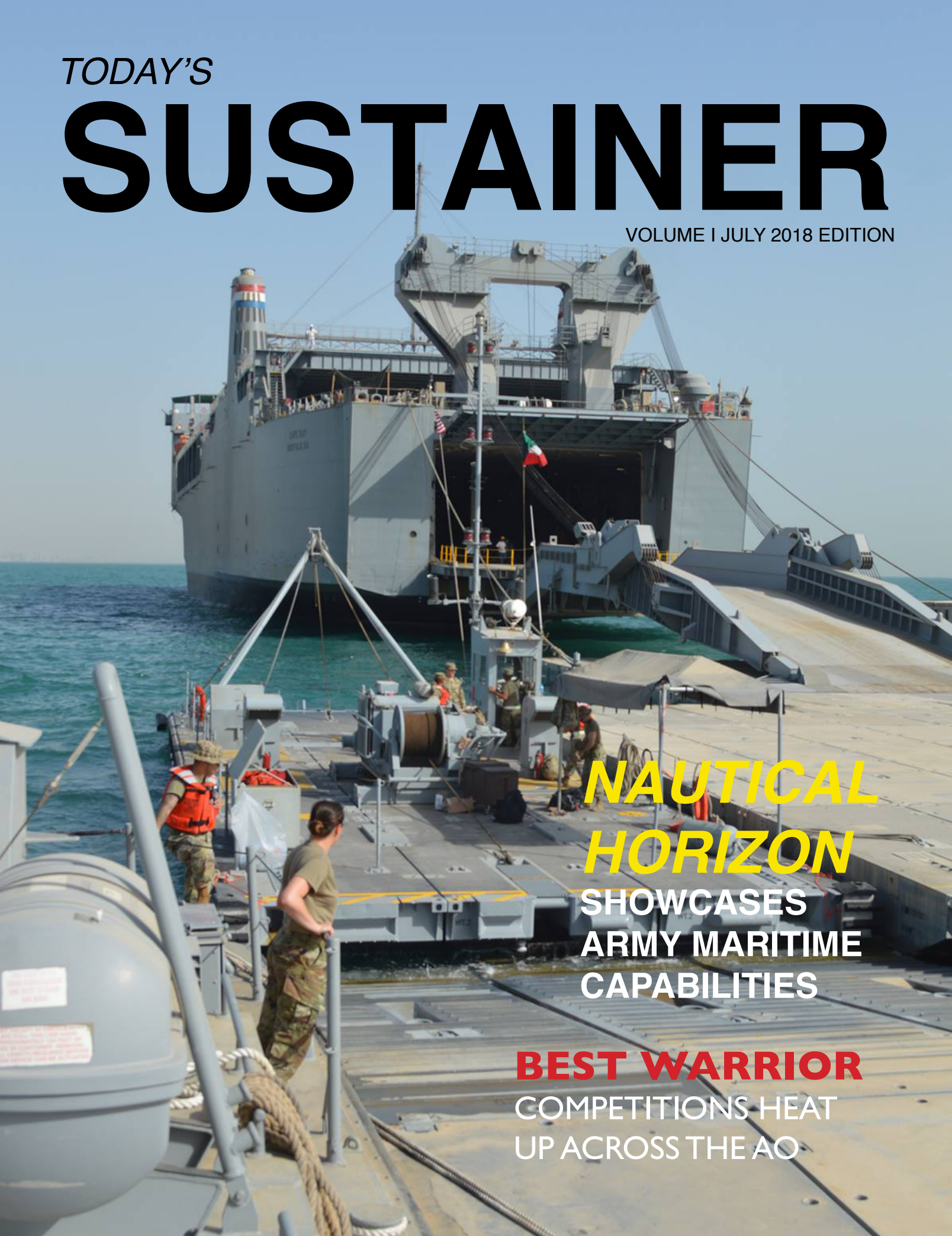
TODAY'S

SUSTAINER

VOLUME I JULY 2018 EDITION



NAUTICAL HORIZON

SHOWCASES ARMY MARITIME CAPABILITIES

BEST WARRIOR

COMPETITIONS HEAT UP ACROSS THE AO



TODAY'S

SUSTAINER

The official publication of the 1st Theater Sustainment Command - OCP, Today's Sustainer invites articles, story ideas, photographs and other material of interest to members of the 1st TSC and its subordinate units. Manuscripts and other correspondence to the editor should be addressed to usarmy.arifjan.1-tsc.mbx.1tsc.ocp-pao@mail.mil. All articles must be submitted electronically or on disk or CD.

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ON THE COVER: Army maritime crews prepare for Roll On/Roll Off operations from the MV Cape Ray in the Persian Gulf during exercise Nautical Horizon June 24. U.S. Army photo by SFC Lisa Rodriguez-Presley

Soldiers competing in the 1st Theater Sustainment Command Best Warrior Competition take another lap during the APFT portion of the competiion. U.S. Army photo by PFC Zoran Raduka

Nautical Horizon

Seafaring sustainers showcase capabilities during seven-week exercise

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Charlotte Reavis
143d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)

SHUAIBA PORT, Kuwait – Boats or military vessels bringing mass amounts of personnel and equipment to a shoreline, like the mental images one gets when thinking D-Day, are usually linked to the Navy. Well, the United States Army also has watercraft and have been using them for years to train and sustain ongoing missions across the world.

One such mission was Nautical Horizon 2018, here, this past month. While the strategic utilization of the Army vessels is not the same as those used by the Navy, the mission of those vessels remains as important- support the warfighter and sustain their needs.

"Nautical Horizon, specifically the LOTS (Logistics Over the Shore) portion brings a very influential spotlight to combat commanders, who in traditional aspects, don't know the Army has watercraft," said Sgt. 1st Class Chase Conner, the Roll-on/Roll-off Discharge Facility platoon sergeant with the 7th Transportation Brigade (Expeditionary), based out of Ft. Eustis, Va. "When higher echelons receive something like redeployment orders, they will not be restricted in their ability to just travel by land or air, they will also understand the Army has these unique capabilities to redeploy their forces or insert their forces into an austere environment if needed."

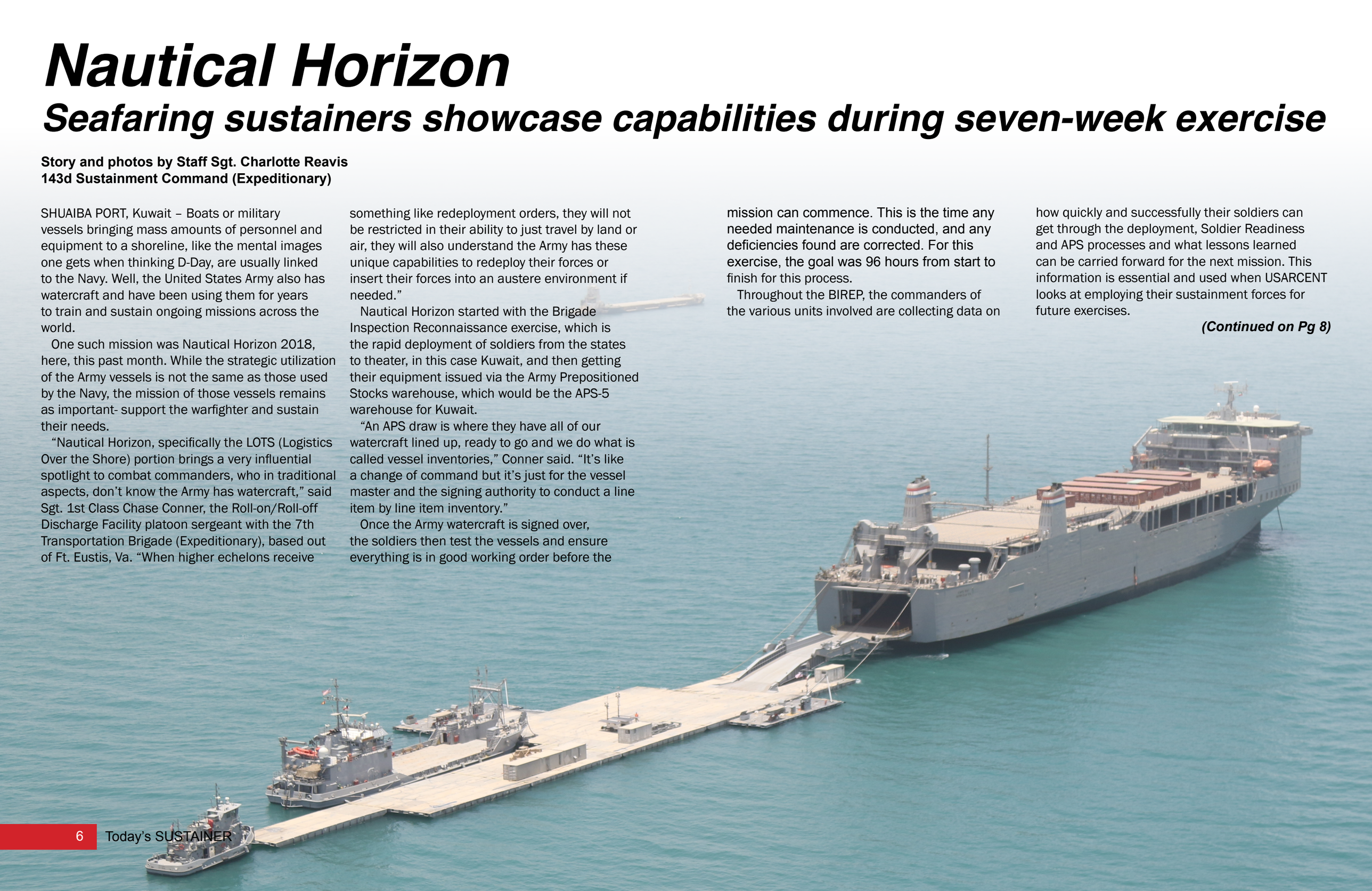
Nautical Horizon started with the Brigade Inspection Reconnaissance exercise, which is the rapid deployment of soldiers from the states to theater, in this case Kuwait, and then getting their equipment issued via the Army Prepositioned Stocks warehouse, which would be the APS-5 warehouse for Kuwait.

"An APS draw is where they have all of our watercraft lined up, ready to go and we do what is called vessel inventories," Conner said. "It's like a change of command but it's just for the vessel master and the signing authority to conduct a line item by line item inventory."

Once the Army watercraft is signed over, the soldiers then test the vessels and ensure everything is in good working order before the mission can commence. This is the time any needed maintenance is conducted, and any deficiencies found are corrected. For this exercise, the goal was 96 hours from start to finish for this process.

Throughout the BIREP, the commanders of the various units involved are collecting data on how quickly and successfully their soldiers can get through the deployment, Soldier Readiness and APS processes and what lessons learned can be carried forward for the next mission. This information is essential and used when USARCENT looks at employing their sustainment forces for future exercises.

(Continued on Pg 8)





Distinguished visitors from the 1st Theater Sustainment Command, Kuwait military and other Coalition Forces came out June 24, to get a first-hand look at the U.S. Army vessels participating in the Logistics-over-the Shore mission.

"Also during Nautical Horizon, in conjunction to the BIREP, we are conducting a Logistics Over the Shore mission," said Lt. Col. Douglas Downs, the Task Force commander for Nautical Horizon with the 38th Sustainment Brigade, based out of Kokomo, Ind. "We are taking equipment that is deploying back to home station, loading it onto an Army watercraft system out to sea and transferring it across the RRDF onto one of the Maritime Strategic Vessels, in this case, the Cape Ray."

Downs continued by clarifying that a LOTS exercise in general is being able to take combat forces and bring them into a degraded port or potentially conducting a beach landing and projecting that force onto land in a very short amount of time. You can bring brigades and division level assets onto land within 24-48 hours with those Army systems rolling off the strategic vessels, fully combat ready, combat loaded and projecting that force into an adversary's area.

Conner and the soldiers of the 7th TBX worked in conjunction with the members of the 38th SB to make all of this happen. They were able to build the RRDF platform with the barge derrick crane ahead of schedule, although some weather and rough waters did factor in when it came time to 'stab' the RRDF onto the MSV and move the vehicles from the Landing Ship Vessel and the Landing Craft Utility over the RRDF platform to the Cape Ray.

"It is a proof of principle that you have all three Army components represented in units that have never worked together, come together in a short amount of time and execute a fairly complex mission," said Downs.

A successful mission like Nautical Horizon 2018 can highlight the ability of the Army's watercraft and allow combat commanders to look at utilizing the vessels as part of their readiness and sustainment operations throughout the entire world.

"Our function is a theater opening asset," said Conner. "We are like a D plus 10 asset and when somebody goes into theater in a situation like D-Day, we are the next ones right behind them to establish a supply chain. A lot of combat commanders don't know that this asset is out there and without these operations, the only time we get used is when someone knows about us."

Nautical Horizon 2018 is setting the stage for a Joint Logistics Over the Shore mission in the planning stages with multiple military components involved. The goal of these exercises is to continue to highlight the sustainment and readiness of today's military, anytime, anywhere.



Military vehicles are moved from the MV Cape Ray to the Roll on/Roll off Discharge Facility June 24.



Video by Master Sgt. Bradley Staggs
38th Sustainment Brigade

Best of the Best

1st Theater Sustainment Command warriors gut it out in competition

Story and video by SFC Lisa Rodriguez-Presley
143d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)

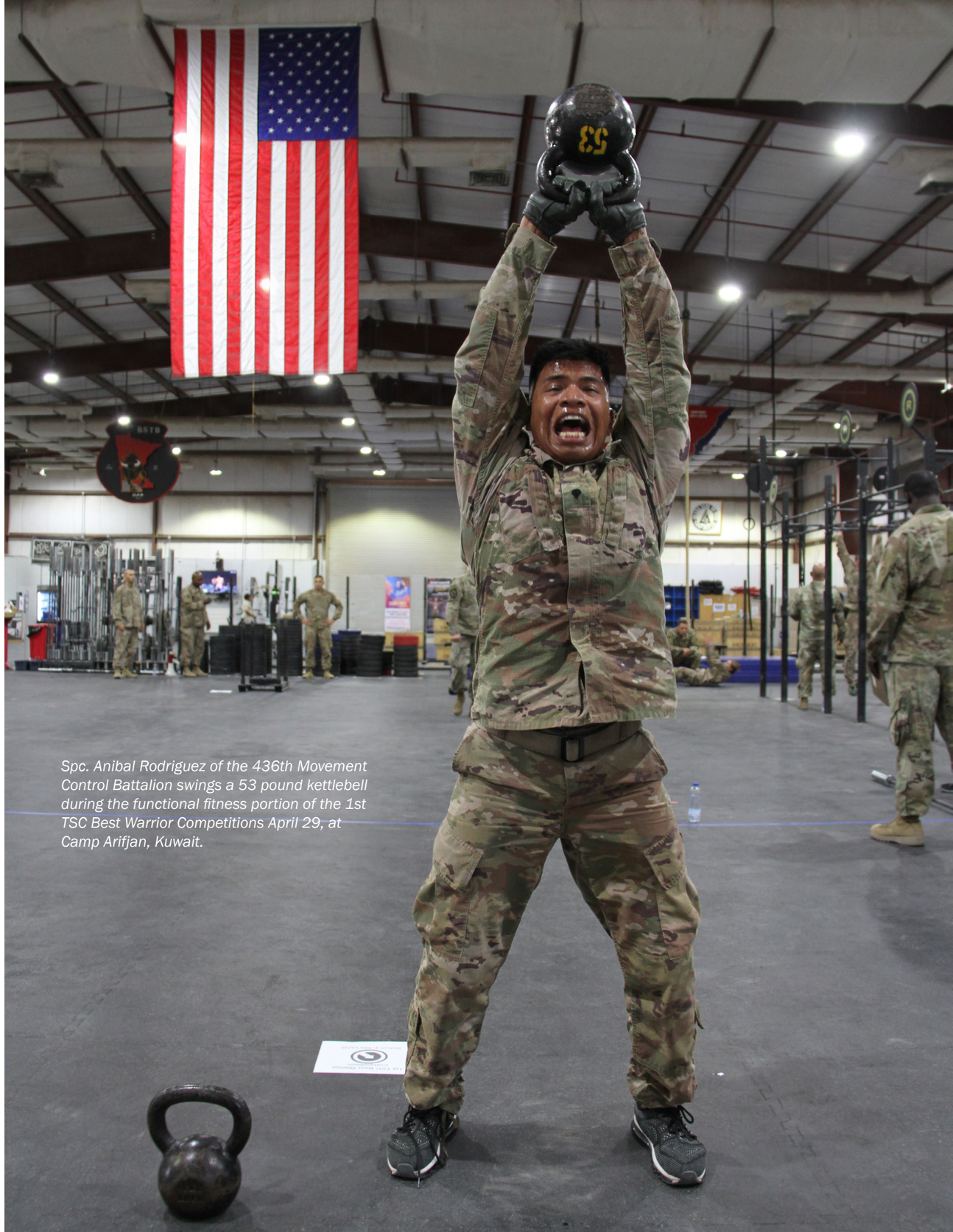
Photos by PFC Zoran Raduka
1st Theater Sustainment Command

CAMP ARIFJAN -- After a physically and mentally challenging four day event, the 1st theater Sustainment Command announced the winners of the 2018 1st TSC Best Warrior Competition in a ceremony at the zone 1 chapel on May 3.

Spc. Austin P. Mellon, of C Troop, 1st Squadron, 124th Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Sinai and Sgt. Zachary K. Green, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 38th Sustainment Brigade were the junior enlisted and non-commissioned officer winners respectively, and will represent the 1st TSC at the U.S. Army Central Command Best Warrior Competition in the coming months.

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Spc. Anibal Rodriguez of the 436th Movement Control Battalion swings a 53 pound kettlebell during the functional fitness portion of the 1st TSC Best Warrior Competitions April 29, at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

"The competition was both mentally and physically challenging," said 1st TSC's Sgt. Maj. Johnny McPeek, one of the competition's organizers. "We really wanted to push the competitors to the limit to ensure that we were sending the most highly qualified soldiers to the next level of competition."

The contest began with an APFT, but that didn't even begin to scratch the surface of what lay ahead for the competitors. In a single day they also completed combatives in full gear, a grueling two-round 10-station functional fitness circuit and warrior tasks and drills lanes training that included donning a full Joint Service Lightweight Integrated Suit Technology (JSLIST) and protective mask to complete events in. The final event of day one was a 200 meter walk through a five-foot deep pool while carrying a rifle overhead.

"Watching them compete is tough," said Sgt. 1st. Class Keith Killgren, one of the soldier's sponsors. "From a physical standpoint this is grueling."

Days two and three proved to be equally demanding, with land navigation, rifle qualification, a 12-mile ruck march with 35 pound ruck, and an appearance board before the command's sergeants major.

While the events were the obvious part of the competition, what can make or break a best warrior is what happens when the events are done, according to Command Sgt. Maj. Carlos Lopes, 1st TSC Operational Command Post Command Sergeant Major.

"Everything is graded," he told the competitors and their sponsors during their initial briefing. "We are looking at what you do when you think no one is looking. When you're in the barracks, when you're at chow, the way you conduct yourselves tells us a lot about who you really are and we only intend to send the best to the next level."

Each of the competitors faced different challenges, from simple things like equipment failures to the mental fatigue that the rapid pace of events provided.

"I had a slight hole in my rucksack," said Mellon, when asked what his biggest challenge was, "and I didn't have a chance to repair it before we started."

For Green the biggest challenge was mental.

"For me it was the mental game," he said. "Bouncing back and forth between all the information the cadre put out – just understanding what was going on and being in the right place at the right time."

While Green and Mellon came out on top, each of the competitors worked hard throughout the competition and represented to 1st TSC well said McPeek.

"Every single competitor brought their A game to this competition," McPeek said. "Their performance just goes to show the skill and determination of the soldiers we have in the 1st TSC."



Sgt Zachary K. Green, swings a kettlebell overhead during the functional fitness portion of the competition.



NCO Winner Sgt Zachary K. Green, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 38th Sustainment Brigade with Command Sgt. Maj. Jason Willett and 1st TSC Commanding General Maj. Gen. Flem B. "Donnie" Walker Jr.



Spc. Austin P. Mellon, of C Troop, 1st Squadron, 124th Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Sinai with Command Sgt. Maj. Jason Willett and 1st TSC Commanding General Maj. Gen. Flem B. "Donnie" Walker Jr.



A member of the Qatar military walks across the air drop bundles being prepared on May 9 to ensure the water loads they are dropping on May 10 are properly secured in the airplane.

RIGGING IT UP

Qatar, U.S. militaries work to strengthen Qatar C-17 air drop capabilities

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Charlotte Reavis
143d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)

AL UDEID AIR BASE, Qatar – Airdrop systems technicians, better known as "riggers," from the 824th Quartermaster Company, along with members of the United States Air Force, the Italian Army, and some U. S. contractors, are working side-by-side with the Qatar military to enhance that nation's air drop capabilities so they can provide additional support to their own military.

"The Qataris are standing up their C-17 program, specifically their C-17 air drop program," said Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Sanders, a member of the 824th Quartermaster Company, Detachment 11. "We were asked to advise and assist them as they did that."

Sanders said this exercise started a few months ago when his detachment was asked to provide support to the Qatar military and advise them on parachute rigging techniques. Once the planning and U.S. personnel needed to advise the various aspects of the air drop were in place, they immediately went to work with the Qatar military.

"The first week, our guys were going to the Qatari's rigger shop and we were demonstrating how to build bundles; just giving them an overview," Sanders said. "We've given them advice on the details of how we do things and why we do things. For example, the different types of parachutes we use; low velocity parachutes for this type of bundle and high velocity parachutes for another type of bundle. Just for their knowledge because they are brand new."

Once the Qatari riggers were familiar with the new techniques, they requested to watch how Sanders and his team worked to see what other methods they

(Continued on pg 17)



Water loads drop from a Qatari C-17 on May 10 as part of a training partnership between U.S. and Qatar forces. The U.S. riggers spent several days working alongside Qatari riggers to assist them in further developing their skills

could use, he said. The two rigging shops on Al Udeid are built differently and provide different ways to set up the materials needed for rigging, so the Qatar military wanted to see the difference in methods used.

"The Qatari riggers came over, watched us rig and helped us rig the bundles to get them training and proficiency," said CW2 Shane Hicks, the commander of the 824th. "My guys joint inspected the load and helped them push it on the aircraft to get it ready to go."

Over the course of the four-week exercise, Sanders said the two militaries worked together and built training bundles using 55-gallon drums, which are normally used for fuel but for this exercise, they filled them with water. They built approximately 125 bundles throughout the month and used 60 of those bundles during their culmination air drop for the Qatar Minister of Defense.

"We conducted the Qataris end mission training event with a culmination of 40 bundles from a C-17 and 20 bundles from 2 C-130 aircraft," Hicks said.

The end training event, which was originally designed to simply drop the bundles, turned into a capabilities demonstration to present to the Qatar Minister of Defense and other high-level personnel of the Qatar military.

The presentation, held May 10, showed off Qatar's full air defense capabilities with various aircraft to include the C-17 and C-130 bundle drops, some ground forces maneuvering, a 'fake' casualty evacuation and a fighter jet escort.

"From a planning perspective, it's been a great time," Sanders said. "All the parties involved, from the C-17 program civilians to the Air Force both locally here at AUAB and the guys that came from the States to the Qatari Air Force and Army; everybody has been working hand in hand."

With the success of the mission, Hicks stated that the Qatari military can have increased confidence in their abilities.

"I think it was a successful airdrop," he said. "There were no malfunctions in any parachutes, and all the commodities would have arrived on the ground safely to support the warfighter."

Sanders and Hicks both stated that the experience was a great one for their soldiers as well. They were happy to see their soldiers integrate in with the Qatar military and enhance their techniques as riggers.

"It's been great nation building and partner building," Sanders said. "The big exercise is over so now they can move into a more sustainable, mission-type focus for the Qataris. This has been a multi-national coalition of partnership, all growing and building and sharing air drop techniques."

Mortuary Affairs: caring for fallen heroes in theater

Story and Photo by Staff Sgt. Charlotte Reavis
143d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary)

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait – It is a sad reality that mortuary affairs is a critical element of theater operations. When U.S. personnel die while deployed, the soldiers of the 1st Theater Sustainment Command- OCP Mortuary Affairs Unit handle the remains with dignity and ensure they are prepared for their final journey home.

"No one wants to think they NEED mortuary affairs," said 1st Theater Sustainment Command-OCP Mortuary Affairs NCO, Master Sgt. Catherine Adams. "Whether its combat related, some sort of freak accident, natural causes; death happens and there's nothing anybody can do about it."

Adams recalls her first deployment fifteen and a half years ago as a fPrivate 1st Class and how scary the experience was as a mortuary affairs soldier. She stated that the processes of mortuary affairs have improved by leaps and bounds and the focus has shifted to preserving forensic evidence to assist in any investigation into ta Soldier's death.

"Policy and techniques have changed a lot since I have been in," she said. "When I arrived in theater in 2003, we received the remains of a fallen soldier and would immediately start to clean the body and process it. Then the regulatory guidance changed and instead of cleaning the remains, we started treating every deceased as a crime scene and preserved the forensic evidence."

This policy change has since allowed the Air Force Medical Examiners at Dover Air Force Base to review the bodies and determine the cause of fatality and assisted with determining what the threats were to soldiers. Now, the mortuary personnel in theater inventory the personal effects, make a tentative identification and ensure all the administrative paperwork is in order.

"Any way that a person can die at home, that doesn't go away just because you're deployed," Adams said. "Those things still happen and we are still responsible for getting them home to their families."

Currently, Adams serves as the senior mortuary affairs advisor for the 1st TSC. It is part of her role to look at the overall operational plan, intelligence threat plans, and how many troops are deployed in the 1TSC's area of operation so that she can calculate and assess the need for mortuary affairs.

Adams said that it is also her responsibility to assist the 'TMAO' and the 1st TSC-OCP personnel by conducting site visits, checking on soldiers and seeing the actual facilities and capabilities mortuary affairs has across theater. She then takes those assessments and presents them to Maj. Gen. Flem B. "Donnie" Walker, the commanding general of the 1st TSC.

"Seeing sites first hand enables us to get a much better picture of the situation we are asking our soldiers to function in," said Capt. Lisa Laughlin, a member of the 1st TSC-MCP. "The TMAO is located at Camp Arifjan but conducts mission analysis and planning for sites all over the area of responsibility."

Laughlin stated that the 1st TSC has mortuary affairs teams, made up of all military branches, spread across ten countries and that some of the teams have as many as ten personnel and some simply have a single liaison officer.

"As the Army is the executive agent for mortuary affairs, we are considered the subject matter expert for all branches," she said.

"As a Department of Defense, (one of the things) we have been developing and trying to validate (is) the capability to process and repatriate contaminated remains," Adams said about the site visits. "I wanted to ensure that the teams on ground and the TMAO knew the most up to date guidance that's out there for the MACRMS (Mortuary Affairs Contaminated Remains Mitigation Site)."



Mortuary affairs staff practice the handling of remains to ensure evidence is preserved for future investigations.

Once they were able to visit several sites across the AOR, both soldiers stated that there was room for improvement when it came to the mortuary affairs mission in theater.

"We are constantly striving for improvement; whether in training or site set up," said Laughlin. "We challenge the NCOs at the sites to set goals that will leave a legacy. Each site is unique and can always be modified to better fit an ever-changing environment."

Adams stated that there are a few things that she hopes to see as the mortuary affairs mission progresses in theater. One thing she would like to see would be better, long standing structures made specifically for the mortuary affairs mission. She stated that there was already a Mortuary Affairs Collection Point designed by another soldier currently being used that would be a great starting point for future structures.

"I would love to be able to say hopefully Mortuary Affairs is going away but it will never go away because, unfortunately, people die," Adams said. She continued to state that building better MA structures in theater would give the opportunity to hand something over to the host nation.

"I think that would be a great way to build rapport and trust with our allies- show them that we care for our deceased this way, and then we want to leave this for you all to care for yours as well," she said. "In my mind, there is no greater thing that you can do for someone."

Laughlin, who is the Field Services Branch Chief for the 1st TSC-MCP, said that she has noticed that the mortuary affairs specialists in theater have proven that their dedication to training has helped make their missions seamless.

"Even deployed, they continue training and rehearsals," she said. "During the execution phase of the mission, there is no time for questions and no room for error. The leaders and soldiers that conduct this mission take extreme pride in the attention to detail and ensuring they get things right for the families."

Although the mission has changed several times since September 11, the overall goal for mortuary affairs has not. Follow the Soldier's creed and their warrior ethos.

"That's the essence of Mortuary Affairs, never leaving a fallen comrade, regardless of what or how they became deceased," Adams said. "We are doing the last great service for our fallen comrade that you can do."

Feeding the masses takes time and talent for RSSB cooks

Story and photos by Sgt. Elizabeth White
3rd Infantry Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan- In the desert of southern Afghanistan, a tiny base hosts hundreds of military personnel, civilians and contractors. The cooks of the 3rd Infantry Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade work long hours every day to provide quality food for them in spite of the austere conditions in the field dining facility.

For a time, one dining facility on Camp Shorab served all of the personnel stationed there. As missions changed and more military personnel were sent to the camp, that facility could barely keep up with the influx.

"Task Force Southwest requested assistance for validating requirements for renovating the DFAC," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Yessenia Johnson, the 3rd Inf. Div. RSSB food advisor. "They were operating a 1000 man facility and we decided they need a 1500 man facility."



Staff Sgt. Warren Dudley (left), a culinary noncommissioned officer, and Spc. Jordan Mulleitner Nguyen, a culinary specialist, both with the 3rd Infantry Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade, discuss the food line up for dinner at Camp Shorab, Afghanistan, Apr. 21. This team of six RSSB Soldiers prepares meals for hundreds of Soldiers, civilians and coalition forces every single day.

The DynCorp International DFAC prepares food for its patrons, but even adding an outdoor seating area couldn't mitigate the large amount of customers that relied on the facility. The RSSB food advisory team saw a need to assist with feeding the populous of Shorab and reduce the load on DynCorp employees.

"To make up for the Security Forces Assistance Brigade's increase in personnel, additional field feeding equipment was needed," Johnson said. "The RSSB was tasked to operate Expeditionary TRICON Kitchen Systems (ETKS) and feed 400 people per meal."

Now, a small team from the RSSB mans the Field Feeding Mess tent, providing breakfast and dinner all week. The team consists of Soldiers who cook, serve food and manage rations.

"At first, you never know what you're going to get coming to a new place," said Spc. Keshone Lisbon, a culinary specialist assigned to the 3rd Inf. Div. RSSB. "I feel like being out here these last couple of months has turned me into a good cook."



Pfc. Janie Peak, a culinary specialist assigned to the 3rd Infantry Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade, pours mashed potatoes into a pan in Camp Shorab, Afghanistan, Apr. 21. Peak works in a tiny Expeditionary TRICON Kitchen System (ETKS) preparing food. To mitigate the effect of an austere base, the RSSB cooks use these kitchen systems to provide the high quality food for hundreds of individuals.

When they first deployed to Afghanistan, these cooks were part of the security platoon for the brigade. For five months, they worked outside of their occupational specialty to protect the United States Forces - Afghanistan compound. When they were called back to their original job, it was a chance to improve themselves in their original specialty.

"I was cooking well in garrison, but I never had the opportunity to cook on a deployment," Lisbon said. "So having that experience, I know it is going to make me a better culinary specialist in the long run."

A primary difference between cooking in garrison versus a deployment is the amount of resources availablefor meal production. The Soldiers cook out of ETKS, roughly half the size of a shipping container, to produce meals for the hundreds of patrons that frequent their feed tent.

While it is a far cry from the functionality of a DFAC, the cooks continue to prepare high-quality meals for the patrons of the ETKS. The RSSB Soldiers make the most out of their situation, knowing that this is an experience they can take back to the states.

Lisbon said that they try to give out the best food in this austere situation. He said that every day they get stronger as a team, and he looks forward to his team being stronger as a whole when they get back to garrison.

3rd Infantry Division RSSB looks SHARP during awareness month training

Story and photos by Sgt. Elizabeth White
3rd Infantry Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan- To continue to bring awareness to the Army's Sexual Harassment/ Assault Response and Prevention Program (SHARP), Soldiers with the 3rd Infantry Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade conducted events throughout April for Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. Events included spin classes, painting, self-defense classes and solariums.

"All these events are geared towards preventing sexual assault," said Sgt. 1st Class Jennifer Darling, the sexual assault response coordinator for the 3rd Inf. Div. RSSB. "Since sexual assault does happen, regardless if you are down range or back home, I think it's a great idea to bring awareness while we are out here."

Building awareness goes both ways for preventing sexual assault. Darling planned solariums to effectively get a pulse on Soldiers' perspectives on SHARP.

"Solariums are discussions to get feedback from the Soldiers to see how the programs are working and what the command can do to improve the program," Darling said. "Rather than take a big class, we take a small group so we can hear the voice of the Soldiers."

Darling went around the Combined Joint Operations Area – Afghanistan, conducting these solariums. She gathered groups ranging from all females to all males, lower and senior enlisted and officers to get a broader perspective on potential improvements they'd like to see to the program.



Capt. Ashleigh Williams Whiteside, the resource manager for the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade, flips Sgt. Corey Sones, a network operations noncommissioned officer for the 3rd Inf. Div. RSSB, during a self-defense class at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, Apr. 10.

"I think it's working, looking at it from 16 years ago when I joined to where we're at now," said Darling. "Back then we were in the reactive phase, but right now we are trying to be proactive."

To help Soldiers be proactive, the brigade put on a self-defense class. During this class, groups of Soldiers could practice escaping from an assault in a safe environment.

"We educated them on the realism on what can happen and provided the class self-defense knowledge through a training environment," said Sgt. Corey Sones, the 3rd Inf. Div. RSSB network operations noncommissioned officer, who taught the self-defense class. "We prepare them against sexual predators and potential dangers while we're out here."

The class included a variety of potential threats, including being pushed to the ground, being choked from behind or from the front, as well as being bear-hugged. Sones ran through each attack, demonstrated how to escape them and concluded the class by doing all the attacks at random to simulate a real threat.

"We did 100 percent drills where the trainer would choke the trainee," he said. "People are not used to being attacked so we wanted to make sure they were knowledgeable on how to escape in a safe manner."



Capt. Victoria Cashio, a behavioral health officer, struggles out of network operations noncommissioned officer Sgt. Corey Sones' bear hug during a self-defense class on Apr. 10 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. The class was given as part of the Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month as a way to promote awareness, provide information about the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program.

As April comes to a close, deployed Soldiers have been taught sexual assault response and prevention, through both physical protection with self-defense and increasing overall awareness of the resources available to them.

"I hope that they did get something out of it this month, however my hope is that sexual assault, sexual harassment awareness isn't only during this month, but every single day they are being proactive in preventing sexual assault in our formation," Darling said.

The Army SHARP continues to develop to combat threats to our Soldiers, civilians and coalition partners, to provide the resources so people can take a stand against sexual assault and harassment.



Deliberate assessment keeps "fires" under control

By Capt. Yifei Zhang
1st Theater Sustainment Command Knowledge Management

In his May periodic assessment, LTG Garrett wrote that in an environment where resources are constrained, "there is a natural inclination to focus on near-term requirements at the expense of long-term objectives." Focus (the most valuable resource of them all) is naturally attracted to the fire burning inches from one's nose. It is difficult to have the presence of mind to remain calm in these situations, suppress the instinct to point and yell, "FIRE!" and ignore the inclination to dash after the nearest water source.

As the Knowledge Management Officer for the 1TSC-OCP, my job is to look at all manners of internal fires: small sparks, unattended cigarette butts, uncontrollable infernos, and ask, "Why?" Or, as I have learned to say, "How is it that this fire has come to burn?" People tend to react badly to the word "Why". It evokes responses such as, "Are you blaming me for the fire?" "Do you question my authority that fetching water is our highest priority at this critical juncture?" Of course not.

I'm looking at the fire and asking "Why?" in order to figure out the underlying conditions which set the spark and allowed it to grow. I want to not only quell this fire, but to prevent future fires. Here's an example that reaches from the squad level all the way to the strategic.

In every unit I've been assigned, there are Soldiers who are universally known as the "go to" people. On the flip side, some units also have Soldiers whom everyone knows to avoid for important tasks, either by their ornery nature or skillset deficiency. I refer to these as "go away" Soldiers. Over time, the "go to" people may accumulate additional duties and start wearing many hats. Leaders trust the "go to" Soldiers to divine intent and accomplish all tasks both stated and implied, so they're usually the first choice for any new tasking. Even when a fire erupts from the ineptitude or nonchalance of the "go away" Soldiers, it sometimes becomes the "go to" Soldier's newest and hottest item of focus, an additional duty to put out the fire.

There are several possible outcomes from this scenario. The best: the "go to" Soldiers will eventually move on to a new duty station, and regardless of a comprehensive and exhaustive RIP process, their absence ripples through the organization. The worst: the "go to" Soldiers burn out and decide to leave the Army for good, taking all their valuable experience and knowledge with them. A positive side-effect of wearing an ever-increasing number of hats is the gradual accumulation of useful skillsets and the perfecting of one's time-management skills. The civilian sector will look at these skills with great interest, and extend offers of higher pay and lower risk of finding oneself in an austere and dangerous environment.

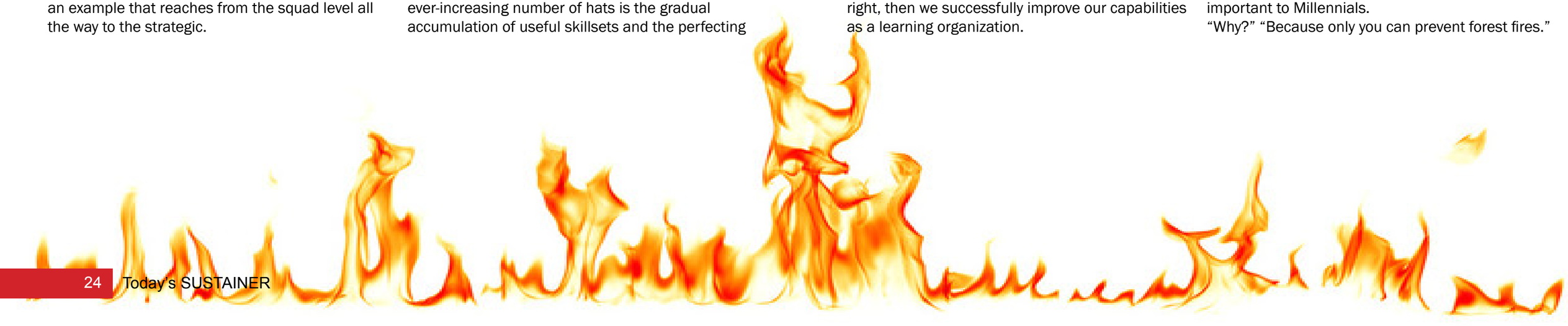
The small, warning fires of allowing "go away" Soldiers to persist in the organization has returned with a vengeance, as the inferno of the organization's retention and talent management woes. And the true tragedy of this story is that very few people start their careers in the military as "go away" Soldiers. They grow into this role over the years as bad habits and low expectations are allowed to set, with years of leadership focused only on the immediate fire and not the underlying cause.

At the heart of Knowledge Management is a process called ADDPI: Assess, Design, Develop, Pilot, and Implement. This process is cyclical, so after an implement phase is another assessment phase. The 'assessment' phase is the most critical piece of the "(ADD)-pie". If we get that phase wrong, then we end up spending our precious focus to solve either a superficial issue, or the wrong issue altogether. But if we get this process right, then we successfully improve our capabilities as a learning organization.

I am often approached by well-intentioned people who have skipped right past the 'assess' and 'design' phases and have a fully-formed solution in their minds. They come to me to help them build and develop a tool. This is a very natural and human thing to do. Tools put out fires. Tools are concrete steps that people can look at and say, "This person is working diligently to put out fires." But much as a technophile like me hates to admit it, tools are often short-term solutions geared towards the immediate fire. Organizational culture, defined and enforced processes, and the discipline, morale, and training of people – these are the answers to the underlying cause.

Without deliberate assessment, we end up with ad-hoc, patchwork fixes that temporarily puts out the fire but leaves kindling strewn all about. As a new fire appears on our noses and we pivot attention to engage it, we leave the conditions ripe for the original problem to resurface and claim more of our focus. Honest and deliberate assessment in the heat of the moment is difficult and contrary to our instincts. But the only way out of this vicious cycle is to going back to the start and asking that 3-letter word that's oh-so-important to Millennials.

"Why?" "Because only you can prevent forest fires."



Alabama unit rolls in, assumes command of Task Force Grizzly

Story by Capt. Brian Hare
787th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – The outgoing 275th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion relinquished command to the 787th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion during a transfer of authority ceremony May 5.

Headquartered in Dothan, Alabama, the 787th CSSB works with the units under their operational control as Task Force Grizzly, a task force that will provide sustainment support to U.S. and Coalition Forces in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

"We're prepared to go the extra mile," said Lt. Col. Craig Roberts, 787th CSSB, commander. "We've come a long way, we have a long way to go, but I am confident that we will embrace this mission with a Grizzly embrace."

Along with Roberts, speakers at the ceremony included Col. Kimberly Martindale, commander of the 38th Sustainment Brigade, and Lt. Col. Daniel Tilton, commander of the 275th CSSB. Brig. Gen. Deborah Kotulich, deputy commanding general, 1st Theatre Sustainment Command-Operational Command Post was among the special guests in attendance

In preparation for their deployment, the 787th CSSB embarked on an intensive two-week training exercise in February at Fort Rucker, Alabama that included events such as range operations, squad tactics, and an extensive land navigation course, among others.

The Soldiers of Task Force Grizzly conducted operations in the field, sleeping in tents during the entire exercise at Fort Rucker, which helped them acclimate to the stresses involved with having to function in an austere environment on a continual basis.

Pfc. Ryan Ramsammy, a Task Force Grizzly Soldier experiencing his first deployment, remarked on the two-week training at Fort Rucker as being an important team building event for the 787th.

"We all worked well together, which is always a good thing before a deployment," said Ramsammy. "It gave me time to get a little closer to my teammates and get to know everyone better."

In March, the 787th CSSB continued their mobilization process at Fort Hood, Texas, completing individual and group tasks such as language and cultural training, as well as familiarization with the logistical and automation systems the unit is required to operate in theater.

Mobilization training for the 787th CSSB at Fort Hood included a Culminating Training Event (CTE) consisting of scenarios the unit would be likely to encounter while conducting real-world sustainment operations. Many of the CTE scenarios required the 787th CSSB staff to utilize the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) to determine best courses of action, said Capt. Ciera Jackson, a staff officer with Task Force Grizzly.

"The culminating training event provided an opportunity for Officer and NCO professional development and it forced the team to think outside the box, especially when it came to MDMP," said Jackson.

The unit was officially certified by a Fort Hood evaluation team as being ready to embark on their mission upon conclusion of the CTE.

"We are the Grizzly Battalion," said Roberts. "Like the Grizzly who is mean, fierce, hunts and attacks with relentless tenacity, as is the professionalism, readiness, commitment and dedication of our Battalion."

The Soldiers of Task Force Grizzly will be deployed in theater for approximately one year.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

By Chaplain Terry Jones

Fridays, we get usually get the morning off for "resiliency." Time to have a more relaxed morning, do my laundry, clean my living area and complete any errands. Usually, I get a few hours to read or write home. We all appreciate this "benefit" knowing that in past rotations or in hot combat zones, there is no time off. In this way, "down time" can be very situational.

This morning, on my way to breakfast I noticed a new neighbor. We have a Starbucks next to our living area but it was closed for renovations since before I arrived. Today, I saw that open sign and knew my resiliency day went up a notch.

Now I sit with a caffe mocha, thanks to my friend Steve Meints who sent me a gift card last month. Thanks Steve! I have a nice chair, copy of Stars and Stripes newpaper and my ipad ready to access free wifi. I feel elated for this taste of normalcy.



As I enjoyed my first sip, a fellow LTC civil affairs officer came in from my unit and I bought him a cup of coffee too. We sat for an hour discussing the Iraq elections and air drops by riggers in Afghanistan. I suppose the latter wasn't "normal" for a weekend in America, but conversation with a friend over coffee, without a pending presentation was enjoyable.

The Starbuck staff were so friendly and my coffee tasted just like home. The first familiar coffee I've had since arriving. I'm not the biggest fan of the dining facility coffee, but who can complain if it is caffeine.

Last week, I sent a VGA cable to a fellow chaplain in Syria. He stood up a "chapel in a box" in a new location. He had everything for Sunday worship including a laptop and projector but somehow the cord from the laptop to the projector went missing. Our IT section found an extra in our supplies and the coveted cord went out in the APO mail the next morning. Needless to say, that chaplain isn't enjoying Starbucks today because of the austerity of his location. So I'm counting my blessings and considering how I can multiply what I've been given to others.

We often fail to appreciate how much gratitude is tied to expectations. At home, I may not think twice about my cup of coffee. In Kuwait, I might not think twice about a VGA cord. And in Syria, we often don't think twice about electricity while local villiagers just outside live on top of ruble, compliments of ISIS. And so, I am reminded today to set my expectations in view of what I do have instead of what I wish I had. I realize that my cup over-flows.

Real Life

Soldiers discuss married, single relationships in the military

Story and photos by Sgt. Elizabeth White
3rd Infantry Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan- The 3rd Infantry Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade held single and married Soldier forums to prepare them for reintegration upon redeployment.

“The purpose of the married forum was to provide marital tools and ideas on ways to reconnect with spouses when we get home,” said Capt. Victoria Cashio, the behavioral health officer with the 3rd Inf. Div. RSSB. “For the single Soldiers, it was a discussion about healthy relationships and challenges of being single in the military.”

On May 29, a small group of single Soldiers gathered around a bonfire to roast s’mores and talk about their experiences being single in the military. Cashio and the brigade and Special Troops Battalion chaplain assistants helped facilitate the event, and were able to offer their perspectives on the transition from being single to getting married.

“A couple of married individuals gave their perspectives,” Cashio said. “[We] tried to put a lot of thought into the event, with ideas and discussions people wanted to hear and offer each other, and get each other’s opinions.”

The Soldiers who attended the event were able to talk openly about their experiences while enjoying the relaxed nature of the forum.

“I enjoyed the scenery, the bonfire and s’mores while discussing our thoughts,” said Sgt. Kieara Hill, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company orderly room, STB, 3rd Inf. Div. RSSB. “I attended the event to hear other opinions and views about how they feel on being single and dating.”

While the singles event was more relaxed and open-ended, the married Soldier forum was more formal, with dinner and discussion at one of the dining facilities on Bagram.

Cashio helped lead the forum and talked to married individuals about their expectations going home to their spouses and gave them methods to navigate through reintegrating with their families.

“We gave them tools and ideas on ways to reconnect through reintegration, the honeymoon period and to normalcy,” she said. “We gave them something actionable to put the skills we taught them to work, such as a 20 questions-type game for spouses.”

“I learned that there are multiple ways to approach certain aspects of your marriage such as different love languages that you and your spouse wouldn’t have the same,” said Sgt. Caroline Robinson-Gray, the senior information technician with the 3rd Inf. Div. RSSB. “If we held a similar event in the rear I would want to attend it with my spouse.”

Whether it was tools to help reconnect with spouses or advice shared around a bonfire, the Soldiers were able to use each other’s experiences and gain valuable lessons for their personal lives.

“I learned that you should stay true to yourself,” Hill said. “If you want to be in a relationship it will come, until then, live your life.”



Soldiers with Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade sit around a bonfire while eating s’mores during a single Soldier forum at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, May 29. The Soldiers discussed relationships and challenges of being single in the military.


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