



81st BCT Soldiers spread their wings in Iraq



Spc. Amanda Staver from the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Platoon, HQ Co., 81st BCT, checks the Shadow UAV to see if it is ready to fly on Al Taqaddum Airbase, March 12, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)

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Message from 81st BCT Commander

Col. Kapral answers your questions about re-deployment

By Col. Ronald Kapral
81st BCT commander

Recently there have been a lot of questions asked by Soldiers and their families regarding our redeployment home. There are still a number of details that need to be worked out, especially the exact dates units will be returning home. It is not that we cannot tell you the dates, it is that we simply do not know them. We will not know the exact dates until sometime around 72 hours prior to the actual departure of Soldiers from theater. This is all based on the air flow from theater and the air flow from Fort McCoy. The flights will all be contracted through commercial carriers and it is way too early to determine the departure times. We believe units will start their initial movements back to the United States some time in July.

There are some questions we can answer. Why are we going to Fort McCoy for demobilization? There are a number of requirements that Soldiers must meet when we prepare to demobilize. Much like the steps we took to get ready to go, we have to do the same for our return. There is a great deal of equipment to turn in, briefings that Soldiers must attend to prepare them for returning to civilian life and most importantly, the medical and dental exams. It is our intent to return Soldiers who are healthy and prepared to reintegrate into civilian life with their families and employers.

Going to Fort McCoy will allow our Soldiers to focus on those very important tasks. They are scheduled to spend approximately six days at Fort McCoy. The Soldiers will travel from Fort McCoy back to an airport nearest their home. In Washington that will be McChord and Fairchild Air Force Bases. California could have multiple sites. Our intent is to complete all re-



81ST BCT
COMMANDER
COL. RONALD
KAPRAL

quirements at Fort McCoy, fly home, conduct a very brief welcome home ceremony, then release Soldiers to their company commanders and their families. Soldiers and families will be reunited on that day.

For those Soldiers who have medical or dental issues, they will be documented at Fort McCoy and a treatment plan established to ensure they are provided for. Our goal is to

It is our intent to return Soldiers who are healthy and prepared to reintegrate into civilian life with their families and employers.

ensure all Soldiers are treated and provided the care they deserve.

Soldiers will also receive their DD214. This is an extremely important document. Special care must be made to ensure it is accurate. It provides legal documentation of the Soldier's service and will be important later on in the Soldier's career. Veteran Administration benefits and retirement benefits are among the items the document will support.

Can Families travel to Fort McCoy

to meet their Soldiers? The intent is to accomplish all the required demobilization tasks unimpeded so your Soldiers can be united with his/her family as quickly as possible upon arriving back to Washington or California. Soldiers will be very busy at Fort McCoy and will not have a great deal of free time. There will be long days. I would recommend staying at home and plan a great reception to welcome your Soldier back.

What will Soldiers be tested for medically at Fort McCoy? They will receive some required tests. Tuberculosis is one. Soldiers will have to be honest and declare any medical condition that may have occurred during the mobilization. Every Soldier will have the opportunity to talk with medical professionals. If there is a problem, it will be addressed.

When Soldiers arrive at home, they will have their leave and final pay documents in hand. Soldiers will not be required to attend a drill until the second or third week of October. That drill is designed for the families. Families are invited and encouraged to attend. There will be a series of information briefings designed to educate the families and Soldiers on benefits. If there are problems associated with reintegration, information

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Message from 81st BCT Command Sergeant Major

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

We are already at the half-way point for the month of March and this deployment! Senior leaders at all levels have begun the process to determine what it is going to take to bring the brigade home. This is good news, but I do not want us to take our attention away from the mission we are on now.

As we have all mastered our skills and our missions, we all must be on guard and continue to fight off complacency. I want our NCO Corps focused on the mission and caring for their Soldiers, for we all know "Murphy" is out there just waiting for us to relax and drop our guard. Leaders, we can prevent this from happening if every one of us continues to set the example and enforce the standards.



81ST BCT
COMMAND
SERGEANT MAJOR
ROBERT SWEENEY

Last month we began our series on the "Year of the NCO." I personally enjoyed the articles on Staff Sgt. Darby and Cpl. Cross and look forward to reading more! Congratulations goes out to Cpl. Cross who just received a battlefield promotion to Sergeant, way to go Sgt. Cross! Sgt. Cross' battlefield promotion is just another reminder to me of the quality of Soldiers, NCOs and officers we have in the 81st BCT!

I also want to thank our Family Readiness Groups for their silent efforts in helping our families. They have provided valuable assistance when needed, and without their efforts, the challenges faced by our families would have been even more challenging.

Thank you FRG, and to all our volunteers. Job well done!

To everyone, family, friends and Soldiers, be safe in what you do and God bless you all. 



Soldiers from HQ Co., 81st BCT watch an interactive suicide training video March 3, 2009 at Camp Ramadi, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)

Resources for suicide prevention

A new suicide prevention video is now available and new suicide prevention training scenario documents in both PDF and PowerPoint formats are also available at <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/>

The site also has links to the Commanders Tool Kit for Soldiers and Leaders, Veterans benefits by state, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston's message on Suicide prevention and a media Roundtable - Human Dimension of Readiness

Life Lines

Army G-1, Army Well Being Liaison Office - 1-800-833-6622

Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline - 1-800-984-8523
Emergency - 911

www.armyfamiliesonline.org - 1-800-833-6622

www.militaryonesource.com - 1-800-342-9647

National Suicide Hotline - 1-800-SUICIDE

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org - 1-800-273-TALK (8255) 

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

By Lt. Col. Carl Steele
81st BCT Chaplain

This past month all of you should have gone through the first phase of the suicide training, "Beyond the Front." The next phase will be done in the month of June and it is called "Shoulder to Shoulder, NO Soldier Stands Alone." This training will focus on improving your ability to recognize the risky behavior and suicidal behavior. It also will provide more information on how you can intervene to prevent suicidal behavior.

Phase II is a chain-teaching approach, which means that leaders at each level will be given training and they will train the next level. This allows you and those in your squad or section a chance to look at and discuss the issues that are presented.

Remember, as we go through this training the most important piece to know is that you can make a difference in another Soldier's life. Don't be afraid to ask the questions and get them the help they need. 





UAV Platoon keeps an eye on Iraq



Soldiers from the UAV platoon, HQ Co., 81st BCT pose with the Shadow. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)

By Sgt. Amanda Gauthier
81st BCT Public Affairs

Soldiers of the 81st Brigade Combat Team's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Platoon stationed on Al Taqaddum Airbase are keeping watch from the skies of Iraq's Anbar Province.

The platoon flies RQ7-B Shadow 200 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles throughout the region of Iraq between Ar Ramadi and Fallujah. The small unmanned aircraft is able to take video during both day and night,

making it possible for troops to know about potential threats without putting their lives in danger. It may be small but it has the ability to make a huge impact on missions conducted by units all over the province. Many units on bases within the range of the UAV call on their assistance regularly. They planes are quiet, most people don't even notice them flying overhead.

The platoon's hours may vary from day to day depending on the mission, but the routine is the same.

"A normal day here: come in get all equipment ready, [conduct primary maintenance checks and services on] equipment, verify the aircraft we're using that day is ready to go and our mission brief," said Staff Sgt. Ian Hardie, the UAV maintenance noncommissioned officer in charge and a crew chief.

There are four crew chiefs in the platoon. It is their responsibility to maintain the vehicle, prepare the vehicle for launch and conduct the actual launch itself. They have several other members of the platoon on hand available to assist in the preparation and the launch.

Hiding behind the scenes, but just as important, are the platoon's UAV operators. The operators sit in the plane's cockpit controlling its every movement without ever leaving the ground. The controls of the plane sit in the back of a HMMWV. The vehicle has two seats; one for the plane operator the other for the camera operator.

Since they arrived in Iraq, the platoon has logged approximately 650 flight hours and about 125 missions. They can enjoy knowing they are helping Soldiers and Marines in the Anbar Province of Iraq complete missions.



Sgt. Jorge Alvarado from the UAV Platoon, HQ Co., 81st BCT prepares the Shadow for take off March 10, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



March's featured NCO: Staff Sgt. Alvin Fernandez

By Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr
81st BCT Public Affairs

The Secretary of the Army has named 2009 as the "Year of the NCO" in recognition of the commitment to service and willingness to make great sacrifices from the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers.

"As an NCO, it is a great honor that the Army declared this year 'The Year of the NCO'. Finally, the backbone of the Army is recognized for its hard work, dedication, leadership and professionalism," said Staff Sgt. Alvin N. Fernandez from Federal Way, Wash., who serves as the NCO in charge of the Iraqi Based Industrial Zone (IBIZ) section for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 181st Brigade Support Battalion, 81st Brigade Combat Team.



Staff Sgt. Alvin Fernandez from 181st BSB on a road march Jan. 30, 2009 in Q-West, Iraq. (Photo courtesy of 181st BSB)

Fernandez, who works as a letter carrier while not in uniform, embodies all these qualities and more as a husband, a father, a friend and a leader of Soldiers.

"He should be recognized as a great NCO because of his dedication to his job as an NCO and to his country. He knows how to take care of his Soldiers and he shows good leadership and a good example to his fellow Soldiers. He is very responsible, loyal, honest and truthful to his job as an NCO," said Fernandez's wife of 24 years, Macrina.

His NCOIC, Sgt. Maj. Debra R. Clarke of Rochester, Wash., couldn't agree more. "Subordinates and superiors alike look to him for advice and counsel. He is always in top physical condition and can adapt to any situation," she said.

Fernandez immigrated to the United States from the Philippines in 1983. Not long after, he joined the U.S. Army, following in the footsteps of his older brother who enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1973.

"He is the main reason why all my family is enjoying the American dream. He is our bridge in immigrating to the United States of America," said Fernandez.

After serving on active duty for nearly eight years and deploying to Iraq during Desert Storm, Fernandez



Staff Sgt. Alvin Fernandez with his wife Macrina and daughter Michelle in Las Vegas in 2008. (Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Alvin Fernandez)

left the military, only to return to the Washington Army National Guard 10 years later in a move he calls "the smartest decision" he's made.

"I am proud of Alvin because he took a tough step. I mean that Alvin did not have to serve his country anymore. He did his time and he re-enlisted, knowing our country was at war," said Kevin Gottlieb, a friend and coworker of Fernandez.

Now back in Iraq with the 181st BSB, he has become an incredible asset to his unit. As the IBIZ NCOIC, Fernandez works to assist and encourage Iraqi citizens to establish businesses in order to re-build their national economy.

"Staff Sgt. Fernandez speaks Tagalog as his native language and, of course, English. He also speaks Spanish, Arabic and German. This unique skill, along with his winning personality and ability to positively navigate cultural differences, has made him a success in an assignment that is not typical of anything in the Army," said Clarke.

Language is just one of Fernandez's many talents. Gottlieb says that Fernandez's ability to listen and offer advice are some of the things that make him a great leader. Macrina says her husband has all the good qualities a wife could ask for.

"He is very loving, caring, thoughtful, faithful, honest and a trustworthy man. He goes out of his way to make me feel loved and respected and takes every opportunity to show how much he cares for me and to our daughter," she said.

While in Iraq, Fernandez spends his free time playing ping-pong or chess, watching basketball and keeping in touch with friends and family. At home, he enjoys volunteering at the food bank, hiking, gardening, fishing, cooking and wood working. Though he has much to be proud of, Fernandez, who one day



Staff Sgt. Alvin N. Fernandez from 181st BSB. (Photo courtesy of 181st BSB)

See FERNANDEZ Page 10



March's featured NCO: Staff Sgt. Patricia McCarthy

By Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr
81st BCT Public Affairs

“A good NCO is an NCO who lives by the Army Values and is guided by the NCO creed. A good NCO is an NCO that takes the time to guide his or her Soldiers in the right direction. A good NCO knows his or her Soldier’s goals and dreams. A good NCO is an NCO who is responsible for his Soldier’s health and welfare. A good NCO is an NCO who listens to his or her Soldier. A good NCO is a good leader and a professional Soldier,” said Staff Sgt. Patricia McCarthy from Olympia Wash., with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 181st Brigade Support Battalion, 81st Brigade Combat Team, when asked what makes a good NCO.



Staff Sgt. Patricia McCarthy with her husband Aaron and their children 3-year-old Andrew James and 1-year-old Caitlynn Marie (Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Patricia McCarthy)

and track everyone who enters the American base.

“She is dedicated to duty, as well as her peers, superiors, and especially to her subordinates. She has taken on a very difficult job during this deployment that is unlike anything we would do in CONUS, and has excelled,” said Sgt. Maj. Debra R. Clarke from Rochester, Wash., McCarthy’s NCOIC.

“She is in the first line of defense for force protection as the Soldier who works directly with contractors, retailers and Iraqi businessmen. She has an innate ability to recognize applicants who are possible security risks and can expertly use the automated tools we’ve been provided to assist in that process. Staff Sgt. McCarthy is just as diligent in her responsibilities of taking care of her subordinates, providing guidance and counsel on an on-going basis,” she added.

McCarthy, who has served for the past 15 years in both the Washington and California National Guard, plans on retiring from the National Guard, which she said has been like a second home to her.

“I have met a lot of great people and have made long-lasting friendships. I still have plenty to learn from my

senior leadership and plan to be part of the National Guard for several more years,” she said.

McCarthy has worked full time for the Washington National Guard for many years at both recruiting and G1. She is currently working on a business administration degree, “so when it does come time to leave the National Guard, I could find another job to call home,” she said.

McCarthy is not just a dedicated Soldier and student, she is a dedicated wife and mother as well. Her husband, Staff Sgt. Aaron McCarthy, is also serving with the 81st BCT in al-Taqqadum, Iraq. He calls his wife the rock of their family and his best friend. He also expresses his unfaltering pride in her.

“Patty loves a challenge and loves to be challenged and will never accept defeat. My wife is a very professional Soldier that lives the Army values. She is a great leader and role model,” he said.

Though Aaron could endlessly talk about the things that make his wife so wonderful, one quality sums her up the best.

“...The one thing that everyone says about my wife is true. She is so nice. That is my wife. There is nothing more important to my wife than helping people all the way from recruiting, to her job in Bldg. 15 and to here. She makes you feel good and she truly cares, that is why I love her.”



Staff Sgt. Patricia McCarthy of Olympia, Wash., with HHC, 181st BSB, 81st BCT (Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Patricia McCarthy)



Staff Sgt. Patricia McCarthy from HHC, 181st BSB checks the fingerprint of a local worker at Q-West, Iraq. (Photo courtesy of 181st BSB)



Happy St. Patrick's Day

Celebrate the Irish March 17

By Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr
81st BCT Public Affairs

St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Britain to wealthy parents near the end of the fourth century. He was kidnapped by Irish raiders when he was 16. Patrick spent six years in captivity in Ireland before escaping back to Britain. He then spent 15 years studying religion and went back to Ireland to spread Christianity. Because Patrick was familiar with the Irish culture and language, he incorporated them into his teachings instead of dismissing their native beliefs. The Celtic cross comes from combining the traditional Christian cross with a sun, which was a powerful Irish symbol. The Irish have celebrated March 17, the day of St. Patrick's death, for thousands of years as a religious feast holiday.

The first St. Patrick's Day parade took place in the United States, not Ireland.

Irish Soldiers serving in the English military marched through New York City on March 17, 1762 to help reconnect with their Irish roots. St. Patrick's Day parades became popular over the next many years among the many middle class Protestant Irish immigrants in America.

In the mid-nineteenth century, millions of poor, un-

educated Catholic Irishmen flooded into the U.S. to avoid starvation during the Great Potato Famine. Though they continued to proudly celebrate their heritage every March 17, they were despised and ostracized by the general population and were often denied work. After years of struggle, the Irish finally found acceptance in America and today, American citizens of all backgrounds join together to celebrate the Irish by attending parades, wearing green and eating Irish food.

St. Patrick's Day is also celebrated in Canada, Australia, Japan, Singapore and Russia. 

Irish Toasts

- May God bring good health to your enemies enemies
- May you live to be a hundred years, with one extra year to repent.
- May the best day of your past be the worst day of your future.
- May you get all your wishes but one, So you always have something to strive for.
- Here's to your coffin... May it be built of 100-year-old oaks which I will plant tomorrow.
- May the sons of your daughters smile up in your face.
- May your neighbors respect you, Troubles neglect you, The angels protect you, And Heaven accept you.

March
is Irish
American
Heritage
Month

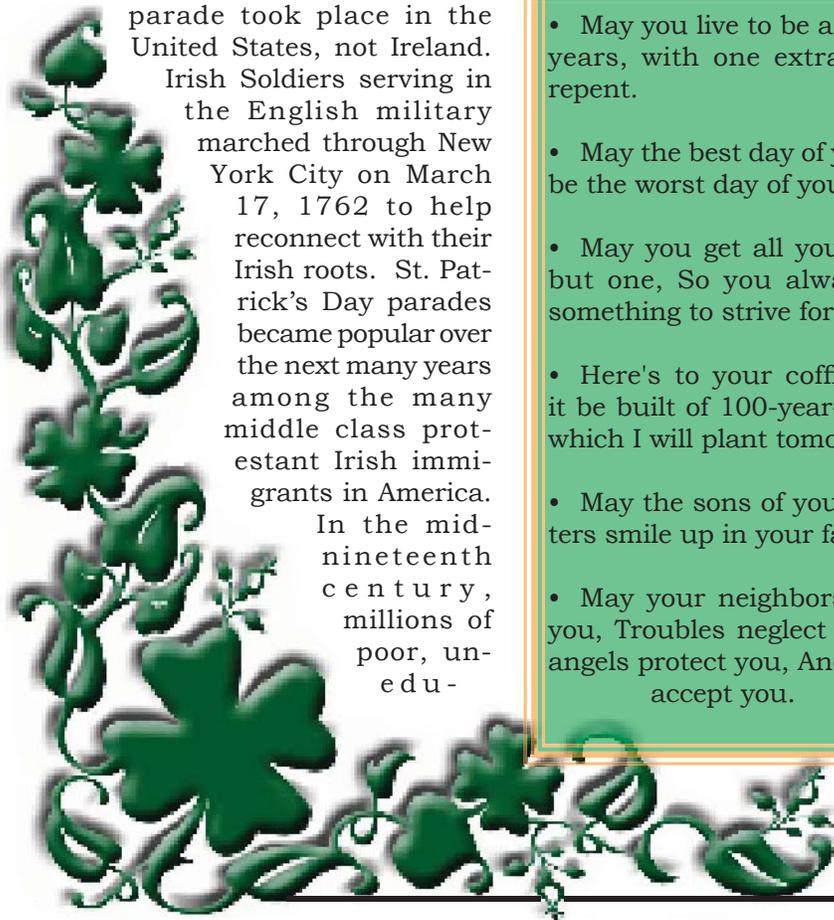
By Sgt. 1st Class Sheletha Quillin
1-161st Inf. (CAB)

The President declares March 2009 as Irish-American Heritage Month. The opening and closing paragraphs of the proclamation read as follows:

"Even before the birth of our nation, the sons and daughters of Erin departed their homes in search of liberty and a more hopeful future. As these early pioneers left familiar lands, they carried with them the rich traditions of home. This March we honor their journey and their lasting contributions to the history and culture of the United States."

"Now, therefore, I, Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2009 as Irish-American Heritage Month. I encourage all Americans to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies, programs and activities."

Congratulations to our Irish-American Soldiers for this honorable recognition. All Soldiers are encouraged to take time this month to learn something new about women's history and Irish American history. You might even learn something about an Irish-American woman! Please share your knowledge with others. 





Adventures in Convoys, Courtesy of The Hustler

Hotel Company, 1-161st Infantry (CAB) Soldiers' maiden voyage to Scania

By Capt. Mike Vincent
1-161st Inf. (CAB)

“You see the lights up ahead? That’s Scania,” said Sgt. 1st Class Elwin Farnsworth, from Hotel Company, 1-161st Infantry (Combined Arms Battalion), 81st Brigade Combat Team, to an obviously impatient and haggard crew. The long seven-hour drive to Scania was wearing on the Soldiers as they pulled into the gate in time to see the sun rise over the familiar T-walls that surround this fortified “truck stop.”

Farnsworth, the H Co. convoy commander, known as *Hustler 21*, is no stranger to the war in Iraq. A veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom II, he has seen his share of combat and has seen the evolution of this conflict for the better.

“Back in 2004, the Iraqis seemed to be totally dependant on U.S. and Coalition Forces, and the insurgency was out to kill the American Soldiers. Now, you see more electricity and sewer improvements,



Sgt. 1st Class Elwin Farnsworth from H Co., 1-161st Inf. (CAB) discusses the route to Scania with Lead KBR Controller Dennis Bos minutes before departure. (Photo by Capt. Mike Vincent)

the Iraqi police and army [seem] to be better equipped and the whole infrastructure has improved,” said Farnsworth.

“Iraq has so much potential. Iraq has all of the natural resources, the historical sites, warm weather and overall good natured people. I just hope they can get it together. It’s the improvements in the quality of life for

the Iraqi people I see that makes me feel better and reassures me that all of our sacrifice is worth it. It makes me proud to be here,” he added.

Many of the H Co. Soldiers hadn’t been to Scania before and had little idea what to expect. Scania is the half-way point from Kuwait to Baghdad and a key logistical hub in theater. This 24-hour operation in the middle of the Iraq desert is the lifeline for Coalition Forces. Its bustling military and contractor vehicle traffic with trucks as far as the eye could see would boggle the mind of even the most experienced of logisticians. Once the vehicles were parked, the H Co. crews headed for the temporary overnight tents for a daylight slumber and recovery for the trip home.

As dusk approached, the familiar sound of engines and the smell of pungent diesel exhaust filled the evening air. The convoy security vehicles took their places in the order of march and the waiting began. The lead scout, Sgt. Brodie Moberly, and his crew moved to the head of the column and waited for the order to depart. Moberly, a veteran of Afghanistan and two previous tours in



Sgt. Brodie Moberly and Cpl. Clayton Burkhamer, both with H Co., 1-161st Inf. (CAB), complete their pre-combat inspections on the scout gun truck before departing Scania. (Photo by Capt. Mike Vincent)

See “SCANIA” page 22



Visiting Qatar

By Staff Sgt. Derrick Grasty
HQ Co., 81st BCT

Most servicemembers know that there is a pass program that involves a four-day pass in Qatar, but many of them don't really know what that pass entails.

Every servicemember who goes on pass embarks on a journey to beautiful Camp Asaliyah, Qatar and is presented with a great opportunity to unwind and get away from the everyday grind of being deployed. Camp Asaliyah offers many amenities such as dining, entertainment and shopping options, as well as various opportunities to go off post and see the sights and sounds of Doha City.

Due to travel issues, actually getting to Qatar can be a little cumbersome, but once you arrive at the R&R site you will find a peaceful environment designed for servicemembers to shed their military uniform, put on civilian clothes and unwind. On site, servicemembers can find a large PX/BX, with various vendors, Popeye's, Dairy Queen, Orange Julius, Chili's, an Irish Pub and a Mexican Cantina. On the recreation side of the house, Camp Asaliyah is home to a nine-hole mini golf course, bowling alley, dance club, gym and a heated swimming pool with Jacuzzi.

For those who just want to relax, there are two lounge areas with soft and comfortable couches for movie viewing. There is also a USO lounge area where servicemembers may take their shoes off and just lounge on the multiple sofas and lay in the plush pillow movie room.



Camels relaxing in Qatar (Photo by Marine Lance Cpl. Brandon Fajohn)

There is even a Spa area that offers massages and a salon for the ladies to get their hair and nails taken care of.

Concerned about losing touch with your loved ones while on pass? The entire USO building is wired with high-speed wireless internet that is as fast as DSL. There are also multiple DSN phone centers and a SPAWAR for those who don't have their own computers.

The R&R program also offers several trips and tours to various locations around Doha. Some of the more popular



Out in town in Qatar (Photo by Marine Lance Cpl. Brandon Fajohn)

trips include a Doha City tour where servicemembers are taken to the old souqs and jewelry souq markets, a camel farm, falcon shop, lunch buffet and the largest mall in Doha. On the way there are various attractions and beautiful architecture to see. There is a water sports trip where servicemembers are taken out into the harbor to partake in tubing and jet skiing. There is also a sea picnic trip where you will load into SUVs and experience a wild ride to the Qatari coast and enjoy swimming in the Persian Gulf, beach volleyball, camel rides and a lunch buffet. The cost for the tours ranges from free to \$30 and they are all well worth the time and money. 📍

Helpful Hints

- Remember that flights get moved around and it is inevitable that you get held up somewhere throughout the duration of your travels. The quicker you accept that, the better off you will be.
- Travel light! You don't need duty uniforms or PTs unless you really want to wear them. There is a lending closet where you can borrow clothes of any style.
- Carry your bag onto the flight. Trust me, it's not any fun when your bag gets sent to Kuwait when you're going to Qatar. If you absolutely must check your bags, keep your personal hygiene items with you.
- Bring cash, and remember if you shop off base, you will need to have Qatari Riyals. There is an ATM machine where you can pull out both dollars and riyals. Your Eagle cash card will not work off post.
- Make the most out of your time, there is plenty to do and lots of people to do it with so there is no reason to sit around and be bored!



The California TAG visits the 1-185th

Maj. Gen. William H. Wade II, the Adjutant General of the California National Guard, congratulates Sgt. Vu Le, a native of San Jose, Calif., and member of D 1-185th Armor (CAB), after a re-enlistment ceremony held Feb. 19, 2009 on COB Speicher, Iraq. Wade arrived on COB Speicher to get a commander's perspective on how things were going for the 1-185th Armor. He also gave out awards and conducted several promotions. Wade stressed: "I appreciate what you do." (Photo by Capt. Renato Rossignoli) 

Job opportunities for National Guard Soldiers after deployment

Compiled by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier
81st BCT Public Affairs

Soldiers looking for a job upon return home from Iraq have another option. Personnel Force Innovation Program is an Under Secretary of Defense initiative to obtain and place reserve servicemembers on active duty tours with Department of Defense agencies for one to three years. When active duty personnel are not available, PFI reservists are more cost effective than civilian employees or contractor support. Defense agency customers fund reserve member active duty costs.

PFI recruits National Guard and reservists for their extensive military and civilian expertise, agile problem solving skills and higher rate of graduate level education. Positions can be filled based on civilian experi-

ence and are not rank or military occupational specialty specific. Jobs range from paralegals to welders.

They pull from a pool of almost 1.5 million volunteers from all branches of the service for work in a variety of agencies. There are a variety of jobs available and they are considered active duty tours, so they include all active duty pay, allowances and benefits. The agencies also fund TDY costs, to include moving expenses.

There are positions available both in the U.S. and overseas. Tour lengths vary, but many are more than a year. The reservist's military service can prematurely curtail tours because of military priorities, such as contingency operations.

For more information, go to the PFI Web site at <http://pfi.dod.mil> and scroll through the list of tours, download the brochure or apply. 

FERNANDEZ continued from page 5

hopes to have his own scholarship foundation for less fortunate children, is the most proud of is his daughter, Michelle, a sophomore at Columbia University.

"Raising and watching my child grow is a very rewarding, priceless experience," he said.

Michelle is equally proud of her dad. "What makes me proud of my father is his ability to put those who are in need before him. He is always willing to go out of his way to offer help to those in need, whether the person in need is a family [member], close friend or even a stranger."

Though he continues to help others, both on the battle field and through volunteer work, Michelle has been his number one priority.

"I can, without a doubt, say that it is because of my father that I have become who I am and that I have accomplished what I have accomplished," said the 19-year-old Michelle.

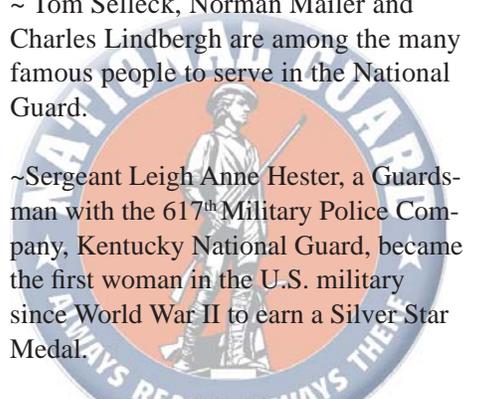
"There is not a day that goes by when I'm walking across campus or down the streets of New York City that I [don't] thank my dad for all that he has done for me and for getting me to where I am today," she added. 

DID YOU KNOW...

~ Tom Selleck, Norman Mailer and Charles Lindbergh are among the many famous people to serve in the National Guard.

~Sergeant Leigh Anne Hester, a Guardsman with the 617th Military Police Company, Kentucky National Guard, became the first woman in the U.S. military since World War II to earn a Silver Star Medal.

~More than 158,000 Guardsmen served on the Mexican Border in 1916-1917 to protect against raids by the Mexican bandit Pancho Villa.





Training for employment post-deployment

The Army announces a new pilot program designed to train Soldiers in high-demand career fields

Courtesy of hrc.army.mil



Congress has selected the Army to participate in an education pilot program designed to provide expanded education opportunities for Soldiers, officers and Wounded Warriors serving on active duty -- to include National Guard and Reserve Soldiers on extended active duty.

The intent of this short-term pilot program is to provide training in high-demand career fields to help Soldiers find employment after they transition out of the Army. Army Education is working with technical and community colleges throughout the United States to build upon existing programs and develop new pilot re-training programs in high demand career occupations, such as rehabilitation, nursing, medical technology and other health care occupations.

The Army Vocational/Technical (AVOTEC) Program was announced Jan. 15 and Army Education Centers and Soldier and Family Assistance Centers began assisting Soldiers with enrollment Feb. 1.

The completed website will provide an up-to-date listing of community and technical college program submissions for inclusion in the AVOTEC Program. Soldiers are to consider enrollment in these programs for training or re-training. However, as the HQDA Executive Agent for the AVOTEC Program, HQ ACES reserves the right to disapprove programs that do not meet the eligibility criteria of the Program. Programs can be no longer than 18 months in length and should not exceed the maximum cost limit of \$4500.00 per fiscal year.

All costs for instruction, certification, or license must be paid by September 30, 2009. No additional funds will be available after the ending date for this pilot program.

Community colleges and technical schools will be added to this website as their programs are submitted and approved.

Thank you for all of your efforts and continued support of our Soldiers and their families.

More information on this program can be found at <https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/education/index.html>.

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Get the most out of your GI Bill Benefits

By Gary Allin
Washington HECB/SAA

The Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board's State Approving Agency (HECB/SAA) evaluates and approves programs of education and training throughout the state of Washington for GI Bill education and training benefits.

The following link to the HECB/SAA website provides Guardsmen and their families information/links on colleges/universities, apprenticeship, on-the-job training programs and flight schools in Washington State that they can attend while receiving GI Bill benefits. <http://www.hecb.wa.gov/autheval/saa/saaindex.asp>.

As the 81st BCT prepares to return home and its troops think about their future, the staff of the SAA is ready to assist your unit's people make their post-deployment decisions by providing up-to-date information on approved schools and training facilities in Washington. If any member of the 81st wishes to attend a school or receive training at a currently unapproved facility in this state, we can work with the facility to seek approval for GI Bill education or training benefits.

For further information, contact Program Associate Gary Allin at (360) 753-7867 or garya@hecb.wa.gov



Task Force 146 keeps their eyes on the fight

By Lt. Col. Jeffrey Sabatine
2-146th FA

Defending a U.S. base bordered on three sides by the third largest city in Iraq, which is arguably the strongest insurgent stronghold in the country, might seem daunting for some. But that is not the case for Soldiers of Task Force 146 Base Defense Operations Center, made up of Soldiers from 2-146th Field Artillery, 81st Brigade Combat Team, working on Contingency Operating Base Marez in Mosul. Instead, the Soldiers have used a creative mix of doctrine, technology, and common sense to turn the COB Marez perimeter into one of the most hardened and best defended perimeters in Iraq.

Maj. Jack Mushallo, the BDOC officer in charge and 2-146th operations officer, said the first thing the unit did when they arrived here in October was conduct a thorough assessment of what they were falling in on.

"The biggest challenge we have is just where we are located," he explained. "Nowhere else in Iraq do you have such a determined insurgency rooted in an urban setting that is so close to a U.S. perimeter that is as expansive as ours."

Mushallo said his team's initial assessment identified weaknesses and prioritized resources to develop a to-do list that was thorough and lengthy.

"Some things we needed to fix immediately," he said. "Others we need to fix tomorrow, and some will have to be fixed by the unit that replaces us."

Task Force 146 Battle Captain and Intelligence Officer Capt. Nathan



TF 146 BDOC Intelligence Analyst Spc. Kyle Brown observes suspicious activity outside the perimeter of COB Marez in Mosul, Iraq using surveillance systems recently employed in the battalion's tactical operations center. (Photo by Lt. Col. Jeffrey Sabatine)

Howard said the team also identified technologies that could help with the arduous task before them and level the playing field against individuals and groups attempting a breach of the Marez perimeter.

"Right now our eyes and ears extend well beyond an area that might have seemed adequate to those who were here before us," he said. "We are aware of things going on in our area of influence long before they have a chance to develop, which allows us to intercept the threat."

Howard said his team's use of multi-tiered collection assets coupled with state of the art security measures employed at the COB's multiple entry

control points, has greatly reduced the capability of unidentified enemies gaining access, but he cautions the threat remains.

"I don't sleep around here but if I did, I would sleep a lot better now," he said.

Mushallo agreed and said the key to providing a safe and secure environment for the 12,000 plus residents he is charged with protecting in an area of operations as contentious as Mosul is diligence.

"This place was hit hard in '04," he remembered. "And it's up to us to make sure that opportunity does not present itself to anybody else, ever again." 📷



HELP US MAKE THE DESERT RAVEN BETTER!

What is your unit doing? We want to know! Send your stories, story ideas and/or photographs to emily.suhr@ar.mnf-wiraq.usmc.mil or emily.suhr@us.army.mil by the 10th of each month.

Photographs need to be in a JPEG or TIFF format. Please include a Microsoft Word document identifying who is in the photo (Identification = full name, rank, unit, duty position and hometown), what they are doing, when and where.

Don't forget to tell us who took the photos and/or who wrote the story!



Celebrate Women's History Month this March

By Sgt. Amanda Gauthier
81st BCT Public Affairs

This year's presidential proclamation for Women's History Month states: "With passion and courage, women have taught us that when we band together to advocate for our highest ideals, we can advance our common well-being and strengthen the fabric of our Nation. Each year during Women's History Month, we remember and celebrate women from all walks of life who have shaped this great Nation."

Women played a significant role in shaping the history of our nation. Yet, in the past, women have been vastly unappreciated for their contributions and sacrifices. Women have helped in every war fought by the United States, providing shelter and food to troops

in to protect the women. This is just one example of the injustice women struggled with. One of the most famous women's rights movement activists, Susan B. Anthony, was arrested in 1878 for trying to vote for Ulysses S. Grant in the presidential election. It was not until 1920 that women gained the right to vote.

Historically, women have always acted as nurses in an unofficial capacity, but in 1901 the Nurse Corps became a permanent corps of the Army Medical Department. The Army contracted women to serve as phone operators, drivers, occupational therapists and to fill other needed shortages during World War I. In 1941 the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was established and six years later women were accepted into integrated units during peace time.



during the Civil War, bandaging wounds and providing vital communications support in both World Wars, Korea and Vietnam.

Women had to fight their own war for equality before they were allowed to openly fight for our nation. Women suffered in an inglorious unofficial war to gain the right to vote and own property in a country they helped build. Prior to the women's rights movement, women were treated as second-class citizens. They were not allowed to own property, sign a contract or vote, much less fight for their country. Women were expected to keep the home and raise children.

On March 3, 1913 policemen just stood by as a women's suffrage march in Washington D.C. was attacked by enraged bystanders. Many of the women were spat on and struck in the face. Soldiers were eventually called

Women have always stepped up to help the nation in times of war and in times of peace. They have always been there standing behind the men fighting for our country, mending clothing, tending to the sick and feeding the hungry. Women are fighting for our country alongside men in every branch of our nation's military throughout Iraq and Afghanistan and there are even more women at home supporting the military and answering our nations call to defend our country's freedom.

"If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them."
- Sojourner Truth 

Quick Facts

~ 1861-1865 - More than 400 women served in uniform during the Civil War. Many of them received pensions

~ 1948 - Women's Armed Services Integration Act enacted admitting women into the Regular Army and the Organized Reserve Corps, creating a permanent WAC

~ 1976 - First women enter the U.S. Military Academy at Westpoint

~ 1983 - First women to participate in direct ground combat in Grenada

~ 1990 - More than 24,000 women serve in the Persian Gulf during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm



A big move made easy at Abu Ghraib

C Co., 1-161st Inf. (CAB) *Highlander* Soldiers make it look easy during a big generator move at Abu Ghraib

By Capt. Mike Vincent
1-161st Inf. (CAB)

The 2nd Platoon, Charlie Company *Crazy Horse*, 1-161st Infantry (Combined Arms Battalion), 81st Brigade Combat Team Convoy Commander 1st Lt. Joel Berkowitz never would have imagined himself leading a convoy in downtown Baghdad, at Abu Ghraib, with \$6 million worth of industrial generators under his responsibility and critical to the 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command's mission of sustaining Coalition Forces at Camp Taji, Iraq. However, the lieutenant couldn't have imagined anything better. As the radio sounded and the glow of a computer monitor filled the small cab of his MRAP, he gave the order: "Crazy Horse 24 RED CON 1, Scout 1 move out."

The vehicles peeled off the staging area, the massive 20-ton containerized generators poised ominously on



Staff Sgt. David Kemp with C Co., 1-161st Inf. (CAB) completes his pre-combat inspections on the trail gun truck before departing Abu Ghraib. (Photo by Capt. Mike Vincent)

flatbed trucks, and waited for their position in the convoy and the order to move. The yard managers assured Berkowitz the generators would pass under the myriad of overpasses and highway signs that scattered the road to Taji. An impact of a generator against an overpass would be catastrophic and could cost millions in repairs. It would also put the convoy in a very dangerous situation being stuck in a hostile Baghdad neighborhood in the middle of the night.

To mitigate the risk, the Soldiers of 2nd platoon employed a seemingly unlikely method of assuring each overpass was high enough to allow the convoy to pass. Each scout MRAP vehicle placed a post with a chemlite attached at the tip on its turret. This post was measured alongside each load to ensure it would clear the under-



1st Lt. Joel Berkowitz from C Co., 1-161st Inf. (CAB) discusses the route to Abu Ghraib with lead scout Sgt. Eli Koehmstedt minutes before departure. (Photo by Capt. Mike Vincent)

passes. As the scout vehicle approached an underpass, the gunner would observe the tip of the chemlite. If the lite impacted the underpass, the load could not pass and the convoy must turn around. If it cleared, the convoy could pass.

The moment of truth arrived. About an hour into the convoy, the first scout vehicle approached an extremely low overpass.

Staff Sgt. Eli Koemstedt, the 2nd Platoon lead scout, radioed the convoy: "This is as low as it gets, hold on." A minute that seemed like hours passed and then Koemstedt radioed: "Hug the left side of the road under the highest point of the underpass; we have about two inches."

Soon, each truck slowly moved to the left and passed underneath. Success. A collective sigh of relief could be heard up and down the convoy as the lights of Camp Taji approached.

As the lead convoy vehicles waited for the delivery of generators, a group of crew members gathered around.

An impact of a generator against an overpass would be catastrophic and could cost millions in repairs.

"Just another day in the life of Crazy Horse," explained Staff Sgt. Candido Villalobos. "We'll be at it again tomorrow."

Just then, the dark silhouette of Berkowitz approached: "We're outta here, report RED CON status when you're up."

The convoy crews scrambled to their vehicles and the engine rumble sounded once again. A familiar order broke the silence: "Crazy Horse 24 RED CON 1, Scout 1 move out." 



California Family Assistance Network Operation We Care Meetings

What is an Operation We Care Meeting? Operation We Care meetings are an opportunity to bring Soldiers, families and communities together on a regular basis to share and support each other and discuss common issues, experiences and concerns.

Azusa 3rd Thursday of every month at 7:00pm
National Guard Armory
1351 West Sierra Madre Ave., Azusa
POC: Myra Valle
Phone: (818) 383-8643
Email: myra.valle@us.army.mil

Bakersfield 2nd Friday of every month at 6:00pm
National Guard Armory
2800 Gateway Ave., Bakersfield
POC: Lacy Gomez
Phone: (661) 978-7782
Email: lacy.gomez@us.army.mil

Bell 1st Wednesday of every month at 6:00pm
National Guard Armory
5300 Bandini Blvd., Bell
POC: Marco Velez
Phone: (213) 503-4472
Email: marco.velez@us.army.mil

Escondido 2nd Saturday of every month at Noon
National Guard Armory
304 E. Park Ave., Escondido
POC: Rebecca Lambert
Phone: (619) 405-7190
Email: rebecca.m.lambert@us.army.mil

Fresno Last Tuesday of every month at 6:30pm
National Guard Armory
5575 E. Airways Blvd., Fresno
POC: Sue Miguel
Phone: (559) 994-6102
Email: sue.miguel@us.army.mil

Los Alamitos Last Thursday of every month at 6:00pm
Los Alamitos Joint Forces Training Base
11206 Lexington Drive, Bldg 244, Los Alamitos
POC: Estella Wimberly
Phone: (562) 254-6916
Email: estella.wimberly@us.army.mil

Modesto Quarterly – Please contact for next meeting
National Guard Armory
933 Kansas Ave., Modesto
POC: Linda Gillum
Phone: (209) 402-4114
Email: linda.gillum@us.army.mil

Paso Robles 4th Wednesday of every month at 6:00pm
Veteran's Memorial Building
240 Scott St., Paso Robles
POC: Clair Ruffner
Phone: (805) 896-4029
Email: clair.ruffner@us.army.mil

Sacramento Quarterly – Please contact for next meeting
Meadowview Armory
3250 Meadowview Rd., Sacramento
POC: Gail Grinius
Phone: (916) 416-8320
Email: gail.grinius@us.army.mil

San Bernardino Last Thursday of every month at 5:00pm
National Guard Armory
266 East Third St., San Bernardino
POC: Phillip Dewitt
Phone: (909) 801-9411
Email: philip.dewitt@us.army.mil

San Diego 1st Thursday of every month at 7:00pm
National Guard Armory
7401 Mesa College Dr., San Diego
POC: Leroy Hill
Phone: (760) 828-7116
Email: leroy.alphonso.hill@us.army.mil

San Jose Quarterly – Please contact for next meeting
San Jose Vet Center
278 North 2nd St., San Jose
POC: Wendy Reichard
Phone (408) 595-9847
Email: wendy.reichard@us.army.mil

Visalia 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7:00pm
National Guard Armory
1100 North Akers St., Visalia
POC: Jim Morrelli
Phone: (559) 217-9976
Email: james.morrelli@us.army.mil

Walnut Creek 3rd Saturday of every month at 11:00am
Location changes monthly – Please contact for next meeting location.
POC: Terri Curd
Phone: (707) 580-3319
Email: terri.curd@us.army.mil

For more information on family assistance in California, visit www.calguard.ca.gov/readyfamilies



THE RAVEN GALLERY



Staff Sgt. Selina Wadsworth from 81st BSTB hands out toys to an Iraqi girl in Khnzera Kaser, Iraq. (Photo by Scott Fontaine)



Gen. Craig McKinley, the chief of the National Guard Bureau, greets Spc. Chris Christopherson of A Co., 181st BSB during his recent visit to Joint Base Balad, Iraq March 1, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. David Isaac)



Staff Sgt. Robert Camacho of Puyallup, Wash., and Sgt. Michael Gillis of Snohomish, Wash., both with 181st BSB, check in local Iraqis to work on Joint Base Balad. (Photo by Scott Fontaine)



Mechanics from B Co. -- Bonecrusher -- 1-161st Inf. (CAB) lower a Medium Tactical Vehicle transmission into a crate at Joint Base Balad, Iraq before shipping to depot to be rebuilt. (Photo by Sgt. David Isaac)



Iraqis wave to a 2-146th FA convoy on its way to Kurdistan. (Photo by Scott Fontaine)



Artillery Soldiers take a walk into Iraq's history

By 1st Lt. Matthew Daum
2-146th Chaplain

The Soldiers of 2-146th Field Artillery have a special treat at Contingency Operating Base Marez in Mosul: a fourth century monastery. Local tradition says the St. Elijah monastery dates back to the fourth century and is the oldest Christian monastery in Iraq. Existing buildings above the ground date back to the 1500's or 1600's.

Numerous mounds around the outside of the monastery show that there are more ancient remains underground that archaeologists might someday excavate. Until the Forward Operating Base was built and the area closed off, the local As- syrian Catholics would gather there to celebrate the

Feast of St. Elijah with special worship services and fellowship. Web sources say the date of the feast is July 19. In the fall of 2003, the ruins of the monastery were occupied by an Iraqi tank unit and used as a command

post. Although the international laws of war protect religious and cultural heritage sites, when they are occupied by combat forces and used as a base for military operations, they become legitimate targets. A battalion of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division attacked the monastery, and captured the ruins. Bullet holes from small-

arms fire, and larger weapons pock the exterior walls of the monastery.



Soldiers from 2-146th FA learn about an ancient monastery on COB Marez, Iraq. (Photo by 1st Lt. Matthew Daum)

REDEPLOYMENT continued from page 2

and individuals will be on hand to provide the families with the required support. This drill will also include the Freedom Salutes in which we get to recognize Soldiers, families and employers for the outstanding support they have provided to the National Guard and the United States of America. We will also recognize the great mission accomplishment our Soldiers have achieved. There will be more information published on the specific details of the October, November and December drills at a later date.

Bottom line: We will publish exact dates of our return just as soon as we can identify them. Our number one priority is to return your Soldier as fast as we can while ensuring they get all the care and benefits they are entitled to.

Thanks again to the families and employers who continually provide the great support to our Soldiers and to the Soldiers for all the hard work that you are doing.



A TROOP, 1-303RD HONORS THEIR OWN

A Troop, 1-303rd Cav. honored four of their Soldiers during a formation on Al Asad Airbase Feb. 19, 2009. Staff Sgt. Louis Comitale received an Army Commendation Medal for his service to A Trp. as their supply sergeant during the mobilization process. Staff Sgt. Stafford Stubbs also received an Army Commendation Medal, his was for his service to A Trp. as their training NCO. Staff Sgt. Derick Sandifer received a certificate of achievement for winning a weight lifting championship on Al Asad Airbase. Cpl. Benjamin Jarrett received a certificate of achievement for obtaining an expert weapons qualification. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



The NFL kicks off Iraq visit with the 81st

By Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr
81st BCT Public Affairs

Dressed head to toe in Marine Corps fatigues, the 6-foot-3 Arizona Cardinal nonchalantly munching on beef jerky outside the Marine Corps Exchange on Camp Ramadi, Iraq, almost fit in, save for the dreadlocks and the poster taped to a wall behind him with his photograph on it.

Larry Fitzgerald smiled casually at shocked Marines and Soldiers as they stumbled past him on their way into the small store. Many stopped to shake his hand or just stare. Some ran back to their living quarters to grab cameras, others bought new ones in the exchange. Inside the exchange, Minnesota Viking Jared Allen, also dressed in the Marine Corps uniform, shopped for new boots, while St. Louis Ram Will Witherspoon and New York Giant Danny Clark shopped around for snacks and souvenirs.

The NFL players spent the day at Camp Ramadi Mar. 7, 2009 to visit the troops as part of a USO tour through Kuwait and Iraq.

"This is fun for us," said Fitzgerald who is on his fourth USO tour. "When we get an opportunity to meet



NFL players Jared Allen from the Minnesota Vikings and Will Witherspoon from the St. Louis Rams greet Pfc. Timothy Powell from Marysville, Wash., of HQ Co., 81st BCT at Camp Ramadi, Iraq Mar. 7 while spending the day with troops as part of a USO tour through Kuwait and Iraq. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr)

the people, meet the troops, it's a lot of fun. I have family that's in the military, so it kind of hits close to home with me. I just want to come over and show the troops my support and give them my appreciation for the sacrifices they make for us."

After arriving at the small base in Anbar Province, the NFL players met

with the base commander, Col. Ronald Kapral, shopped at the exchange and ate dinner at the chow hall with excited fans before attending an autograph session that evening.

The foursome was greeted for the autograph session by hundreds of eager Marines, Soldiers and Sailors from across base. The players didn't disappoint. They answered questions from the troops ranging from which other players in the league they most admire – Clark admires players like Allen and Reggie Bush, while Allen finds Peyton Manning both impressive and frustrating – to which branch of the military each would join if things were different – each followed in the tradition of their family members who have or are serving, the Air Force for Witherspoon, Marine Corps for Allen and Clark and the Army for Fitzgerald. The players also talked about their families, hobbies and, of course, football. One Marine wanted to know what the best part of being a football player was.

"I'm doing the job I dreamt of do-



NFL players Danny Clark from the New York Giants and Larry Fitzgerald from the Arizona Cardinals give the 81st BCT Commander Col. Ronald Kapral an autographed football at Camp Ramadi, Iraq Mar. 7. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr)

See NFL page 24



HEALTH CORNER

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

HEAT CAN KILL!

As spring and then summer approaches and the temperatures rise, we need to ensure that all of us drink the appropriate amount of fluids and know what to watch for in ourselves and our battle buddies.

Drink:

- Drink enough water to replace your sweat losses
- Don't wait until **you feel thirsty** to drink, you need fluids before you feel thirsty
- Remind your buddy to drink, refill your canteen or water bottle frequently
- Watch your urine. If it is dark colored, or you are not voiding, **you are dehydrated**
- Fluids containing caffeine, energy drinks, or sodas are not adequate fluid replacements

Eat:

- Eating balanced meals replaces salt. Gatorade can help replace fluids and salt
- Do not follow low calorie diets while working or training in a hot environment
- You should not use dietary supplements or metabolic enhancers at any time, but especially not during extreme heat periods

Notify your chain of command, battle buddy or health care provider if you:

- Are dizzy
- Have an HA not responding to the usual measures
- Feel nauseated
- Feel tired or weak
- If you are confused or you notice someone "acting differently"

Following these simple steps will help keep you and your battle buddy healthy as the temperature climbs. 📄

Sexual Assault Response Coordinator



By Master Sgt. CathyJo Wings
81st BCT SARC

Is alcohol a date rape drug?

Any drug that can affect judgment and behavior can put a person at risk for unwanted or risky sexual activity. Alcohol is one such drug. In fact, alcohol is the drug most commonly used to help commit sexual assault. When a person drinks too much alcohol:

- It's harder to think clearly.
- It's harder to set limits and make good choices.
- It's harder to tell when a situation could be dangerous.
- It's harder to say "no" to sexual advances.
- It's harder to fight back if a sexual assault occurs.
- It's possible to blackout and to have memory loss.

How can I protect myself from being a victim?

- Don't accept drinks from other people.
- Open containers yourself.
- Keep you drink with you at all times, even when you go to the bathroom.
- Don't share drinks.
- Don't drink from a punch bowl or other common, open containers.

If someone offers to get you a drink from a bar or at a party, go with the person to order your drink. Watch the drink being poured and carry it yourself.

Don't drink anything that tastes or smells strange.

Have a non-drinking friend with you to make sure nothing happens.

If you realize you left your drink unattended, pour it out.

If you feel drunk and haven't had any alcohol – or, if you feel like the effects of drinking alcohol are stronger than usual – get help right away! 📄

81st BCT SARC Master Sgt. CathyJo Wings
cathyjo.wings@ar.mnf-wiraq.usmc.mil
DSN 344-0932 VOIP 696-5171

File your taxes for free



Soldiers and their families who served on Active Duty Military - including Reservists and National Guard - in 2008 and earned less than \$56,000 AGI are eligible for free federal tax return preparation and filing. Visit www.taxfreedom.com for more information.

Inspector General



Sgt. 1st Class Paul Scott
DSN: 318-344-0877
Paul.a.scott@us.army.mil
paul.scott@ar.mnf-wiraq.usmc.mil



Embedded reporter Scott Fontaine interviews Staff Sgt. Kent Bailey, one of four Soldiers from the 81st BCT's JNN platoon stationed in Al Nakhuyb, an Iraqi Army outpost. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr)

An outsider's view from the inside

What it's like to ride along with the 81st Brigade Combat Team in Iraq

By Scott Fontaine
Tacoma News Tribune

I was driving home from an assignment when my BlackBerry buzzed with an e-mail from my editor. "Pack your bags," he wrote. "You're going to Iraq." Nine days later I was on a flight to the Middle East.

I'm lucky enough to work for a newspaper that cares about covering the military – but not always about giving much advance warning for embedding in Iraq. Still, I couldn't refuse the opportunity to spend two months with the 81st Brigade Combat Team.

I volunteered for the assignment because I wanted to tell your stories. Many – far too many – people back home have turned their attention away from Iraq. My unwritten mission was to remind those people that 2,400 of their statesmen were pulling themselves away from their families and often putting themselves in harm's way to serve our country.

Like any assignment, there were good times and frustrating ones, times when the words just flowed onto the page and when enough near-beers couldn't break writer's block. A handful of stories, though, will likely remain the highlights of my trip. I thought I'd share them with you, in no particular order.

~ The trip to the ruins of Ur, right outside Contingency Operating Base Adder, with a group of Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 161st Infantry (CAB) resonated with everyone who went. We were a bit of a diverse crew: A Baptist chaplain, a Christian seminarian, a Jew, a history buff.

At night, we often relaxed in a coffee shop. Maj. Joe Hammel taught us new card games while Spc. Eric Mulkey played his ukulele and talked about living in a

yurt somewhere "off the grid" in eastern Washington.

~ A humanitarian mission with the 81st Brigade Special Troops Battalion to Khnzero Kaser, a village outside Contingency Operating Base Q-West. A church in Bellingham donated boxes of medical supplies – everything from electrolyte strips to ibuprofen – and medic Staff Sgt. Selina Wadsworth used her training to listen to the needs of the villagers and distribute the meds. Others brought toys, dolls, coloring books and crayons, and just about everyone was snapping photos.

~ A convoy mission to Habur Gate on the Turkish border gave me hope. The Kurds know how to run a country properly. At one point, I walked into town without wearing any gear and not worrying about my

"The guys seemed to forget I was a reporter after about 20 minutes and just treated me like one of the crew."

safety. It was a glimpse of how Iraq could be.

~ The Shadow unmanned aerial vehicle played to the tech nerd in me. These guys have one of the coolest jobs in the brigade. I'm sure the Raven crew at Q-West has an equally badass job, but duststorms prevented them from putting a bird in the air while I was there.

~ I had a chance to walk around Forward Operating Base Prosperity in Baghdad's International Zone with Spc. Joseph McInroy. I had only been in Iraq a day, but my unofficial tour felt like a sudden immersion; we climbed to the roof of one of Saddam Hussein's palaces, inside a massive metal Saddam head and took photos by one of the huge ponds he built.

~ On many of the convoys on which I rode, the guys seemed to forget I was a reporter after about 20 minutes and just treated me like one of the crew. It was fun to sit back, chat with the guys and maybe listen to some tunes over the headset.

I remember what a coworker told me before I left. Peter Haley, who has embedded three times in Iraq, told me: "I have no idea what you'll do for the rest of your career, but your first time over there will almost certainly be the most memorable assignment of your life."

It's tough to argue with that. 

KEEP IN TOUCH

My coverage of the 81st Brigade Combat Team doesn't end when I get on a flight to Kuwait. As The News Tribune's military reporter, I'll be continuing to write about the brigade and the people who serve in it. Feel free to e-mail me anytime at scott.fontaine@thenewstribune.com about anything: the deployment, the latest food at the chow hall or those dreadful commercials on AFN.

-Scott Fontaine



THE RAVEN GALLERY



A Soldier from B Co., 1-303rd Cav. loads a magazine at the range in Baghdad, Iraq. (Photo by Scott Fontaine)



Sgt. Nicholas Porter, Sgt. Edward Brock and Sgt. Charles Einarson, all with HQ Co., 81st BCT, prepare for a convoy Mar. 10, 2009. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr)



Soldiers with 2-146th FA drive from COB Marez to Kurdistan on a night convoy. (Photo by Scott Fontaine)



Staff Sgt. Daniel Yoest from Yakima, Wash., with HQ Co., 81st BCT scoops up a ball during a softball game at Camp Ramadi, Iraq, Feb. 28, 2009. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr)



Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Edwards checks to make sure two of his Soldiers, Spc. Steven Downing and Pfc. Houston Jernee from first platoon, A Troop, 1-303rd Cav., are prepared for an upcoming mission while they check to make sure their equipment is ready. (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



Members of H Co., 1-161st Inf. (CAB) Hustler 21 trail crew assist in the recovery of a tanker truck breakdown minutes outside Scania. (Photo by Capt. Mike Vincent)

SCANIA continued from page 8

Iraq, volunteered for this tour.

"I saw the flier in the armory back in Montana where I'm from and my buddies and I put together a squad to join the 1-161," he said.

Moberly came off active duty and wanted to try civilian life for a change, but, after a couple years, decided to return to the Army National Guard.

"I always wanted to be a Soldier ever since I was a little kid and I couldn't imagine doing anything else with my life," he said.

Upon his arrival in Iraq, he volunteered to be the lead scout for his platoon, where he said he could have the most impact on the success of the platoon's mission.

The convoy moved out just after sunset on the long road back to Baghdad. Minutes later, a KBR driver

started waving his hand and giving the thumbs down to signal that something was wrong. The tanker truck had broken down and needed a recovery vehicle for the truck and his tank trailer. Within minutes, three convoy security vehicles arrived at the scene and took up positions to protect the KBR recovery efforts. Not more than 25 minutes had elapsed when the convoy started pushing forward again. The training on recovery battle drills paid off. But now it was dark and the high time for improvised explosive devices was fast approaching.

"Everything looks like an IED" said Moberly, describing the hardest part of his job. "You always have to stay in the mind set that something will happen and, it may be cliché, but it's true, complacency kills."

"In '04, it seemed the goal of the IED by the insurgency was to kill Soldiers," Farnsworth said. "Now, it seems they are designing IEDs to show the world that regardless of the superior technology of the Americans, they can still defeat our technology and really use them to make a political statement."

The IED is the primary weapon used by insurgents

and is fast becoming the new weapon of the Taliban in Afghanistan because it has been so effective in Iraq. For Hustler 21 and his crew, they'd been lucky enough to be half way through this tour and not know the IED and its effectiveness. However, their luck was about to run out.

Suddenly, a large explosion rocked the MRAP, then one more and then another. "IED...IED!" sounded over the radio from the trail vehicle. The radio sprang to life with requests for situation reports and statuses of the convoy vehicles. Soon, the smell of diesel fuel filled the cab of the MRAP.

"Do you smell that?" exclaimed Pfc. Kyle Hare, the young platoon medic from Moses Lake, Wash. "I don't think it's from us."

All of the convoy vehicles reported no damage and the convoy continued back to base. On arrival, however, the crew found that a tanker truck was not so lucky. The

IED punched a hole in the side of it, but everyone was OK.

Earlier that evening, Moberly talked about what made him favor the military over civilian life.

"In civilian life, there is nothing more to life than to serve your own needs. But life here is different. It gives me a sense of something higher than myself, of being a part of something greater. Whether it's defending my county or giving the Iraqis a better life, I can say I had a hand in that and that is what makes me proud, knowing that I can look in the mirror and say to myself that I made a difference in the world," said Moberly.

Farnsworth, who postponed retirement to deploy, plans on returning to his construction business in Tacoma, Wash., and enjoying life with his wife Lori and four sons, Kyle, Aaron, Vincent and Kameron. Farnsworth doesn't plan on deploying again, but knows he can't let his fellow Soldiers down if the call comes. Moberly plans on returning to his Guard unit in Billings, Mont., and joining them for their year-long deployment to Afghanistan. 

**"Everything looks like an IED.
You always have to stay in the
mind set that something will
happen and, it may be cliché,
but it's true, complacency kills."
Sgt. Brodie Moberly**



TRICARE Maternity Coverage

What's covered, what's not

By Diane Mayer
TriWest Healthcare Alliance



TRICARE's maternity benefits include prenatal care, labor, delivery and postpartum care. If you are eligible for TRICARE maternity coverage, here are three baby steps that will get you off to a running start:

Step 1: Visit Your Primary Care Manager

If you think you are pregnant, or you are expecting, your primary care manager (PCM) is your first stop prior to seeing a specialist such as an obstetrician, as you may need a prior authorization or referral to ensure that your care is covered by TRICARE or to avoid higher out-of-pocket costs.

Step 2: Know Your Benefits

TRICARE covers*:

- An ultrasound or sonogram determined to be medically necessary. A maternal ultrasound is covered only with diagnosis and management of conditions that constitute a high-risk pregnancy.
- Services and supplies associated with prenatal care, labor, delivery and postpartum care
- Anesthesia for pain management during delivery
- Emergency cesarean section
- Subscription to free weekly e-mail parenting newsletter, "eCareConnect" via www.theparentreview.com/DoD

TRICARE does NOT cover*:

- Personal comfort items such as private rooms and televisions after delivery

- "Routine" ultrasounds, including ultrasounds to determine gender. You may choose to pay for a routine ultrasound separately from your TRICARE benefits.
- Treatments, procedures and technologies related to artificial methods of reproduction including artificial insemination, *in vitro* fertilization (IVF), gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT) or the reversal of a prior surgical sterilization.

*NOTE: These lists are not all-inclusive. To determine if a specific service is covered, visit www.tricare.mil>benefit information>medical>covered services.

Step 3: Enroll within 60 Days of Birth or Adoption

- If you and your spouse are both active duty service-members, either of you may be designated as the baby's sponsor.
- Be sure to register your baby in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) as soon as possible after your baby is born or adopted.
- Once your baby is registered in DEERS, you will need to enroll your baby in TRICARE Prime or Prime Remote (TPR) **within 60 days** of birth or adoption. A newborn is covered as a TRICARE Prime or TPR beneficiary for the first 60 days following birth or adoption as long as one additional family member is enrolled in TRICARE Prime or TPR. If the child is not enrolled in TRICARE Prime or Prime Remote (TPR) within 60 days, coverage will revert to the TRICARE Standard program option (which carries additional deductibles and cost-shares) on the 61st day, until the child is enrolled in TRICARE Prime. The child's eligibility for TRICARE Standard ends 365 days after birth or adoption if not properly registered in DEERS.

Need more information? Visit www.triwest.com>beneficiary services>TRICARE Benefits or www.tricare.mil, or call 1-888-TRIWEST (874-9378).

TRICARE Covers Vaccine to Prevent Cervical Cancer

By Diane Mayer
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

A vaccine can save the lives of more than 11,000 women this year.

That equals about 30 women a day in the United States, according to the American Cancer Society. These women are diagnosed with cervical cancer; almost 4,000 will die from this frequently preventable disease.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) has been found to be the number one cause of cervical cancer. However, there is an HPV vaccine.

This TRICARE-covered benefit is available to protect against certain types of HPV viruses that have been

linked to cervical cancer.

The risk of developing cervical cancer can be greatly reduced by taking the following steps:

1. Get Regular Pap Tests

Why get tested? Sixty percent of the cervical cancers currently diagnosed in the United States are in women who have never received a Pap test or who have not been tested in the past five years. Start testing within three years of becoming sexually active or at age 18, whichever comes first.

2. Obtain the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

The HPV vaccine can be given at the same time as other vaccines. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC) recommends the vaccine be administered to females ages 11 to 26 years old, although girls as young as 9 may receive it.

The vaccine does not protect against every type of HPV infection and cannot prevent all cervical cancers. It is still important to continue getting regular exams and Pap tests.

Women interested in getting the HPV vaccine should contact their physician. For more information on TRICARE benefits and healthy living, visit www.triwest.com>Beneficiary Services>Healthy Living>Health & Wellness>Prevention. Or call 1-888-TRIWEST (874-9378).



NFL continued from page 18

ing as a kid,” said Clark. “That alone is something to be extremely proud of. But more importantly, I’m a big fan of uplifting people. Just like we’re here across the world hopefully picking up your morale, I do this in small towns back at home.”

As the uniformed servicemembers cheered and laughed, it was apparent their morale had been lifted. Many waited patiently in line for more than an hour to meet the players, who didn’t leave until everyone in line had made it through. They signed their names on footballs, video games, hats and photos. They also posed for hundreds of photographs with the often star-struck troops, many of whom later said they were surprised and impressed by the laid-back attitude of the famous players.

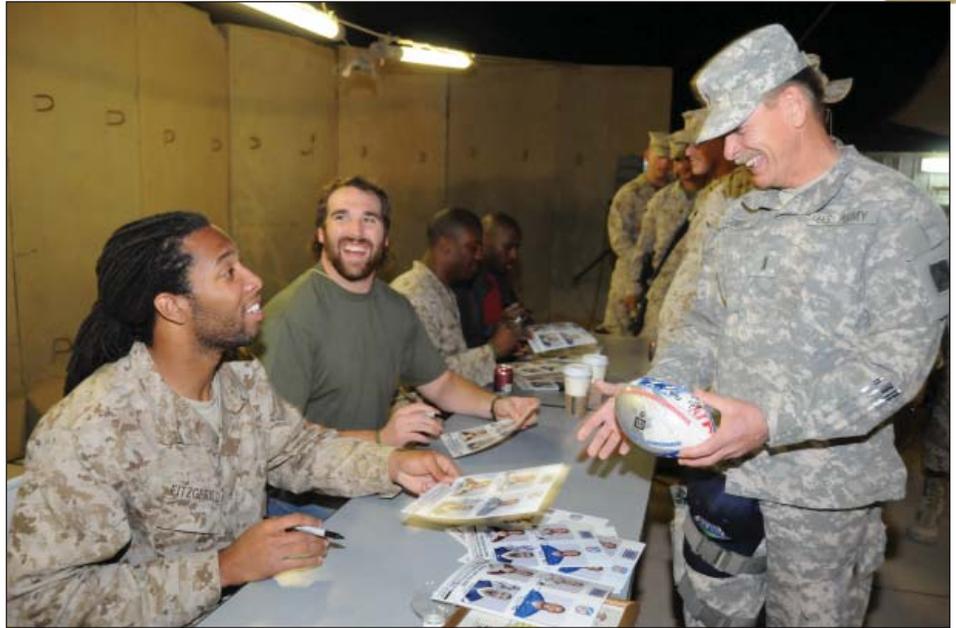
“They get paid millions of dollars a year, way more money than I could even imagine having. You’d expect that money to maybe go to their head or for them to be pretentious or

“...You guys are holding up a worldly ideal and making sure that everybody knows the U.S. military stands strong.”

NFL player Will Witherspoon from the St. Louis Rams

something and expect a lot of things, but they’re just down to earth, just like any other people. They’re curious about what we’re doing, just as curious as we are about them,” said Sgt. Amanda Gauthier from Puyallup, Wash., with Headquarters Company, 81st Brigade Combat Team.

“The coolest thing I found today was just talking with Jared Allen. That was fun. He’s a really interesting guy to talk to,” added Sgt. Donald



NFL player Larry Fitzgerald from the Arizona Cardinals signs an autograph for Chief Warrant Officer Ken Curry from Roy, Wash., with HQ Co., 81st BCT at Camp Ramadi, Iraq Mar. 7. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr)

Zeitler from Orting, Wash., also with HQ, 81st BCT and a Seahawks fan. “Who I wanted to see the most was probably Larry Fitzgerald because there’s kind of a rivalry between the Seahawks and the Cardinals and I’ve watched them play a lot. He’s really fun to watch play.”

The NFL stars were equally impressed with the servicemembers. They all commented on the difference between what they see on TV and what they saw in front of them.

“We really are getting a great grasp of what’s going on and the situation and how much more is being done over here than what we really see and what you guys face day to day and how important that is, not only to us at home, but everybody here [in Iraq]. I mean you guys are holding up a worldly ideal and making sure that everybody knows the U.S. military stands strong,” said Witherspoon.

Clark called the visit humbling and an inspiration. He reminded the troops that everyone at home is cheering them on and eagerly awaiting their return. Fitzgerald thanked them for protecting him and allowing him to do what he loves most, play ball.

“This has been an amazing experience being able to come over here and meet young women and men that are protecting our freedom,” he said.

Allen told the troops that Fitzgerald had to twist his arm a little bit to come, but now: “I wouldn’t trade this for the world. Honestly, this has been a big eye opener for me.”

He added that the only thing missing from the visit was the opportunity to shoot a .50 Caliber machine gun. When asked by a Marine if he would demonstrate his calf-roping routine, Allen responded by saying: “I have a rule. I don’t do it unless it’s on Sundays; it’s the only superstition I got. You let me fire a .50 cal, it’s on. I’ll do it all day. I’ll even take my shirt off for the ladies.”

After signing the last autograph and posing for one final photo, the weary players retired to their housing units, the same ones the troops stay in, smiling and ready for their next stop.

“It’s really amazing what you guys do; put your life on the line. The sacrifices you’ve made with your families are unbelievable. I love you guys and I really appreciate everything. Thank you,” said Fitzgerald.



Crazy Laws

- ☞ In Indiana, Citizens are not allowed to attend a movie house or theater nor ride in a public streetcar within at least four hours after eating garlic.
- ☞ In Marshalltown, Iowa. Horses are forbidden to eat fire hydrants.
- ☞ In Seattle, Washington, Goldfish can ride the city buses in bowls only if they kept still.
- ☞ In Tulsa, Oklahoma Its against the law to open a soda bottle without the supervision of a licensed engineer.
- ☞ In North Dakota you cannot serve beer and pretzels at the same time in any bar or restaurant.
- ☞ In Hartford, Connecticut it is illegal to educate dogs.
- ☞ In Florida hunting and killing a deer while swimming is illegal.
- ☞ In Massachusetts, Snoring is illegal unless all bedroom windows are closed and securely locked.
- ☞ In Chicago, Illinois it is forbidden to eat in a place that is on fire.
- ☞ In Wallace, Idaho. It is unlawful for anyone to sleep in a dog kennel.
- ☞ In Fairbanks, Alaska no moose is allowed to have sex on city streets.
- ☞ In Kentucky, everyone must take a bath at least once a year.
- ☞ In Glendale, Arizona, it is against the law for a car to back up.
- ☞ In Washington "it is mandatory for a motorist with criminal intentions to stop at the city limits and telephone the chief of police as he is entering the town."
- ☞ In Oklahoma Criminals can be fined, arrested or jailed for making faces at a dog.
- ☞ In Greene, New York. It is illegal to eat peanuts and walk backwards on the sidewalk during a concert.
- ☞ In St. Louis, Missouri. It is illegal to sit on the curb of any city street and drink beer from a bucket.
- ☞ In Rumford, Maine. It is illegal to bite the landlord, no matter how much he deserves it. 📷



SAINT PATRICK'S DAY



Lt. Col. Kevin McMahan, the 81st BCT operations officer, shows off his holiday spirit during his one-man St. Patrick's Day parade on Camp Ramadi March 13, 2009. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Suhr)

81ST BCT PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



MANAGING EDITOR
 STAFF SGT. EMILY SUHR
 EMILY.SUHR@US.ARMY.MIL
ASSISTANT EDITOR
 SGT. AMANDA GAUTHIER
 AMANDA.R.GAUTHIER@US.ARMY.MIL

TO SUBMIT ARTICLES, PHOTOS, OR STORY IDEAS
 E-MAIL EMILY.SUHR@US.ARMY.MIL
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