

STEEL RAIN

3RD BATTALION, 157TH FIELD ARTILLERY

Stay Alert, Stay Alive

Commonly uttered in the Army, it's an expression that applies to missions in Al Anbar Province, Iraq.

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

AR RAMADI, Iraq - Missions only happen to fulfill a legitimate need, said a Provincial Reconstruction Team member. The mission Oct. 8 was two-fold: introduce a new team member to an Iraqi judge and also follow up on a case to see that justice is going to be served for a Marine killed in Al Anbar previously.

According to Marine Col. Brett Barkey, a lawyer serving on the Provincial Reconstruction Team here, only necessary missions happen because the risk of life is never taken lightly.

Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, Colorado Army National Guard, 115th Fires Brigade, based at Camp Ramadi, helps make the PRT's missions happen.



1st Lt. Christopher Berven provides dismounted security for members of the Camp Ramadi-based Provincial Reconstruction Team during a mission in Al Anbar Province, Iraq, Oct. 8.

They not only are responsible for providing safe transportation to the meetings for the PRT, but also providing dismounted security to ensure they stay safe while outside the wire. They serve much like a bodyguard for the PRT members.

During the pre-mission brief Oct. 8, Barkey spoke to the troops to remind them how much the PRT appreciates their service and also wanted to extend his gratitude and concern for a Battery A Soldier who was wounded on a previous mission.

The mission on Oct. 8 into the city of Ar Ramadi was successful and quiet for the troops and PRT members. Everyone accomplished what they needed to and returned safely to the Forward Operating Base without receiving any enemy contact.



Soldiers along with the Provincial Reconstruction Team walk toward the vehicles that will bring them home at the culmination of the meeting in Ar Ramadi, Iraq.



During the mission brief, Col. Brett Barkey, a Provincial Reconstruction Team member, expresses his gratitude for the security provided by Colorado Guardsmen.

From the Battalion Leadership:

Battalion Commander:

Lt. Col Al Morris



We are already at the midpoint of our one-year mobilization and as I look back we have done a lot since April 15th.

We continue to stay busy and our mission load is pretty steady though it is very different every day.

As Sgt. Maj. Sergio Alvarez has said, the hard training done in the units has

paid off across the board in everything we do. It is one thing to say everyone is staying on their toes; it is another to stand the test.

We did experience a Soldier being wounded recently and I can tell you that the performance of Sgt. Marty May and his team were flawless, which minimized any further casualties. I continue to hear accolades from our higher headquarters on the battalion's excellent work and am grateful to have such fine leaders in every battery and company getting our work done.

As we do our mission every day and continue to refine and improve the way we do business, I am also proud of the high level of integrity in the way we perform our work and the respect we show each other. I'm not going to say this is all perfect, but leaders enforce a high standard and few Soldiers deviate.

Do enjoy your time together during your rest and relaxation (R&R) time. For some, it is the only time you ever have two full weeks away from work.

In closing, I want to pass on again how much of an honor it is to serve with you all. God bless.



Battalion Command Sergeant Major:

Comments by acting Battalion Sergeant Major, Sgt. Maj. Sergio Alvarez

Trying to fill the "big guy's" shoes while he is on leave has not been easy! The battalion has experienced a lot during this past couple of weeks.

Everything from a transfer of authority, to the turn-over of part of Camp Ramadi, to the injury of one of our Warriors has kept us busy.

We experienced the first test of our emergency procedures when one of our Soldiers was wounded while out on mission. I am proud to tell you that our Alpha Battery and support Soldiers performed incredibly well and without hesitation in caring for their injured team member.

We will miss our Marine brothers who have now, for the most part, departed. We look forward to serving alongside our new brothers from the 1st Brigade 82nd Airborne Division (Army).

We are all adjusting to our different working relationships. Your Soldier will probably notice very little change other than a few minor rule changes. The hardest part was having to change over everyone's e-mail addresses. Our communication section (S-6) performed flawlessly doing this task even though several key members were absent due to leave travel. Good Job!

By now, many of you have started receiving your Soldiers for leave. Those of you that haven't just need to hold on a little longer.

Enjoy the time with your loved one and remember to send them back afterward. Before you know it we will all be home.

If your name is Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Koob though you should definitely hurry back since your shoes are hard to fill.

Chaplain's Corner: *Spiritually Fit*

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

When we got to Iraq, God gave me a vision of something more than I was initially given. The previous chaplain from Oklahoma had even said, "If we knew this was going to be our office for the whole deployment, we would have asked for something else." So, instead of a cramped shack, we were able to secure a full size trailer.

Spc. Keaton Stein, my assistant

from Grand Junction, Colo., has framed houses before, so he was able to build a really solid wall with a door and a bullet-proof glass window for my office. Then, we secured shelving and bookcases so that our Spiritual Fitness Center could function as the "care package central" for the battalion. We also have a sitting area, a plethora of books and a corner set aside for the United Through Reading video camera equipment for Soldiers to record themselves reading a children's book to their kids.

Now thanks to your gracious care

packages, Soldiers come into the Spiritual Fitness Center and grab snacks, toiletries, books and end up talking to Stein or myself or petting our Spiritual Fitness dog, Mahnoosh, or all of the above.

This Spiritual Fitness Center has become a tremendous morale booster for our troops – it is bigger, nicer, has a dedicated mission towards them and is physically closer to the troops and



See FITNESS p. 12

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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

The month of October has kept the 188th Forward Support Company very busy. The temperature has dropped and we average about 100 degrees Fahrenheit here but our missions have increased with the leave process in full swing. We have many Soldiers going out on leave and many returning. So for this month we have completed twelve ADLOG missions logging over 800 miles and conducted two reflexive fire ranges. Sgt. Schumacher took the lead as convoy commander

during a range conducted earlier this month that escorted our maintenance platoon and some Alpha Battery Soldiers to the range.

Our maintenance platoon has also increased their work load. They are able to work longer hours now that the temperature has dropped. They work hard on getting all the Company and Battery vehicles through Command Maintenance to ensure that they are fully mission capable. Not only have they been maintaining the Battalion fleet they also support other small units around the base who do not have any maintenance support such as the Federal Police Transition Team (FPTT), other transient convoy teams that are needing maintenance support. For this month the maintenance platoon has worked on over 100 vehicles and logged over 400

man hours.

We would like to congratulate Sgt. 1st Class Mitchell Landers and Mrs. Landers on their brand new baby boy who was



Capt. Beth Soelzer

born on Sept. 19. Baby and mom are reported to be happy and healthy. We are expecting Sgt. 1st Class Landers back from leave shortly with pictures.

Thank you to all the families and friends for all your support, care packages and letters. They sure do boost morale for the troops. Have a great month.

Headquarters & Headquarters Battery Based in Colorado Springs

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



Capt. Ashkan Angha

Well here we are again, another month down and it seems like the time has just been flying by. The Highlanders of HHB had another busy month, doing numerous projects around the camp and performing base defense duties.

I would like to give a special thanks to Capt. Garrett Rasnick, 1st Sgt. Ed Schwaigert, Staff Sgt. Amador Collins and Staff Sgt. Brandon Goode for all

of the hard work they put into supervising the construction of the "Great Wall of Ramadi." Their efforts in constructing the boundary between

us and the Iraqi army side of the base are greatly appreciated and they did an awesome job.

I would also like to say thank you to Sgt. 1st Class Albert Trujillo and Staff Sgt. Joseph Wilson for all of the hard work they put into designing and building our new entry control point/escalation of force training lane. This project will not only be beneficial to HHB, but also to other Batteries and Battalions well after our mission here is complete.

The units who replace us one day here at Camp Ramadi will be able to use this training lane long after we're gone. These are truly the kinds of marks on Camp Ramadi that will help the 3-157th Field Artillery maintain its spotless reputation.

We have been able to complete these missions as well as maintain our regular missions without a hitch. Don't get me wrong, we do more than

just work around here. It's always fun to walk into the S-6 and take a seat at the cribbage board with Staff Sgt. Bruce Wisor and Sgt. Greg Kennedy. If running is more your style, you can always meet Capt. Jason Stuchlik, Capt. Kevin Trabert and 1st Lt. Steven Travnicek and sometimes others in front of the Containerized Housing Units at around 9 p.m. and take a couple of laps. It's never very hard to convince Staff Sgt. Brian Goodburn, Sgt. Clayton Gonzales, Cpl. Andrew Seedarnee, Spc. Joey Bishop or Spc. Samuel Galvan that it's time to pull out the cards and deal a couple of hands of Spades.

This past week we had a barbeque around our small pool celebrating Sgt. 1st Class David Garduque's birthday and everyone had a great time. We even had candles made out of qtips. The list goes on and on.

Your Soldiers are working hard but have managed to find a balance between working hard and playing a little here and there to try and break the monotony. As always, I recognize the sacrifices that you make at home and thank you for supporting our Soldiers.

Alpha Battery Based in Longmont

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



Capt. Dom Tatti

Apache had our bravery tested with our recent Soldier wounded in action.

We are happy to report he is doing well and is returning home to be with

his family.

During the incident, his squad reacted with tactical precision in order to render him immediate buddy aid and ground evacuation to advanced care. There was no hesitation in action as our Soldiers have spent countless hours training and preparing for this type of scenario. The Battery leadership was able to speak with him and his family within hours of the incident.

I am extremely proud of everyone in the Battery as all three platoons played a role in his quick return to safety. I realize this type of incident is difficult for families and friends back home

to imagine. Please know that in these situations we will keep your family informed and your Soldier will receive only the highest level of care.

As Soldiers, we have volunteered to put ourselves in harm's way to protect our families and those less fortunate both at home and abroad. Only the most courageous raise their hands for this honorable duty which is attributed to our strong foundations at home.

Your expressions of gratitude for the Soldiers' sacrifices are always appreciated and mean a lot to every one of us.

On a lighter note Apache continues to build our teamwork proficiency by

passing our off time hanging out with each other.

Recently, our Soldiers competed in an inner battery Olympics that pits platoon against platoon in a series of 10 different events. The events included a home run derby, three-point shot challenge, volleyball, football punt and throw, strongman competition, dodge ball, ping pong, 5-kilometer run, spades tournament, and a Call of Duty 4 Challenge (XBOX).

Each Soldier signed up for the events and competed as a team for their platoon victory. A point system was established and the winning platoon was awarded

See APACHE p. 12

Bravo Battery Based in Aurora

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

An introduction from the acting Battery commander

By 1st Lt. Timber Toste

Hello friends and family of Bravo Battery. For all of you that don't know me I am the executive officer of the Battery (that sounds very official doesn't it?) and since the commander is some place in the Caribbean smoking Cuban cigars and drinking Rum Runners, I have the pleasure of writing the news letter this month.

It has been an honor to serve with the Soldiers of the Battery as there acting commander for a few weeks and I have had the pleasure of having 1st Sgt. Rodolfo Reyes, who was my first platoon sergeant when I was a young platoon leader, as my battle buddy again.

As most of you know I have been with the Battery now for a number of years and know all of your Soldiers very well. All of you back home should be very proud of our men and women who are serving in Iraq. Not only should you be proud of your Soldiers, you should also be proud of all of the sacrifice that all of you back home have made for all of us here. None of the men and women could accomplish their mission without the unprecedented support of our friends and family back home.

The Battery has done an outstanding job over the course of this deployment and have done a number of things that none of them will ever forget. The Soldiers of first and second platoon have been conducting a personnel security detail with members of the Provincial Reconstruction Team that is working to empower the people of Iraq in rebuilding their country. Many of the Soldiers have had the opportunity to have dinner with sheiks, travel to small villages, take pictures with local children, and one team was even given a gift of an owl. The owl was later released along the Euphrates and we all hope it is living a full and happy life. The Soldiers of third platoon have been running one of the gate's that allows access to Camp Ramadi and have been working and performing exceptionally well to protect the safety of us all on base. As our mission moves forward we will continue to have life changing experience and wish all of you back home could be here to share in those experiences with us.

Over the past month the once scorching desert of Iraq has began to release its grip on the heat. The 130 degree weather has cooled off to around 100 degrees during the day and about 60 degrees at night. For many of us it has began to remind us of one of the best times to live in Colorado, the fall. Most of the troops have been talking about the trips up to the mountains to see the aspens change, the end of the year fishing trips, hunting seasons getting ready to start, and of course the skiing and snowboarding season rapidly approaching. For those of us who will not be able to make it home on leave during this time of year I hope there is a cool breeze making the aspens rustle, your lines are tight, and the snow falls in buck-

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Protection Dog Keeps Soldiers Smiling

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

CAMP RAMADI, Iraq (Oct. 3, 2009) - Force protection is an important element. Soldiers stand guard with an array of technology to help protect the forward operating base, but there is also another kind of protection in a smaller, less tactical package who serves as an important player on the team.

The unit 3-157th FA replaced had raised Heidi as a puppy and was a part of the hand over during the relief in place before 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery, Oklahoma National Guard, did prior to ending their tour in Iraq.

"She just recently had a bath, got a flea treatment, flea collar and has a nice new red collar with a leash," said Torres-Eyre. "She felt very pampered and pretty," she said after getting the full salon works from the Soldiers who care for her.

Heidi is assigned to our gate but does float around to visit other troops around the FOB, said Torres-Eyre.

Torres-Eyre is fortunate to have both Heidi as a reminder of home and also be deployed with her husband, Spc. Christian Torres-Eyre, who also works at one of the gates



"Beware of dog" is posted at the entrance to the building where Heidi works with the Battery B Soldiers.

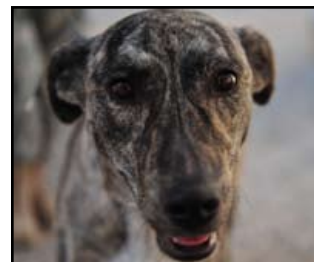
ally helps alleviate that and we can shower her with our love and attention."

Heidi, who is a fan of muffins and bacon from Camp Ramadi's dining facility, also has a wish list created by her Soldiers to include Nutrient dog treats, adult Nylabones and dog shampoo.

Heidi is up-to-date on

her shots, gets a bath on a regular basis and is well taken care of, said Torres-Eyre. "She seems to have acquired a taste for the DFAC - especially hash browns and Doritos," she said. "I know it's not healthy by any means, but it's what she prefers."

While working, Heidi entertains the Soldiers and also provides companionship - she's a good listener.



Heidi checks out the camera lens up close!



Spc. Ford Torres-Eyre pets Heidi, who seems pretty happy with the attention.

"Heidi is a companion dog that helps to relieve stress, keep morale up and is naturally protective so she helps our visitors cooperate," said Spc. Ford Eyre-Torres, a Soldier assigned to Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, Colorado Army National Guard, 115th Fires Brigade, serving as base security at a Camp Ramadi gate.

Torres, a Denver, Colo., resident, said, "She is a great pet and we are lucky to have her."

on the FOB.

"My husband and I have one dog and two ferrets. We miss them tremendously, but having Heidi around is like having a piece of home here in Iraq," said Torres-Eyre. "Rather than making us miss our pets at home, she actu-



Regimental Combat Teams Transfer Authority

Photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

CAMP RAMADI, Iraq - In a historic ceremony at Camp Ramadi Sept. 26, the last two remaining Marine Corps Regimental Combat Teams, RCT-6 commanded by Col. Matthew A. Lopez, and RCT-8, commanded by Col. John Love, transferred authority of their areas of operation to the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team (Advise and Assist Brigade) of the 82nd Airborne Division, commanded by Col. Mark Stammer.



(Right) Many sheiks from Al Anbar province came to show their support for both the outgoing Marines and incoming Army. With the help of interpreters, they listened to a translation of the ceremony through headsets.



(Right) Standing in formation for the transfer authority ceremony were Soldiers representing the 82nd Airborne Division, Marine Regimental Combat Team - 6 and Iraqi army.



(Left) Commanding General of Multi National Force - West Marine Maj. Gen. Richard Tryon salutes during the transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Ramadi, Iraq, Sept. 26.



Regimental Combat Team - 6 Commanding Officer Col. Matthew Lopez and RCT-6 Command Sgt. Maj. James Booker relinquish command and case RCT-6's colors during the transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Ramadi, Iraq, Sept. 26.

Lt. Col. Al Morris stands with Sheik Lawrence Mutib Hasan, a tribal leader in Anbar, following the transfer of authority ceremony. Morris and Regimental Combat Team - 6 Commanding Officer Col. Matthew Lopez worked closely together to ensure the relationships built by the Marines carried on with the Army.



HOW TO BEAT THE MORNING RUSH

Tips for handling the chaos of a household minus one very important player ... your deployed Soldier.

Editorial by Suzanne Buemi

We all try to be better organized - especially in the mornings. It's never our intention to forget the class cupcakes or to dress our children in purple on "orange day." Most of the time, we're just so busy that becoming organized can feel like another thing on our "to do list." We somehow think aspiring to a color-coded filing system with typed labels in plastic sleeves is the only way to manage the morning rush, and since we usually fall short of this goal, we feel doomed from the start. There's no right way to get organized. You simply need to be able to find "stuff" quickly in order to get the job done.

For working parents, one of the greatest organizational challenges is simply getting out of the house on time in the morning.

What should our hectic morning goal be? Not to have a lavish breakfast or a lengthy family meeting, but just to get everyone dressed with lunches, backpacks, and briefcases in hand - always leaving time for a quick story, song or hug. Unfortunately, young children have no sense of time and quickly come to believe that the definition of hurry is "Mommy and Daddy are getting cranky." So what can we do? If after encouraging and coaxing, our children fail to produce the desired results and we resort to nagging, pleading, and some yelling, our children may learn that we spend more time focusing on them during times of resistance than during times of cooperation. Mornings like this leave us frustrated, exhausted and discouraged.

Here are some ideas that may help you organize and experience less hectic mornings:

PREPARE THE NIGHT BEFORE

Pick out clothes for the next day, including yours. If possible, pick out clothes for the entire week on Sunday night. Include underwear, socks and even hair accessories for girls.

KEEP ITEMS IN THE SAME SPOT

Place backpacks and briefcases by the door with homework and office work packed inside. Know what shoes everyone will be wearing and place those by the door. Looking for lost shoes at the last minute makes everyone frantic.



WAKE UP EARLIER IF YOU NORMALLY RUN LATE

A few extra minutes of sleep may seem like the best way to cope with the morning rush, but those minutes can make the difference between hectic and hurried.

HAVE A CONSISTENT MORNING ROUTINE

Children are more cooperative and more comfortable when they know what to expect.

HAVE A "FIRST THIS, THEN THIS" POLICY

Younger children may not have a sense of time, but they do understand sequence. Create little reminders such as, "You may not go downstairs until you are dressed," or, "You may play after breakfast."

DON'T EXPECT MIRACLES

Children approach life with a more relaxed, slower pace than we do, and we could all take a lesson from that. Even with seemingly flawless plans, unexpected events can always happen. For really important I can't be late mornings, have your children go to sleep in their day clothes. Comfortable sweats or shorts work well.

Read more for other ideas about organization and morning routines. *Tips for Morning Routines* Why do mornings seem so difficult? First of all, we're in a time crunch. There is so much to do in a short period of time. "Morning is the time in which temperamental differences may be most evident - the child who is slow to get going clashes with the mother or father who is fast paced.

Or the child who is crabby clashes with the parent who is also crabby," say authors Ellen Galinsky and Judy David, in *The Preschool Years: Family Strategies That Work* - from *Experts and Parents*, (Times Books, 1988).

Finally, mornings provide the perfect opportunity for children to assert their individuality. With the clock ticking for work and meetings, this is prime time for power struggles.

The Canadian Child Care Federation offers these suggestions for starting the day off right:

UNHURRIED MOMENTS

Make sure everybody has enough sleep and rises early enough to avoid rushing. Give yourselves time for some unhurried moments together before you have to leave the house.

NIGHT BEFORE CHORES

To save time in the morning, do things the night before. After dinner, for example, prepare lunch boxes and leave them in the fridge overnight. And after you clear away the dinner things, set the breakfast table for the next morning. Ask family members to bath/shower/wash hair the night before, if possible. Gather permission forms, lunch money or notebooks.

See TIPS p. 10

Deployed tattoo artist builds esprit de corps

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

CAMP RAMADI, Iraq - During his off hours, he grabs a paint brush and delves into a life he's always loved. His full-time job while deployed is manning one of the towers at Camp Ramadi, Iraq, but during his off time he reverts back to his art, a passion in his life since his childhood.

Pfc. Michael Gomez, a tattoo artist from Denver, Colo., was tasked with painting the Berserker mural for Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, Colorado Army National Guard, 115th Fires Brigade.

"If you can think it, I can ink it," is the motto Gomez lives by as a tattoo artist of seven years. In this case, it wasn't a tattoo he was asked to do, but it might be just as permanent for 3-157 FAs Berserkers.

It began at Fort Hood, Texas, when he was asked to design the logo for the battery, then known as the Banshees. However, after a change of command ceremony, the unit became known as the Berserkers. A new logo was needed and Gomez already had designs in mind.

It wasn't difficult for Gomez to design the berserker, a person he defines as a gladiator who is bred to kill. It's dark, it's morbid, it's a bit extreme and it's exactly the kind of art Gomez likes most.

"I do macabre," said Gomez. "It's Goth with a mix of surrealism."

The painting is a depiction of a berserker who stands poised to kill and, although the design in itself looks menacing, the size of the painting is also intimidating. It stands at more than nine feet tall and three feet wide in an area many people frequently pass by.

"It's one of those highly traveled paths in the battalion area so everyone walks past it and sees it," said Staff Sgt. John Pino, the Berserker operations noncommissioned officer in charge, of Walsenburg, Colo.

I think the painting demonstrates the esprit de corps of the unit, Pino said, while adding, "You can tell he put a lot of work and a lot of detail into it."

The painting took Gomez approximately two weeks to complete, working mainly during the evening hours. His art studio was the space located outside his Containerized Housing Unit. He was able to work with the assistance of the outside light above his CHU door and also a flashlight through the night.

By Oct. 1 the painting was complete. It was only a few hours later that Gomez was medically evacuated for a non-life-threatening injury.

Capt. David Wilcox, Battery B commander said he was proud of Gomez for getting it done before leaving Ramadi.

"I volunteered for the tour," said Gomez. "I've been with the National Guard for years and wanted to go on deployments, but this is my first one. I wish I could finish [the tour]. I wish [my fellow Soldiers] good luck and I wish I was staying here



Pfc. Michael Gomez works in the evenings painting with the use of the light outside the Containerized Housing Units

with [them] to finish it."

He may not be here with his battery but he leaves in his place a larger-than-life-size painting to continue motivating his fellow men and women in arms and remind them that the extra effort to increase morale (even during personal time) is worth it.

He was motivated to do the painting, and we plan on displaying it through the deployment, bringing it back home with us to Colorado and taking it again when we deploy next, said Pino.



The painting is displayed proudly in the battery area.



Pfc. Michael Gomez stands in front of his art.

Training in Iraq Continues

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

AR RAMADI, Iraq - The open desert in certain regions of Iraq create a playground for training that helps Soldiers maintain situation awareness and also hone their marksmanship skills.

Not far from Camp Ramadi lays open land where Soldiers can take their weapons, ranging from pistols to crew served weapons, and test fire, conduct reflexive fire training or verify the optics on their weapons are properly zeroed for the utmost accuracy.

"It's different shooting out here because there is a higher threat level

around you," said Staff Sgt. Norman Clark, a sergeant of the guard for Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery.

When the Colorado Guardsmen shoot at the ranges back home at Fort Carson, Colo., they don't need to have anyone pull security or scan for threats.

"Once we roll into the area [where we fire our weapons], we set up a defensive perimeter with our vehicles and shoot from inside that perimeter," said Staff Sgt. Christopher Banks, Battery A, 3-157th FA training noncommissioned officer. "We are always at a hyper state (of alert) for any unseen threats," he said regarding the Soldiers' situational awareness.

"We have classes every day on our weapons and other situations (that



Pvt. Jeffery Glatts, a Quick Reaction Force gunner assigned to Battery A, peaks down through the gunner's hatch and smiles for the camera before heading to the range at Camp Ramadi, Iraq Oct. 5.



Sgt. Matthew Schumacher of St. Charles, Ill., a squad leader for the 188th Forward Support Company's Convoy Support Platoon briefs the troops going to the range Oct. 5.



Sgt. Matthew Schumacher, the convoy commander for the range Oct. 5 in Ar Ramadi, Iraq, tells the Soldiers their left and right limits while firing down range. Schumacher said weapons training is "imperative to our job because we go outside the wire and if we get enemy contact we have to be able to engage and eliminate the threat."

"Your weapon is basically your life. If you don't take care of it, it can't save yours."

Staff Sgt. Norman Clark

may arise)," said Spc. Patrick Simpson, Soldier who was originally deployed with 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery, Oklahoma Army National Guard, but stayed in Ramadi when 3-157th FA took command. Simpson, an Oklahoma City, Okla., native said he has confidence in the Soldiers on the Quick Reaction Force team he currently serves with.

"I don't think anyone on the QRF would freeze up (if they received enemy contact) because everyone is comfortable with their positions."

Reflexive fire training helps Soldiers, like those on the QRF, react at a moment's notice to engage the enemy.

Clark describes the value of reflexive fire training as someone who is "able to go from a nonthreatening state to engaging someone with your weapon rapidly."

"You don't want to be walking around with your weapon pointing up.

See TRAINING p. 13

Getting an Education at Camp Ramadi

Story by Sgt. Dennis VanWagner

CAMP RAMADI, Iraq - There are various things we may wish we were able to do, like play the guitar, speak a foreign language, or further our education. Usually there is some obstacle we moan about as to why we are unable to pursue it, such as a lack of money or time, family obligations or the demands of our job. Since this article is about how some members of our unit are pursuing their education, we'll deal with the obstacles to furthering their education.

Since we are in Ramadi, and our families are back home, this obstacle has temporarily been postponed until we return home. While we are deployed and are on what the Army calls "Title 10" orders, our education is paid for. So down goes another obstacle. This leaves a demanding job and little time to pursue an education. I'll introduce you to some of our Soldiers who are managing to fit in an education while keeping up with the demands of their jobs in just a bit.

Here in Ramadi we actually have an education center where we can find out about what there is available to Soldiers while they are deployed. This facility is run by Sgt. Billy Feltner, Staff Sgt. Vince Hosey, and 1st Lt. David Cutler and is housed in a small two room wood frame building. Here they have several computers connected to the internet so that classes can be done online. These computers are set aside for educational purposes only. Currently its hours alternate from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. one day and noon to 10 p.m. the next day.

I have visited the education center several times while trying to get enrolled in vocational courses. It has always worked out so that Sgt. Feltner happened to be on duty at those times. He explains that college courses from universities around the nation are available, as well as vocational courses, and Army correspondence courses also. A Soldier can take tests ranging from SAT, GMET, CLEP, DANTES and Excelsior tests. They also take DLAB language placement tests, certification tests in computer programming

or automotive (ASE) certification tests. Sgt. Feltner also says that Soldiers can find study material to retest and improve their ASVAB scores in order to get accepted to Warrant Officer School, Officer Candidate School, and special operations military occupational specialties, or just

to change their MOS to one requiring a higher GT score. He also explains to Soldiers how to set up their Tuition Assistance that the military offers to pay for college. I have found Sgt. Feltner to be very knowledgeable and extremely helpful. Being new to the job when he first got to Ramadi, he spends a lot of time researching materials to be able to answer Soldier's questions.



Staff Sgt. David Ebert

The first soldier I'll introduce you to is Staff Sgt. David Ebert from Bravo Battery. He works at a gate putting in some long hours just as many of us. Back home he is a student of Nazarene Bible College and works in accounting. His major is counseling and is considering becoming an officer, maybe a chaplain but isn't decided yet.

Here he is enrolled in some Army correspondence courses as well as two college classes; Introduction to the New Testament and English Composition. His most difficult obstacles to getting school work done is his duties as a squad leader. He has various deadlines to meet, Soldiers to take care of and his mission at the gate. Still he manages to squeeze in six hours of work of study time in.



Pfc. Andrew Elfter

Next, I'd like for you to meet Pfc. Andrew Elfter who is also in Bravo Battery. He has an Associates Degree in Psychology at West Kentucky University and is currently enrolled with DeVry. He is working on a Project Management degree. He is enrolled in Army correspondence courses as well as two classes at DeVry. He is

taking Advanced Systems Analysis and Advanced Project Management. He says his biggest obstacles are coming back from a long mission, trying to unwind a bit, then get himself motivated to get to his school work. He spends on average about 1.5 hours a night doing school work, occasionally multi-tasking while listening to a football game on TV. He says the time difference between here and home actually works to his advantage when having to log into study groups from his class online. He is seri-

See SCHOOL p. 17



Sgt. Billy Feltner



Cont. TIPS p. 6**OFFER ENCOURAGEMENT**

If a small child is prone to dawdling, you may have to keep an eye on her and offer frequent reminders. When you are busy in the kitchen and the child's room is on another level, have her dress nearby where you can supervise while you work.

GIVE YOURSELF MORE TIME

Add 10 or 15 extra minutes to your usual schedule. If the child is ready on time, spend it reading, talking, or doing some other activity together, making sure you give him your undivided attention during this period.

REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

Expect your children to do what they are capable of, for example, washing and dressing themselves if they are old enough. This may be an unreasonable expectation for a younger child. Set one task at a time to make expectations seem more attainable.

HAVE A FAMILY MEETING

When children are old enough to join in a family discussion, sit down together, perhaps the night before, to talk about ways to make the morning better.

GETTING OUT THE DOOR

If a child has not been cooperative, use the extra 10-15 minutes to get him ready with as little fuss as possible. Do not scold or chat; just do what is necessary to leave on time.

SPEND TIME TOGETHER

Promise and follow through to spend time together if the morning routine goes smoothly. Don't forget to praise your children on days when everything works well and your family starts the day on time!

THE MORNING STRUGGLE

Children who don't cooperate may resist morning routines by arguing about breakfast food, debating about what clothes to wear, or playing when they should be getting ready to leave. Children often seek our attention in the morning, especially when we are rushing. Our children soon learn that when they resist, argue or stall, they get our attention. These morning dif-

ficulties may arise even when we give our children plenty of attention at other times. What can you do to spur on the uncooperative child and give him a sense of power and control?

Encourage and remind, but try not to nag. Let them experience the consequences of procrastinating. This may mean missing breakfast or forgetting their homework.* Establish an agreement that the TV doesn't go on in the morning until the chores are done, if at all.

Create a routine chart with your child, and involve your child by asking "what's next on the routine chart?" They can help cut out pictures and design the chart. Have stickers for your child to place on the steps he completes.

Use an alarm clock in children's rooms. This will ensure that you wake them up at the same time each morning and you haven't gotten lost looking over your e-mails. This will prepare them for elementary school as well. Ask children whether they would like your help getting ready.

Avoid lectures. Instead, asking "what" and "how" questions such as "what happens when you don't get dressed in the morning?" and "How do you feel about missing the school bus?" will entice conversation with our children. These questions help children think for themselves, whereas our lectures may make them stop listening.

Talk about times when you have procrastinated, what happened as a result and how you felt about it. Plan ahead and give your child enough time to succeed on his

own. Remember to give reminders and establish clear expectations regarding your routine.

Let your child know that you need their help and say, "I would appreciate you getting dressed so we can get to school before circle time." This invites cooperation instead of defiance.

Many of us are always charging off with our to-do lists in hand, thinking that when everything is done (which it never is) we can enjoy life. But what we do everyday is life, and our ability to step in time with our children amid the everyday stuff, such as getting out of the house in the morning, takes some organization and a lot of patience. But somehow, somehow, we usually get it done.



A FAR CRY FROM PARADISE

There may be an abundance of palm trees in Al Anbar Province, Iraq, but it's no tropical retreat.

The ground changes from shades of dark brown during wet season because of the rising water levels in the ground creating a muddy mess, to cracked, dry and dusty that exists for the majority of the year; dry season.

When Soldiers head back to the States, they'll enjoy the bright color of grass, flowers and trees for the first time in months!

Photo by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

FAMILY READINESS DATES

Key dates for meetings:

October 17, November 7 and November 11

Family Activities: Message to your Troops!

November 7: Aurora

November 8: Colorado Springs

Neighborhood Hello's! Come join us for coffee and conversation

Alamos: October 6-7

Grand Junction: October 22-23

Holiday packages for Soldiers party TBD

الف مبروك (Congrats!)

Achievements: *Spc. Sean Markovich*
1st Place in Weight Class Bench Press
lifted 335 lbs

The following Soldiers were promoted this month:

Kevin Baker to Specialist • Thomas Black to Specialist • Michael Gomez to Specialist • Jeremy Ham to Specialist • Brett Hanley to Specialist • Jonathan Hoover to Specialist • Tyler Johnson to Specialist • David Karrow to Staff Sergeant • Sean Markovich to Specialist • Jason Matter to Sergeant First Class • Kevin Mazzola to Specialist • David Meggison to Corporal • Michael Ramirez to Specialist • Devin Snell to Specialist • Adam Thompson to Staff Sergeant

Cont. APACHE p. 4 the Battery cup. This time 3rd Platoon

(Quick Reaction Force) took the crown and bragging rights for the next month. The events were very close giving the other platoons a competitive shot next month at the title. Since each one of the platoons owns a different type of mission this has been a great opportunity to bring everyone back together.

One of the best sources of entertainment our Soldiers have been enjoying is the letters we have received from students in hometown schools. A special thanks to Mountain View Elementary for their kind words and unique drawings which has brought a smile to our faces. We encourage you to involve your children in projects such as these. Some Soldiers here do not have children but enjoy the innocence just the same - a good reminder of why we raise our hand to serve.

Cont. FITNESS p. 2

discretely distant from the battalion headquarters area. Thus, your Soldier can come by and see the chaplain without "seeing the chaplain." And if their buddies give them any grief, they can say, "I just went for the snacks," and proceed to give buddies some of the snacks they got from the Spiritual Fitness Center.

Please help us to continue this great ministry to the troops by sending more care packages. Items of great interest include: Men's Body Wash, shaving cream, disposable razors, shampoo, soap, Easy Mac, Ramen noodles, Cup of Soup, oatmeal packets, microwavable popcorn, Girl Scouts cookies, Oreos, Twizzlers, nuts, etc. We could also use a few good children's books as well. Thank you all for your continued thoughts, prayers and support of this nation's fantastic Soldiers.

A Message from the Family Readiness Group in Colorado



Hello to friends and families,

I hope this letter finds you well and in good health. It is the Flu season again and it has started early this year. We already know stress exists without adding the additional stress of being sick. So remember to wash your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer. There are easy to carry travel-sized ones sold at most stores.

We are quickly approaching November and the seasons are certainly changing. As the night is starting to come earlier and the weather is getting colder you can tell that winter is just around the corner.

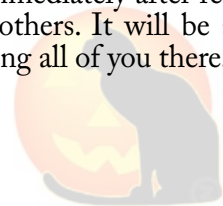
I hope that you had a great Halloween and everyone enjoyed themselves and stayed safe. I hope that the rebound for you parents is a fast one from all of the sugar highs that the kids delve into during these holidays!

Just a couple of reminders, as the holidays approach quickly and you decide to go and visit family outside of Colorado or the home of record we have on file, please

remember to let us know that you will be leaving. We will need the address of where you are going, a good contact phone number and the duration time of your trip. We will only use this information in the event that we need to get a hold of you.

We will be doing a holiday greeting message to our service members who are currently deployed on November 7 and 8. The first day is in Aurora and the second is in Colorado Springs. Contact us for the times and specific locations if you are available to attend. If you have not yet RSVP'd for your time slot please do so by RSVP'ing to Rebecca Dehart. Please give us the time of which you would like for your message to be recorded by the hour. If you decide to bring a family pet your pet will need to remain outside of the building until it is your turn to record your message and will need to leave immediately after recording for the safety and health of others. It will be a good time and we look forward to seeing all of you there.

With Warm Regards,
Suzanne Buemi
FAC Coordinator



Cont. TRAINING p. 9

Basically, we practice shooting from different positions because you never know what direction the threat will be from.”

Soldiers practice moving from their left and right, kneeling and turning around to face their six o'clock in order to practice moving to face the threat without flagging (pointing their weapons unsafely) at anyone around them. Soldiers refer to this as having proper muzzle awareness.



A round is discharged from a M4 Carbine rifle.

Another way Soldiers sustain a comfort level with their weapons is ensuring the weapon is properly cared for and maintained.

“I go to the range every chance I get in order to perfect my skills as a marksman,” said Banks, a Greeley, Colo., resident, who is responsible for tracking the training conducted by Battery A Soldiers ranging from survivability skills and weapons training to first aid.



Spc. Carlos Garcia pretends to eat Cpl. David Chavez's frog that Chavez pulled out of his pocket to show his friends at the range. This frog, Chavez said, goes with him everywhere.



A small flame bursts after Cpl. Jeremiah Winters discharges rounds from his automatic rifle.

In addition to being proficient at operating their weapons, Soldiers are also adjusting to the difference in maintaining them in the Middle East.

“You should never lube your weapon as much here,” said Clark regarding the reduced amount of lubrication on the weapon to keep it operational because of the sandy environment. “It's imperative [to be proficient with your weapon] because it can save your life. If your weapon isn't zeroed, it won't help you.”

A zeroed weapon is when the sights and scopes on a particular weapon are aligned for the Soldier's eyes who operate it. Although

some weapon systems don't require it, zeroing means that the optics on the weapon are optimized for the Soldier's eyes. Everyone's sights require different adjustments so once the Soldier zeroes his or her weapon, someone else may not be able to pick it up and aim as well because of the differences.

“I treat this thing like gold,” Clark said about his weapon. “I don't even want to bump my scope.”

Clark, who teaches hunters safety courses in Colorado said, “I've had classes and taught my Soldiers that your weapon is basically your life. If you don't take care of it, it can't save yours.”



Soldiers standby for the command, “Ready, up.”

SOCKS WITHOUT BORDERS

Story by Capt. Christopher Miskimon
Photos by Staff Sgt. Liesl Marelli

CAMP ALI, Iraq – It began when an Iraqi soldier, known in Arabic as a jundi, walked up to us as we awaited the passage of an American convoy. Many of the missions our battalion undertakes move through a gate controlled by our partners, the Iraqi army. As we watched to make sure everything was going smoothly, this Iraqi asked us if we could spare any socks for the jundi. They were in short supply and often what socks were available were of poor quality.

I looked around at the Iraqi soldiers working nearby. While I had no clue about their socks, their boots were almost all badly worn.

A soldier's feet are important; they have to take care of them. I talked it over with the interpreter and we decided to see what we could do. It would be a good opportunity to build a friendly relationship with the Iraqis and show them we want to be good neighbors - after all, Camp Ali, the Iraqi base, is just next door.

Generosity is important in Iraqi culture; people who share what they have are well regarded, fables are told about generous people who lived hundreds of years ago.



Capt. Christopher Miskimon stands with jundis on Camp Ali after giving them care packages to include snacks, socks and personal hygiene items Sept. 25. Smiles were ever present as the interpreter explained the gifts.

See SOCKS p. 16

facebook IS A HIT!

Thanks to all the families and friends, Colorado's 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, now has nearly **600** 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 images 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>

Pages • 1 Result



Name: **3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, Colorado Army National Guard**
Type: Government
Fans: 479 fans

(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.

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

An Update from the Colorado National Guard's DEERS Office

This update is designed to inform all members of the Colorado Guard about the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System office at Joint Force Headquarters in Centennial, Colo.

The DEERS office's normal hours of operation are Tuesday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The number to speak to someone on staff is office number is (720) 250-1315.

By regulation, all DEERS offices must support all Department of Defense agencies, civilian or military in need of DEERS or identification card support. The office at JFHQ routinely provides services to all branches of military service, as well as all DoD employees and contractors. The Denver area is home to a large number of DoD contract agencies. On average, approximately 30 percent of all Common Access Card cards issued at JFHQ are to non-military personnel. In addition, the JFHQ office serves members of all branches of the military, as well as all retirees and their dependents.

Many retirees and service members of all branches discover that there are errors in their DEERS records. The office at JFHQ spends a considerable amount of time in identifying the cause of these errors and working with the personnel offices of the various branches to have these errors corrected.

These efforts are time consuming and in some cases take weeks of working with other branches to resolve the issue. In view of this variety of activities, the office at JFHQ must operate by appointment. Ultimately, appointments are for the benefit of those needing DEERS assistance.

Customers who come to the office without an appointment are at risk of being asked to schedule one and return - an inconvenience at best. In addition, speaking with customers when making an appointment affords the opportunity to ask questions and provide information that prevents the customer from arriving at the office, only to discover that they do not have required documents of proof of identity. The requirement for appointments is, in sum, to ensure that the customers are well-served on their first visit to the DEERS office.



To learn more about DEERS

For more information about DEERS, you may contact the Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office at (800) 538-9552. Family members living outside of Colorado can locate their nearest uniformed services personnel office at <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/>. And to view or update your information online, you may visit Tricare at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/deers/>

From the "Doc"

I am Lt. Col. Victor Palomares and was recently deployed to join 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery, as the battalion physician assistant. In all 23 years in the Colorado Guard, this is the first time I feel that I have been able to contribute to my fullest in my role as a PA. I graduated from the University of Colorado school of Medicine-Physician Assistant program in 1992 and have been in practice in Loveland, Colo.

I am honored to tell the families back home that I will ensure that each Soldier in this unit receives the best medical care possible. I have been able to order the newest antibiotics, as well as equipment needed to aid our Soldiers'. Our unit medics also attended multiple courses prior to deployment and are doing an outstanding job.

In Loveland, I have been fortunate to have extensive experience taking care of multiple medical illnesses that has prepared me aid your family member in Iraq. As, your unit "Doc," I would like you to know I take pride in treating my patients like I would like to be treated. So rest assured, I want the best possible.

Sgt. Cedric Gamble's road to weight loss

Staff Sgt. John P. Martinez III

CAMP RAMADI, Iraq - Sgt. Gamble is enjoying himself on R&R back home right now. He is firmly adamant that he will continue his workout regiment while on leave. There are a number of obstacles he must be prepared to overcome during his time at home. We will find out if the temptations he faces at home will make or break his weight loss. Good Luck Sgt. Gamble.

AGE: 39 • STARTING WEIGHT: 253 • CURRENT WEIGHT: 238

This month's workout plan: Enjoying R&R but hopefully not too much though!



Lt. Col. Victor Palomares

Cont. SOCKS p. 14

Before coming to Iraq, I was told by innumerable people to let them know if I needed anything. Well, now was the time to put that to the test. I wrote to friends and family back home and told them how to send care packages. I'd already compiled a list of things American soldiers wanted, so I added socks to the list, asking people to throw a few pair in with whatever they could send. I made sure to explain exactly who the socks were for, so everyone knew this was for the Iraqis. I figured I'd get a few, enough to give each soldier two or three pair.

In less than a month I had over 300 pairs of socks! Piles of socks! Boxes overflowing with tube socks, athletic socks, socks, socks, SOCKS!!! We've made three trips to pass them out and there are still more waiting for jundi who need them. We pass them out over time to make sure everybody gets some. The Iraqi lieutenant we talk to makes sure they aren't hoarded. We've even expanded the program

to include foot powder, soap and hygiene items they have a hard time getting.

Of course, the response has been great! The Iraqis are so appreciative and thankful. They've asked us to pass along blessings to all those who helped, their children and their homes. In Iraqi culture this is a very polite and respectable way to say thanks for the generosity shown by so many people who took time to help them even though there was no particular reason for them to do so. Of course, those of us who work closely with the jundi are just as



The Iraqi army jundi who received the gifts passed along their gratitude Sept. 25 at Camp Ali in Ar Ramadi, Iraq. Capt. Christopher Miskimon plans to continue coordinating care packages for the jundis to aid in a good working relationship.

thankful for helping us to build a positive partnership with the Iraqi army.

So please, for all the sock donors reading this, give yourselves a pat on the back!

Managers of Chaos: Restricted Access & A Need to Know

Story by Capt. Christopher Miskimon

The Battalion Tactical Operations Center, or TOC, Sounds like a wondrous place, doesn't it? A place where miracles of organization and command take place daily, where the magic of a modern military force in motion is controlled. Why, the TOC must be an exciting place indeed!

In reality, it's one of the last places a Soldier wants to go. Why?

There are a few rules young Soldiers learn quickly. One is never to go anywhere near where the "brass" (officers) hang out. At first that sounds rather negative, but think about it.

When you're at work, do you hang out in the executive wing or the boss' office? Probably not.

So, what actually goes here? Simply stated, the management of chaos.

The battalion has a very complex and challenging job here at Camp Ramadi.

We handle base defense, security missions outside the camp, run the Mayor's cell, and maintain not only our own vehicles and equipment but much of Camp Ramadi's as well. It's a big job and with many Soldiers doing multiple jobs, which can quickly get very hectic and confusing.

In the TOC a dedicated group of Soldiers work around the clock to ensure every mission and task is tracked, coordinated and supported.

If the Soldiers guarding the base sees something they need to report, they call us and we decide what to do next and send help if it is needed.

When a mission goes outside the wire we track it until it is home again, staying in touch with them the entire time.

Information is power, so we spend a lot of time sending out what we learn to whoever needs to know it, from the Soldier on the ground to the battalion commander and sometimes

higher. Sometimes we don't have the information our Soldiers need, so we hunt it down and get it to them.

The TOC is run by two battle captains, one working a day shift and the other working at night. Alongside them are three battle noncommissioned officers. Together they ensure the TOC is running efficiently and smoothly.

Soldiers such as Staff Sgt. Anthony Alston and Spc. Nicholas Mathis communicate via radio with the Batteries, answer calls for information and help schedule missions. While most of the battalion sleeps at night, Staff Sgt. Steven Crabbe and Sgt. Brian Horton take care of many little tasks that help prepare 3-157 for the next day's work.

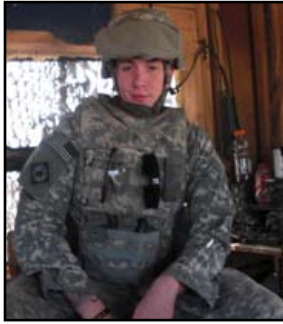
These and the rest of the Soldiers in the TOC take on the responsibility of keeping our unit informed and on track.

You can't prevent chaos from happening, but you can control it so it doesn't control you, which is what the Soldiers in the TOC do every day.

Cont. SCHOOL p. 10

ously considering going to Officers Candidate School in the future.

Up next is Pvt. Michael Richard who works with Staff Sgt. Ebert. Back home he is an apprentice butcher, married and has a two-year-old boy. He is enrolled at Pikes Peak Community College and is working on an Associate in Psychology and Emergency Medical Services. He has enrolled in two classes; English Composition and Introduction to Psychology. He is still waiting on the course work to get here. He figures a combination of long hours at work and trying to regularly get in his gym workouts will make fitting in school work difficult, but will make it happen.



Pvt. Michael Richard

Then we have Spc. Lorenzo Esparza who originally is from Mexico. He works in metal framing back home making metal studs for construction work. He is married, has two children, and has been a Colorado National Guard Soldier for six years. He wanted to join the police force, but found that he needed to obtain his citizenship first. He has been studying intensively for the last six months, subjects like American history, economics, and the American constitution. He is



Spc. Lorenzo Esparza

making arrangements to take his test for citizenship then apply for U.S. citizenship here in Iraq. He will have to convoy to Baghdad or another city to take the test. He spends about 15 hours a week studying and finds that his biggest obstacle is having little time after working 12 hour shifts, doing physical fitness five times a week and doing section training a couple of hours a week.

Last in our lineup is myself. I'm Sgt. Dennis VanWagner originally from 1st Battalion, 158th Field Artillery, Oklahoma National Guard, but extended to stay here with your unit. I'm attached to Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 157th Field Artillery. Though back home I was working on a Dual Disciplinary Bachelors in Psychology and Management, I decided while here to divert and get my certifications as a Personnel Fitness Trainer. I'm enrolled in three vocational courses: Fitness, Nutrition and Physical Therapy. Like everyone else introduced in this article, my biggest obstacle is finding time. I just keep figuring out new ways to fit in some study time.



Sgt. Dennis VanWagner

These are some examples of how a few of us in the 3-157th FA are dealing with and overcoming the various obstacles to furthering our educations.

No matter what, issues will always exist in our lives whether it's time, money or whatever the case may be. However, I believe that if a person waits till they have the time, they'll never find it.

Sometimes you just have to tackle a problem to accomplish your goals.

**Cont. TOSTE p. 4**

ets. Make some turns for us, have that warm cup of hot chocolate, and send your blessings our way, and we will all be there to share in the experience next year.



Gently snow-coated Morrison, Colo., by Liesl Marelli

Once again I would like to thank all of the wives, husbands, children, parents, grandparents, friends and families back home for all your support. Mail call is one of the best times of the week for us and all of us look forward to receiving a box from back home so, please keep the boxes coming.

It has been an honor for me to serve with all of you and your Soldiers during this time and we look forward to seeing all of you when we get home

and continue with our life back in the Colorado Army National Guard.



Colorado's breathtaking colors of the changing season by Liesl Marelli