

STEEL RAIN

3RD BATTALION, 157TH FIELD ARTILLERY

'I'm Leaving on a Jet Plane'



From Colorado to Texas and now across the big blue sea

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

FORT HOOD, Texas - After months of intense training, Colorado's 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery is ready to turn the page and begin a new chapter of their lives. The time has come to "leave on a jet plane" across the big blue sea into a world they have been preparing day-in and day-out for; Iraq.

To commemorate the culmination of the mobilization training, the 115th Fires Brigade hosted a farewell ceremony June 21 at 10 a.m. at Short

Horn Airfield here.

More than 2,400 Soldiers from Colorado, South Dakota, Minnesota, Alabama and Wyoming came together for the hour-long ceremony.

With bleachers overflowing and some sitting on the hot pavement baking in the Texas heat, hundreds of friends, families and 115th Fires Brigade supporters turned out for the ceremony to wish their Soldier a bon voyage.

188th Forward Support Company

Commander Beth Soelzer, of Colorado Springs, Colo., said, "The Soldiers are excited about deploying, working hard to accomplish the mission and safely returning next year to their loved ones."

Immediately following the ceremony, Soldiers who

had not already taken their four-day pass quickly went to their barracks, changed into civilian attire and hit the road with their loved ones to enjoy their last days of freedom in the States before flying half-way across the world to their home for the next 10 months, the Middle East.



Soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery stand tall and proud during their deployment ceremony at Fort Hood, Texas, June 21.



Families, friends and supporters of the 115th Fires Brigade came to cheer on their Soldiers as they embark on the next step of their journey in the Middle East in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



115th Fires Brigade Commander Col. Richard Knowlton will lead the troops to war, stationing the brigade in Iraq and Kuwait, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

FROM COLORADO TO



TEXAS TO



KUWAIT TO



IRAQ



From the Battalion Leadership:

Battalion Commander:

Lt. Col Al Morris



We've just completed our validation by First Army after two months of training focused on squad- and team-level training and battle drills. The last two weeks were filled with our culminating events.

The first event was a Command Post Exercise that focused on the battalion's Tactical Operations Center and the internal battle drills for the many types of

situations we may encounter.

This was followed by a grueling Mission Readiness Exercise, where our Soldiers were put through the ringer on security patrols through a mock village where we negotiated with Iraqis through the use of interpreters, combat logistics patrols, use of our quick reaction force, entry control points and so on.

In each scenario, Soldiers were faced with direct or indirect attacks, uncooperative civilians, and medical situations requiring quick offensive and defensive action to protect Soldiers and suppress the "enemy."



Though many would have initially gladly

Battalion Command Sergeant Major:

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Koob



The training at North Fort Hood has finally ended. After four months of individual and collective training the Soldiers are now able to take a deep breath, unwind a little, and take a four day pass then move on to Iraq. The training ended with a Mission Readiness Exercise, a nine day event that simulated the missions we will be conducting in Iraq. The Soldiers in 3rd Battalion, 157th

Field Artillery performed extremely well under very hot and humid conditions, running missions 24 hours a day. The evaluators of the exercise said that the Soldiers performed extremely well. I can say without hesitation that they are prepared for the mission. By the time you get this newsletter we will either be on the way to Iraq or very close to leaving. Please keep us in your thoughts; you will certainly be in ours.



skipped the Fort Hood part and gone straight to Iraq, the world-class training has been invaluable and will keep us sharp and ready for anything when we finally begin our mission in Iraq.

Chaplain's Corner: *The Strength to Get Over Yourself*

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

"What do I do when my love is away, Does it worry you to be alone

How do you feel by the end of the day, Are you sad because you're on your own

No, I get by with a little help from my friends." The Beatles.

In the recent Army Strong recruiting campaign commercials, the narrator states that Army Strong is "the strength to get over and the strength to get over yourself." This is appropriate for Soldiers, spouses and families.

One of the most important skills in life that we all need to develop is the ability to ask for help. No one can make it through this life alone; rather, we all get by with a little help from our friends.

This is the beginning of building our resiliency – the ability to bounce back from hard circumstances. Getting over ourselves means that we are not too proud, stubborn, or embarrassed to ask for help. Part of this skill comes from a faith that the system of asking for help works. This is easier found in the Army than in the civilian world.

*"What do I do when my
love is away, Does it worry
you to be alone*

*How do you feel by the
end of the day, Are you sad
because you're on your own*

*No, I get by with a little
help from my friends."*

The Beatles

In the civilian world, people disappoint, churches disappoint, and we all know that families can be a disappointment in our lives. However, just because we have experienced the pain of disappointment in the past does not mean that every time we ask for help we will get pain.

The best hitters in baseball only hit around .300, which means that they are only successful three out of 10 times. What if when asking for help you are only successful three out of 10 times? Should you stop asking for help simply because people are humans and aren't perfect?

People are not perfect and do not always give help when we ask. But some people sometimes do help – and that is what we need to get over tough times and to get over ourselves.



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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



Capt. Beth Soelzer

This month has been a hot one here in Texas! The unit has been working hard to complete all the required training to prepare us for our mission.

We started the month off going to the Close Quarter Combat Range where we were able to practice our controlled firing skills. The second part to the range was a live shoot house where we worked on moving rapidly through confined area and identifying targets.

Our last lane before the big exercise was the Mounted Gunnery where 1st Platoon's Personnel Security Detail was able to test their accuracy with their Crew Served weapons.

Even though the Fighting 188th has been working

hard and kicking butt, we have also had time to play. The Soldiers purchased a volleyball net and ball and have been having fun improving their skills on the court. We were able to take an evening and attend the LT Dan Band Concert down on South Fort Hood. The biggest morale booster was our day at the lake. It was a great way to unwind from a grueling training schedule and recharge before the big exercise.

We would like to thank all the family members for their support. It is appreciated by all. We would also like to welcome to the world Jonathan Samora who was born on June 13. Congratulations Heather and Staff Sgt. Nathaniel Samora!



(Left) This is the "half-house" where Soldiers practice moving in teams before they enter the shoot house with live ammunition.

Photo by
Sgt. Josh Gillespie

Headquarters & Headquarters Battery Based in Colorado Springs

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



Capt. Ashkan Angha

It has been nearly five months since we began the process of training our Soldiers - your Soldiers. Our Soldiers are trained, our weapons are clean, the equipment is packed and we are ready to meet every challenge ahead and accomplish the mission.

The mission of HHB 3-157th while on deployment is to conduct base defense security operations. That mission includes manning towers and providing security within the camp 24/7. The guard posts that HHB man will ensure the safety and security of the camp. Additionally, HHB may be tasked with keeping accountability of all Soldiers, equipment and operations within the camp and the overall welfare of the camp.

Overall, based on accounts from Soldiers who have previously deployed, we have received the best training in North Fort Hood. We have received the latest and the greatest equipment. We are tactically and technically proficient in all of our duties. Morale is high and every one of us is anxious to get this deployment started. I hope by the time you read this you have enjoyed the time with your Soldiers and you at home are ready to work through the difficult task of living at home without your loved ones. As always stay in touch, write letters and thank you for all of the care packages. HHB Soldiers, without waiver, are "READY TO STRIKE!"

- Capt. Ashkan Angha

Well, training at Fort Hood is almost complete, so our focus has shifted to packing up our equipment and conducting the final training exercise. The Soldiers are doing well, and I am extremely proud of how far we have come from the start of training. I know that we are all looking forward to a little time with our families prior to deployment. Although it is never enough, it will be greatly appreciated and carry us into our deployment. The motivation of the Soldiers in HHB and around the battalion is high and I believe that they are ready. I want to thank you for your thoughts and words of encouragement to all the Soldiers. It makes all that we do a little bit easier, when we know our families and communities support not only us but the United States Military. - 1st Sgt. Ed Schwaigert

Alpha Battery Based in Longmont

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

Apache has come a long way since the Pepsi center and last seeing our families and friends.

While overseas, one of the most important aspects of keeping our Soldier brothers and sisters safe is by providing a defensive force on our Forward Operating Base.

Base defense is the most fundamental key to mission success. Apache has been charged with this selfless task by providing a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) coupled with gate defense.

This mission allows our camp residents to sleep safely at night and conduct viable business during the day.

Apache has taken the reins on these missions and proved ourselves worthy of the task.

The function of our QRF is to provide a professional fast-moving element to augment the protection of the FOB. The gate in charged with

keeping the bad guys out and the good guys safe.

Upon completion of our Mission Readiness Exercise (MRE) our trainers were overwhelmed at our ability to execute these missions.

Apache demonstrated the ability to think decisively, quelling all our trainers' attempts to gain access to the safe zone. Apache is ready to help write the next chapter in American history.



(Left) A Soldier scans his sector of fire for enemy activity during a mission in a simulated Iraqi city at Fort Hood, Texas.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

Bravo Battery Based in Aurora

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

Bravo Battery spends a day at the lake.

On June 6, the Soldiers of Bravo Battery were treated to a day at Belton Lake filled with fun, sun and plenty of food. The Belton Lake Outdoor Recreation Area, located on Fort Hood, offers free admission to Soldiers who want to utilize their facilities, including Sierra Beach, boat rentals, a water slide and much more.



Capt. Jim Forester

Many Soldiers took advantage of boat rentals while at the lake. Following the mandatory boating license test that is administered at the Belton Lake boat dock, the Soldiers were able to spend the day on the lake water skiing, tubing and wake boarding.

"Renting the boat was probably the smartest decision we've made while at Fort Hood," said Staff Sgt. Brian Carver. "It gave us a chance to get away from everything for a while and blow off a lot of steam."

Those who didn't take part in the boating adventures were able to spend their time at Sierra Beach and swim, play basketball or take a ride down one of the available water slides.

"It was a good break from the training and gives the Soldiers a chance to bond in an environment opposite our everyday training" said Staff Sgt. Joel Kelm, the battery supply sergeant.

Some of the Soldiers from the unit who have a cooking background offered their services in order to prepare burg-

ers, brat wursts and hot links for their fellow unit members.

"(We) live for days like this where we can show off ... cooking is my passion," said Sgt. 1st Class Ramiro Vasquez, who spent the majority of the day behind a grill.

Along with the grill duties, the cooks also took on the responsibility of preparing six watermelons and monitoring the sanitation of the food service area.

"I think it should have been an overnight event," said Spc. Benjamin Maye, about the duration of the outing which lasted from about 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. When asked about his impression from that day, Staff Sgt. Kyle Sullivan said, "Sun, women and watermelon are always better than beans, bullets and barracks."

- Staff Sgt. John P. Martinez III



(Left) Spc. Dan Mof-fit gets over his childish fear of heights while cliff jumping.

Photo and caption by
Spc. Thomas Stapleton

A day in the life as a deploying Guardsman for Colorado Employers

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

FORT HOOD, Texas - Employers and Colorado media, escorted by Col. Ken Sanchez, the Colorado Army National Guard Director of Operations, and Capt. Michael Odgers, a Colorado Army National Guard Public Affairs Officer, traveled here on a bosslift May 18.

Bosslifts transport employers and supervisors to military training sites where they observe National Guard and Reserve members on duty as part of the Total Force. This provides the employer a better understanding of what their Reservists do when they are away from their civilian occupation for duty with their military units. Employers see firsthand the type and quality of military training and leadership activities National Guard and Reserve members receive.

(Information courtesy of the Maryland National Guard)



(Left to Right) Capt. Jim Forester, Battery B Commander; Lt. Col. Al Morris, battalion commander; Col. Ken Sanchez, Colorado Army National Guard Director of Operations; and Capt. Ashkan Angha, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery commander, pose for a picture at the culmination of the Bosslift.



Steve Youngerman of Denver's CBS, videos an attack at an Entry Control Point during the battalions Mission Readiness Exercise. Using simulated rounds, Soldiers reacted to Improvised Explosive Devices, small arms fire and protests at the ECPs.



Craig Korth of Raytheon presents an American flag to Lt. Col. Al Morris, the battalion commander, to fly in Iraq.



(Left) Joshua Buck of the Longmont Daily Times-Call, photographs Pfc. Joshua Webb during the Bosslift. Webb is currently assigned to Battery A based in Longmont, Colo.



Soldiers, such as Capt. Ashkan Angha (far right), got the opportunity to interview with Altitude Sports & Entertainment based in Denver, Colo., during their two-day stay here. Jim Martin (left) and Matt Hutchings (right) will embed with the unit in Iraq later this summer.

Tips for Sending Care Packages Overseas

Courtesy story by Stacey Abler

Stacey Abler is an Army Wife and owner of the website www.marriedtothearmy.com

1 Call the post office or go there in person and request your mailing supplies. The post office offers flat rate priority boxes for free. No matter how much they weigh, it costs a fixed rate to mail them. They come in different sizes. You can also pick up priority tape and custom forms at no charge. For current rates go to www.usps.com.

2 Always short on time? You can arrange pick-up of your priority at your home or office free of charge. How great is that? All you have to do is print the label from your own printer, schedule the pick up and that's it!

3 When you are taping the boxes, there's no such thing as too much. I sometimes wonder how the Soldiers were ever able to get into the ones I sent! Be sure to tape all of the seams and I always run the tape in one continuous stream around the entire box. So far, they have all arrived in tact.

4 Some place stickers underneath the tape across the seams. This makes it easy for the soldier to see if the box has been opened and re-taped. Just be aware that some units do not allow ANY decoration on the outside of the box.

5 Be sure you address the package exactly how the unit instructs.

Some units do not allow rank, etc. on their packages. Address them correctly to ensure the delivery is not delayed.

6 Many wonder if priority is the best way to send a package as far as speed. Priority only allows it to get to its final destination in the United States quicker. After that, it is in the military's hands. Most have said that priority packages take about 2 weeks to arrive where normal parcel post can take four weeks or more.

7 There is much debate on what to put on a customs form. The official answer is to fill it out completely and accurately. Many people are VERY vague on the form in order to guard against theft (yes, it does happen). I know some who list "snacks" and a value of \$10 every time no matter what they send in the box. The choice is up to you. Always remember, the package can be insured for a minimal fee.

8 Be sure to check the guidelines for the region your soldier is in. For instance, some areas do not allow pork products. Pornographic materials of any kind are also not allowed. It is permissible to send a bible for personal use but not to send multiple bibles for distribution. Note: This is only a sampling of regulations and not a full list.

9 Be very careful combining hygiene products and food in the same package. Some Soldiers have reported opening their package to find all of the food tastes like soap/deodorant even when everything is sealed separately.

10 If anything in your package could possibly leak, bust, etc., be sure to put it in a Ziploc bag. You don't want the entire package ruined be-

cause something leaked.

11 If you are sending pictures or anything that could be damaged if the package got wet, it is a good idea to enclose these in a Ziploc bag wrapped in a paper towel as well.



12 Many send the Soldier a list of things that they included in the box either in the actual box or in a separate letter so the Soldier knows everything arrived in tact. Some also include this list in the box so if it happens to come apart in transit, the mail room staff knows what was in it.

13 Be creative when sending packages! (Whether it's their favorite game or snack that won't melt in the heat or a sticker that will make them laugh!)

14 Send your Soldier cards or letter writing materials so she or he can write home or recognize special days for those in his family. Don't forget that letter mail from overseas to the U.S. is free for the Soldier.

15 Prepare in advance for holidays. Don't wait for the last minute. Mail is much busier as holidays approach so send things at least one month out from the holiday.

Please write the mailing address exactly how it is provided. No rank, no city. Only name, unit and APO. For the APO address, please contact your local Family Readiness Group representative or call 720-250-1186.

MORE RELIABLE NEWS FROM IRAQ

Instead of relying on civilian coverage of Iraq, consider these two reliable military news sources. Both have easy-to-use Web sites.

Multi National Forces-West: <http://www.mnfwest.usmc.mil/> This is an official Marine Corps Web site and is provided as a public service by the Marine Corps Division of Public Affairs.

Multi-National Forces-Iraq: <http://www.mnf-iraq.com/> This is the official Web site for Multi-National Forces Iraq.

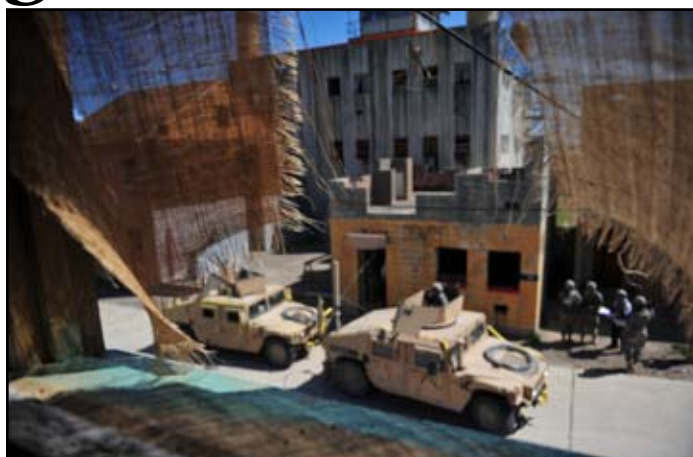


By, With and Through

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



Lt. Col. Al Morris (center) along with 115th Fires Brigade Commander Col. Richard Knowlton and a Provincial Reconstruction Team leader speaks to a local sheik through use of a linguist. While overseas, the unit will conduct numerous missions such as this. It takes skill and practice to successfully utilize a translator and maintain cultural awareness.



Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, prepare to leave the simulated Iraqi village after a meeting with a local sheik at Fort Hood, Texas, May 17. Iraqi natives work as civilians on the battlefield to help make the training as real as possible. Cultural awareness and situational awareness are a must for the troops.



Pfc. Steven Ryan (left) and Spc. Jordan Schnebke (right) cover the rear door and alley of the house where a meeting with a local sheik takes place. Both Soldiers are assigned to Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, Colorado Army National Guard, 115th Fires Brigade.



A Soldier from Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, positions himself near a window opening during the meeting with the local sheik. While pulling security, vigilance, attention to detail and intuition play into the safety of the environment. If something does not feel right, chances are - something is up. During this meeting, however, there were no attacks on the troops. The meeting ended cordially and the troops returned back to their base.



A Soldier conducts a dismounted patrol in a simulated Iraqi village while the gunner scans his sector of fire for any potential threats.

Technological Advancements Increase Safety

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

FORT HOOD, Texas - Deploying Colorado Guard men and women are now all outfitted with the Army's newest vest, the Improved Outer Tactical Vest.

The IOTV is designed more comfortably and with easier capabilities



Pfc. Jeremy Ham of Battery B demonstrates how to quickly remove his Improved Outer Tactical Vest. A fellow Soldier stands behind him to catch the rear part of his vest so the ballistic plates do not shatter when they hit the concrete street.

for Soldiers to drop the vest at a moment's notice.

Why might a Soldier need to drop it quickly? If there was a vehicle roll-over in water or a vehicle was on fire and a Soldier was injured and wasn't able to get out easily. Dropping the extra weight of the vest makes the Soldier more maneuverable.

One of the other benefits of the vest is that Soldiers can open up one side of the vest at a time to administer first aid, instead of opening up the vest exposing the entire chest cavity.

The sides of the vest Velcro under the middle flap so it's easier for Soldiers to adjust the vest to fit comfortably.

In the photo to the right, Pfc. Jeremy Ham of Battery B displays the Army's newest tactical shirt to wear with the Army Combat Uniform.

The Army Combat Shirt has pockets on the sleeves, elbow pads and has a mock turtleneck collar that will keep out hot brass out of the shirt. The material is more comfortable and breathable in hot environments, like Iraq.



The vest is held together by the cord in Pfc. Jeremy Ham's left hand. Once the cord is pulled, the front and back of the vest completely detach.

DVIDS IS HERE!

All released photos, stories and Steel Rain newsletters are posted on Digital Video & Imagery Distribution System (DVIDS) at 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)
- 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 or contact DVIDS at 1-877-DVIDS247. Thank you and we hope you enjoy seeing your Soldier in action!

dvids
NEWS

facebook

FANS OUT THERE?

Colorado's 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery now has an official page on Facebook. 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.

Until we get to Iraq, there won't be too many new posts but stand by. More will follow! We promise!

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!

A Message from the Family Readiness Group

Hello to all of our families,

I hope this letter finds you well and in good health. I was given this opportunity to write you all this letter. I want to stress a couple of things to you to reiterate our sincerity for your well being.

When our family assistance center representatives call to ask how you are doing or if they can be of any assistance, please, take advantage of this and use them to their fullest capacity. The representatives are there to make things a little less stressful during a deployment and or need.

I want to also remind you that we are a self-help referral service. If you do have a need please call your representative as they can direct you to any kind of resource that you should need. If they can not fulfill the request right away on the phone, they will get you an answer within 24 business hours.

We really want to make sure that you know that we are here for you and that we pride ourselves on our work and taking care of you, the families. Should you have a need please do not ever hesitate to give us a call.

With warm regards,
Suzanne Buemi
Family Assistance Center
Coordinator

FAMILY READINESS DATES

Alpha Battery: FAC contact Jennie Zambo at 720-250-2771; July 18 and August 15 locations TBD. FRG volunteer: Robin Weis.

Bravo Battery: FAC contact Nancy White at 720-847-8495; July 18 and August 15 at the Orchard Road Christian Center. FRG volunteer: Nancy Russell.

HHB/188th FSC: FAC contact Danielle Miller at 720-250-3971; July 18 and August 15 locations TBD. FRG volunteers: Megan Meggison (FSC) and Cathy Skinner (HHB).

USEFUL WEB SITES



<http://www.militarysos.com/> provides support and information resource for military spouses and significant others of all branches, around the

world.



<http://www.military.com/military-spouse-network/page/home.html> is the

Online Home of Military Spouses with more than 400,000 members.



<http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/> is the Department of Defense website for official Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) program information, policy and guidance designed to help troops and their families, leaders, and service providers. Whether you live the military lifestyle or support those who do, you'll find what you need!

A Message from the Rear Detachment

Capt. Chris Stutz
Commander
C Battery

Greetings,

It is my honor to command Battery C and work with the fine Soldiers of this battalion. I look forward to the next year and meeting many of you.

As this is my first submission for "Steel Rain," I would like to tell you a little about myself, Battery C and 188th Forward Support Company Rear Detachment and the Soldiers who make up 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery Rear Detachment.

I am the Commander for Battery C and the Soldiers of the 188th Forward Support Company Rear Detachment and my acting first sergeant is Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Straight.

The Soldiers who make up my command have worked hard over the last four months to reconstitute the Battalion Rear Detachment into a viable battery formation that can conduct Army doctrinal training to keep the artillery mission alive and well here in Colorado as our brethren de-

ploy overseas to defend freedom.

June will find Battery C and 188th FSC Rear Det working hard to prepare for Annual Training in July.

Colorado's 3-157th FA Rear Det will go to the field for AT. We will conduct artillery missions, recovery and maintenance operations, small arms qualification, Military Operations Urban Terrain, Land Navigation mounted and dismounted and have a Morale Welfare and Recreation evening with a barbecue. We will begin our training and completion of Artillery Tables in preparation for a Live-Fire Exercise scheduled for the March/April time frame of 2010.

Speaking of attending Family Readiness Group get-togethers and the Live-Fire Exercise, we will be working closely with 1st Lt. Jeff Bell and Staff Sergeant Dehart to make this an event that all can attend, it's an exciting way to see what your Soldiers do in the field.

The Battery and Family Readiness Group are working closely together to support the Soldiers going overseas and their families; so in the near future don't be surprised to see a few of us attending Family Readiness Group events. We are committed to supporting the needs of the whole battalion family.

