

115th Fires Brigade

Cowboy Thunder

Volume 1 Issue 6

January 2010



**Advanced Marksmanship Training
Puts Rounds On Target**

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Commanders' Comments

Howdy from Cowboy 6

February is upon us and there is light at the end of the tunnel. The brigade is busy executing an ever increasing mission load while subordinate units are replaced, preparing to exchange yet more equipment, planning movements home and getting ready to receive our replacements. The pace of operations is just going to increase for all involved until everyone is home. Our units and service members have performed each and every mission to a high standard and we are all proud of their accomplishments. The scale and diversity of missions this brigade has done is stag-



Col. Richard C. Knowlton

gering. We have executed missions in eight countries, on land, sea and air, with active, reserve, National Guard, Navy, and Coast Guardsmen. It is truly inspiring to see everyone working together for the common goal of accomplishing the mission and developing friendships that will last a lifetime.

All these service members have made great sacrifices to deploy and support the nations Global War on Terror. Our supporters at home, the families, communities, employers and rear detachment, have also sacrificed a great deal in order to support this deployment. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed and are making significant contributions to the brigade's success on this mission. I am so impressed and thankful that in your Soldiers absence, the Families and communities at home have been able to stand up and take care of each other and support the Soldiers as well. You're truly the unsung heroes of this War.

There is much yet to do and many tasks and missions to be safely accom-

plished before all our service members are able to return home to their normal lives. All of us must keep our eye on the ball and recognize we are not done yet. Each of us must continue to focus on the mission and safety while understanding that patients and tempers will grow short as we get closer to home.

Now is a good time for everyone to step back and evaluate the events of the year, we all have changed. How will we reintegrate into our home life, work life and communities? Each of us have grown in the last year, and nothing will be just as we left it. If we all keep this in mind while preparing to reintegrate into our lives at home we will be more successful.

I will ask everyone to do three things for the remainder of the deployment.

First, stay focused on the mission. We're not done yet. Second, keep up your safety awareness. Let's not have any safety issues this close to the end. And third, exercise patients as we get closer to home. These three things will help us finish strong and proud.

Happy Trails

Cowboy 6 out

Command Sgt. Maj. Comments

Another month has clicked by as we continue to get closer to the finish line of this marathon we call a mobilization. While the 115th Fires Brigade completes our portion of the larger mission, we need to stay focused until we cross the finish line and get everyone home physically, mentally and spiritually intact. The last thing I want to see happen is for someone here in Theater, or at home, have something negative happen to them because someone gets lazy or loses focus on what they are doing. It only takes a split second for something bad to happen because of a lack of focus.

I see a lot of hard work going on in preparation for our mission hand off to our friends of the 53rd Infantry Brigade from the Florida National Guard. We need to keep this inertia going and set them up with the best training we can give them so they will be successful after we leave.

My heart swells with pride from the respect that the American Public has for our Soldiers, Sailors and Coast

Guardsmen. I recently returned from R&R leave and there wasn't a day that went by that several people, especially in the airports, didn't take the time to thank us for our service. This respect will assist us during our transition back into civilian life, but we can't totally depend on the goodwill of the American Public. I encourage our Soldiers and their Families to take a look at what they will do as a family when the Soldiers return home.

Each of us need to keep in mind the difficulties our Families and friends



Command Sgt. Maj. Kenton Franklin

have endured at home and we should all take a step back, and do a little self-reflection before starting to reintegrate into our Families and jobs. Think about your goals for when you go home and set yourself up to achieve them. This will help as we prepare to go home and give all of us a chance to think things through before we actually get there.

Along with this, I encourage all of you to keep open lines of communication with your brothers and sisters in arms and mutually support each other when we get home. Gathering contact information now will help you maintain communication with your buddies for the rest of your lives. As I get closer to the end of my military career, I have started focusing on the people that I have met and served with because when all the money is spent and we have finished our military service, all we will have left is the people that we have served with and the bonds we developed, which will last the rest of our lives.

Stay focused, take care of each other and let's finish strong like I know we all can.

Cowboy 7 Out!

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On the Cover:



Marksmanship Training is On Target

An Advanced Marksmanship Team from 2-300 Field Artillery trains with the sniper squad of the Kuwaiti's 25th Commando Brigade in northern Kuwait, January 14. (Photo by Master Sgt. Dave Largent)

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Taking it to the mat: 115th FiB Soldiers complete level 1 combatives course

Story by Sgt. Robert D Walden

Photos by Master Sgt. Dave Largent

Despite bruises, broken ribs and uncomfortable situations, 17 Soldiers from the 115th Fires Brigade became Level 1 certified at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, after completing a six day Modern Army Combatives Course Jan. 2, which is designed to teach basic hand to hand fighting techniques.

There were about 50 Soldiers from various units that participated in the course, which was divided into a morning and afternoon section. Of these Soldiers, 10 were from Headquarters, Headquarters Battery, 115th FiB, and 7 from the 61st Chemical Co.

"If you're ever in a situation where you can't use a weapon and you have to take it to the ground, these guys are going to do better than the average person," said Capt. Jakob Z. Norman, a JAG officer with HHB 115th FiB who encouraged many of the Soldiers in his unit to enroll in the course. "It's not a bad skill to have even back home walking around the streets of America," Norman added.

During the 40 hour level 1 course, Soldiers learned 17 skills including



Spc. Delilah S. Joungh puts a classmate in an arm bar during a combatives class at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

fighting positions, chokes and arm bars. They were tested on performance of these skills, as well as their ability to teach others.

"In order to pass, not only do you have to be able to do the skill, but you also have to be able to articulate what's going on in order to teach other Soldiers those skills," said Norman. "After completing the first certification course, Soldiers are qualified to teach the techniques at a squad level in their unit."

There are four certification levels in the Modern Army Combatives program. Each certification builds on previous levels and teaches more advanced techniques. Upon completion of the level 2 course, which is 80 hours and teaches 57 fighting skills, the Soldier becomes an instructor and can help with level 1 certification courses.

"The combatives courses are designed to be hard. They put people in uncomfortable situations so that if they ever find themselves in that situation again they will feel more comfortable," said Norman, who is level 2 certified and helped instruct

the level 1 course. "There's a lot of things we do in there; whether it's get punched in the face for the first time, or to go against people that are a lot bigger than you, or females against males and males against females ... all of these are uncomfortable positions," Norman said.

Each day before the instructors teach the fighting skills and allow the students to practice, they wear them out by having them do stretches and drills. Some of the drills were: various rolls from one end of the mat to the other; the assisted bear walk, where a partner holds onto a Soldier's neck and wraps their legs around his waist, dangling underneath the Soldier as he bear walks across the mat; different ways of sliding across the mat on your back and side; and variations of flutter kicks, sit-ups, and pushups.

"Everyone that goes through the course, regardless of their level of physical and mental training, gets worn out," said Norman. "The idea is



Sgt. Samuel T. Ohnstad, top, and Sgt. First Class David M. Jurpik, bottom, practice combative skills during a course at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

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to wear the students out and get them exhausted before they actually start practicing techniques on each other. This reduces the likelihood of injuries because they aren't able to push as hard and it also simulates a real situation where you wouldn't have all your energy and strength but still need to fight."

In order to ensure as much safety as possible for the class, the instructors used Composite Risk Management and experience to identify potential safety problems. They had several instructors there during the course to watch for unsafe conditions and correct them as needed. If someone gets too aggressive they tell them to back off. They also teach techniques that encourage the participant's safety and limit injuries.

"In the drills we do while practicing arm bars we tell the students not to actually grab the arm and finish the move," said Norman. "Once you get to where you know you can do an arm bar you leave it. There's no reason to break anybody's arm in the class."

Even with safety precautions, many students were injured and a few were

unable to complete the course. The worst of these was an injury to an elbow sustained while doing a roll which resulted in the Soldier being removed from theater for surgery. A few other reported injuries were: a Soldier re-injured his shoulder which had been previously dislocated and another Soldier's eye hemorrhaged when he was punched during a drill.

"We did have injuries," said Norman. "It's unfortunate, but you know you're getting good training when your body is being pushed like that."

"The instructors did their job," said Spc. Delilah S. Joung, a Zone 6 billeting specialist serving with HHB, 115th FiB. "They made sure you did the move right cause if you did it wrong then someone could get hurt."

"The best part about the class was the slap drill," said Joung. The slap drill consisted of each person in the class being slapped, and slapping their partner twice on each cheek. "It's something that I will always remember. It stung, and after the last one tears came to my eyes," Joung said.

The final drill that Soldiers must pass in order to complete the course is the clench drill. During each of the four rounds, students are required to use one of three techniques to clench onto a punching instructor and limit their ability to hit the student. As a safety precaution the instructors wore gloves, but each round they became more aggressive and hit the students wherever they were vulnerable.

"The instructors went full blown on the students and all we could do was try and get a clench in," said Joung. "I can take a punch, but that was the first time I've been punched in the head that many times.

"The instructors went full blown on the students and all we could do was try and get a clench in," said Joung. "I can take a punch, but that was the first time I've been punched in the head that many times.



Soldiers become dizzy and disoriented as they roll across the mat during a warm-up exercise. Drills like this were used to wear the participants out before wrestling with each other as an attempt to prevent injury.

That was the worst headache I've had," she added.

You don't get to pick your attacker or how they treat you," said Norman referring to the clench drill. "You have no option but to close that gap, which is the first step in a real fight."

Joung took the combatives course to get ready for Camp Arifjan's annual combatives tournament. She was the only female to compete in the middle weight class this year.

"I participated in the tournament last year and took it," said Joung. "I didn't know that this year it would be coed. I won the first two matches against guys but the third guy chocked me out. I did pretty well against him but he got the rear choke so deep and I couldn't keep my chin down," she said.

"I would do the tournament again next year if given the chance," said Joung. "I like the intensity of it. I enjoy the rush."

Joung also hopes to have the opportunity to attend the Level 2 certification course. "I heard you get to hit in the second class so I would take it if it's offered," she said.

"The best thing about the course is that Soldiers develop the sense, or the physical awareness that you can do more than you think you can do," said Norman "It's always been my opinion that the mind tires before the body. In order to make a tougher, stronger Soldier, they have to be made to do what they wouldn't normally do. This course does that," he added. "Walking away from this course Soldiers will be a little bit surer of themselves as a Soldier, and as a person."



Instructors for the Level 1 combatives course assist Soldiers as they practice the 17 fighting skills taught during the weeklong class.



Coast Guardsmen, contractors and Kuwaitis prepare the boom to be guided into the water where it will then be pulled into place by a coast guard 25 foot Transportable Port Security Boat to contain any oil floating on the surface during the first Emergency Oil Spill Response exercise held at Camp Patriot, Kuwait, Dec. 14.

Oil Spill Response Exercise

Story and photos by
Master Sgt. David Largent

An Oil Spill Response Exercise was conducted at Camp Patriot, Kuwait, Jan. 14 to ensure the response team would be able to contain and clean up an oil spill should it ever happen.

Participants included members of the Camp command cell of the 1-147 Field Artillery out of South Dakota, Coast Guardsmen from Port Security Units 301 and 312, Soldiers from the Harbor Master Operations Detachment, 396th Transportation Company, 593rd Sustainment Brigade, contractors from Combat Support Associates, Environmental Department, several Kuwaitis and members of Camp Patriot Fire Department. It was the first time many of the participants have ever been involved in an oil spill exercise.

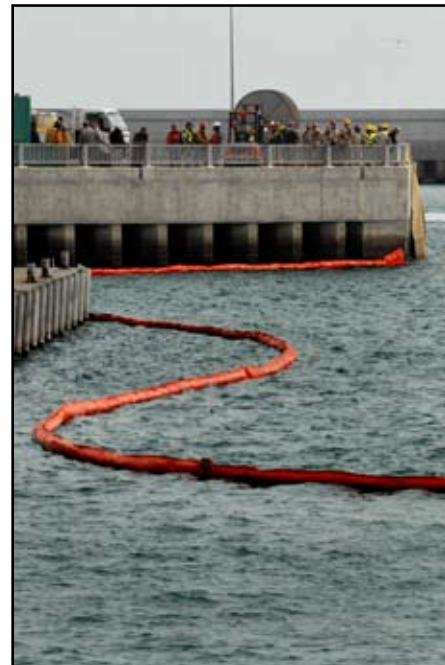
It's necessary to get all of the departments together that would be involved and determine what responsi-

bilities fell to which department and how to coordinate and communicate throughout the response.

"The goal is to have the ability to respond here in Kuwait as we would anywhere back in the U.S.," said Kirk E. Davis, environmental department manager from CSA, the company that is under contract with 3rd Army to provide oil spill and hazmat response to the U.S. Military in Area Support Group Kuwait's area of responsibility.

Prior coordination and practice is required to put a team together from so many different groups.

"Our intent was to provide personnel and equipment to contain a spill from a U.S. vessel up to 1,000 gallons of fuel within the harbor and notify CSA spill response for the cleanup," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Brett K. Anderson, environmental officer for Camp Patriot Command Cell, 1-147 Field Artillery. "The first response is to contain the spill, then the contractors come in to do the cleanup," he added.



The boom is put into place surrounding an oil spill to keep it contained until it can be removed.

To kick off the exercise, the simulated spill was reported to the Joint Operations Center, manned by Soldiers from

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1-147 FA, who spread the word to the other organizations involved. Each quickly responded to the call and did their piece to contain the spill.

The fire department was first on the scene and ensured the area was safe for other workers and checked for injured personnel while the Quick Reaction Force from the 1-147 secured access to the pier.

The harbor master ensured radio communications functioned properly as a Coast Guard team delivered the trailer with the oil containment boom and prepared to guide the boom into the water where a boat crew operating a 25 foot Transportable Port Security Boat guided the boom out into the water to contain the oil until it could be removed.

Throughout the exercise a small group of Kuwaitis observed each stage of the operation so they will know the steps in case there is an oil spill.

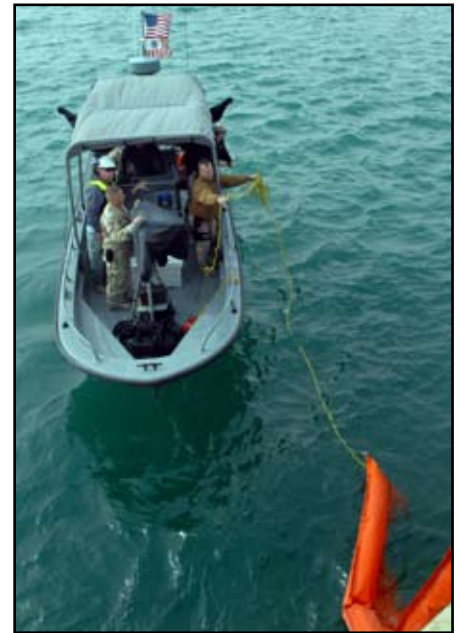
While there was no oil spilled this time, the exercise allowed all the participants to; get their hands



A 25 foot Transportable Port Security Boat manned by Coast Guardsmen from PSU 301 who will soon redeploy back to the U.S. and some of their replacements from PSU 312 guide the boom into place which would keep the oil spill floating on the water from spreading until it can be removed.

on equipment for the first time and learn how it operates; test communications and learn how to make their radios work throughout the different groups involved; and an opportunity for everyone to meet the others that they will be working with should a spill ever occur.

"I think it's going to open doors and build bridges to more and better joint training," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Glen A. Spence, harbor master, 396th Transportation Harbor Master Operations Detachment, 180th Transportation Battalion, 593rd Sustainment Brigade.



The boom is guided into the water as the Coast Guard Patrol Boat pulls it into place. The boat must travel slowly to make sure the water isn't stirred up which would affect the spill they would be trying to contain.



Quick Reaction Force members from the 1-147 Field Artillery secure the entry to the pier to ensure only required personnel are near the oil spill to ensure safety of everyone during an Oil Spill Response Exercise.



Petty Officer 1st Class Carl M. Sette, machinery technician, Port Security Unit 312, operates the hydraulic control on the oil containment boom to regulate the rate the boom is played out Dec. 14.



Members of the 2-300 Field Artillery Advanced Marksmanship Team work with Kuwaiti snipers from the 68th Platoon, 25th Commando Brigade for two weeks. They focused on close quarter marksmanship and long distance marksmanship.

Wyo., Kuwait Forces Conduct Weapons Training

Story by Sgt. Katie Gray

Photos by Master Sgt. Dave Largent

At the base of a mountain range in Kuwait, a barely visible target is seen standing against the wind. Five hundred meters away, a man shields his face against the blowing sand and lines up the target in the crosshairs of his scope, draws a breath, pauses and fires, then pauses again to hear the ‘plink’ of the bullet on the metal target.



A Kuwaiti sniper with the 68th Platoon, 25th Commando Brigade, looks downrange through a spotting scope to the 500 meter target during joint advanced marksmanship training with a team from the 2-300 Field Artillery. The training took place at a firing range near Camp Megavier, Kuwait, Jan. 7.

This was one of many shots fired on the last day of training between Soldiers from the 2-300 Field Artillery, 115th Fires Brigade and Kuwait Soldiers from the 68th platoon, 25th Commando Brigade during a two week advanced marksmanship training course on Jan. 7, at a range near Camp Megavier, Kuwait.

The training focused on hitting targets in urban terrain and started with theory in the classroom then shifted to application in the field.

The nine 2-300 F.A. Soldiers were handpicked to lead the joint training because of previous achievements. The instructors were prior active duty with either designated marksman training or sniper school experience which qualified them to instruct the Commandos on both close quarters marksmanship and long distance marksmanship with M9 pistols, M4 rifles, and .308 caliber sniper rifles.

This training gave both groups an opportunity to see how the ‘other side’ does things. Although the Kuwaitis had previous marksmanship training, Staff Sgt. Zachary S. Miller, NCOIC of the training from 2-300 F.A., explained this training was tailored to suit the changing scenery of warfare.

“Now the fight is urban. It’s not going to be in the desert or the jungle or wherever we’re used to fighting,” explained Miller, who spent four years in the active Army and is a qualified Bravo Force sniper. “They’ve been

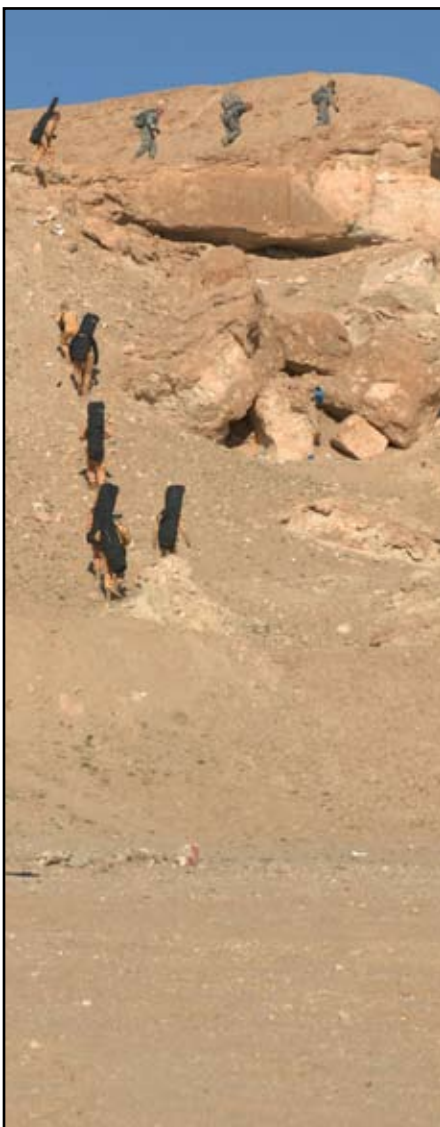
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Working as a team, a Kuwaiti sniper takes aim and prepares to fire at the 500, 800, and 1,000 meter targets while another sniper, also from the 68th Platoon, 25th Commando Brigade, gets ready to fire.



1st Lt. Oliver Gooden of Rock Springs, Wyo., operations officer, 2-300 Field Artillery, looks downrange to the 500 meter target during advanced marksmanship training with a Kuwaiti sniper team.



To add realism by increasing their heart rate and breathing, the snipers ran a couple kilometers with 35 pound packs or their sniper rifles and then, each two person team, did 200 pushups and 200 sit-ups before firing at the 500, 800 and 1,000 meter targets.

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doing very well. They've been shooting 1000 meter targets and they're doing great. They are doing great things for their country and the War on Terrorism."

The training is one of the extra modules the 68th platoon, which is comparable to U.S. Special Forces, undergoes, said 1st Lt. Fahad Al Owish, the Sniper Squad Leader of the 68th platoon. Al Owish explained most of his men go through Kuwait Ranger School before joining the Brigade, and then are selected for the 68th.

"Most of the officers and enlisted guys we have try to go to the 68th because it's like the top notch. But it's hard to get into because you've gotta go through tests," Al Owish said.

The requirements for the Kuwaitis to become Special Forces demonstrates that they view their Special Forces with just as much pride and determination as their American counterparts.

"Every unit has a set of Soldiers that are definitely motivated to do training in infantry tactics," said 1st Lt. Oliver Gooden of Rock Springs, Wyo., an operations officer with the 2-300 F.A. "These guys were squared away. They're motivated to be out here and they were happy to come out every day with us to get dirty, nasty, and shoot bullets downrange.

"I've trained with over 12 different countries in my career and every infantryman in the world is basically the same: pretty easygoing guys, we like simple things, we don't mind the dirt, we don't mind the sweat; these snipers are just the same," Gooden said loud enough to be heard over the wind.

Of course, the training had some challenges. The language barrier caused some discomfort on both sides; most of the Kuwaitis had varying English abilities yet shyness made them hesitant to speak up at first.

"For us we learned patience—language patience. Everything moves just a little bit slower when two different units speak two different languages," Gooden said. Yet the barrier made the Americans reassess a teach-



1st Lt. Fahad Al Owish, 68th Platoon, 25th Commando Brigade, surveys the area in front of him and prepares to fire during advanced marksmanship training with a team from the U.S. 2-300 Field Artillery.

ing strategy that heavily relies on verbal communication.

On the last day of training, American Soldiers challenged the Kuwaitis physically with a 'stress shoot'. Both forces donned 30-35 pound rucksacks and ran up and down the suddenly distant hill that served as a backdrop for most of their shooting. When they returned, each two man team performed 200 pushups and 200 sit-ups. They then had three minutes to set up their rifle and engage their target.

The exercise didn't dissuade them and everyone was able to complete the shoot, albeit with a few moans and pained laughs. Even sore and tired, Miller had good things to say about the 68th platoon, "I'd absolutely go to war with these guys. They're great Soldiers...they're a tier up of everyone else that I've worked with."

Gooden is especially optimistic. "I'm glad that the relationship between the Kuwaiti's army and the U.S. Army can take a step forward for the future," Gooden said.



Cpl. Randy L. Stevens, HUMVEE gunner, A Battery, 2-300 FA, from Florence, Texas, checks the wind speed to see what effect it will have on the trajectory of the bullet.

The Heart of Operations

Story Spc. Matthew H. Oda

Thousands of service members living in camps throughout Kuwait have their daily life support needs looked after by mayor cells operated by Soldiers within the 115th Fires Brigade.

The mayor cell is a non-standard, non-tactical operation center. Because they are non-standard, some of the positions and job titles don't necessarily conform to a typical military operation.

"Our purpose is to conduct base operations and to provide life support for permanent party and temporary transient coalition forces," said Master Sgt. Charles Olivas Jr., Camp Arifjan mayor cell NCOIC. "We focus on helping units accomplish their assigned missions for the Army Central Command assigned Area of Operation, by securing and providing a safe living area and working environment for everyone's basic life support needs."

Camp Arifjan's mayor cell is staffed by Soldiers of Headquarters, Headquarters Battery, 115th FiB, while Camp Patriot is manned by 1-147th Field Artillery from S.D. Camp Virginia and LSA's mayor cell is run by the 960th Brigade Support Battalion from Wyo. Camp Buehring is operated by the 151 CBRN from Ala.

The Soldiers in HHB 115th FiB at Camp Arifjan work in several different sections within the mayor cell to ensure operations run smoothly in their area of operation.

"We have a grounds crew that conducts camp beautification, as well as heavy lifting and equipment movement in coordination with contractors," said Olivas. "We have a light crew whose sole responsibility is turning on and off the light sets which we have more than 160 in Zone 6. There is a contracting position and an assistant contracting

position which basically manages and monitors the contracts that are assigned to them or contracts they initiate. We also have an inspection crew that goes around and inspects all the work the contractors are supposed to be doing," he added.

There are two main sections that have the biggest roles within the mayor cell.

"We have billeting, which is one of two main sections in the mayor cell. They assign billeting to personnel based on classified information they receive on troop movements and troop strength coming in and out of theater, as well as service members who visit our camp and need a place to stay," stated Olivas.

The billeting office is responsible for organizing the housing for transient service members who stay 90 days or less, as well as permanent party service members who stay over 90 days in Zone 6.

"We have the capacity to house 10,000 service members at any given

time," said Sgt. First Class Robert Iokepa, Camp Arifjan's billeting NCOIC. Currently in Zone 6, there are around 7,000 service members being housed, he added.

Sometimes service members forget the environment they are in. Kuwait doesn't have eminent danger like Iraq, but it's still considered a combat zone.

"The largest problem we encounter in billeting is service members forgetting that they are in the military and deployed to a war environment," said Iokepa. "In our office, some think they're coming to their local Motel 6 and looking for room service and any other service you might find at a hotel."

Creating a more efficient process to provide living quarters for service members on a daily basis is the goal.

"The biggest goal is to streamline the billeting process. Get all the people involved with a unit's deployment

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As daylight approaches, Sgt. Gerald C. Hernandez switches off the 160 light generators located throughout Zone 6 at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Hernandez, from Cheyenne, Wyo., turns the lights on at dusk and off at dawn everyday. (Photo by Master Sgt. Dave Largent)



Sgt. 1st Class David M. Jurpik, NCOIC for the contracting office within the mayor cell, rides a four wheeler to inspect projects being conducted by contractors. (Photo by Master Sgt. Dave Largent)

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on the same sheet of music so when the unit comes to Zone 6 or leave Zone 6, the confusion caused by any operation of that size is brought down to a minimum,” said Iokepa. “Another goal is to leave billeting better so when the next unit comes in, it’s not chaos.”

The other main section within the mayor cell is the Emergency Operations Center.

“The EOC is the heart of all operations. Since it’s a 24-hour operation, they have contact with all the contractors and subcontractors, core personnel, vendors, and overall everyone centralized in Zone 6,” said Olivas.

“We are in charge of safety, repair and Soldiers’ quality of life within Zone 6,” said Staff Sgt. Melvin Fairbanks, the NCOIC for the EOC at Camp Arifjan. “We put in work orders and make sure the work gets done. The EOC has a crew of nine people that work one of three different shifts. At any given time, one of us will be putting in work orders submitted by service members, contractors or anyone within Zone 6 who finds something broken or for small projects they want done,” added Fairbanks.

The daily use of the facilities and equipment on camp creates wear and tear, increasing the need for maintenance.

“Typically when something is broken, someone will call it in to tell us where it’s at and what’s broken. Whether it’s an emergency, urgent or routine request, we assign an urgency to it to determine how fast it needs to get done,” said Fairbanks. “Then we decide what contractor to send it to depending on what area, tent or Prefabricated Concrete Building it’s located in.

When the work is finished, the contractor will submit a check-off sheet indicating they’ve done the work. Our Core department inspects the work done by the contractors when the job is complete to ensure the problem is taken care of,” added Fairbanks. “Depending on what the work order is, the contractors respond to the requests anywhere from one hour to one day, and depending if they need parts, they take around a day or two to complete the work.”

Running the operation with a quarter of the staff the previous unit had was one of their biggest obstacles.

“The first three months were the hardest. We had to redesign the process to submit all the work orders, which was a real challenge at first,” said Fairbanks. “We also had to figure out how to cover all the shifts. We created a new, paperless submittal process that cut down the time and the amount of people it took to do a request. After the third month, more people were assigned to us which really helped cover shifts,” he finished.

The camps in Kuwait managed by the 115th FiB have had over 50,000 work orders submitted and have billeted over 200,000 service members since they took over the mission in July, 2009.



Soldiers’ from the 115th Fires Brigade mayor cell prepare the flag for proper storage after taking it down while ‘retreat’ is played. The mayor cell is responsible for all the daily life support needs of Zone 6 at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. (Photo by Master Sgt. Charles Olivas)

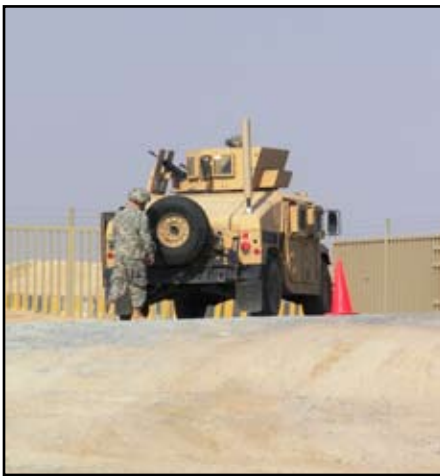
960th BSB Cleans Up the LSA

Story by Sgt. Robert D Walden

Soldiers of the 960th Brigade Support Battalion managing the command cell at the Life Support Area, Kuwait, have greatly improved their base and made the living conditions better for thousands of service members who travel through on a daily basis.

Between 900 and 2000 transient service members a day stop at the LSA on their way to other bases, redeploying, or for Rest and Relaxation leave.

“Our mission as a command cell is to provide life support for the gateway mission, which is to send Soldiers in and out of theater,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Winney, the LSA camp command sergeant major. “We provide water,



Spc. Jeremy Guy positions an up-armored HUMVEE near an entry control point at the Life Support Area, Kuwait, Nov. 1, 2009. (photo by Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Winney)



Sgt. Keith Reedy improves the roads at the Life Support Area, Kuwait by cleaning out the drainage ditches with a backhoe. (photo courtesy of U.S. Navy)

food, electricity and billeting for all of the transient Soldiers.”

When the 960th BSB took over the mission at LSA in July 2009, they identified areas where they could improve their base and set out to accomplish these improvements. Some of the things identified were problems with noisy generators, the inability to quickly get people and equipment on and off base through the Entry Control Point and general camp clean up.

Doing something about the generator noise was the first improvement the 960th BSB command cell tackled.

“When we first got here the noise level on this camp was atrocious,” said Winney. “It was affecting the quality of life. We had old generators that were extremely noisy. Most places on camp you couldn’t hold a normal conversation outside because of the noise level.”

To resolve the problem, over half of the old generators were replaced with a new RQ, or run quiet type generator. “Now you can walk around and actually converse with someone without having to yell back and forth,” said Winney. “That was a big accomplishment

for us. We hit the ground running and did it in about 60 days of being here.”

Streamlining the process of getting hundreds of trucks and buses transporting service members and supplies on and off of the installation on a daily basis, while maintaining security, was the next obstacle that the Soldiers at the LSA command cell faced.

“Every drop of water at the LSA is brought in on trucks, and all of the electricity is provided by generators,” said Winney. “There are fuel trucks coming in and out, and all the water brought in is also carried out. That includes sewage and waste.”

“When we first got here there were constant issues with outages of power and water,” said Winney. “The ECP out there was a nightmare. It was to the point that it was hindering the mission. We made a lot of improvements to expedite the process to get them in and out and to reduce their wait time at the gate,” explained Winney.

Although these achievements have greatly improved the base and made the transient service

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members time at the LSA more pleasant, most will not realize the drastic improvements. One thing that nearly everyone traveling through the LSA does notice though, is the ability to eat and relax any time of day or night at several different places on base.

"Everything on LSA is open 24/7. We have McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken, a PX, and a base dining facility," said Winney. "We get Soldiers in here all hours of the day and night. Some are here less than 12 or 24 hours and we need to take care of their needs whether its food or a tube of toothpaste."

"Desert Diamond is a little oriental place where you can go sit down at a restaurant and eat," said Winney. "There aren't many places where you can do that in Theater. They give you a menu and even bring the food to your table. It's just like being back home."

"Green Beans Coffee had seating for maybe half a dozen Soldiers," said Winney. "We replaced it with a brand new facility that has room for about 50 soldiers. The Soldiers are enjoying it tremendously. Now you can go into a much nicer environment."

"The environment is really what it's all about. What makes Soldiers feel better is the fact that they can sit down in a nice, clean, quiet environment and enjoy a cup of coffee and chat with a friend, or to sit at the USO and read a book or watch a movie," explained Winney. "I think environment has a lot to do with it."

The Soldiers have also constructed a 250 yard Golf driving range on the edge of camp. They have clubs, and hundreds of balls for the service members to use.

"It gets a lot of attention from our Soldiers and everyone has a lot of fun out there, and can improve their game," said Winney. "If you



Volunteers from the 2-300 Field Artillery clean up the base by conducting a police call at the Life Support Area, Kuwait.

hit ten balls, we just ask that you go out and pick up at least ten. If you see more, grab them too."

The Soldiers of the 960th BSB have not only been busy making the LSA more comfortable, but also improving the way it looks.

"It's just so much nicer looking than it was when we first got here," said Winney. "When we got here litter and trash was not a concern. People just let it lay. We made some changes and our permanent party personnel have cleaned up the place we live. We try to make it as nice as we can while we're here. It's still not home, but it's better than it was." 🇺🇸



Soldiers from the Command Cell, 960th Brigade Support Battalion raise the flags at the Life Support Area, Kuwait, Sept. 2, 2009. (photo by Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Winney)

Command Visit Boosts Morale, Readies Soldiers for Demob

Story and Photos by Brandon Quester, Public Affairs Specialist, Wyo. National Guard

A group of Wyoming Army National Guard command and support staff recently visited Soldiers with the 115th Fires Brigade currently serving in Kuwait in an effort to proactively approach the demobilization process for the Wyoming Guard's largest deployment in state history.

“It was important for us to go over there and talk to them eye-to-eye,” - Col. Porter

The brigade has been in Kuwait since June 2009, performing command and control operations as well as convoy escort duties throughout

Kuwait and Iraq.

The six people from the Wyoming National Guard Joint Force Headquarters visited Soldiers to ensure a successful demobilization through reintegration, retention and a return to the civilian workforce. The trip also provided a motivational boost for the Soldiers who are beginning to count the days until departure.

The overall message from Kuwait is that of success.

Soldiers remain highly motivated and continue to provide crucial support to military operations on a global scale. As of January, the brigade has supported operations in 12 countries and has driven nearly 4 million miles during convoy security missions.

According to Wyoming Army National Guard Chief of Staff, Col. Greg Porter, the staff visit was designed to ensure a smooth transition home and to remind Soldiers they

will be supported throughout the entire mobilization process.

He said the Soldiers have done an exceptional job in serving their state and nation and that taking part in this special visit is indicative of the Wyoming Guard mentality of taking care of its family. The message, he said, is that Wyoming cares.

“It was important for us to go over there and talk to them eye-to-eye,” Porter said, adding that this deployment is a significant event in Wyoming National Guard history and that it is important to take a proactive stance both in-country and here at home.

“My mission is to equip (Soldiers) with the tools in order to get a job,” - Becki Hunter.

Porter said Soldiers, their families and employers have sacrificed a great deal throughout this deployment. Bringing the Soldiers home physically, mentally and spiritually intact is the primary objective of the support entities here in Wyoming as well as their command counterparts in Kuwait.

The visit also included Becki Hunter, Wyoming National Guard employment coordinator.

“When the unit left the state, we knew of roughly 200 individuals who were unemployed,” Hunter said. “It was Col. Porter’s intent to get these guys on solid ground when they get home.”

With a box full of resume templates



Wyo. Army National Guard Chief of Staff, Col. Greg Porter, briefs a group of 115th Fires Brigade Soldiers about the current state of Wyo. and the road to demobilization during a visit to Camp Virginia, Kuwait, on Jan. 18, 2010.

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and business cards, Hunter spent nearly three full days talking with Soldiers about employment opportunities throughout Wyoming. She also discussed the current job environment in the state and met one-on-one with Soldiers to provide guidance.

“My mission is to equip (Soldiers) with the tools in order to get a job,” she said. “I’m here as a resource.”

But Hunter said the trip also served as a huge morale booster.

“Just a little taste of home does huge things for the Soldiers,” Hunter said. “It’s amazing.”

“Home is out there, it’s not just a fleeting thought. It kind of offers a minor distraction – in a healthy way,” - Lt. Col. Phipps.

Also conducting business during the visit was Lt. Col. Greg Phipps, deputy chief of staff for personnel.

Phipps discussed the Yellow Ribbon Program and how it relates to the reintegration process. He also met with brigade command staff regarding administrative topics and command climate conditions.

But beyond the official capacity of his visit, Phipps also made time to visit with Soldiers, saying the visit will help Soldiers remember that home is not far off – reiterating the fact that Wyoming cares.

“It’s really good from a morale standpoint,” Phipps said. “Home is out there, it’s not just a fleeting thought. It kind of offers a minor distraction – in a healthy way.”

“In the end, we got the mission and we got each other,” Phipps said. “We’re one Wyoming Guard and we care.”

The command trip included visits to two main areas of operation for Wyoming Soldiers, including Camp

Arifjan and Camp Virginia within Kuwait. Visitors had the opportunity to meet with Soldiers from each of the three Wyoming elements of the

brigade, including the 115th Fires Brigade, 2nd Battalion – 300th Field Artillery Regiment and the 960th Brigade Support Battalion. 🇺🇸



Soldiers walk past 115th Fires Brigade Tactical Operations Center tent displaying the Wyoming flag and brigade logo at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, on Jan. 18, 2010. A contingency of Wyoming National Guard Joint Force Headquarters staff visited the brigade to ensure a successful reintegration process upon the unit’s return this spring.

Pickin' and a Grinin'

Story and photos by
Master Sgt. Dave Largent

A deployment can seem like a long time, but many service members find ways to help the time pass more quickly. Some come up with ways to make the time go faster for others as well as themselves.

One member of the Headquarters, Headquarters Battery, 115th Fires Brigade, who works at the Zone 6 camp command cell, started teaching Guitar lessons to make the time go faster.

In his 26 years Sgt. Tyrell P. Peterson, has been busy. Since graduating from high school he has become a college graduate with a teaching degree, started a teaching job in Phoenix, Ariz., where he teaches music to kindergartners through eighth graders, has served most of an eight year enlistment, married his wife Lexi about three years ago, bought a house, and has a couple months left of a yearlong deployment here in Kuwait, where he teaches guitar lessons in his spare time.

Peterson teaches his students to play about a dozen instruments and plays six instruments himself.

A lot of people listen to music to relieve stress, but Peterson doesn't just listen to it, he teaches it.

"When you're playing music, your brain is in a completely different area. You're thinking about the scales, what the song is saying, you're thinking about what you were doing the last time you heard the song or the last time you played that song. You're not thinking about work orders or whatever is going on. It gives you time to sit and think plus it gives you a discipline you can work on, playing better, writing music if you feel like doing that.

Plus it's also stress relieving to show other people how to do something they want to do and help facilitate that because you get to see them learning and progressing. It makes them feel better and it makes you feel better seeing them improve. It helps improve the situation; it does the most good for the most people," said Peterson.

"It's the teacher in me, I love showing that stuff, I love teaching. I love watching people when they actually get it and they can do it again on their own and they are excited about it and you gave that to them. That's the cool thing about it and they can progress from there," he said. "As a music teacher I knew there were people who wanted to learn to play guitar, so why wouldn't I do something to help those people do that? It's like it's not a big deal, I can do it," Peterson added.

Teaching a weekly evening class can make the day longer, but going from work order to work order can make the days seem long too.

"Every day is long here, what else am I going to do? It gives me something to look forward to, something to prepare for," Peterson said referring to his evening guitar class. "It keeps me

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In addition to teaching a weekly guitar class, Sgt. Tyrell P. Peterson, plays base for 'The Local Joes' band put together by members of the 115th Fires Brigade. They performed at a Camp Virginia, Kuwait Labor Day Celebration.

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thinking forward instead of thinking where I could be other than here. It keeps me focused on something other than work or being in the barracks. It gives me somewhere else to be,” said Peterson. “It gives me something to break up the week, something to prepare for and you hope, other people are preparing for it too. You hope that they are practicing and enjoying playing the guitar,” Peterson said.

“I’ve never taught guitar before, not in classes. Here it’s been nice because I’ve had a chance to think about it methodically which I’ve been trying to do back home. I’ve been trying at school, but you get so busy. But here I’ve had more time to plan, that’s been really helpful,” said Peterson.

“I’ve seen a lot of improvement in the students who practice. It doesn’t matter who you are teaching, adults or kids, you always have to jump on them to practice because you can’t get anywhere without practice. When they practice and come in to class you can see amazing improvements in just a few months or even a week. It’s really fun to see. See things clicking and



“Teaching seventh and eighth graders you have to keep them engaged. Try and keep them focused on what you want them to be doing, keeping them on task. The same thing can occur here too,” said Sgt Tyrell Peterson.

Cowboy Thunder

them understanding and learning the chords. You can say play this chord and they jump right to it and before they had never touched an instrument in their life,” he said.

It’s not just good for Peterson!

“So they’ll go home from here with another skill they didn’t have before, which I think is really cool. They can say they came to Kuwait and learned how to play a guitar, they can teach their kids how to play. It’s something they can use to bond with their family,” said Peterson.

“What am I getting out of it, it feels good, it’s a gift that you’re giving somebody and you know they’re going to go home with that.

Plus it keeps my skills sharp. When I first started the guitar lessons it had been eight months since I had taught anything. It was really nice knowing I still had it. I still had the teaching skills; I could still explain it I could break things down and help people understand it. Teaching takes practice,” he said. “It keeps me grounded in what I do back home; it kinda keeps me thinking about the future when I do get back home. Things I learn here I can use when I get back. I’ve learned a lot about practicing techniques. I used to start right off with chords, but I’ve found working more with the left hand is really important before you jump into the chords,” he added.

According to Peterson there are similarities and differences between teaching adults and elementary age children.

“Teaching seventh and eighth graders you have to keep them engaged. Try and keep them focused on what you want them to be doing, keeping them on task. The same thing can occur here too. You have to make sure they’re staying motivated, practicing, and staying on task in class because they love to chat. You have to keep them busy, don’t give them free time, and make them keep thinking constantly about what they’re doing. Is everybody checking your thumb, are you checking your fingers, where are your fingers at, is your thumb on the right string watch your fingers, make



Cpt. Jakob Norman listens as Sgt. Peterson explains chords for the guitar during an evening class.

sure they are curved, watch your position, alright we’re going to do this, play it, ready go. You never give them a chance to sit there and think about it. A lot of drill is really key to keeping kids on task and keeping adults on task,” said Peterson.

Adults can tell you why they do not understand something that kids may not. They can’t tell you why they’re not getting it and adults can communicate to you what they’re having a hard time with. So working with an adult they might say, ‘I don’t understand how to put my fingers here. Why can’t I do this.’ A kid may have a problem for weeks and weeks until you finally see the problem they’re having but an adult can communicate it to you. My finger doesn’t feel right, it hurts when I do this and you can say oh turn your wrist like this and it will fix it.

The long days here in Kuwait can seem pretty short when compared to long days back home.

“I teach music, kindergarten through eighth grade, general music and then I teach band and orchestra before and after school. So at the end of the day, I teach around eleven classes. Each one is at least half an hour,” he said.

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He taught in west Phoenix in a low income area for a year and a half before leaving in January 2009 for the deployment.

"It was a shock to my students and the school staff. When I went in with my orders in November (2008) I showed them to my principle. We talked about what we were going to do. They got a long term substitute," he said.

The first thing one of my students said to me was, "Have you ever shot anybody?" said Peterson.

"That's the first thing they say, ever shot anybody, are you going to bring home a machinegun all that stuff. Hope you don't die, hope you don't get killed, hope no one shoots you." Then they draw you pictures. The last few days of school they all made me cards and gave me presents and stuff. One drew a picture of me flying a jet over the school, they had no idea what I was going to be doing, I had no idea really what I was going to be doing here either!" he said.

"I told them I'll be back, my seventh graders are going to be in high school when I get back. That's going to be hard, I really love that class, they're the best class I've ever had, and they're not going to be there when I get back. The kids, they grow so fast. I'll have to relearn their names, their attitudes, they're all completely different, and so it's going to be like being a brand new teacher," Peterson said.

"I have a new school, the school I taught at had a new school built behind it so I'll have a new room in a new school with new personnel. Brand new school with new students, new teachers, everything will be different. I was pulled out and came over here for a year and I will go back and everything will be completely different, so I'm kinda bracing myself for that," he said.

I think the school was more shocked.



My finger doesn't feel right, it hurts when I do this and you can say oh turn your wrist like this and it will fix it," said Sgt. Tyrell Peterson.

Especially the kids, it's nice to have their support. The teachers have been really supportive too, they threw a going away party, and they're there for my wife. It's nice to have a big support group, they have 635 students at the school and I think I've gotten something from almost every single one of them. My room is completely packed with calendars and stuff. One class made a calendar for my wife, they drew a picture for each month and she can mark the days off. So it's just thoughtful stuff like that," said Peterson. "When they see the uniform they think you have guns and go shoot, but I use the keyboard and mouse and a guitar quite a bit too. But that's mostly for stress release," he added.

Peterson planned on joining the Wyo. National Guard. He planned on getting his teaching degree. He also planned on getting a job as a music teacher. But, he didn't plan on being deployed to Kuwait!

"The thing is when you're teaching music, when you're doing it all day long, you don't want to listen to it,

you don't want to talk about it when you go home, when someone has a question about music or their instruments and you say, you know I do this all day. So getting away from it actually has been really refreshing. It's been a nice break. When you've been away from it a while you realize how much you miss it, how much it really means to you instead of being saturated by it all the time," he said.

"I miss my wife. It's funny, when I got deployed I became so detached from everything else. Then I got here and realized there will be an end to it. It's made it really obvious how important my wife and family really are, how much I miss them," announced Peterson.

Peterson's enlistment will end in February, but he will be on stoploss a couple months until the deployment ends.

"I will be discharged in April when I get back. I will be happily discharged and I will have served my country and be ready to move onto other things. It was a great experience, but I will be glad it's over," said Peterson.



Sgt. Tyrell P. Peterson enjoys playing music as well as teaching it. He started a weekly guitar class to help the time go by for himself and also for others.

To view more photographs please visit our Facebook page at:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Cheyenne-Wyoming/115th-Fires-Brigade/115980276368?ref=ts>

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