

# STEEL RAIN

3RD BATTALION, 157TH FIELD ARTILLERY

## Transferring Authority

*After a successful year for Oklahoma, Colorado assumes command*

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

**RAMADI, Iraq** - Oklahoma Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery, handed over command to Colorado Army National Guard's 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, in a transfer of authority ceremony July 31 here.

As part of the ceremony, the outgoing unit commander and command sergeant major "case" their battalion colors and the incoming command unveils their colors.

Lt. Col. Al Morris and Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Koob approached the color guard, removed the casing on the 3-157th FA's battalion colors and unmasked the flag together.

The 3-157th FA colors remain unveiled for the duration of the deploy-

ment.

This ceremony symbolized the transfer of authority for 3-157th FA. From here on out, they are solely responsible for their missions.

Leading to this moment was the right- and left-seat ride with the 1-158th FA.

The 158th helped prepare Soldiers at all levels of the battalion for their missions during the weeks leading up to the ceremony.

Everything 3-157th FA has done from Fort Carson to Fort Hood to Camp Buehring and Camp Ramadi has prepared them for this moment.



Headquarters and Headquarters Battery; Battery A; Battery B; and the 188th Forward Support Company stand eager and ready to assume full responsibility from the outgoing unit.



Lt. Col. Gregory Lankford, 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery commander of the Oklahoma National Guard (left) prepares to turn over command to Lt. Col. Al Morris, 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery commander, Colorado National Guard, during the transfer of authority ceremony July 31 at Camp Ramadi.



Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Koob and Lt. Col. Al Morris unveil the 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery colors, which will be displayed in the battalion area for the duration of the deployment.

# From the Battalion Leadership:

## Battalion Commander:

Lt. Col Al Morris



We've been on the ground for over a month now and have finally gotten into a good, but busy, stride. While we have adjusted to our battle rhythm, we are keenly aware of the potential to become complacent, so we work hard to keep Soldiers and leaders sharp. Part of this is a continual validation of every war-time task. Beginning with our Personnel Security Details, we continue to train and improve our performance. We have continued to go to the rifle ranges, and Soldiers are involved in physical fitness activities - some organized and some individually.

At this point, we have already had some visitors, including Maj. Gen. Edwards and Command Sgt. Major Lawrence from Colorado. It was a great visit and opportunity for us to explain our missions, and our Soldiers also appreciated seeing smiling faces from home. Maj. Gen. Edwards took a lot of time with the Soldiers going out to work sites. In addition, we had another visit from Altitude Sports. Jim Martin and Matt Hutchins spent a few days with us as embedded reporters and interviewed a lot of Soldiers, going out on missions and seeing what we do first-hand. It was an excellent visit, and Jim and Matt were very supportive. Soldiers enjoyed the opportunity to show what they do and many will soon be part of a television special Altitude Sports is doing on the unit.

Even as we have settled into our jobs, things are forever changing as we look forward to the eventual return of not just our unit, but the U.S. Army's responsible withdrawal from Iraq. With that will come more mission changes and surprises that will challenge us and keep us on our toes.

I want to thank the many families, employers, and friends of our Soldiers for the outpouring of support you have shown the battalion.

We are all grateful for the support.



## Battalion Command Sergeant Major:

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Koob



This month the senior Noncommissioned Officers in the battalion conducted validation lanes for the Personnel Security Details and the Convoy Escort Team. The members of these teams perform missions outside the wire.

The validation included checking on maintenance procedures, load plans, execution of the mission, knowledge of the weapons systems, battle drills and pre-combat checks of individual equipment. All sections that went through the lanes did an excellent job, passing the validation with flying colors.

We recognized Pfc. Kevin Mazzola from Battery B and Spc. Joseph Jarvis from Battery A with a battalion coin for their expertise on the M240B machine gun. I am glad they are on *our* side.

Looking ahead, we will continue to validate sections throughout the year to ensure they sustain their skills.

I also want to recognize Spc. Keaton Stein, the chaplain assistant, of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery. He and the chaplain moved into a new building where Stein built an office, put up shelves and set up an area for care packages, where Soldiers can pick up items they may need. He also set up an area for the United through Reading program. This program allows Soldiers to read a book to their children on videotape. The tape and book are mailed to the child, and the child can watch the video while reading along.

Last, I would like to recognize the maintenance teams from the 188th Forward Support Company. As I write this, it is 122 degrees, and they spend all day, every day, performing maintenance on the battalion's vehicles with no protection from the heat and sun, with the exception of some overhead cover. They maintain great attitudes and really seem to enjoy their job and their contribution to the mission.



## Chaplain's Corner:

### *Getting a Soldier Home*

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

If something happens and you want your Soldier back home for some reason - how do they get home? The first and most critical piece of the

puzzle is calling the American Red Cross. Nobody goes on emergency leave (known to Soldiers as "e-leave") without a Red Cross message. A copy of the message, with its number legible, is part of the packet of paperwork that must be submitted in order to get a Soldier moving off his or her base and heading home.

After someone back home calls the Red Cross, the information is verified by the Red Cross then forwarded to our brigade headquarters in Kuwait. It's then forwarded to our battalion headquarters here in Iraq. The Battalion then



**See CHAPLAIN p. 13**

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# From the Batteries:

## 188th Forward Support Company Based in Pueblo

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

### *A Luxury We Once Took For Granted ...*

Story by Staff Sgt. Michael Campbell

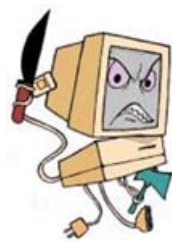
Some of the biggest concerns Soldiers of the 188th Forward Support Company had was internet service available in their Containerized Housing Unit at Camp Ramadi.

*Would it be installed and how much would it cost? How do we go about getting it? Would the connection be fast?*

Once we arrived and started our Relief In Place, these questions were answered by the Forward Support Company in 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery.

*Yes, internet is available. Yes, it is installed. And yes, it was costly but worth it in the long run.*

Our next option was to contact various Soldiers throughout the outgoing unit to see who had the satellite systems and if they were willing to sell them at a fair price.



This is where all the fun began, *I say that sarcastically.*

First off, as the outgoing unit stated, the systems were expensive. We purchased one at the high, but going-rate of \$1600. This system currently had 10 Soldiers on it and would easily (ha ha!) transfer over to our 10 Soldiers.

When we contacted their provider on pricing, we got a nice surprise. They would gladly transfer the service, but the price would go up from \$3300 every three months to \$3600, *plus* there would be an additional charge of \$300 every three months for maintenance costs!

This obviously wasn't going to work, so we began the arduous task of locating another provider.

We all hoped to have the internet service purchased and have it operational within a couple of days of moving into our permanent CHUs. The process of locating and purchasing these systems began as soon as we arrived, and was generally completed by the time we were moved in. *Not a problem, right?*

Locating a different provider was more of a challenge. It's not like in America. We do not have providers on every corner. A lot of research went into finding a provider on the internet, which, by the way, was done in the evenings at the Camo Café (*more internet we pay for while finding other internet to pay for*).

Finding a provider took about a week with constant e-mails going back and forth with explanations of what our equipment was, how many people would be on the system, and whether or not this was all compatible. After all was said and done, we located a provider, were given all the specifications and measurements and were told, "Good luck, have fun!"



Capt. Beth Soelzer

**See INTERNET page 13**

## Headquarters & Headquarters Battery Based in Colorado Springs

Capt. Ashkan Angha, Battery Commander and Deputy Mayor  
1st Sgt. Ed Schwaigert, First Sergeant

The day we were informed that Headquarters and Headquarters Battery and the Forward Support Company were going to be assigned to the Mayor's Cell mission, there was a sense of excitement and a sense of the unknown.

When we arrived in country and started our Relief In Place and Transfer Of Authority, I had many questions and concerns. We were replacing the 81st Heavy Brigade Combat Team, who staffed the Mayor Cell jobs with 100 plus Soldiers, and we were going to do the same job with less than 30 Soldiers.

We were faced with a daunting task. However, our Soldiers accepted the challenge and went to work. By all accounts from the tenants around camp, they are doing a superb job!

At the Mayor's Cell, we provide numerous functions to

include maintaining living areas, handling all camp work orders for the living areas, water distribution, assigning billeting and offices, fuel distribution, and making badges for all contractors, to include third-country nationals and local nationals.

The jobs that the Mayor's Cell is responsible for is like running a city back home in the States.

Most importantly, we provide force protection. We have also been charged with Camp "draw down," which means we are working to consolidate the needs on the camp and prepare it to be returned back to the Iraqi people.

In the implementation of a responsible and swift draw down, we save money. We are being good stewards of the U.S. taxpayers' dollars and are striving to save as much as possible without diminishing the services we provide to our service members.



Capt. Ashkan Angha

## Alpha Battery Based in Longmont

Capt. Dom Tatti, Battery Commander  
1st Sgt. Eric Weis, First Sergeant



Capt. Dom Tatti

Each day presents a new challenge that keep us on our toes.

Our Soldiers and their families seem to be set-

tlng into their battle rhythm for the deployment. However, we remain ever-vigilant and unpredictable to ensure our safety.

Our willingness to serve has impressed many of the other units here on camp. We have been accepted as camp equals and are constantly interacting with other units in sporting events, such as softball and volleyball.

Some of the Apache Soldiers have had the opportunity to meet local nationals while on missions. We are seeing the difference our presence here has made over the last few years. The uniforms of the Iraqi Secu-

rity Forces do not seem so foreign, and we see more and more of them every day. The Iraqi people are active participants in the reconstruction and security of their country. The cultural training we received is paying off.

By the time the next newsletter is published, we should be starting our 15-day deployment leave.

Soldiers submit a "wish list" of dates for their leave. As you might imagine, Thanksgiving and the December holidays were, by far, the most popular. Apache leadership is working hard to divvy

up the days fairly. Soldiers who have significant events are given priority.

As always, please continue to send e-mail, letters and care packages to your Soldiers. We all love hearing from home. *Please remember that chocolate does not fare well in the desert.*



(Above): A photograph of a thermometer here of the heat that is responsible for melting the chocolate in the care packages.

## Bravo Battery Based in Aurora

Capt. David Wilcox, Battery Commander  
1st Sgt. Rodolfo Reyes, First Sergeant

### *A More Refined Bravo*

Story by Staff Sgt. John P. Martinez III  
Photo by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

Chess is said to be a game of kings; a civilized game played by civilized people. As we are now in the land credited as the cradle of civilization, is it not proper to take up such a game?

If you ask a Soldier like Spc. Benjamin Maye, he would agree.

Maye, 25, joined the Colorado National Guard in January 2007 to continue in his family's history of military service.



He born and raised in Menden, Germany and started playing chess when he was six-years-old and continued practicing with his father into his early twenties.

August 20, he entered the Camp Ramadi Morale, Welfare and Recreation chess tournament for the third consecutive week.

"I began playing in the tournaments because I wanted to find a challenge," Maye said about the weekly chess tournaments in Ramadi.

"There is some tough competition. A few times I thought I might lose ... but I pulled through."

The latest chess tournament began at 8 p.m. and continued well into the night. After hours of playing Maye walked away with yet another chess tournament championship certificate, bringing his camp total to three. His opponents were impressed, to say the least.

"He was doing moves I didn't even know were possible," commented one player.

(Left) Spc. Benjamin Maye competes in his third chess tournament at Camp Ramadi.

Even though three straight wins is a great accomplishment in itself, Maye's win-

ning streak extends even farther.

While participating in pre-deployment training at Fort Hood, Texas, he took part in a MWR-sponsored chess tournament, which again resulted in victory for the young Soldier.

"I currently hold a rating of 1750 but would like to improve to 2000 before the end of the deployment. That will require me to read a lot of books," said Maye, who contemplates a future in the game.

"I would like to play professionally one day."

When asked about his performance, Battery B Executive Officer 1st Lt. Timber Toste quipped, "Even though he is a good chess player, he still hasn't beaten me at Rummlkuba."



Capt. David Wilcox





# Colorado Leadership at its Finest

*Colorado senior leaders stop by to wish the troops well*

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

**RAMADI, Iraq** - Colorado Guard Soldiers had a command visit by senior Colorado National Guard leaders at Camp Ramadi in July.

Visiting were Maj. Gen. H. Michael Edwards, Colorado National Guard Adjutant General and Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Lawrence, Colorado National Guard Senior Enlisted Leader.



Maj. Gen. H. Michael Edwards goes one-by-one shaking every Soldier's hand.



Sgt. Theodore Wilson proudly displays the Adjutant General's coin he was presented with by Maj. Gen. H. Michael Edwards.

"From a senior enlisted perspective, it's important for me to see how our Colorado Guardsmen are contributing to the mission," said Lawrence.

"Most importantly, I needed and wanted to see and hear first-hand from our Soldiers and Airmen about how they are living, working and spending their non-duty hours."

"Our Colorado Guardsmen [and women] continue to impress [us] with

their high level of skill, competence, resilience, and overall contributions to the mission."

Edwards and Lawrence's message to the troops was simply, "You are all truly amazing and make all of us extremely proud," which is a message they wanted to convey in person and not just from afar.

During their time in Iraq, Edwards and Lawrence also visited Soldiers from the 217th Space Battalion, who flew into Ramadi to meet with them.

They also traveled to Balad, Iraq, to visit with Colorado Guard Airmen. Unfortunately, they were unable to visit the 86th Military Intelligence Company, Colorado Army, because of sand storms.

(Right) Staff Sgt. Roger Davis laughs with Colorado's visiting senior leaders about the coin he was presented. They all got a good laugh when someone said, "It's too big to carry around in your wallet."



(Right) Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Lawrence, Colorado National Guard Senior Enlisted Leader, tells Soldiers how vital their mission is in this region of Iraq, how to stay vigilant while serving and how proud he and the adjutant general are of their service.



188th Forward Support Company Soldiers take a photo with Maj. Gen. H. Michael Edwards and Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Lawrence



# Personalizing home - *Colorado Style!*

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

**RAMADI, Iraq** - "I could not imagine being from Colorado and not bringing and flying a Broncos flag while deployed."

Maj. Clay Taulman, 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery executive officer, wouldn't have it any other way; the Broncos flag will fly while 3-157 FA operates in Ramadi.

July 28 was an informal, but very important ceremony for 3-157.

Where 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery's Oklahoma University flag once waved now displays Colorado's Broncos flag.

"You gotta love the Orange and Blue," Taulman said. "They always fight to win the game. Soldiers at the 'dirty boots' level respect that kind of commitment."

Taulman's message to the Broncos is, "3-157 FA has your back in Ramadi. *Go Broncos!*"



Staff Sgt. Bruce Wisor, a Broncos season ticket holder, (left) and Spc. Nicholas Canada, who has been a Broncos fan since he was young, (right) prepare to hang the Broncos flag. "It's about time we replaced the Oklahoma University flag with the Broncos flag," said Wisor.



Maj. Clay Taulman, battalion executive officer, (left) and Spc. Nicholas Canada, a supply specialist, (right) raise the Broncos flag July 28.

## IT'S LIKE A DESERT OUT HERE!

Colorado is known for its blue skies. However, Ramadi competes with it in a less-than-appealing way.

Chief Warrant Officer Jody Hakala said he remembers the last time he saw a cloud, which was last month.

Every day, at least until rainy season, Soldiers don't get much of a break from the oppressive sun. Without a cloud in sight, both the Soldiers and vegetation feel the wrath of the sun's unrelenting heat.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

# The 300 Club in Ramadi

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

**RAMADI, Iraq** - Service members know it as the "300 Club." Either they join the good one or the bad one. Either way, while in Iraq, they are bound to join the ranks of one or the other.

The 300 Club isn't an official club but it does have well-known meanings among the troops.

The good version is when Soldiers spend their free time in the gym to max out on their Army Physical Fitness Test. A perfect APFT is 300.

The bad version is when Soldiers spend their time eating junk food from care packages or the "all you can eat" food in the chow hall and avoid

the gym. The bad version can result in a flabby (and not muscular) 300 lbs. or more.

To ensure Soldiers maintain high physical fitness standards and are eligible for promotions, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery conducted the battalion's first in-country APFT August 13.



Staff Sgt. Marion Jackson grades Sgt. Joshua Gillespie on his sit ups.



The Soldiers are graded on their physical fitness according to their gender and age.



With a stop watch in hand, Sgt. 1st Class Deborah Manzanera follows the runners.

facebook

## FANS OUT THERE?

Thanks to all the families and friends, Colorado's 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, now has more than 300 fans!

For those of you who aren't familiar with Facebook, it's a "new media" outlet that many Department of Defense agencies now support.

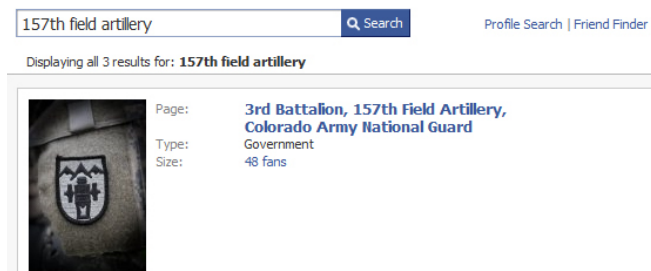
You can create a profile and connect with former military friends, colleagues, family members or your Soldiers who are overseas!

The 3-157 FA Facebook page is searchable if you type in search "3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery." The image that will appear is copied at the bottom so you know what to look for.

Our main image is of our brigade unit patch that we proudly wear on our arm.

The Facebook page has photos, links to stories and imagery posted on DVIDS, updated information, and, with any luck, will also act as a forum for families and Soldiers to communicate. Also included are updates from Lt. Col. Al Morris about life over here.

The Facebook page for the battalion is: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Fort-Hood-TX/3rd-Battalion-157th-Field-Artillery-Colorado-Army-National-Guard/219788830264?ref=nf>



(Left) Here's what it looks like on Facebook when browsing for the group!

## DVIDS IS HERE!

All released photos, stories and Steel Rain newsletters are posted on Digital Video & Imagery Distribution System (DVIDS) at [www.dvidshub.net](http://www.dvidshub.net).

This Web site provides news, images, audio, video and publications from military operations around the world!

From this Web site all friends, families, Soldiers and employers are able to create a free account so they may download products.

### You have options with DVIDS

- To subscribe via RSS go to ([http://dvidshub.net/unit\\_rss.php?unit\\_id=671](http://dvidshub.net/unit_rss.php?unit_id=671))
- To view a gallery of work from 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery go to (<http://www.dvidshub.net/units/3B-157FA>)

If you have questions about DVIDS, you may e-mail Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli at [liesl.marelli@us.army.mil](mailto:liesl.marelli@us.army.mil) or contact DVIDS at 1-877-DVIDS247. Thank you and we hope you enjoy seeing your Soldier in action!

**dvids**  
**NEWS**



# Field Artillery: The 'Movie'

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

**RAMADI, Iraq** - Video cameras, reports and journalists intimidate most Soldiers more than the thought of close-quarter combat.

When they see a video camera operated by the infamous media, they normally try to leave the area as quickly ... and quietly as possible.

Thankfully, not all media is "scary." One outlet in particular has proven time and time again to be a friend of the Colorado National Guard.

Altitude Sports and Entertainment, headquartered out of the Denver metro area, has a good working relationship with the Colorado Guard, especially after embedding with the troops in Iraq previously.

When Jim Martin and Matt Hutchins of Altitude Sports and Entertainment, found out 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery was deploying, they immediately submitted their media embed request to U.S. Central Command.

The packet was approved!

Their first embed happened at Fort Hood, Texas, where they interviewed Soldiers, documented Battery A at a Military Operations Urban Terrain "Iraqi" village and met with the battery and battalion leaders.

After a few months of game planning what kind of items they hoped to cover in Iraq, the day arrived when they found themselves back in the presence of 3-157 FA, with cameras in hand and ready to continue their documentary.

In addition to the missions they covered, they also were sure to capture "shout outs" from Soldiers to their families back in Colorado that they will air during Thanksgiving and winter holidays.

The documentary, which they say will be anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour, will be available to every Sol-



Jim Martin (standing) and Matt Hutchins (sitting) interview 1st Sgt. Joseph Bishop (left) and his son Pfc. Joey Bishop (right).

dier in the battalion - free of charge, when they return from Iraq.

Martin and Hutchins, who are both proud military parents, said they are happy work with the Colorado Guard. At the culmination of every interview, they thanked the Soldiers for their service and shook their hand.

Even the Soldiers who were hesitant to work with any civilian with a video camera took a deep breath, gave Altitude a shot, and when the interviews were done, they felt satisfied and at ease.

The embed was a success for the Soldiers and Altitude!



Matt Hutchins kicks up his feet after a Soldier finds a chair for him while on a mission. Sitting in a secured area, he took full advantage of any available amenities, like a chair, while joking with the Soldiers about how great it felt to finally sit.



Matt Hutchins causes quite a stir with local Iraqis while on a mission in Al Anbar Province. Iraqis kept stopping in the hallway to watch him video.



# Colorado Plays an Integral Role in Al Anbar

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

**RAMADI, Iraq** – Colorado's 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, 115th Fires Brigade, is doing its part to get Al Anbar Province, Iraq, up and running.

The Soldiers are performing a slew of missions in Ar Ramadi ranging from Quick Reaction Force to Personnel Security Detail to operating towers and gates at Camp Ramadi. Each of the batteries assigned to 3-157 FA holds different areas of responsibility.

Battery B, 3-157 FA, conducts Personal Security Detail missions for the Camp Ramadi-based Anbar Provincial Reconstruction Team.

"Without the presence of a security detachment, the Provincial Reconstruction Team would not be able to perform its mission safely," explains Air Force Tech. Sgt. Leonard Norris, an operations noncommissioned officer with the PRT.

Battery B and A are charged with maintaining tight security for members of the PRT, as well as those with whom they meet. The protection provided to the PRT is essential to the success of their missions.

"If my [Soldiers] can provide that sense of comfort for [the PRT] then the team can concentrate more on their job at hand and not worry about the security piece," said 1st Sgt. Rodolfo Reyes, Battery B first sergeant.

August 9 was the battery's first mission to the province's Fuel Distribution Center.

Center.

"We were at the Ramadi Fuel Distribution Center to meet with the director general of Oil Distribution, Abdul Ghani, about the current problems with fuel and oil distribution facing Al Anbar and to assess the progress of the FDC," said Lance Cpl. Chase Niblett, of the Multi National Force - West Civil Military Operations section.

The Anbar Provincial Reconstruction Team consists of subject matter experts in an array of fields such as governance, economics, infrastructure, rule of law, public diplomacy and public affairs, project management and operations. Anbar PRT encompasses specialists from the departments of State, Defense and Justice and U.S. Agency for International Development. Both uniformed service members and civilians serve on the PRT.

While members of the Anbar PRT met with Ghani, the security detail maintained their highest level of vigilance to ensure the safety of those who they were protecting.

"Staying vigilant is paramount to the safety of any and all individuals (we protect) to include civilians," said Spc. John Perea of the PSD. "[It] can and will help prevent or defuse a situation before it gets out of hand. If something does happen and it wasn't preventable, it's better to be ready to react than be caught off guard."

At the culmination of the meeting, Ghani invited the Soldiers to rotate in and enjoy some local

Iraqi food.

"[The food] was amazing," said Sgt. Jeff Daniels, a soldier assigned to the PSD. "It's probably one of the best dishes I've eaten in a long time."

"I think [the Iraqis] look at sharing a meal as 'sealing the deal' so to speak," said Niblett. "When we eat out in town, the soldiers [on the PSD] normally get some Iraqi food,



Spc. Casey Ferguson communicates with other personnel in his vehicle while on a mission in Ar Ramadi, Iraq, August 9. Ferguson serves as the gunner on a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle with Battery B.

but I've never seen an Iraqi as motivated about getting the PSD team fed as I saw here."

This mission, supported by Battery B, gave the Ramadi-based PRT an opportunity to continue building and strengthening their relationship with the local government, business leaders and elected officials.

According to the Anbar PRT, oil has not only changed the immediate lives of the people of Anbar; its potential will have huge impacts in the future. The PRT is in place to assist and assess the progress of the oil distribution, among their many tasks.

"I'm happy knowing something is getting done for the Iraqis," said Daniels. "We are here to help."



Spc. John Perea of Battery B, conducts security for the members of a Provincial Reconstruction Team August 9 while on a mission in Ar Ramadi, Iraq.

*For more images from the mission, please visit the battalion's unit page on DVIDS at Web site:*

[www.dvidshub.net/units/3B-157FA](http://www.dvidshub.net/units/3B-157FA)

# A Message from the Family Readiness Group in Colorado

Hello families and friends,

I hope this newsletter finds you all doing well and in good health. I hope that by now you have had an opportunity to speak with your Family Assistance Center representatives.

We will continue to contact the families that the service members gave us permission to contact through the end of the deployment on a once-a-month basis.

I would like to encourage you to call your FAC representative outside of the one call that they make to you. We are all available seven days a week for your questions and concerns.

We have also had monthly meetings held in the four areas of our state. I hope that you have had an opportunity

to come to one of the meetings that have been facilitated by many good presenters filled with lots of good information. We will continue to hold these meetings once a month until our Soldiers come home. We hope to provide you with mixture of formal information and fun!

I hope that you are having a good summer, and please remember that you have a support network that is here and is willing and able to assist you with any needs you have.

With warm regards,  
Suzanne Buemi  
Family Assistance Center Coordinator  
Colorado National Guard Family Program



## FAMILY READINESS DATES

### Key dates for meetings:

September 19, October 17 and November 7

### Family Activities:

Happy Apple Farms September 26

### Neighborhood Hello's!

Sterling: September 9

Montrose: September 23-24

Alamos: October 6-7

Grand Junction: October 20-21

Colorado State Fair: August 28 - September 7

الف مبروك (Congrats!)



The following  
Soldiers were  
promoted this  
month.

Warrant Officer Stephanie Mann  
Pfc. Michael Nielson  
Spc. Christopher Presley  
Cpl. Andrew Sedarnee  
Sgt. 1st Class Albert Trujillo  
Spc. Mitchell Ward

## Meet the 3-157th Medics!

### Who are we?

There are 14 of us and over 400 Soldiers and that's just the way we like it. We're the medics of 3-157th Field Artillery and this is what we do.

We have a daily sick call shift where Soldiers can come in and be treated for injuries and illness, aches and pains, or just talk to someone about an issue to get a fresh perspective. On any given day we roll out on missions with the rest of the brave men and women of our battalion. To date we've rolled on more than 60 missions, we've seen more than 150 Soldiers during sick call hours, and were always ready for more. Our job here is to take care of our Soldiers, to keep them healthy and safe, and to bring them all home the same way they left.

We're a wild bunch, with loads of experience both military and civilian. We've got emergency room technicians, fire fighters, combat veterans, and college students. Each of us brings unique skill sets and personalities to the table. We are a family, and we look out for our own as well as all others. We just wanted to introduce ourselves.

To all our families back home we just want you to know, your Soldiers are in good hands.



Story by Medic Platoon Sergeant Jason Sorenson



# Colorado Guardsmen Earn Combat Patch

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

**RAMADI, Iraq** - August 21 was a historic day for 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, Colorado Army National Guard, 115th Fires Brigade.

In ceremony at the battalion's motor pool, Soldiers were presented with the 115th FiB combat patch by Brigade Commander Col. Richard Knowlton and Brigade Command Sgt. Maj. Kenton Franklin.

Knowlton removed his own combat patch and placed it on 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery Commander Lt. Col. Al Morris' right arm.

Knowlton then patched the battalion staff, special staff, battery commanders, first sergeants and the color guard.

Once patched, the battery commanders and first sergeants went one-by-one patching their Soldiers' right arm.

Those who have already earned a combat patch for previous deployments have the option to now wear the 115th FiB patch or 3-157 FA patch, in addition to the other patches they earned before. Soldiers also have the option to have a "naked" right arm and not display anything.

With the many options available, Soldiers tend to display a combat patch so other Soldiers know they've done their time in a combat zone.

The patch is worn on the right arm under the Infrared American flag. The unit patch for 3-157 FA is worn on the left arm to show they are currently assigned to the battalion.



The Bucking Cowboy is proudly displayed under the American flag.



One-by-one the battery commanders and first sergeants put the 115th Fires Brigade patch on their Soldiers' right arm.



Pfc. Andrew Elfter smiles when presented with the 115th Fires Brigade patch by Battery B Commander Capt. David Wilcox.



Chief Warrant Officer Tommie Rautenkranz is presented with the 115th Fires Brigade combat patch by Brigade Commander Col. Richard Knowlton during a ceremony.



Brigade Commander Col. Richard Knowlton removes his own combat patch and proudly places it on Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Al Morris' right arm.



# Los Texmaniacs come to perform

*A morale booster arrives via helicopter for a night of fun!*

Story and photos by Sgt. Joshua Gillespie

**RAMADI, Iraq** - It was 125 degrees and the rotor wash was stirring the air. It felt like a furnace. Dust was blowing in their faces and yet they were still smiling.

The Los Texmaniacs had arrived!

The San Antonio-based band consists of David; the accordion player; Max, the guitarist; Gabriel, the bass guitarist, and Lorenzo, the drummer. Max formed the band with David and Lorenzo as the original members of Los Texmaniacs.

The band was in the middle of its second tour of Iraq in support and its fifth tour for the USO when it arrived to Ramadi.

The style of music is they play is called Tejanos. It is similar to Mariachi with a country-rock flair. The vocals are in Spanish and English.

They took the stage August 9 at 8 p.m. for a crowd of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and civilian contractors, playing traditional Spanish music, some of their own songs, and covers of Rock & Roll from the 80s and 90s.

They played for two hours and were still smiling and laughing after

the show.

When the concert ended, they took time to sign autographs and talk with the troops. The band asked everyone where they were from, what it was like at the troop's home, and if they have family back home.

Troops also had the opportunity to ask questions of the band. Each band member shook hands with the troops and thanked them for their service.

Max said, "I was scared the first time I came over but, I know how important the morale is for the Soldiers."

There are a lot of people back home who feel the same way."

"My mother asked me to hug the troops and tell them we are praying for them. I want the Soldiers to know that Los Texmani-

acs and people back in America care about them. I was talking to a Marine that has a six-month-old daughter that he has not even seen. That touches my heart," he said.

When asked if he had any last words for the troops before heading back home. Max said, "I want to personally thank them for their service and courage. I want all the troops to know that [we] support them and everything they do for us."



Above: Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, Sailors and civilians line up for autographs from band members.



Left: The Los Texmaniacs perform live for Camp Ramadi residents in a concert August 9. This was the band's second visit to Ramadi, Iraq.

## Softball at Camp Ramadi

Photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli



Staff Sgt. Michael Campbell



Spc. Christopher Krambeer



Sgt. Harrold Pate



**Cont. CHAPLAIN p. 2**

notifies the battery or company leadership, depending on circumstances, also gets the chaplain involved.

For bad news, often the commander or first sergeant and the chaplain go visit the Soldier. The leadership informs the Soldier of the news and the chaplain is there for support.

This is similar to a casualty notification team back home, where the individual doing the notifying is of equal or higher rank than that of the Soldier and is accompanied by a chaplain for support.

After the Soldier has been notified, he or she decides to go home or stay and then it is approved by the battery and battalion commander.

Frequently, the chaplain helps the Soldier call home while the unit leadership is already at work making arrangements for the Soldier to get home as soon as possible.

Despite the unit doing everything

quickly and smoothly, the Soldier might not get home for several days. *Here is why...*

Let's say you call on Wednesday afternoon, Colorado time. By the time the message gets verified and sent to us, it may be hours before it gets to us. There may not be enough time to notify the Soldier, file all the paperwork, get the battalion commander's signature and arrange transportation that night – as Wednesday at 2 p.m. in Colorado is 11 p.m. here.

Another consideration is in-country travel availability. Traveling, in general, takes time but it gets complicated during bad weather. All things considered, they don't actually leave until Thursday night from this camp.

Then, they wait for a flight to get to Kuwait by Friday.

From Kuwait, they wait a couple of hours or more for a flight from Germany – say its late Friday night by now. After that, they need another

flight from Germany to somewhere in the United States. It's Saturday by now.

Next, they wait for a connection to Denver International Airport.

By the time they pick up their luggage, get out of the airport, get something to eat and finally get home – say an hour or more from the airport – it is late Saturday night and your Soldier is absolutely exhausted and wants to sleep in as late as possible on Sunday before doing anything or seeing anybody.

Whew...

Thus, getting your Soldier home could easily be a four to five day journey, and then they might not be ready to do anything until after a good night's sleep after they getting home. *And that is if it all goes well.*

We hope no emergencies arise for anyone, but if they do, we wanted to give you the inside scoop as to why it takes a while to get them home.

**Cont. INTERNET p. 3**

This, too, was accomplished by the time we moved into our permanent CHUs. We were able to get faster service at a lower price, \$2800 every three months. *Progress!*

We settled in our CHUs and began the process of getting our service started. The first signs of trouble began when we took a look at the equipment and wiring that we purchased. All of the wires and cables from the satellite dishes and CHUs in our block had been cut somewhere along the line. Equipment and wire to fix these issues were in very short supply, so we had to have tools, wire, ends and materials sent to us by mail. This took well over a week, so our wait for internet continued.

While we were waiting, we decided to go ahead and aim the satellite and at least get that part done. Aiming the satellite should be easy, *right?*

We had the azimuth, the elevation, the polarization, all of the technical details to accomplish this. *Wrong!*

You don't just go out and point the dish in the general direction and say, "Good to go!" The satellite is very tiny out there in space. It's like finding a needle in a hay stack, so you need a spectrum analyzer to accomplish this feat. We found this out with further research at the Camo Café after three days of going up and down on the roof to adjust the satellite dish with *no* results.

Now that the aiming was accomplished, where can we find a spectrum analyzer? You don't just go out and buy one, so we had to find someone that had one. We went back to the initial local provider here. *Yes*, they had one and would be more than happy to find our satellite for a different provider, for a price; \$300 later, the installer was

up on our CHU roof trying to locate a satellite he had never heard of before, a provider he had no clue about, and passwords that he hasn't got the faintest idea of how to get around.

Between the installer and many helpful individuals figuring out the azimuth, elevation and polarization of the satellite dish, this process became a huge monster. We were communicating between our provider in Europe, (a two-hour time difference); our installer, who wanted to only work after dark when it was cooler; and a bunch of Soldiers who had their own ideas of how the install should go. Needless to say, *this wasn't working out.*

Nothing seemed to work and everyone was getting extremely frustrated. Three continuous nights of this and our installer had finally had enough. He said that he would take the entire system back to his shop and get it figured out there. During the two days that it was in the shop, all of the materials and equipment arrived in the mail. We ran all the wires and the connections were completed. Once the installer came back out to put the system back up, he told us that he replaced two pieces of faulty equipment, reconfigured the polarization, which was wrong from our provider and re-situated the dish on the roof of one of the CHUs.

Here it is, now August 18 (*two weeks after we have all moved into our CHUs*) and the system is finally operational. It is definitely not the fastest system out there, but we are all happy that we can communicate with our loved ones back home. It was a frustrating experience, but we are finally *good to go!*



# Fit Mind, Body, Spirit

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

**RAMADI, Iraq** - When 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery was tasked with the Mayor's Cell, among those jobs was to run the Morale, Welfare and Recreation office.

Maj. Clay Taulman, the battalion executive officer, decided the camp should begin "fun" runs, in addition to hosting evening events at the camp's entertainment stage.

Similar to the event at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, to celebrate Independence Day with a run, Camp Ramadi now hosts its own fun runs.

The event is in its infancy but is slowly growing.

The first fun run only drew approximately 15 service members but on the August 22 5-Kilometer run, more than 30 Soldiers, Marines, Airmen and Sailors came to compete.

Army personnel have yet to beat the Marines, who have swept the competition thus far.

However, Colorado Soldiers like 1st Lt. Sean Deveau is convinced that given a longer distance like a 10-Kilometer run, Soldiers will win.

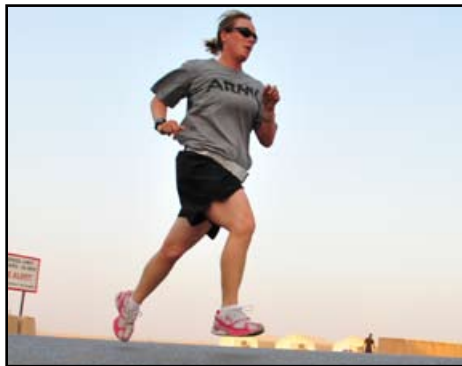
Time will tell if Deveau's speculation is correct, but one thing is for sure, competition will continue at the bimonthly fun runs.



More than 30 Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines compete in the Camp Ramadi 5-Kilometer fun run August 22.



Maj. Andrew Diederich steps it out!



Capt. Beth Soelzer rocks steady.



1st Lt. Jeff Wilson races two Marines.



Spc. Dana "DJ Crunch" Nisley briefs the runners.

## Sgt. Cedric Gamble's road to weight loss

Staff Sgt. John P. Martinez III

Time in the desert can generate a lot of monotony. This can result in boredom, isolation and sometimes weight gain. Some Soldiers, however, use the time to their advantage. One of Berzerker's own has committed himself to becoming healthier and more fit. The leadership has elected to highlight the weight-loss goal of one of its Noncommissioned Officers.

Over the next few months, we will follow Sgt. Cedric Gamble's workout plans, weigh-ins and eating habits in an effort to reinforce his dedication to self improvement. Since deploying to theater, his commitment to self improvement has resulted in a current weight loss of 14 lbs.

AGE: 39 • STARTING WEIGHT: 253 • CURRENT WEIGHT: 239  
This month's workout plan: 30 minutes of cardio, abdominal and upper body - alternating days.