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Issue 10

The Desert Raven



Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire speaks with Cpl. Jerame Smith from Walla Walla, Wash., with Bravo Company, 1-161st Infantry (Combined Arms Battalion), 81st Brigade Combat Team, Washington Army National Guard, Jan. 7, 2009 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. Gregoire traveled to Baghdad, Ramadi and Balad during her two-day trip to Iraq to see Washington Soldiers. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)

Gov. Gregoire visits 81st Soldiers in Iraq

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Message from 81st BCT Commander

By Col. Ronald Kapral
81st BCT commander

Well the holidays are over and a New Year has begun. If we were home, many of us would have made some New Year's resolutions, and by now, many would have broken them. I would like to challenge each and every Soldier to let 2009 be different. You have the opportunity to make positive changes in your lives.

Our mission here will always be the number one priority, and we must never forget that, nor let our guard down. However, in your down time there are a number of opportunities for you to explore.

Take advantage of the online college classes that are available to all Soldiers. Start on that degree program. Not only do your college credits count toward that degree, but they give you valuable promotion points.

The Army offers a wide range of correspondence courses within your MOS. You can also learn more advanced training in other areas. Continue your professional knowledge and development.

Company grade officers, now is the time to enroll in your Commander Career Course and complete the correspondence phase. Funding for Reserve Component officers to attend the long course will be extremely limited, if available at all.

Later this month the brigade's leadership will build the 2010 training year plan. The focus will be to get Soldiers into their NCOES schools while building crews to perform our heavy mission. It will be a challenging year that will force us to relearn the necessary skills needed to operate and maintain our tanks, Bradleys and Paladins. Soldiers who need NCOES schools in TY 10 need to be programmed early to ensure we have the funding and the school slots. This also applies to the Career Captain's Course.

The Soldiers of this brigade are doing an outstanding job. Our missions are being completed and Soldiers are continuing to demonstrate distinguished performances on a daily basis. Don't let up. Continue to train hard and be ready for all contingencies. The road home is long and dangerous, but together we will make it. 



Message from 81st BCT Command Sergeant Major

By Command Sgt. Maj.
Robert Sweeney
81st BCT Command Sgt. Maj.

Department of the Army has announced that 2009 is "The Year of the NCO", a time to enhance the education, fitness, leadership and pride in service of our NCOs.

If the Army needs any examples of good NCOs, all they have to do is drop in on any unit of the 81st BCT and they will see some of the best NCOs hard at work, accomplishing the many missions that come their way, and most importantly taking care of Soldiers!

The accomplishment of our brigade and the Army rests squarely on the shoulders of our NCO corps and that is why the NCO corps is



referred to as "The backbone of the Army". I am most proud of the efforts put forth by our young sergeants and staff sergeants. The position of responsibility and leadership of our junior NCO level is tremendous. To learn and execute while in a combat environment is a great credit to them, and to the leaders they serve under!

The month of January also means the beginning of R&R for

some of our Soldiers. A reminder to all, there is always the possibility that not everyone is going to be afforded the privilege to go on R&R. It is a privilege and not a right.

Remember when traveling home, you are still a Soldier and I expect you to act accordingly. Think before you act and ask yourself, "will the actions I am about to take reflect poorly on me, the Soldier?" If the answer is yes, then don't do it.

If you arrive at home and things have changed, please do the right thing. Walk away, seek some advice and deal with the situation wisely. Please pass on our warmest regards from the command group to your family and friends, for you are in our thoughts and prayers daily. 



Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire visits with Charlie Troop, 1-303rd Cav., Jan. 6, 2009 in Baghdad. Gregoire visited Baghdad, Ramadi and Balad during her two-day trip to Iraq to see Washington Soldiers. (Photo courtesy of C Trp, 1-303rd Cav.)

Gov. Gregoire visits the 81st BCT in Iraq

By Sgt. Emily Suhr
81st BCT Public Affairs

Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire visited Soldiers from the 81st Brigade Combat Team, serving in Iraq Jan. 6 and 7.

During her two-day trip, Gregoire visited Soldiers stationed in Baghdad, Ramadi and Balad.

"The purpose [for this visit]," said Gregoire, "is to come here in person, see what it's like, have a much better understanding of what you do, and bring it back to the people of Washington."

While in Iraq, Gregoire got a chance to meet with hundreds of Soldiers from across Washington. She made a point to greet as many as she could individually, and offered support and kind words to gathered groups of Washington servicemembers at each base.

"I come on behalf of Washington to say thank you," she said.

She brought news from home to the Soldiers of the 81st BCT, who have been mobilized since mid-August, of low gas prices and high snow banks.

"I have lived in Washington my whole life and never seen weather like this," she said.

She also addressed Soldiers questions and spoke frankly about the state of the economy in Washington and what that would mean for returning citizen-Soldiers. She spoke of stimulus packages and programs designed

to help Soldiers find civilian careers, such as Helmets to Hard Hats.

"We're going to get through it," assured the governor. "We're going to recover."

Gregoire got a chance to see how the Soldiers lived and see first hand the things they are doing in Iraq. She expressed pride and thanks to her Soldiers.

"Thank you for your service to our country. We look forward to welcoming each and every one of you back home; and we look forward to you finding that when you come home,

the welcome mat will be out. We will [assist you in finding] a job and we will take care of your loved ones while you're away."

She spoke of her husband and how excited both he and she were to welcome the 81st BCT home in August. She promised the Soldiers of Washington that their return from Iraq would be different from the reception the first gentleman received when returning from Vietnam.

"We'll make sure you get the respect, thanks, praise and honor you deserve," she said. 🇺🇸



Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire greets Sgt. Richard Hall from HQ Co., 81st BCT, Jan. 7, 2009 at Camp Ramadi, Iraq. Gregoire traveled to Baghdad, Ramadi and Balad during her two-day trip to Iraq to see Washington Soldiers. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



Wash. TAG and SCSM visit with the 81st

By Sgt. Emily Suhr
81st BCT Public Affairs

Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Lowenberg, the Adjutant General for the Washington National Guard, and Army State Command Sgt. Maj. Kim S. May, the State Command Sergeant Major for the Washington National Guard, visited troops from the 81st Brigade Combat Team, based out of Camp Murray, Wash., Dec. 28 and 29 in Iraq.

During Lowenberg's two-day trip, he was able to meet with Soldiers from Headquarters Company, 81st BCT in Ramadi and 1-161st Infantry (Combined Arms Battalion) in Balad. He spoke to Soldiers about issues from the home front, such as family and Soldier care, TriCare benefits and the economy back home.

The worsening economy in Washington was a concern for many Soldiers.

"It will effect us," said Lowenberg.

However, he assured Soldiers that it was both his and Gov. Christine Gregoire's objective to retain all Washington military jobs. While about 1,400 state employees have been laid off so far, Lowenberg assured deployed Soldiers that the governor had given priority to the military when



Col. Ronald Kapral awards an 81st BCT combat patch to State Command Sgt. Maj. Kim S. May as Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Lowenberg, looks on during a ceremony Dec. 28, 2008 at Camp Ramadi, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)

creating the budget.

Though much of the military funding was spared, budget cuts still need to be made.

"Every penny we save over the next few years will mean the difference between someone losing their job and not," he said.

Besides keeping their National Guard jobs, Lowenberg wanted to stress that civilian job opportunities would be waiting for Soldiers as well. Washington has implemented a J-9 section at Joint Force Headquarters where all Soldier and family care issues will be under one roof. The J-9 will not only help Guardsmen's families while they are



Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Lowenberg, awards Spc. RJ Tally from Irvine, Calif., with HQ Co., 81st BCT, a coin Dec. 28, 2008 at Camp Ramadi, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)

deployed, but has programs set up to assist returning Soldiers looking for employment in a bleak economy. The Washington National Guard has reached an agreement with many unions across the state to enroll returning Soldiers and Airmen into fully-funded apprenticeship and journeymen programs.

"It's not just about making sure your medical and dental is taken care of, we need to make sure your life cycle is taken care of," said Lowenberg.

Lowenberg opened himself up to the Soldiers and let them voice their own concerns from the warfront. Many expressed disappointment with some of the training they received prior to coming to Iraq, their inability to procure equipment and promotion issues.

Lowenberg assured the Soldiers, "Your concerns, the shortfalls and the gaps, are being heard."

He urged Soldiers to, "Keep their mind and attention on theater requirements. We'll take care of things at home. We'll take their suggestions and recommendations and input for process improvements and work it, they just need to focus on taking care of business in theater."

Col. Ronald Kapral, the 81st BCT commander, and his staff briefed Lowenberg on all the accomplishments the 81st BCT has achieved since their arrival in October.

"It's amazing what National Guard Soldiers are capable of doing," said Kapral.

Across Iraq, 81st BCT Soldiers are conducting convoy security missions, base sustainment operations and base defense missions.

Lowenberg, who had tried to make it to Iraq for Christmas, expressed his thanks to the 81st BCT Soldiers and let them know how proud of them he was.

"There are very few people in this world who will be able to do, even if they wanted to, what you are all are going to do tomorrow, what you do everyday. You're making history," he said. 



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

By Lt. Col. Carl Steele
81st BCT Chaplain

I want to encourage you to appreciate the little things that touch our lives while we are deployed. Things like a routine duty day that begins early and lasts into the night.

Enjoy the game of cards or the computer game played with friends. New friendships that have been carved out over a short time that will last a lifetime. The beauty of the night and the crispness of the morning. The world-changing conversations that happen over lunch in the dining facility. Doing something different than what you do every day back home. Think of those things that make you laugh, a story, a joke, a movie. Remember how far you have come, the ways you have been challenged and changed.

I think these days also allow us to appreciate the things we have back home.



Col. Ronald Kapral, the commander of the 81st Brigade Combat Team, flies over Iraq in a Blackhawk helicopter Dec. 28, 2008 on his way to Balad. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



Sexual Assault Response Coordinator



By Master Sgt. CathyJo Wings
81st BCT SARC

Below is some information taken from a July 21, 2008 Associated Press article.

"Even as women distinguish themselves in battle alongside men, they're fighting off sexual assault and harassment. It's not a new consequence of war. But the sheer numbers of women serving today – more than 190,000 so far in Iraq and Afghanistan – is forcing the military and Department of Veterans Affairs to more aggressively address it.

Of the women veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan who have walked into a VA facility, 15 percent have screened positive for military sexual trauma, The Associated Press has learned. That means they indicated that while on active duty they were sexually assaulted, raped, or were sexually harassed, receiving repeated unsolicited verbal or physical contact of the sexual nature.

The VA now provides free care to any veteran from any era who has experienced military sexual trauma. That's a change from the 1991 Persian Gulf War and earlier wars. Since 2002, about 20 percent of female veterans from all eras and 1 percent of male veterans have screened positive for military sexual trauma.

The effects of a military sexual trauma can be long lasting – particularly for those who don't seek early help. The VA still sees veterans who experienced sexual attacks in Vietnam – and even World War II."

If you have been sexually assaulted in any way, contact your unit victims advocate or SARC

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Members of the American Legion Riders post 34 in Pasco, Wash., send their thanks to the Soldiers of the 81st BCT (Photo courtesy of the American Legion Post 34)



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Spc. Shawn Bradley and Sgt. Selina Wadsworth, both combat medics with 81st BSTB, offer their experience and skills to a sick Iraqi baby from a local village Dec. 20, 2008 in Khadan, Iraq.

Iraqi Army and 81st BSTB gives hope, health to Iraqis

*Story and photos by Capt. Jaqueline Baird
81st BSTB*

Soldiers from the 81st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 81st Brigade Combat Team, based out of Everett, Wash., accompanied the Iraqi Army's 4th Battalion, 7th Brigade, who brought toys, blankets and school supplies to local village children in Khadan, Iraq Dec. 20, 2008.

While the Iraqi Soldiers were handing out the supplies, some of the villagers requested to be seen by the 81st BSTB combat medics.

"This mission provided an opportunity for the Soldiers of the IA to demonstrate a commitment to the lives of the local people," said Lt. Col. Ken Garrison, the 81st BSTB Battalion Commander. "The villages were selected by the IA commanders based on their assessment of the need. These villages are seldom visited, and the people clearly appreciated the visit by their soldiers."

This trip also enabled the Iraqi Army soldiers an opportunity to build a relationship with the local population. 📷





Lt. Col. Kenneth Garrison, the commander of the 81st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 81st Brigade Combat Team, and Command Sgt. Maj. David Nunn, the command sergeant major of the 81st BSTB, visit their troops on a live-fire range Dec. 30, 2008 at COB Q-West, Iraq. The "Crushers" regularly conduct Base Defense Operations, Counter-IED Patrols, Counter-Indirect Fire Patrols, Non-Lethal Engagements and QRF Operations in support of Base Defense Operations at COB Q-West. (Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Kenneth Garrison)

HEALTH CORNER

By Lt. Col. Stephen Anderson
81st BCT Surgeon Cell

With "spring training" coming up here in Iraq, as well as working and walking on uneven surfaces, I would like to review some basic sprain and strain treatments. Some of you may already be familiar with the RICE treatment protocol.

R: REST. Stop what aggravates your injury. Do not finish the game or exercise routine if it causes pain. Get sufficient rest to allow healing.

I: ICE. Apply ice or cold packs to the sore area for 20 minutes every few hours. Do not apply the ice packs directly to the skin. Always put a cloth or towel next to your skin, then the cold pack.

C: COMPRESS. Wrap it up with an ACE wrap or similar to help control swelling and ease pain. It also provides some additional support to prevent re-injury.

E: ELEVATE. Try and keep the sprained area elevated higher than your heart if possible.

Following these simple guidelines will ensure you recover quicker from an injury, and help prevent re-injury. Sprains/Strains that do not respond to this treatment should be seen by your local BAS. 

Washington's Minuteman Fund Gets Cash Boost

By Richard Gray
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

While the 81st Brigade Combat Team and other Washington National Guard members are deployed around the world, their families at home will have a financial safety net, with a contribution from TriWest Healthcare Alliance.

To ensure these families get the financial help they need to meet life's emergencies, TriWest, which administers the military's TRICARE healthcare plan in Washington, contributed \$25,000 to the Minuteman Emergency Assistance Fund.

There is a "huge demand on the Minuteman Emergency Assistance Fund and the Family Programs arm that is funded by it," said Maj. Anne Marie Peacock, the Washington National Guard's family programs director.

George Cargill, TriWest market vice president in Tacoma, presented the gift to The Adjutant General of the State of Washington, Maj. Gen. Timothy Lowenberg, on Dec. 18, 2008 in the National Guard's offices at Camp Murray.

"TriWest continues to be a steady partner that recognizes the importance of supporting our National Guard families," said Maj. Gen. Lowenberg. "We are grateful for their generosity and the lasting impact their contributions have had on the Washington National Guard community."

More than 10,500 of Washington's citizen soldiers and airmen have deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom since 9/11. The Washington National Guard has also participated in Operation Noble Eagle, the Hurricane Katrina relief mission and securing the southwest border (Operation Jump Start), in addition to state missions in Washington.

"Our men and women in uniform have it tough enough during deployments and the Guardsmen who are deployed and who will be deploying shouldn't have to worry about meeting unanticipated expenditures, such as car and home repairs, while they're away," said TriWest President and CEO David J. McIntyre, Jr.

TriWest's contribution was part of its holiday "Giving to the Guard" campaign, providing support to the National Guard throughout the 21 western states TriWest serves. Visit www.triwest.com to learn more about TriWest's community outreach programs benefiting military families.

This is the third consecutive holiday contribution TriWest has made to the Washington National Guard, totaling \$75,000 so far. 



KEEPING BALAD SAFE

181st BSB provides security on Joint Base Balad

By Sgt. Emily Suhr
81st BCT Public Affairs

Though Joint Base Balad, Iraq boasts amenities such as two swimming pools, American fast food restaurants and a movie theater, it is clearly still in a warzone. MRAPs and HMMWVs rumble down the busy streets, which are lined with T-barriers. Sandbags are stacked outside the Soldiers rooms. F-16 fighter planes take off regularly, blocking out all other sound. Most notably, of course, are the thousands of servicemembers walking around carrying weapons.

For the more than 100 Soldiers of Alpha Company, 181st Brigade Support Battalion, 81st Brigade Combat Team, based out of Seattle, Wash., Joint Base Balad is home for the next seven months.

While the brigade conducts various types of missions in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Soldiers of A Co. are “troops for task,” providing security for Iraqi businesses on base and the

hospital, escorting local nationals working on base and providing Personal Security Detail services.

Pvt. Becky Vasquez from Pasco, Wash., who has been in the National Guard for two years, wasn’t originally planning to be on this deployment. She was assigned to a chemical company from the 96th Troop Command, based out of Yakima, Wash., but when the 81st BCT needed more troops, she was called to duty.

“They got everyone together in one room and said, ‘You’re all going to deploy next month with the 81st Brigade,’” Vasquez recalled. “Everyone was just dead silent. Some were crying. I was with my friend, she was right by me. I just told her, ‘We’re going to get through this.’”

The 19-year-old supply clerk, who works for a collection agency back in Pasco, said being in Iraq isn’t as bad as she expected.

“My mom is really worried about me being over here, but I tell her it’s not as bad as the news portrays it to be,” she said.

Like many of her fellow Soldiers, Vasquez pulls security duty in a variety of places on JBB, including

the hospital.

The Balad hospital cares for wounded Coalition servicemembers, as well as local civilians. It can be a surreal experience for anyone, but especially young Soldiers unaccustomed to the medical field.

“The first time I was called into the trauma room is an experience I will never forget. It was [an Iraqi] who had a head injury. His face was all swollen. There was blood everywhere. He was unconscious. At first it was like I wasn’t even there. It felt unreal. But then I realized, this is a war environment,” said Vasquez.

Spc. Lillian Savea from Tacoma, Wash., works security duty in the hospital with Vasquez.

Also on her first deployment, Savea said seeing people in the hospital, “was difficult for me in the beginning. I appreciate people in the medical field a lot more. What these folks here go through who are working in the emergency room, up to the ICU. What they deal with mentally. It is a very rewarding experience working in

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Lt. Col. Gregory Allen, the commander of 1-161st Inf. (CAB) speaks to Soldiers from the 181st BSB just before their combat patch ceremony Dec. 30, 2008. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



BSB (Continued from page 8)

the hospital.”

When not serving as an administrative clerk in the National Guard, Savea is a postal worker in Federal Way. She said her office has been very supportive since she's been away and seems to be surviving her absence.

“I'm sure they're still going well. I get my mail, so...,” she said when asked how things were going back at her office.

Besides getting letters and packages from home, Savea said organizations such as, Support our Troops program, the South King County Fire Department Rescue Mission and the Boy and Girl Scouts have sent care packages to the troops, reminding them that they are missed back home.

While the Soldiers of A Co. have an important task to do, it can become tedious for them. Soldiers generally stay busy by taking classes at the education center or catching a movie at the base theater. JBB also has multiple internet cafes and phone centers so Soldiers can stay connected. Savea enjoys going to the gym and salsa night at the morale, welfare and recreation center. A Co. hosted a casino night Christmas



Spc. Lillian Savea from Tacoma, Wash. (left), and Pvt. Becky Vasquez from Pasco, Wash., both with A Co., 81st BSB, stand guard at the hospital at Joint Base Balad, Iraq Dec. 30, 2008. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)

party for the Soldiers, complete with Rock Band.

“I think I have some of the best leadership,” said Capt. Selina Riedel, the A Co. commander. “I have a great first sergeant, great [executive officer]. They're always looking out for the Soldiers, finding things for them to do. We have softball, a ping-pong tournament, flag football.”

The company leaders also ensure their troops don't get complacent

in an often quiet war zone by continuing to train between missions.

The PSD platoon provides security escorts on and off base for the commanding general and his guests, as well as the Iraqi Business Individual Zone team who regularly meets with local business owners in town.

“We go out [to the improvised explosive device training range] at least once a month,” said 1st Lt. Sean Taborne from Port Orchard, Wash., the PSD commander. The Soldiers drive around and attempt to find training IEDs. “Then we react to them the same way we would outside the wire. We practice our [tactics, techniques and procedures]. We also get weekly briefs on all the recent significant activities, so the Soldiers know what to look for.”

In the end, most of the Soldiers from A Co. expressed that the entire Iraq experience has been better than expected. Many appreciate the opportunity to travel and learn a bit about Iraqi culture from the Iraqi civilians. Vasquez, like many of the Soldiers of A Co., said she'd come back to Iraq for another deployment.

“I really like the experience,” she said. 



1st Lt. Robert “Chocolate Thunder” Bryant, the executive officer of Alpha Company, 181st BSB, plays some ping-pong ball, a popular past time in the 181st BSB, Dec. 30, 2008 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



THE RAVEN GALLERY



Members of the 81st BCT Headquarters PSD team goof around Christmas Day in Al-Taggadum, Iraq while sending their platoon leader, Staff Sgt. Jason Muzzy, off on leave. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



Members of 1-185th Armor Battalion (Combined Arms Battalion), 81st BCT, await the arrival of Gen. David Petraus, the commander of U.S. Central Command, who swore in Soldiers during a reenlistment ceremony at COB Speicher, Iraq Dec. 25 2008. (Photo courtesy of 1-185th AR (CAB))



Soldiers from the 81st BSTB, 81st BCT, participate in a 5K Jingle Jog on Christmas Day.

L-R: Maj. Kevin Harmon, Sgt. Deborah Scrimpscher, Capt. David Raines, Capt. Chris Blanco, Spc. Nicole Iredale, Spc. Asia Veal, Spc. Kristine Iredale, Capt. Kirstie Roy. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kirsten Froelich)



Spc. Cory Anderson, with Alpha Troop, 1-303rd Cav., 81st BCT, cleans his M2 .50 Cal Dec. 29, 2008 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



THE RAVEN GALLERY



Spc. Ben Ashworth from Spokane, Wash., a tanker with Delta Company, 1-161st Infantry (Combined Arms Battalion), 81st BCT, paints a mural outside his company headquarters Dec. 30, 2008 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. Ashworth spent six hours a day for eleven days working on the mural depicting Ares, the God of War, and Spartan fighters. His father is also deployed to Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



Spc. Garrett O. Thorsby of Alpha Troop, 1-303rd Cavalry, 81st BCT, works on the air cylinder of an Armored Security Vehicle Dec. 29, 2008 at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



Col. Ronald Kapral, the commander of the 81st BCT, and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Sweeney, the command sergeant major of the 81st BCT, get into the spirit of things during a softball game at Camp Ramadi, Iraq, Dec. 20, 2008 (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)

Staff Sgt. Jason Siler, Spc. Christian Harris and 1st Lt. Kurt Strauss from B Co., 81st BSTB, receive awards for work performed in Washington and Wisconsin during the mobilization of the 81st BCT. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kirsten Froelich)



Col. Ronald Kapral awards Sgt. 1st Class Michael Dasaro from the unmanned aerial vehicle platoon his combat patch in Al-Taqaddem, Iraq Dec. 25. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



How to say thank you

By Ronald J. James

Assistant Secretary of the Army

Say "Thank You" with a United States Army Freedom Team Salute Commendation!

Our Army is doing a tremendous job defending America's freedom. However, our success depends on strong supporters standing with us as we fight the Global War on Terrorism. I encourage you to take the time to say "Thank You" to those special individuals that help us accomplish our duties.

The U.S. Army's Freedom Team Salute program was initiated by the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff to provide all currently serving Soldiers a sincere, heartfelt way to recognize their Parents and Spouses for their support and sacrifice.

Guard and Reserve Soldiers can also recognize their Employers during these trying times. Additionally, anyone can honor the millions of discharged U.S. Army Veterans who served with distinction; and, other Army Supporters, who continue to make significant contributions to the Army's mission (for example, a Soldier's child or other relative, a Family Readiness Group Leader, Department of the Army Civilians, or an active community member, etc.).

Those honored will receive a personalized letter of thanks and certificate of appreciation signed by the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Army; an official Army lapel pin; and, Army decals. The entire commendation package is prepared and mailed at no cost to either you or the recipient.

Honoring someone is quick and easy. Simply visit the U.S. Army Freedom Team Salute website at www.FreedomTeamSalute.com and complete an online commendation form. For additional information or assistance, please contact Freedom Team Salute at info@FreedomTeamSalute.com.



Col. Ronald Kapral, the commander of the 81st Brigade Combat Team, speaks to Soldiers from Headquarters Company, 81st Brigade Combat Team, during their combat patch ceremony Dec. 28, 2008 at Camp Ramadi, Iraq. In a tradition dating back to WWII, combat patches depicting the unit they serve with during wartime are placed on each Soldier's right sleeve. (Photo by Army Sgt. Emily Suhr)

81st BCT Retention information

By Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Fraizer
81st BCT retention

To all the Soldiers of the 81st BCT, thank you for staying with the Washington Army National Guard. So far, more than 220 Soldiers have extended in country. We have given out more than \$3 million in bonuses, student loan repayments and the G.I. Bill kicker. So far, bonuses have stayed the same, but are due to change Jan. 31, 2009. Please talk to your retention NCO and ask for guidance. Staff Sgt. Joe Wysock and I are out here to help you with your career decisions. I encourage you to look at your options and stay Army National Guard. I will be out visiting the Soldiers of the 81st more starting in mid-February. I want to thank Command Sgt. Maj. Windom, 1st Sgt. DeFever and Staff Sgt. Herrrome for the withstanding efforts you have made toward the attrition in the units.



Members of B Trp, 1-303rd Cav. re-enlist outside the American Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq Dec. 30, 2008. The American Embassy in Bghdad is the largest embassy in the world and was opened Jan. 6, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Fraizer)



Battlefield treatment

Story and Photo by Sgt. Alexander Snyder
123rd MPAD Public Affairs

On a night late in November, Cpl. Eric Whitney, a medic with 2nd Platoon, Bravo Company, 1-161st Infantry (Combined Arms Battalion), found himself trying to save the life of a civilian contractor who was bleeding out.

Whitney's convoy had been traveling to an outlying camp when a roadside incident left one of the fuel tankers in his convoy damaged and on fire. Whitney's vehicle, commanded by his squad leader Sgt. 1st Class Mathew Stansfield, was first on the scene and pulled up alongside the burning truck.

"We didn't think anybody survived," Whitney said.

"I thought the (driver) might be dead right off, just seeing the damage to the truck," Stansfield said.

As Whitney's vehicle backed off, Stansfield spotted a pair of feet on the other side of the truck; the driver had made it outside the vehicle.

By the time Whitney reached him, the driver was lying near the median; Cpl. Efren Morfin, a Soldier from the convoy's fire truck, had pulled the injured driver away from his burning tanker.

Whitney went to work, cutting off the driver's clothes and applying tourniquets and bandages. Drawing on eight years of training as a medic – and the help of the Soldiers around him – Whitney worked to control the driver's hemorrhaging and save his life.

"At first, I wasn't sure why he was bleeding so bad," Whitney said. "He was actually on high blood pressure medicine, which made it kind of tricky."

Such medicine thins out a person's blood making it more difficult to control bleeding, he said. Whitney's patient, a 42-year-old man from Fiji, spoke very good English and was able to answer questions and describe

his pain level, which helped in his treatment, Whitney said.

As he worked, Whitney was helped by Soldiers around him who were certified combat lifesavers – not medics, but Soldiers trained to provide emergency treatment of battlefield injuries. Sgt. Joshua Defeyter, a truck commander, Spc. Anthony Livano, a gunner, and Sgt. Chad Jensen, a driver, all helped treat the driver while they waited for the medical evacuation helicopter to arrive.

"It's very critical to a medic to have CLS," Whitney said.

Whitney said much of what happened that night is a blur.

"That's where my men come into play," Whitney says, "They're my support. I don't worry about my security because I know they have it."

Whitney, a 36-year-old father of four from Spokane, Wash., joined the National Guard eight years ago as a medic. He first deployed to Iraq in 2004, serving at Forward Operating Base Prosperity, in Baghdad's Green Zone. That night however, was the first time he'd treated an injury like this, he said.

"There was times I thought he wasn't going to make it," Whitney said. "He was pretty beat up."

But Whitney's patient survived that night. He has

"That's where my men come into play. They're my support. I don't worry about my security because I know they have it."

Cpl. Eric Whitney

since been flown back to Fiji, Whitney said.

Whitney credits much of his ability to perform in this situation to his training. Prior to this deployment, many Soldiers he trained with were paramedics in their civilian lives and brought their own experience to the table, he said. But Whitney's calm demeanor may also have played a part in saving the driver's life.

"Eric's really, really calm," Stansfield said. "He doesn't really get rattled at all, which is a good thing in a medic."

He says Whitney's ability to stay calm helped him to remain calm also. Although he can be credited with saving the driver's life, Whitney said he isn't a hero.

"I get to go home," Whitney said. "The real heroes are those that don't go home." 

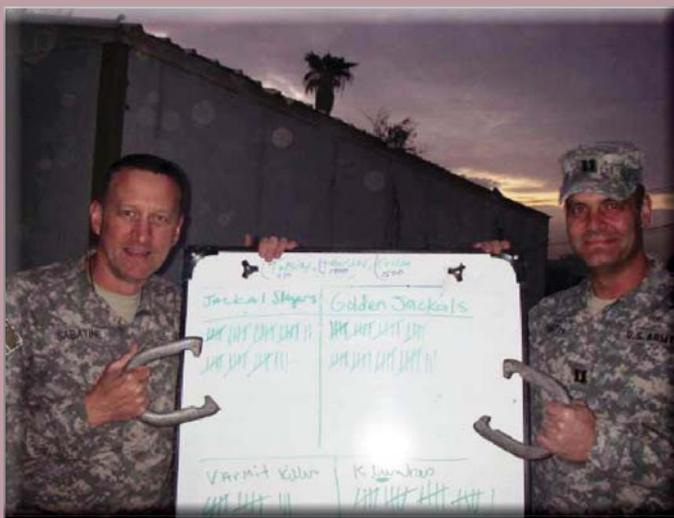
HELP US MAKE THE DESERT RAVEN BETTER!

Do you have a story to tell?

What is your platoon doing?

Do you know a Soldier who has gone above and beyond?

Please send your photo and story submissions to emily.suhr@us.army.mil by the 10th of each month.



Lt. Col. Jeff Sabatine and Capt. Jeff Heath pose for a team photo in front of the scoreboard recording their championship victory in the Jackal Cup. The Jackal Cup is the only NHPAI-sanctioned event played in Iraq and is held annually at COS Marez in Mosul. The Golden Jackals were the home-town favorite and are credited with keeping countless kids off drugs by generating interest in horseshoe pitching. (Photo by Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Morgan)

Desert Horseshoes

By Sgt. Virgil Akins
2-146th FA

In December, Capt. Jeffrey Heath of HHB 2-146th Field Artillery organized a Horseshoe tournament at COS Marez .

Iraq is not known for its horses, but perhaps soon Mosul will be known for its unique role in the sport of horseshoes. The Mayor's Cell and BDOC staffs on COS Marez have put their mark on the sport by organizing a month-long tournament in December. They called it the Jackal Cup Tournament and created a double-elimination tournament that pitted two-man teams in sometimes hotly contested events of precision, skill and comedy.

It took some time for the idea to catch on, and even more time for some of the teams to become proficient in the shoe throwing art, but then that was all part of the plan. Some teams were organized at random to build unit cohesion, and each team picked their own team name. On Dec. 29, the favored Golden Jackals, consisting of Heath and Lt. Col. Jeff Sabatine, reeled in the tournament crown with a stunning victory in a back and forth match of the century.

Since the tournament, construction has begun to improve the playing field and conditions to make the next event bigger and better for all the new teams involved. 

Level: Medium

Sudoku

6			5	7			3	
	7		6		2			
8		9			3		6	
								1
2		8				7		9
5						3		
	6		7					8
			4				9	
	4			6	5			3

By 1LT Joseph Cluever

See page 17 for the solution to this month's puzzle

Strange but True

According to "reliable" sources, "Google" and other sources

- The microwave was invented after a researcher walked by a radar tube and a chocolate bar melted in his pocket.
- Wearing headphones for just an hour will increase the bacteria in your ear by 700 times.
- Butterflies taste with their feet.
- In every episode of Seinfeld there is a Superman somewhere.
- Rats multiply so quickly that in 18 months, two rats could have over a million descendants.
- The plastic things on the end of shoelaces are called aglets
- A dragonfly has a lifespan of 24 hours.
- It is physically impossible for you to lick your elbow.
- Dueling is legal in Paraguay as long as both parties are registered blood donors.
- Bob Dylan's real name is Robert Zimmerman.
- A cat has 32 muscles in each ear
- Charlie Brown's father was a barber
- The maximum weight for a golf ball is 1.62 oz
- Almonds are members of the peach family
- All of the clocks in the movie Pulp Fiction are stuck on 4:20.
- Our eyes are always the same size from birth, but our nose and ears never stop growing.
- The electric chair was invented by a dentist.
- Women blink nearly twice as much as men.
- Almost everyone who reads this list will try to lick their elbow.



2009: The Year of the Noncommissioned Officer

Courtesy of www.army.mil

Since 1775, the Army has set apart its NCOs from other enlisted Soldiers by distinctive insignia of grade.

With more than 200 years of service, the U.S. Army's Noncommissioned Officer Corps has distinguished itself as the world's most accomplished group of military professionals. Historical and daily accounts of "life as an NCO" are exemplified by acts of courage, and a dedication and a willingness to do "whatever it takes" to complete the mission. NCOs have been celebrated for decorated service in military events ranging from Valley Forge to Gettysburg, to charges on Omaha Beach and battles along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, to current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In recognition of their commitment to service and willingness to make great sacrifices on behalf of our Nation, Secretary of the Army established 2009 as "The Year of the NCO."

Throughout 2009, the Army honors NCOs through initiatives and events that:

- Enhance awareness and public understanding of the roles and responsibilities of today's NCO.
- Enhance and accelerate the development of NCOs through education, fitness, and leadership development initiatives.

We invite you to join the celebration of one of America's greatest assets, the NCO Corps, the "backbone of the American Army."

For more information, go to www.army.mil/yearoftheNCO



IN HONOR OF "THE YEAR OF THE NCO" WE WILL BE FEATURING ONE OF OUR OUTSTANDING NCOs FROM THE BRIGADE EACH ISSUE OF THE DESERT RAVEN, BEGINNING FEBRUARY.

President signs Army Commemorative Coin Act

By Nick Rhinehart

The Army Historical Foundation

President George W. Bush signed into law the "United States Army Commemorative Coin Act of 2008" on Dec. 1, authorizing the creation of a series of commemorative coins to recognize and celebrate the establishment of the United States Army in 1775, and to honor the service and sacrifice of American Soldiers of both past and present, in wartime and in peace.

These will be the first U.S. coins ever issued to celebrate and honor the Army and its 234 year heritage. The U.S. Mint will work on six coin designs, front and back with the Army Historical Foundation. Coins will be minted and sold during 2011 and come in a \$5 gold piece, a silver dollar and a copper-clad half dollar. An estimated \$10-\$12 million of the sales revenues will help fund the National Museum of the United States Army slated for construction at Fort Belvoir, Va.

"The Commemorative Coin Act will help raise the revenue needed to build a museum dedicated to the men and women who have for so long protected the sovereignty and freedom of our country," said Senator James M. Inhofe of Oklahoma. "The museum will serve to commemorate the enormous sacrifice of our Soldiers and will be a symbol of the Army's dedication to the fight for freedom."

Designated in 2000 as the Army's primary partner in building the museum, the Army Historical Foundation led the drive to establish the Army Commemorative Coins.

"Passage of the commemorative coin legislation has been the only legislative priority of the Army Historical Foundation over the past twelve months, and we are very pleased to announce the success of this initiative," said retired Brig. Gen. Creighton W. Abrams AHF executive director. "These coins will be beautiful mementos of past service for veterans, and will make appropriate gifts for retired veterans and currently serving Soldiers alike."

DID YOU KNOW...

- Theodore Roosevelt, the only president of the United States to be awarded the Medal of Honor, was a former Guardsman.
- Every member of the National Guard swears an oath to uphold two constitutions – that of his or her state or territory, and the Constitution of the United States..
- Since 1898, 121 recipients of the Medal of Honor have had National Guard service at some point in their career.



Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen presents his coin to Capt. Jack Mushallo, of 2-146th FA, upon his departure from COS Marez. Capt. Mushallo planned and executed the security plan for Mullen's visit in conjunction with the Kid Rock USO show in December. (Photo by MC1 Chd J. McNeeley)

"One-Stop" service for Washington Guardsmen and their families

By Tom Riggs

WANG J-1, Deployment Cycle Support

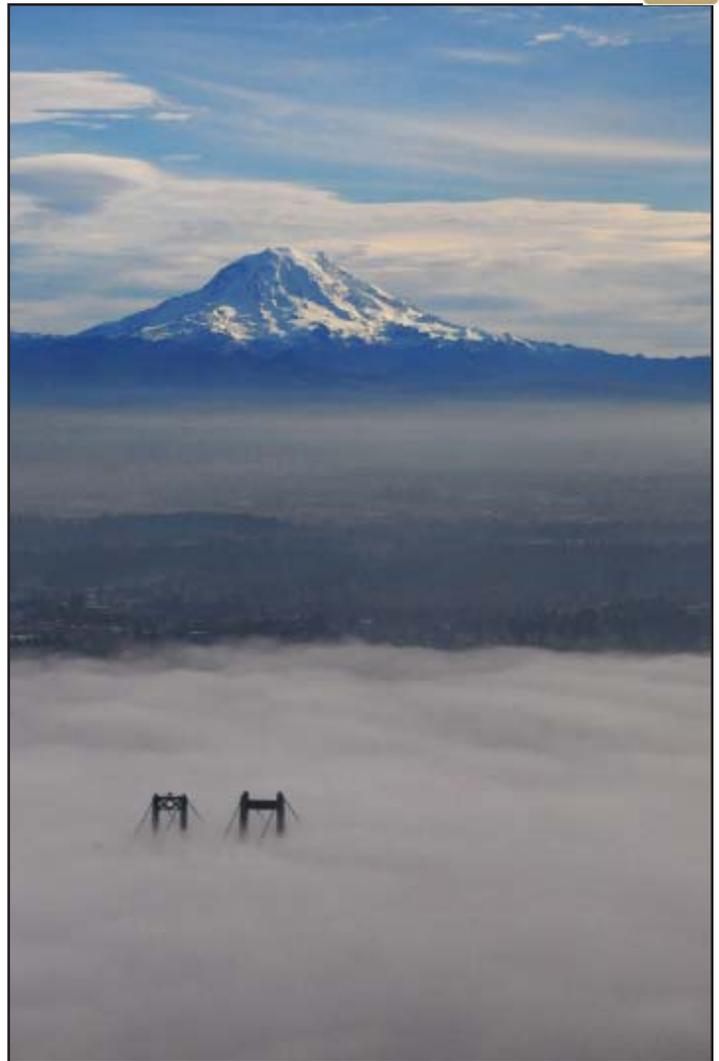
Have you ever been frustrated while looking for information or assistance? Ever needed to apply for a program or benefit and not been sure who to call? Ever called three different agencies only to be given one more phone number to try? Have you thought about where and how you can get help finding new employment, accessing health care, or finding resources when you rotate home?

Your Washington National Guard has created a brand new Directorate to solve those problems. Today you can be assured the answers and services you need will be provided under one roof. This Directorate was created with you, the individual Soldier or Family Member in mind. Welcome to the Warrior, Veteran and Family Readiness Service Support Directorate, J-9.

This new Directorate was established by the TAG on 1 December 2008 to oversee all Warrior, Veteran and Family Readiness services. It will provide full-time, full-spectrum support for Guardsmen and their families in a "one-stop" center established in Building 3 (Camp Murray)

The J9 is responsible for the Wounded Warrior Program, Deployment Cycle Support and Reintegration (Yellow Ribbon), Veterans Transition Assistance, Family Programs, Sexual Assault Prevention And Response (SAPR), Employer Support of Guard and Reserve (ESGR), and will house the new Director of Psychological Health.

Look for the new J9 in mid February. It will be loaded with useful information on employment, health care, and demobilization tasks you can complete even before reaching Ft. McCoy. If you have questions now, please e-mail Tom Riggs, the Deployment Cycle Support Transition Chief at tomriggs.riggs@us.army.mil We look forward to serving you!



A glimpse of home

Master Sgt. David Largent from the Washington National Guard Public Affairs Office in Camp Murray snapped this photo of Mt. Rainier from the back of a Chinook.



The 81st BCT's Ravens perform for a packed crowd New Year's Eve at Camp Ramadi, Iraq. (L to R) Sgt. Derek Dixon, 1st Lt. Buddy Francisico, Maj. Doug Lineberry and Col. Christopher Fowler



Disney Parks offers free five-day admission to military personnel in 2009

As Disney Parks ask "What Will You Celebrate?" and invite guests to turn their personal milestones into magical family vacations in 2009, America's military personnel will have one more reason to celebrate: Free multi-day admission to Disney's U.S. theme parks.

With the "Disney's Armed Forces Salute" offer, active and retired U.S. military personnel, including active and retired members of the United States Coast Guard and activated members of the National Guard or Reservists, can enjoy complimentary, multi-day admission into Disney's U.S. theme parks, great rates at select Walt Disney World Resort and Disneyland Resort hotels, and additional special ticket offers for family members and friends

"For so many of the men and women who serve in our U.S. military, time together with their families is cause enough for celebration," said Jay Rasulo, chairman of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts. "We are grateful for their service and hope 'Disney's Armed Forces Salute' will allow our troops to create wonderful, magical memories with their family and friends."

For details, go to <http://www.ngb.army.mil/news/archives/2009/01/010609-Disney_Parks.aspx>



Master Sgt. Mark Deandrea and Sgt. Lisa Scott, both from Headquarters Company, 81st BCT, ring in the New Year at Camp Ramadi, Iraq (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



Effective Jan. 1, 2009, TRICARE will reduce the rates for TRICARE Reserve Select. Monthly premiums for TRS individual coverage will drop 44% from \$81.00 to \$47.51, and TRS family coverage will drop 29% from \$253.00 to \$180.17. To view the entire news release, visit: <http://www.tricare.mil/pressroom/news.aspx?fd=480>

Solution to this month's puzzle

Solution

6	2	1	5	7	8	9	3	4
3	7	4	6	9	2	8	1	5
8	5	9	1	4	3	2	6	7
4	3	6	9	8	7	5	2	1
2	1	8	3	5	6	7	4	9
5	9	7	2	1	4	3	8	6
1	6	3	7	2	9	4	5	8
7	8	5	4	3	1	6	9	2
9	4	2	8	6	5	1	7	3

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PHOTOS NEED TO BE IN A JPEG OR TIFF FORMAT.
PLEASE INCLUDE A MICROSOFT WORD DOCUMENT.

IDENTIFY WHO IS IN THE PHOTO, WHO TOOK THE
PHOTO, WHEN AND WHERE.

(IDENTIFICATION = FULL NAME, RANK, UNIT, DUTY
POSITION AND HOMETOWN).