

# STEEL RAIN

3RD BATTALION, 157TH FIELD ARTILLERY

## Training begins at Fort Hood



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

Soldiers assigned to 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, Colorado Army National Guard light up the range with tracer rounds as they fire the M240B medium machine gun with the help of night optics at Fort Hood, Texas, April 25, 2009. The battalion, which arrived at their mobilization station April 18 for additional mobilization training, is deploying this summer in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

### Weapons training continues at Fort Hood

By Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

**FORT HOOD, Texas** - More than 60 Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, Colorado Army National Guard conducted day and night fire with the M240B Medium Machine Gun here April 25, 2009.

The battalion, which conducted a large majority of its required weapons training at Fort Carson, Colo., prior to moving to Fort Hood, only had a few Soldiers needing to qualify on the machine gun.

"All the weapons we train with, we are deploying with in theater," said Staff Sgt. Clifford Fraipont, a resident of Fountain, Colo., who was appointed the non-

commissioned officer in charge at the range.

My main responsibility is accountability of all Soldiers at the range, ensuring they successfully complete the training safely, he said.

Wake up for Soldiers heading out to the range is typically early – around 4 a.m., and, they are expected to remain at the range until the last Soldier firing is done. This range was operational for approximately 17 hours.

Once the range is operational, the Soldiers were briefed, gathered their gear and were assigned firing lines. Although it's important for Soldiers to perform safe acts on the range, it's not all serious business for the entire 17 hours.

One Soldier at the range, Spc. Josh Keadle of Thorn-

**Continued p. 5**

# From the Battalion Leadership:

## Battalion Commander:

Lt. Col Al Morris

We've settled into Fort Hood and after receiving a variety of new gear have begun our collective training in earnest. This has included counter -improvised explosive device (IED) training, urban operations, and mounted gunnery. We had concentrated our training in Colorado on individual tasks to validate Soldiers such as rifle marksmanship so Soldiers would be ready to train as a team. This training is demanding, but Soldiers are adapting well and most are really enjoying it. Soldiers are expected to keep up their physical training regimen and it is paying off in the training lanes. Our training will continue to build as Soldiers become more proficient and as we look toward our culminating event next month and readiness to deploy. It will be a big training exercise that will run 24/7 where we will perform the same types of functions as our mission in theater for several days and go through a validation. We're all looking forward to completing our training and getting on with our mission, but we will ensure that our time here is well spent—We'll continue to train hard so that we do everything right because we know that we train as we fight.



## Battalion Command Sergeant Major:

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Koob

As LTC Morris noted, the Soldiers have settled into North Fort Hood. They are well fed, the gym, Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) facility and laundry facilities are running smooth. The billets, to say the least, are very crowded. Their living arrangements in Iraq will be much better.

In addition to the collective training, the Soldiers are involved in rigorous physical fitness training. Good Soldier physical fitness results in fewer training injuries and illnesses.

To date, there have been only minor training injuries and no serious illnesses.

Most of you have seen on the news that the weather in Texas has been wet, and the temperatures have been in the 80s. A hot and muggy climate takes a little time to adjust to, but the Soldiers are holding up well.

Mail delivery is going well, so do not hesitate to send those letters and packages.

The four day pass is confirmed, and Soldiers will be free to leave on pass on the afternoon of June 21. This is a change to the pass starting on June 22.

## Chaplain's Corner

Chaplain (1st Lt.) William Ferris, Battalion Chaplain

What a time of growth Fort Hood has been already! God and people are moving. However, this is hard to see for many because growth involves a lot of pain and frustration. But, when our Soldiers work through their pain and frustration, they really have an opportunity to grow and mature. Our Soldiers are learning how to trust their training; how to trust their leaders; how to trust their peers and particularly how to ask for help.

Currently, the Unit Ministry Team provides a lot of pastoral counseling to help our Soldiers and Leaders grow and mature. We also are providing an LDS/Mormon service on Sunday mornings, a Traditional Protestant service on Sunday evenings, a Roman Catholic confession and mass on Tuesday evenings, a Contemporary Christian service on Wednesday nights, an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting on Fridays and an Anger Management class on Saturdays. Anger Management is led by our Brigade licensed mental health worker, Maj. Leon Chamberlain, whom we are grateful to have on this deployment.

Those services are all provided at the North Fort Hood Chapel. We also have transportation, as necessary, to services on South Fort Hood for Buddhist, Jewish, Wiccan and other services. Please continue to pray for your Soldiers and our Battalion and Brigade as we train and prepare, and grow and mature. Thank you for all that you do for all of us. - Chaplain Bill Ferris



## WARRIOR ETHOS

**I will always place the mission first.**

**I will never accept defeat.**

**I will never quit.**

**I will never leave a fallen comrade. I am an American Soldier.**

DISCLAIMER: This newsletter is an authorized, official publication of the Colorado Army National Guard. Contents of the newsletter are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the National Guard Bureau. Comments may be sent to the Public Affairs Noncommissioned Officer, Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli, at [liesl.marelli@us.army.mil](mailto:liesl.marelli@us.army.mil).

# From the Batteries:



## 188th Forward Support Company Based in Pueblo

**Capt. Beth Soelzer, Company Commander**  
**1st. Sgt. Joseph Bishop, First Sergeant**

A Salam Aleichem (Hello) to all Family, Friends and Loved Ones of the 188th FSC (Phantoms)!

We are getting settled here at the "Great Place" Fort Hood, Texas. Some really smart general named Fort Hood the "Great Place;" however, I am sure if you asked your Soldier about Fort Hood, you will get many other descriptions.

Our dining facility is better than average and our Soldiers are eating very well. The first week, we went through our medical/financial/in-processing and fired all of our assigned weapons at various ranges. We are now beginning our collective training where we will be validated on performing tasks as platoons and companies/batteries. The weather out here is different: humid, hot, rainy and muggy. Temperatures are in the 80's. We are adapting to it by staying hydrated and making sure we are physically fit and ready for the tasks ahead of us. Our Soldiers have been issued new and improved equipment to help ensure our safety and well being.

I'm pleased to say morale remains very high within the unit. I believe that is a direct reflection of the support the Soldiers have back home. All of the Soldiers in the FSC wanted me to remind all of you that we understand the burdens and responsibilities that we dumped on your shoulders. We are so appreciative of you all. We will continue to lead the way here at the "Great Place," but our thoughts and concerns will always remain with you in Colorado.

## Headquarters & Headquarters Battery Based in Colorado Springs

**Capt. Ashkan Angha, Battery Commander**  
**1st Sgt. Ed Schwaigert, First Sergeant**

It seems like it was yesterday we were de-icing the plane to take off for Fort Hood, Texas. We were greeted to a nice humid, warm afternoon in Fort Hood. We have had rainy days and 100 percent humidity and, coming from Colorado it is taking a bit to get use to. Your Soldiers have been working very hard since we have arrived, and I am extremely proud of their hard work. The days seem to be very long, but we have much to accomplish before we leave for Kuwait. Training is going well and we have major training events coming up to include Improvised Explosive Device Detect and Defeat (IED-D) and force protection. Friday mornings we conduct a battery run and today we had our first run. Your Soldiers were motivated and could be heard all around North Fort Hood. I think we have been the only battery to conduct a battery run to date. You should be proud of your Soldiers. Please make sure you stay in touch with our Soldiers. It is always nice to hear a loved one's voice from the other side of the phone after a long, hard day. We tell them the same thing here. If you have any concerns and issues please contact me and the 1SG at anytime. We thank you for your support and all the care packages. **HAPPY MOTHERS DAY!** -

*Capt. Ashkan Angha*

Well, we have arrived at Fort Hood and immediately started through the process. Since then we have, for the most part, completed medical and dental screenings and received new gear (Must be Christmas). The Soldiers are doing great and getting into a routine so that we can improve our combat readiness. For the families, we thank you for keeping us in your thoughts and prayers, the cards and letters help a lot. E-mail and Skype help the Soldiers keep in touch and see what is going on back home. We are doing physical training on a more regular basis and today May 1, we completed our first battery run. Let me know if any of the families need anything while we are down at Fort Hood, we will do our best to help you out. I will look out for your Soldiers and get them the training they need prior to going overseas. - *1Sgt. Ed Schwaigert*



## Alpha Battery Based in Longmont

Capt. Kevin Cadena, Battery Commander  
1st Sgt. Eric Weis, First Sergeant

To All the Family and Friends Back in Colorado:

Well, Alpha Battery has arrived at luxurious North Fort Hood. It was a steamy 80 degrees or so when we arrived and, as you recall, we just left a snow storm, so that was quite pleasant and sweaty. We hit the ground running and went right into some in-processing and, upon completion, we finally arrived at our home for the next two months.

The living accommodations are OK. Many of the Soldiers have taken the small space assigned to them and made it into a temporary abode. Hopefully, many of you have received pictures of the tribal living hooches that have been constructed. It is really an engineering marvel.

We went into our new equipment fielding and we all received some equipment to outfit us with the best and most up-to-date individual equipment available. Unlike

the Army I was raised in 20-years-ago, everything now comes in pieces and parts. So it is getting a gift that you have to figure out and put together. For me, it took a few tries on a couple items before I got it correct. But I am sure the Soldiers did not have as many difficulties.

Training has been mostly weapons ranges; we have many crew serve weapons that we only did familiarization fire on while we were back in Colorado. Our major upcoming event is fast-paced training in urban operations over the next few days. The Soldiers are ready and getting all their equipment and newly-issued gear ready. There should be many photos to follow. That is all to report from here. Please keep the mail and packages coming, since it is a real morale booster for your Warriors.

Thanks to all of you for the support you provide so that we can serve.



## Bravo Battery Based in Aurora

Capt. Jim Forester, Battery Commander  
1st Sgt. Rodolfo Reyes, First Sergeant

Things have been very busy for the battery since we arrived April 18. We started out with five days of in-processing. This means medical and dental checks followed by a ton of administrative work and finally getting ourselves acclimated to our new surroundings. Central Texas is a lot more humid than Colorado, so everybody has to get used to feeling like they're wet half the time. This is the rainy season for Texas as well so we also must get used to something other than snow falling from the sky.

After the in-processing we began going to weapons ranges to get Soldiers qualified with their rifles and machine guns. These were some very long days for the troops since they had to be at the range ready to go at 6 a.m. This meant they had to wake up no later than 4 a.m. to get ready. Some of the parents reading this probably can't picture their child being awake that early, but it's true! During this time we also were issued new body armor, helmets, goggles and glasses to protect the eyes, and carrying equipment such as rucksacks and pouches. Even though we're going to Iraq they gave us a set of heavy-duty winter clothing that's good down to 60 below!

This week we will begin Mounted Gunnery, which means the Soldiers will practice using the machine guns mounted to the tops of their trucks. Each truck crew will get the chance to work together as team and use the type of vehicles and weapons we will use overseas.

The food here is decent; think of a cafeteria and you've got it. There are usually several choices of what to eat including a both sandwich and salad bars. There must be a chicken farm nearby because it's offered every meal, fried, BBQ'd, baked or breaded. Fish and beef are also common. There is also a dessert table and an ice cream freezer. Is it gourmet cuisine? No, but I've sure had a lot worse.

Our barracks are old World War Two-style affairs, long squad bays just like in the movies. They're plain, concrete-block buildings; nothing fancy but they are air-conditioned. Again, nothing to get excited about but we're not staying in tents as we could be.

Overall, morale is good. There have been some long days and things do get very busy and stressful at times, but we all know the Army can be that way so we're not surprised. Its par for the course and we always pull together to get through the occasional problems you're no doubt hearing about when you talk to them (it's a Soldier's

God-given right to complain!). Your loved ones are a resilient bunch and the leaders in the battery work hard to keep them safe and prepare them for Iraq. Take care on the home front and keep those letters and care packages coming! -Capt. Christopher Miskimon, Battery XO

The guys are motivated to begin their training. They are particularly excited to get started with the upcoming training that will be the true essence of, "Shoot, move and communicate."

Bravo will be participating in a gunnery lane that will have Soldiers firing .50 caliber machine guns from their vehicles while moving. They will be trained on engaging targets from far distances while feeding vital enemy information back to their headquarters.

The training will be intense and will push the Soldiers to their limits as far as marksmanship skills and communication skills are concerned. For the traditional Artilleryman, though, this is a far cry from the big cannons and rockets they are use to. - 1SG Rodolfo Reyes

**Continued from p. 1**

ton, Colo., of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, was celebrating his 21st birthday. He was among the Soldiers required to train with the machine gun. Since celebrating his birthday didn't allow for cake or a party, his commander decided to help him celebrate in another – more Army – way.

"We had him do 21 pushups while saying 'happy birthday' for each one performed," laughed Capt. Ashkan Angha, his battery commander.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

Spc. Josh Keadle celebrates his 21st birthday April 25, 2009, at a Fort Hood range in Texas with his battery commander, Capt. Ashkan Angha, making him do 21 pushups while saying, "Happy Birthday." Both Ashkan and Keadle laughed about it. "It was the most memorable thing about my 21st," Keadle said laughing.

"It was terrific," Keadle said sarcastically. "It's not as fun as being at home but it was the most memorable thing about my 21st here," he said laughing.

At the range, the Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery were conducting day and night fire and some select Soldiers had to qualify while others performed familiarization fire.

"The Soldiers selected to qualify on the machine gun will have that weapon assigned to them in Iraq, so we want them to have the highest proficiency with the weapon," said Angha.

Soldiers also benefited from the optics on the weapon system, which allowed the Soldiers to see the targets more clearly under the dark Texas night sky.

In groups of two, one gunner and one assistant gunner, the Soldiers approached the firing line, set up their gear, checked the sights and familiarized themselves with the targets that range control popped up so they could identify them before they began firing

– but this time in the dark.

Soldiers shot off five to seven round bursts; tracers illuminated the dark range.

Around midnight the Soldiers headed back to their barracks to unload their gear and catch some sleep before the next training iteration began the following day.

"Both the mobilization training and deployment requires sacrifices from our Soldiers and families," said Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Al Morris. "However, these sacrifices are essential for preparing our troops to deploy, conduct their required missions and all return home safely to their loved ones."

The battalion is scheduled to deploy to Iraq at the culmination of their training at Fort Hood this summer.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

Spc. Ben Harbour of Vancouver, Wash., (left) and Spc. Josh Keadle of Thornton, Colo., (right) get their M240B medium machine gun ready for night fire at a Fort Hood range April 25, 2009. Harbour looks down range for targets through his optics, while Keadle checks the rounds to ensure they are all connected. Both Soldiers are assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, Colorado Army National Guard based in Colorado Springs, Colo.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

Soldiers assigned to 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, Colorado Army National Guard light up the range with tracer rounds as they fire the M240B medium machine gun with the help of night optics at Fort Hood, Texas, April 25, 2009. The battalion, which arrived at their mobilization station April 18 for additional mobilization training, is deploying this summer in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

# EQUIPPED WITH THE LATEST GEAR

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli



New gear was issued to the Soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery Soldiers to better prepare them for Iraq!

Out with the old (Right) - Interceptor Body Armor. The IBA is a protective vest for Soldiers. These were recently replaced with the Improved Outer Tactical Vest (Left). This is a more comfortable fit and has a quick release for Soldiers. This way, if Soldiers need to drop their vest for any reason, they do it in one quick motion. It still has the same ability to carry the protective plates that can shield



bullets but at least, while carrying all the weight, it's safer and comfortable!

The uniform requirements have changed since arriving to Fort Hood, Texas, April 19. Once the Soldiers settled in, they were instructed to wear certain items at all time (1) a water source (known as a Camelbak), (2) their M4 Carbine rifle or 9mm pistol (3) eye-pro (ballistic sunglasses) and (4) gloves.

Little-by-little the Soldiers get used to having these items on them, so by the time they get overseas, they'll be good to go! They also get into the habit of clearing their weapons before walking into a building. Clearing a weapon is when the Soldier checks his or her weapon to ensure there are no rounds in it, it is on safe and a buddy also stands by to make sure they properly go through the steps to clear it.

The required items while training at a range increases even more! Soldiers must wear their helmet, eye-pro, hearing protection, IOTV, weapon and gloves, along with elbow and knee pads.

It's a lot of weight to carry around - some have even more to carry depending on their assigned weapon - but it's all part of the training. Getting used to moving in the gear, operating in the gear and being accountable for all the items are among the tasks Soldiers face both here and overseas.



# WHERE TO MAIL YOUR LETTERS ...



## MAILING ADDRESS:

**RANK First Name Last Name**  
**Company / Battalion / 115th FiB**  
**Bldg 56413**  
**North Fort Hood, Texas 76544**

## EXAMPLE:

**SPC Joe Smith**  
**HHB / 3-157th FA / 115th FiB**  
**Bldg 56413**  
**North Fort Hood, TX 76544**

## Health and Welfare update

When the battalion arrived to Fort Hood, Texas, the Soldiers' first task was to go through the administrative and medical Soldier Readiness Check here.

At the SRC, Soldiers were able to verify that their will, power of attorney, life insurance, emergency notification form and pay were correct and up-to-date. They also went through a medical check that included getting a few more vaccines - most of whom got their Small Pox vaccine and second-series Anthrax shot.

Healing from the Small Pox is no easy feat. The Soldiers were thoroughly briefed how to take care of the injection site and properly dispose of the used bandage.

Despite getting a few uncomfortable vaccines, to date, the Fort Hood troops can happily report there is *no Swine Flu* down here! Having said that, the medics deploying with 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery are prepared for anything!

The high-speed medical platoon assists the 157th FA Soldiers 24/7, if needed. In addition to the medics, there is also a Troop Medical Care facility here along with a nearby hospital.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

All Soldiers who had not received the Small Pox shot in the last 10 years were required to get the vaccine - excluding medical exceptions within days of arriving to Fort Hood, Texas.

**A reminder on behalf of the Family Readiness Group:**

Below is the flyer for the Blessing of the Blue Star Family Flags ceremony for families of 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery. The ceremony is being sponsored by the American Legion and the Orchard Road Christian Center located at 8081 East Orchard Road, in Greenwood Village, Colo., 80111 (South of Metro Denver). The ceremony will be held May 24 at 9:30 a.m. All families and supporters of the 157th Field Artillery Battalion and the Colorado National Guard are welcomed to attend.

Questions about the event may be addressed to 1st Lt. Jeff D. Bell at (303) 918-5166 or via e-mail at [jefferson.bell@us.army.mil](mailto:jefferson.bell@us.army.mil).

**Orchard Road Christian Center  
8081 East Orchard Road  
Greenwood Village, Colorado 80111**

**Sunday, May 24, 2009  
at 9:30 a.m.**

***Come and join us at the  
3-157th Field Artillery  
Blue Star Service  
Banner event!***

Disclosure: This event is neither affiliated nor sponsored by the State Family Program nor the Yellow Ribbon Campaign.

