat tops.

Dear XO,

I am thoroughly perplexed at the misuse of today's modern vernacular and the mispronunciation of the common English dialect.

-Edward S. Longworth III

Dear ESL: I couldn't agree much more, its like when someone posepose you a question which is very plexing. Someone posed to me the other day if I had any ideal what the bunyancy was of a water bottle floating on top of the water. I said it depends if there is Algery growing on the bottom or not. You would have thunk I had a third eye grown out of my forehead. The man cud not comprehension what I was speaking to him. He obliviously needs to go back to high school and get into a circulum that learnt him proper English grammars. I felt it is mines and your duty as the edgumacated ones to help them understands.

Please send your questions to:

Maj. James Jones

"Ask the XO"

HHC TF 49

APO AE 09391

Or email them to:

hawktwosix@yahoo.com.



Desert talons

This long-eared owl set up shop in a tree outside Task Force 49 brigade headquarters for a few days in early March. The owl drew dozens of curious Soldiers who came by the tree to take a look at Task Force 49's unexpected guest. Master Sgt. William Nickoloff, who works in the headquarters building, sent a photo of the bird to the United Kingdom-based World Owl Trust, through the website "Owls.org." A representative e-mailed him back, identifying the breed as a long-eared owl and informing him "it will make a lovely little article [for the WOT newsletter] and hopefully it will help our 2,000 members realize ... that there is more to Iraq than a war." Long-eared owls are generally nocturnal animals, making this one's appearance on a sunny afternoon all the more striking.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

Point of View

Conversations offer glimpse of another Iraq

By SGT. 1ST CLASS ERIC REINHARDT
Task Force 49 PAO

As a public affairs NCO for an aviation brigade I've seen large parts of Iraq from the air, but rarely have the opportunity to interact with its citizens. It's been a stark contrast from my deployment to Bosnia, more than a decade ago, where I lived among locals in Sarajevo and even learned enough of their language to get around.

On the fifth anniversary of the Iraq War; however, I was fortunate enough to meet and speak with several Iraqis. All were guests at Camp Victory, attending a professional seminar for U.S. Army dentists, where I was covering a story on a Task Force 49 officer's project to provide dental supplies to Iraqi children. Most of them were in their early 20s, recently out of dental school and beginning their practices in Baghdad. All of them knew they were risking their lives simply by attending an event sponsored by the Americans. They clearly appreciated the opportunity for professional development and fellowship with their American counterparts.

During a lunch break I spoke to a few of them. They told me about their lives in Baghdad and about the war. They

spoke with cold-water honesty, humor, courage and curiosity. In some ways, they reminded me of friends back home at that age: bright, funny, idealistic and determined to make their community a better place. They face steeper odds than my friends and I ever did; however.

They're beginning their careers amid war, violence and uncertainty about their country's future.

One young woman explained to me the fatalism that guides her daily life and practice in Baghdad.

"I know when I leave my house - even to go shopping - it could mean death," she said. "It doesn't stop me. It's important for me to keep living my life anyway and to do my work."

Despite the hardships, she's starting her dental practice, is engaged to be married and has faith that

things will get better.

Another woman told me she appreciated the chance to talk to people outside her community; that it was a kind of therapy for her. She said many people in her neighborhood live with what we would describe as post-traumatic stress disorder.

"We don't really have therapists or psychologists here," she said. "We only have mental hospitals. If you go to get help, people think you're weak or crazy."

So when I have a problem, I usually call my mother. It helps just to talk."

I spoke with a man in his late 30s who has practiced dentistry in Baghdad for more than a decade. He told me about his Shia faith and about one of its central figures, Imam Hussein, a descendent of the Prophet Mohammed and one of Islam's first leaders. He views the 7th century figure as a symbol of peace, rationality and sacrifice for the greater good. He wanted me to know that he believes militants have distorted and twisted Imam Hussein's message to justify their violence.

Perhaps even more importantly, we talked about our families, children and interests and found things in common.

"It is very important when [Soldiers] can learn who we really are; that Iraqis are not all terrorists, criminals and bad people, and that we are hoping for a good future," he said.

And so I found, despite obvious cultural differences, we all share many of the same hopes and values as the Iraqis I spoke to. Their words also revealed the impartial compassion common to medical professionals the world over.

The experience certainly didn't define all the complexities of Iraq and its people, nor was it unique among Soldiers who've met locals here. It was just a snapshot; but it has somehow made my time in Iraq more meaningful.



Sgt. 1st Class Eric Reinhardt

What's on your iPod?

Spc. Racheal Oliveira
HHC, 2-147 AHB

James Blunt - "1973" Because I love his style and sound.

Toby Keith - "American Soldier" Because it brings back the patriot in me on days when I feel the least patriotic.

Scatman John - "Cotton Eyed Joe" This song gets me going no matter how tired I am. I get up and do a jig.

Blue October - "Congratulations" Because we have all experienced this at some point in our lives

Frank Sinatra - "I've Got You Under My Skin" Because it just wouldn't be a complete playlist without Sinatra.



Master Sgt. William Nickoloff
HHC, Task Force 49

Shaggy - "Angel"

Because it's a song I dedicated to my wife before I left for Iraq.

Black Sabbath - "Iron Man" Because I want to be like my hero, Master Sgt.

[Paul] Wayfield [Task Force 49 human resources NCOIC] - the most hardcore runner I know here.

Queen and David Bowie - "Under Pressure" My aunt Dar liked David Bowie, so it reminds me of her.

Evanescence - "Bring Me to Life" Because I think it's got a cool video and it's a good workout song in the gym.

Kid Rock - "Only God Knows" I like the beat and I appreciate that he came to visit us here in Iraq.



Capt. Robert Mullins
HHC, Task Force 49

Otis Redding - "Dock of the Bay" It reminds me of sitting on the beach with a cooler full of Coronas and frozen margaritas.

Kenny Chesney - "Back Where I Come From" It reminds me of college and all of the friends and family I have back in Tennessee.

Frank Sinatra - "Come Fly With Me" 'Cause you can never go wrong with Frank Sinatra.

Jimmy Buffett - "A Pirate Looks at Forty" I'm a pirate at heart! Someday I plan to own a nice power boat, so I can spend my days floating along, catching some sun, looking for "booty."

Alabama - "Dixieland Delight" Just another song that reminds me of being back home.



Gunslingers

Continued from Page 1

"I like to fly," he said. "I've been doing it 14 years and this is my ninth helicopter," he said.

Martin's experience goes well beyond aviation, though. It's the third specialty he's had in his Army career.

"The Army's let me do a lot of things," he said.

He has been a cavalry scout and a communications officer. On his previous tour in Iraq, he was an advisor and liaison officer to the Iraqi National Police commandos – training them how to conduct raids, cordoned searches and checkpoint operations.

That experience serves him well in his current job, planning air support for ground operations with both U.S. and Iraqi forces.

Working with Iraqi forces

Recently, the battalion has provided air support to the 3rd Iraqi Army Division and plans to build on that relationship in the coming months as the Iraqi Army gradually takes over security operations in more parts of the country.

"We work with them when they have an operation coming up," Martin said. "They'll send us the information on it and we'll coordinate with them and provide them cover. We've done a lot of engagements with them."

The coordination is assisted on the ground by U.S. Military Transition Teams working side-by-side with the Iraqi Army.

"The MIT teams have translators and they have direct Iraqi counterparts they work with," Martin said. "One of the biggest things they do is provide that link between the ground and the air."

Extension

Continued from Page 1

"Our Soldiers are making a difference and we know that staying longer will allow us to conduct a thorough handover with another aviation brigade in order to build upon the success we have achieved," he explained.

"We are all disappointed that we will not return as early as we hoped, but we know it is best that we stay until our job is complete," Sherrell said. "We know our families are well supported at home at Fort Wainwright and the community will continue to support them while we are away."

"I could not be more proud of our families and Soldiers for the way they have received this news and the way our Soldiers approach every task, every day," Sherrell said. "We may return home a few months later, but we will make those extra days in theater worthwhile as we leave Iraq more secure and stable for having served here."

Family support officials at Fort Wainwright said they were ready for the announcement.

"We stood up the Family Assistance Center last week," said Randy



Courtesy photo

An Apache takes off after a stop at the Forward Area Rearmament and Refueling Point on LSA Anaconda. Task Force 49 operates the FARP, which services coalition helicopters from all across Iraq.

That link is strengthened further with aviation and ground experience at both ends, according to Martin.

"One of the MIT team leaders is an aviation officer, and I was on the ground last year, and I'm an Apache guy," he said. "It allows us to support the Iraqis on the ground and we've got American units we can interface with to provide us clearance of fire."

Blue to green

One of 2-159's younger pilots also has some varied experience. Warrant Officer 1 Jeffrey Smith was an F-16 crew chief in the Air Force before switching to the Army to become an Apache pilot.

Smith, 25, is from Daleville, Ala., right outside Fort Rucker, where Army flight training takes place.

"I joined the Air Force to kind of get away for a while," he said.

Working on aircraft, but not getting to fly them left him wanting more out of his military career, and so he applied for Army flight training.

"The mission – that's what made me want the Apache," Smith said. "Going out there and hopefully making a difference and hopefully catching some of the bad guys."

At the beginning of the year, Smith was flying escort missions over Baghdad. Lately he's covered more varied airspace in support of ground units. He said he likes being able to make their jobs easier.

"We're their air asset for an allotted amount of time," Smith said. "They can have us go look at anything they need us to."

Blanchard, director of Fort Wainwright's Morale, Welfare, and Recreation office.

Blanchard said he is confident in the FAC team and that most members were here during the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team extension in 2006.

"We're ready to assist families with extension issues as they come up. We're prepared to handle anything," he said.

Once it was determined the unit would be extended, the notification process for families moved very quickly.

Support on the home front

According to Jen Carter, the Family Readiness Group leader for HHC, the response was immediate and the support that families have received from the Army and post agencies has been very impressive.

Carter explained the steps that were taken in the family notification process, and that she was initially contacted by their FRG advisor, Lauri Sherrell, wife of the Task Force 49 commander.

That call was immediately followed by a letter to all the families from Col. Sherrell

As soon as the letter was sent to all the families by e-mail, the phone tree was activated. Within one day of the initial notification, a meeting for the families was held at the chapel.

Numerous agency representatives were at the meeting for the families.

"The CDC provided child care, the ASYMCA provided snacks and talked about the other services they offer," Carter said.

Col. Al Kelly, the USARAK G-3, was at the meeting to represent the USARAK commander.

Carter said he was there to first express the command's commitment to the families and then to let them know help is here to handle any issues.

Others on hand to offer support included Lt. Col. Manley Alford, Task Force 49 rear detachment commander, and Col. Burt Thompson, commander of the 1-25th Stryker Brigade Combat Team.

"The response was so prompt and efficient," Carter said. "Everyone was there with open doors, phones, offering themselves ... it's been excellent."