

115th Fires Brigade



Cowboy Thunder

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**Military Operations
in Urban Terrain**

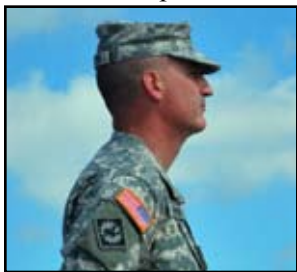
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Commanders' Comments

This is the last newsletter from our deployed brigade. The brigade is preparing to return home and disperse. We will never have the brigade formed, as it was here, again in history. The brigade has performed magnificently.

The 115th FiB consisted of more than 2,600 National Guardsmen and Reservists from 31 states and 550 Active Army, Coast Guard Reserve, and Active Navy personnel brought together to provide Camp Command, force protection, and conduct security operations in 8 different countries including Kuwait, Afghanistan, Iraq, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, UAE, and Djibouti.

The Brigade drove 5,505,969 miles and successfully conducted 27,523 missions including 23,390 convoy escorts, 3,459 Quick Reaction Response, 499 Area Re-



Col. Richard C. Knowlton

action Response, and 175 MRAP Escort missions. One hundred and one children were born to Brigade personnel during the deployment. The Brigade held 42 Host Nation training events and trained more than 850 Kuwaiti Soldiers and Sailors. Brigade units commanded 6 camps in Kuwait and Iraq administering 85 contracts worth more than \$21.3 million and turned in more than \$32.67 million worth of excess or unneeded equipment.

Each and every member of the brigade has performed very well under adverse conditions. The chaplains, surgeons and behavioral science officer have done an extremely good job under the most adverse condition. Nobody comes to see them when things are going well. Every visit is an emergency to someone and every Soldier is given the very best attention and treatment until they are well and ready for the next mission. These Soldiers in particular deserve big thanks for helping Soldiers complete this mission and return home physically, mentally and spiritually intact. I'm very proud of their efforts and their accomplishments.

It's hard to single out one accomplishment that the brigade achieved over others but one comes to mind. This brigade was one of three National Guard brigades in theatre that was kept together and operated as a brigade under its own leadership. This is the first time this has happened in this war. The eyes of the entire Army were on this unit and it's mission to see how it would turn out. The brigade performed magnificently and has set conditions for follow on units to command their own formations and stand on an equal level with their active duty counterparts. This is hugely important to the National Guard as a force, and is a testament to the professionalism and the skill of our citizen soldiers.

As these soldiers return I would ask those at home to do a few things. Pat them on the back, shake their hand and tell them you're proud of them and what they have done, look them in the eye and thank them for their service and ask them to tell their story. You will be amazed at the experiences and achievements of these proud and honorable soldiers.

Happy Trails

Command Sgt. Maj. Comments

It seems like forever since we started preparing the task force for this deployment. We have struggled through some hard times and also some good times. Through the bad times, our Brigade Surgeon, Mental Health Professional and Chaplains have helped us physically, mentally and spiritually. I hope all of our Soldiers have grown through this experience, but we have had some Soldiers who won't return home with us intact. Although this is difficult for me personally, I know our team has helped a lot of Soldiers, Sailors and Coast Guardsmen and Women and enabled them to function in this environment and beyond.

The hard part of the deployment is probably ahead of us. We have Soldiers going home to broken families or no jobs. I encourage each of our

Warriors who find themselves in a difficult situation to take advantage of all the benefits available through the Veteran's Administration, Military One Source, other Local and Military Agencies and the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Campaign. There are a lot of people out there that want to help returning Veterans. Sometimes we need to swallow our pride and get help if we need it. I encourage everyone to



Command Sgt. Maj. Kenton Franklin

check on their Battle Buddy, see how they are doing at least through the first 90 days. If your buddy is having difficulties, please encourage them to get help. I encourage all the Team Leaders and Squad Leaders out there to keep track of their Soldiers and make sure they have the information and assistance they need. We need to remember that once you are a Soldier's Leader you are always looked to by them as their Leader. I encourage every Soldier to take some down time once they get home, take in the whole new world you are going back to and reintegrate with your families and friends. The Post 9/11 GI Bill and other Educational Benefits make going to College or a trade school almost cost free. Those who thought College is not an option may want to rethink their future.

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115th Fires Brigade
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On the Cover:



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in Urban Terrain** Page 10-11

An MOUT Training Team from 1-147 Field Artillery trains with Kuwaiti's 25th Commando Brigade at Camp Kazma, Kuwait, Feb. 17. (Photo by Sgt. Robert D Walden)

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Kuwait Policewomen Tour Camp Patriot

Story and photos by
Sgt. Katie Gray

Cameras flashed and various American and Kuwaiti greetings and terms were traded back and forth as a group of six women from the Kuwait Police Academy attended a special meeting with female United States Coast Guard and Navy officers at Camp Patriot, Mar. 3.

It was a special chance for the women, from the first class of female graduates at the academy, to interact with other female officers.

Cmdr. Joan Amanda Dobbs, Deputy Commander, Combined Task Group 56.5, came up with the idea after hearing about the class and contacted the Kuwait Coast Guard where Capt. Mubarak Ali Y. Al Sabah, Chief of Maritime Operations helped arrange the meeting. As the first among what Dobbs hoped to be many meetings, the group toured Camp Patriot while the two sides exchanged lifestyle and culture stories. One popular word of the day was “ajib” slang for “awesome” and the word flew back and forth all day in both languages.



Lt. Farah Ahmad, a Kuwait Policewoman checks out a machinegun during a tour of a Navy patrol boat at Camp Patriot, Kuwait, March 3. She was one of the first graduating class of female officers from the Kuwait Police Academy.



From Left to Right: Lt. Amal Al-Awadhi, Lt. Maali Osama Bu-Abbas, Lt. Dalal Al-Amer, Ensign Michelle Bostic, Lt. Farah Ahmad, Ensign Elisha Mueller, Lt. Heba K. Al-Khalaf, Lt. Carmelita Fleming, Lt. Eman Boland, and Cmdr. Joan Amanda Dodds gather for a group shot after a ride on Navy and Coast Guard patrol boats and a tour of Camp Patriot, Kuwait, March 3.

Lieutenants Eman Boland, Heba K. Al-Khalaf, Farah Ahmad, Dalal Al-Amer, Maali Osama Bu-Abbas, and Amal Al-Awadhi were just six of 40 applicants to the first Kuwait Police Academy to allow women to attend. Prior to attending the academy all six of the police women had college degrees, varying from

law and forensics to media. Twenty seven of the 40 who started the class went on to graduate and included 16 officers, eight warrant officers, and

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Cmdr. Amanda Dodds, deputy commander, Command Task Group 56.5, and Capt. Mubarak Ali Y. Al Sabah, chief of maritime operations, Kuwait Coast Guard, led a group of Kuwaiti police women and female American officers during a tour of Camp Patriot, Kuwait, March 3.



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three sergeants. The Kuwait Police Academy typically takes two years, unless a cadet has a college degree prior to attending in which case it is shortened to six months.

All the women say their families have been very supportive throughout the process.

Even at the Academy the women were breaking records. Capt. Al Sabah said the women's standards were even higher than the Academy's, and hoped they will be applied to incoming cadets.



Ensign Michelle Bostic, CTG 56.5, saw firsthand how the policewomen pushed the cultural envelope and said, "They are truly pioneers."

The women spent a year as second lieutenants and will be promoted in mid-March to first lieutenants.



Lending a Helping Hand

Story and photo by
Spc. Matthew H. Oda

Immediately after the 115th Fires Brigade arrived in Kuwait last July, some of their Soldiers were tasked to fill positions with their higher headquarters due to a shortage of personnel.

An order was issued to the brigade from 1st Theater Support Command, Area Support Group-Kuwait and Army Central Command, directing Soldiers from the brigade with specific job skills to work at duty positions that their higher headquarters were not able to fill themselves.

The 115th FiB responded to the FRAGO by sending 16 Soldiers to work with those commands and assist them with their mission.

“Initially, we identified the liaisons back in Feb. 2009 during Annual Training when we received word that ASG-Kuwait had 22 positions they wanted us to fill,” said Lt. Col. Deanne Vogel, executive officer for the 115th FiB. “We didn’t have the personnel to do that, but we knew the liaison positions could relay information back to us, so we decided it would be a good way to communicate to and from the two commands,” she added.

There are some benefits to working away from the unit as well as disadvantages.

“It provided me an opportunity to work and communicate with a variety of new people and various organizations on an array of missions,” said Lt. Col. Frank Belen, Liaison Officer for the 115th FiB who works at ASG-Kuwait. Like anywhere else you go, you meet and develop new friends along the way. One of the disadvantages, however, was not being able to meet and work with more of the 115th FiB Soldiers, and other members of the Wyoming Army National Guard,” added Belen



Multiple Soldiers from the 115th Fires Brigade were assigned to the Area Support Group headquarters building located at Arifjan, Kuwait, in support of a request from ASG-Kuwait needing additional help manning open positions due to a shortage of staff in their sections.

who is originally from the Hawaii Army National Guard.

The following Soldiers were assigned to work with higher headquarters:

Area Support Group-Kuwait

Lt. Col. Jason Kaul
1st. Lt. Aaron Ohnstad
Staff Sgt. Paul Bennick
Spc. Brandon Belmonte
Capt. Jelani Berry
Lt. Col. Frank Belen
Spc. Floyd Mabbitt
Sgt. Nicholas Kamono
Spc. Adeline Andree
Sgt. Cynthia Fox
Spc. Kirby Suginaka
Pfc. Cory Schroeder

1st Theater Support Command

Sgt. Brandon Collado
Capt. Eric Morris
Pfc. Eugene Royce

Army Central Command
Staff Sgt. Maralina Schoenfelder

Having Soldiers work at another command immediately after arriving in theater is never an easy task; however, the 115th FiB excelled with it. In the end, being in the military is about supporting one another as a team. Guard Hard!🇺🇸



Third Army’s “A” insignia displayed in front of the ASG-Kuwait building representing all commands in Kuwait’s Area of Operation are united, having a common goal at hand; to fight the war on terrorism.

Gunner Harness Designed to Reduce Injuries

Story and photos by
Sgt. Robert D Walden

A major safety concern of the 115th Fires Brigade is motor vehicle use. When a vehicle is wrecked, it can cause property damage, injury or death.

The harness worn by MRAP and HUMVEE gunners is designed to reduce injuries by holding the individual inside the vehicle in case of an accident.

"The gunners do feel safer with it," said 1st Lt. Adriana Sparks, a quick reaction force platoon leader with the 62nd Chemical Company deployed to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. "At first they did not like it, nobody likes to have

something really tight in your groin, especially males, but it works."

For safety, the crew conducts rehearsals for immediate action in case of a rollover before nearly every mission.

"There is a latch on the right side of the gunner and whoever is sitting closest pulls the lever and the gunner drops inside the truck," said Sparks. "The gunner braces himself and whoever is there grabs onto him to keep him from being tossed around inside."

"During the rollover training I still got tossed around a lot but the harness kept me in the vicinity of the back seat rather than being thrown from the vehicle," said Spc. Willis M. Knight, supply specialist, 2-300 Field Artillery who works as a QRF

gunner at Camp Virginia, Kuwait.

"I really don't notice the harness once I put it on, even after driving for a couple hours," said Knight.

These rehearsals proved effective last month when Soldiers from Sparks platoon were coming down a burl in a HUMVEE and the front of the vehicle caught in the sand, flipping it over.

"If he didn't have the harness on he would have flown right out of the vehicle," said Sparks. "It's like wearing a seat belt."

"Being the gunner is the best position on the vehicle because you have your own little space," said Knight. "To stay safe we just keep a low profile and don't fight the truck. You move with it. It's like being in a boat."



Gunners from Charlie Battery, 1-151 Field Artillery, 115th Fires Brigade, put on their harnesses at Kabari Crossing while preparing for a convoy escort mission into Iraq, Feb. 22. Left to right, Spc. Mitch Olson, Spc. Andrew Loher, Spc. Kyle Diekmann.



Spc. Willis Knight demonstrates the use of a gunners harness (top) and mans the gunners turret of a HUMVEE (bottom).

Fires Brigade Raises the Bar Throughout Deployment

Story by Spc. Matthew Oda

Photos by Master Sgt. Dave Largent

The 115th Fires Brigade achieved a vast array of accomplishments during the course of their one-year deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The brigade mobilized with six battalions from five different states, Headquarters, Headquarters Battery and picked-up command and control of four additional units' within a couple months after the brigade arrived in country.

"This brigade brought together organizations from five different states through the mobilization station," said Lt. Col. Harold Walker, deputy commander 115th FiB. "For a Fires Brigade to bring together separate battalions independent of the units that were assigned to the brigade headquarters in country is truly phenomenal. Working with five different states to put together a task organization to execute this mission is history," he added.



Explosive Ordnance Disposal collectively destroyed over 750,000 pounds of expired munitions.

The following list is a few of the major accomplishments achieved by the units working together as the 115th FiB, at five camps in the Kuwait theater of operation:

- 363rd and the 1108th (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) collectively destroyed over 750,000 pounds of expired munitions
- \$25.7 Million of excess equipment turned in to be reallocated to incoming units
- 86th Engineer Dive Team salvaged approximately 10 tons of debris and logged 5,085 minutes of bottom time on the Alseqlawiyah Bridge project. They also conducted missions in seven different countries
- The brigade conducted host nation

training with several branches of Kuwait military which included Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear and Environment training, weapons, dive team, crises response, maintenance training, patrol boat operations, and Military Operations in Urban Terrain for more than 850 Kuwait Soldiers and Sailors serving in the Kuwait National Guard, the 25th Commando Brigade and the Kuwait Navy

- The brigade accumulated a million mission miles within the first 60 days of running its mission and ended their deployment with a little over five million miles on tactical vehicles alone

Continued on next page



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Military Operations in Urban Terrain was part of the training conducted for more than 850 Kuwait Soldiers and Sailors.



Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear and Environment training was also part of the Host Nation Training conducted. 61st Chemical Company, based at Fort Lewis, Wash. was attached to the 115th Fires Brigade.

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- Quick Reaction Force conducted 3,499 missions; Area Reaction Force conducted 660 Missions
- 32,013 camp work orders completed from all camps since the Transfer of Authority last July
- 355,157 Third Country National searches completed at the Sea Port of Debarkation & Camp Patriot
- 151 CBRN provided life support to 100,000+ Service members at Camp Buehring
- 3-157 Field Artillery conducted 331 Personnel Security Detail missions in Iraq since their TOA
- 157 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle were escorted to Afghanistan by 61st and 62nd Chemical companies: a total of 387 MRAPs and 36 of other vehicles
- Coordinated the issue of 234 new M1151 Up-Armored HUMVEEs (totaling approx. \$27.8 million) for Convoy Escort Teams, ARF, QRF throughout Kuwait Area of Operation, and assisted and tracked progress of units as they turned in old M1114 UAHs and M1151 UAHs
- The Public Affairs Office produced seven issues of Cowboy Thunder which included about 50 articles with photos and captions. They also produced a special edition focusing on Host Nation training. This publication, the "Cowboy Thunder" brigade monthly online magazine won 3rd place in the Department of the Army's Keith L. Ware, annual public affairs competition.

•The brigade's Facebook page managed by the PAO has grown to over 1,400 fans and contains 74 photo galleries with over 4,000 photos and 19 video's. The Facebook page has received over 20,000 views, 13,000 interactions which includes over 800 comments by fans.

Not only were there many things accomplished by the 115th with the combined efforts from all the battalions within the brigade, but history was made as well.

"The 115th Fires Brigade and all the people assigned to the unit have really made history," said Walker. "There is no other time where a Fires Brigade with an artillery mission, has conducted missions like force protection and camp commands before. Including all of the other different responsibilities the slice units with the brigade have in this theater; it's truly amazing," he finished.🇺🇸



Throughout the brigade, 234 new M1151 Up-Armored HUMVEEs, totaling approx. \$27.8 million, were issued to replace older M1114s and M1115s.

Kuwait, South Dakota National Guardsmen Conduct MOUT Training

Story and photos by
Spc. Steve Brannelly

Continuing in the spirit of a successful partnership, U.S. Guardsmen from S. D. with the 1-147th Field Artillery, 115th Fires Brigade and members of the Kuwait National Guard's 4th Infantry Battalion came together Feb. 18th to perform their final day of training on Military Operations in Urban Terrain at Camp Kazma, Kuwait.

MOUT training involves assaulting a building, moving tactically from room to room and neutralizing combatants until the building is clear.

For the host nation troops, it was their first experience with this type of training.

"It was very well executed. They've done a great job, especially having never been exposed to this before," said Command Sgt. Maj. Darold Diede with the 1-147 FA.

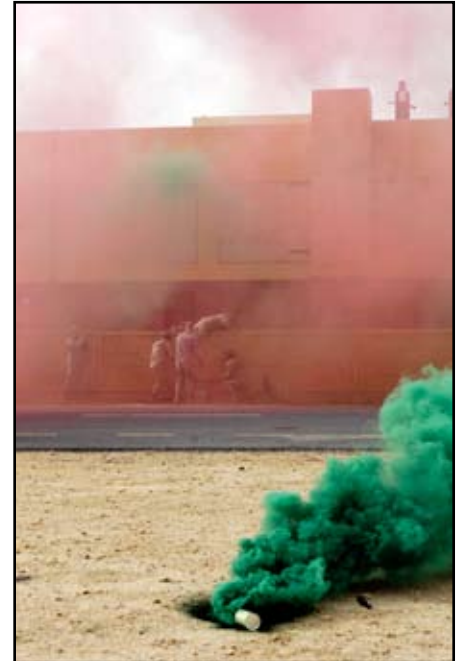
The KNG's 4th Infantry Battalion was organized in Oct. 2009, and is "basically a hodge-podge of the leftovers from the other battalions," said Eric Thien, a civilian contractor with Military Professional Resources Inc. "And these guys came out here to their first live fire MOUT range and hit every single target," he added.

The 1-147 FA Battalion has been rotating squads to train with the KNG Infantry Battalions since Sept. Some of the training included Improvised Explosive Device reaction, weapons training, and a favorite of the U.S. Soldiers; riot control.

Lessons learned by the Kuwait Guardsmen centered on proper use of, and trust in, their equipment.

"The Soldiers threw rocks during that training. If the Kuwaitis got hit, they should've had their riot shields up," said Diede.

Continued on next page



Screening their movements with smoke, Soldiers from the 4th Infantry Battalion, Kuwait National Guard, overcome a wall before assaulting the target building during MOUT training at Camp Kazma, Kuwait, Feb. 18.



Using the walls as cover, Soldiers with the 4th Infantry Battalion, Kuwait National Guard, round the corner as they prepare to breach the building during Close Quarters Training at Camp Kazma, Kuwait, Feb. 18. During training over the past six months, including the MOUT training, Soldiers with the 1-147 Field Artillery from South Dakota were there in an overwatch and mentoring capacity.

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“These guys are happy to get out. Interacting with the Kuwaitis is something these Soldiers don’t often get to do,” explained Diede. “It’s great for them to experience another culture doing the same things they’re doing.”

According to Diede, “Our guys also got the chance to hone their mentor-



Soldiers with the 4th Infantry Battalion, Kuwait National Guard, clear the building before calling in EOD support at Camp Kazma, Kuwait, Feb. 18.

ing skills,” whether demonstrating the most efficient way to get over a wall, or imparting different techniques for stacking outside a door before assaulting a room.

Despite the language barrier the two groups worked together well and the troops from S.D. were impressed with how quickly the Kuwaitis picked up the basics of MOUT. On the other side, the host service members were pleased to show off their National Guard training center to their U.S. counterparts while picking up some valuable infantry tactics at the same time.

At the conclusion of the training, the KNG soldiers formed up to receive certificates of accomplishment from their commander before posing for a group picture with the contract trainers and the S.D. Guardsmen.



Explosive Ordnance Disposal Soldiers fire a water canon to disarm a simulated explosive.

Conducting training with the host nation builds on an already stable foundation of cooperation, and allows the U.S. troops to feel more comfortable in their temporary surroundings.

“I’ve met with two of the top five Kuwaiti generals, and they both said that while we are here this is our home, we’re welcome anytime,” Diede said.



A member of the Kuwait National Guard’s EOD unit prepares to place a water cannon to disarm a simulated explosive device during MOUT training.



Soldiers with the 1-147 Field Artillery from South Dakota, conduct MOUT training with Soldiers from the 4th Infantry Battalion, Kuwait National Guard, at Camp Kazma, Kuwait, Feb. 18. This training allows Soldiers from both countries to experience how each military conducts operations.

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When I look back upon what this Brigade has accomplished it totally amazes me. We have taken 2,300 Soldiers from 37 States, 6 Battalions from 5 States and integrated them into a great force. I commend each and every Soldier for their determination and self-sacrifice. We have conducted Annual Training Periods in extreme conditions, endured challenging training at Fort Hood, and extremely successfully conducted missions that even when we left Fort Hood we had no idea we would conduct and conduct so well. Along with our accomplishments as a Brigade, we cannot forget the successes of our Dive Teams, EOD Teams and Chemical Companies. They have done anything our Nation has asked of them in a professional and safe manner. I have also enjoyed working with our Navy and Coast Guard brothers and sisters. They too have accomplished

much and have a lot to be proud of, conducting one of the most difficult waterside security missions in the AOR. I am most proud of our safety record. For all the miles we have driven, hours we have spent on the water and the conditions we have endured, to have the limited amount of accidents says a lot about our Warriors and the Leadership down to the E-5 level.

When I think back on this deployment, I will think of the young Soldier in the Gun Turret and his quiet determination to accomplish all his assigned tasks. I will remember the NCO's who made sure that their Warriors had the equipment they needed to accomplish the assigned mission. I will remember the pride that each one of the members of the 115th Fires Brigade shows for their Branch of Service, their State and Nation. It has truly been an honor to serve as the Brigade Command Sergeant Major and I will always treasure the friendships I

have made. I will also remember the ultimate sacrifice that SSG Rabjohn and Spc. Avila have made for their Country. May they and their families and friends find peace.

Cowboy 7, Ready for the next Mission, OUT



Command Sgt. Maj. Kenton Franklin

VIEWS OF KUWAIT CITY

See Pages 21-22 for More Photographs of Kuwait City



Behavioral Health Professional Helps Soldiers Focus on Their Mission

Story by Sgt. Robert D Walden

The 115th Fires Brigade's intent during their year-long deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom is to bring every Soldier home physically, mentally and spiritually intact.

In order to accomplish this intent, Col. Richard Knowlton, commander of the 115th FiB, felt it necessary to have an experienced Soldier focus specifically on the service member's behavioral health and invited Maj. Leon Chamberlain, a behavioral health officer who had recently re-joined the service after a 14-year break, to deploy with the unit.

Chamberlain originally joined the Air Guard in 1980 as an enlisted member. He later transferred to the Army Guard where he commissioned and worked in a Public Affairs Detachment in Cheyenne, Wyo.

"In 1992 I was trying to complete my degree to work as a counselor," explained Chamberlain. "Working a full time job and a part time job, and trying to go to school full time; y'know how much the Guard requires as far as education and time, and I didn't want to let it suffer. So I chose to go ahead and leave the Guard at that point in time. But I always missed it."

Chamberlain was at a town hall meeting in Casper Wyo. one weekend and started talking with a friend of his from Officer Candidate School, Maj. Gen. Edward Wright, the Wyo. Adjutant General.

"I told him that I'm kinda interested in being in uniform, and he said 'well why don't you get back in,' and I told him I'm too old, I can't complete my 20 years by age 60. He said, 'with age waivers we could probably get you back in if you would like.' I said, well, look into it and see if you can," explained Chamberlain. "They called me Monday morning and said, 'we've got a Mental Health position that's been



Battling the mental health stigma of weakness, Maj. Leon Chamberlain, behavioral health officer, 115th Fires Brigade, meets Soldiers where they work and feel more comfortable talking.

created and would you be interested?" And I said yes I would."

"I had no idea I would end up on a deployment but I felt it was a very, very important thing," said Chamberlain, referring to why he re-joined the Wyo. National Guard. "I do not believe in accidents. I believe that there's a purpose for everything that happens in a person's life—everything. Not that I want to be away from my family, not that I want to be away from home,

cause I don't, but I intensely believe in Soldiers... so that's why I'm here."

Upon returning from a previous deployment in 2005, Knowlton was impressed with how Chamberlain, a former field artillery officer who then worked as a civilian mental health provider with the medical command in Wyo., interacted with Soldiers as they returned home.

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"I was extremely impressed with his work with Soldiers," said Knowlton. "I requested him by name because he has characteristics we need for this deployment. He is a get out there and be with Soldiers type of guy."

Because of his desire to meet with Soldiers where they work, Chamberlain interacts with 70 to 120 service members a week. According to Chamberlain, mental health providers that work out of an office meet with about 20 service members a week.

Chamberlain's desire to meet Soldiers in the field goes along with Knowlton's intent to overcome the mental health stigma of Soldiers asking for help.

"The military has a unique and tough culture," said Knowlton. "People don't like asking for help; especially with behavioral health because they don't want to appear weak. Because Leon is out with the Soldiers, meeting with them where they live and work and talking with them while sitting on a curb or T-barrier, it eliminates this stigma."

"It's okay to struggle at times," said Knowlton. "Everyone has difficulties. Learning coping methods will help Soldiers to work through them."

Chaplains and behavioral health officers have different backgrounds and use varying counseling methods when meeting with individuals. Chaplains also have the church and other things to focus on which takes time away

from counseling. Having a full time, dedicated mental health officer in the brigade allows Soldiers an additional way to get help.

"There are some people who are really not comfortable with approaching things spiritually," explained Chamberlain. "I've also talked to some people who in their own lives are open to spiritual things, but they say 'right now that just isn't what I need. I just need to know how to do it.' So I teach them the how-to of human functioning."

Chamberlain sees a lot of similar behaviors and emotions with service members who have deployed. Some of these are: anger, isolation, difficulty in relationships, sleep problems, nightmares, difficulty maintaining employment and substance abuse.

"It's a typical way for people to deal with trauma," said Chamberlain. "It lends itself to damaging and sometimes self-destructive behavior. We can't necessarily stop the whole process, but if we can intervene early in the process and teach people about thoughts, emotions, the effects they have on us, and coping skills then the Soldiers lives will be better," explained Chamberlain.

Because of the deployment, Chamberlain has a better understanding of what service members experience and can relate better to those experiences.

"It wasn't a surprise to me but it was somewhat puzzling why everybody experienced anger," said Chamberlain referring to veterans he had worked

with. "Being in this setting now and watching the impact it has, and talking to people here and the personal experience of it, I can relate to the slowness of how things get done, and in many cases the helplessness of things."

"Just having been here, 'Where you there?' Oftentimes that's all a person needs really," explained Chamberlain. "Maybe you haven't done my job, but if you've been close enough then you've got some understanding." I do think it'll improve the quality of what I'm able to offer. Not to say that people have to have been here to work with a veteran, cause that's unrealistic, but I think it's beneficial."

The first thing Chamberlain does when meeting with someone is to develop a relationship.

"I might be spending some time with somebody who currently has some pretty negative behavior, someone who's pretty angry," said Chamberlain. "I think to be real effective and able to help, you've got to be able to accept that person regardless of who they are and what the appearance is."

"I start to get to know the individual whether its sitting down on a curb or sitting on a piece of equipment, leaning up against a T-wall, maybe just walking down alongside a road," Chamberlain explained. "It doesn't make any difference where, but just get to know that person and find out something about them."

"Then we start talking about how you have healthy relationships and how to go back home," said Chamberlain. "You know we've been gone a long time how's home for you? You excited about going home? How's your family doing with this deployment?" said Chamberlain. "Then I teach as we go along, teach healthy relationships, teach how to deal with stress, teach how to deal with anger."

"Typically I will carry a pad of paper with me and we write things down so that when they walk away they've got a model of something they can work with and can go back and look at," said Chamberlain.



As an object lesson, Maj. Leon Chamberlain teaches Soldiers to forgive by carrying marbles with them symbolic of the grudge. He then coaches them through the process of throwing it away; never to pick it up again.

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"I don't think that the majority of people that I initially make contact with really recognize what they want to have happen, or what needs to happen," explained Chamberlain. "As I see it, one of the most important things to do is to educate a person. If a person is aware of what happens in trauma, or a potentially traumatic event, then they will be able to start addressing the problems."

"I had drawn some things out for an individual who had some negative thing going on in his relationship with his wife. There had been some fighting going on over the phone. Just a few nights ago when they talked he opened the papers, and when he started to feel like getting into an argument he looked down at the information on the paper, redirection his conversation, and when the call ended, it ended on a happy note," Chamberlain said with a smile. "Rather than continuing to talk about the possibility of divorce the conversation ended on 'well maybe we can make this work.'"

"Who wouldn't want to be involved with something like that?" asked Chamberlain. "That's why I do what I do. Because people's lives can change and they can go home healthy!"

By learning and applying the skills Chamberlain teaches, it not only benefits the lives of the service member and their families, but Soldiers can share the information with each other when they see someone struggling.

"When you get a healthy, thinking Soldier, that person is going to be looking out for the rest of the members of that unit. They'll care about them," explained Chamberlain. "This isn't just an obligation... these are our brothers here; once a Soldier has learned skills on how to have healthy relationships they share the information to help each other. And if things are working better at home for them they will be happier, and can focus on their mission here

whether it's out driving up and down the roads in Kuwait, or running a convoy, or involved with office operations day in and day out."

"Somebody made a comment to me here a while back that made me really think," said Chamberlain. "He said, 'do you even think about the trickle down effects of this? That if a person has applied some healthy information, some self-care information to their life, and that has made some change in their home, are the children in that home going to have less potential for substance abuse or other self destructive behavior? Or maybe decrease the number of divorces?' It's hard to know what the trickle down effect might be."

Meeting with people and talking about relationships and other sensitive parts of people's lives isn't always easy.

"Stand beside the body of somebody that just committed suicide. Watch somebody go through getting a letter or phone call of unfaithfulness or divorce," said Chamberlain. "Big things, important things, aren't easy things. Do we have any right not to do the very best job we can?" asked Chamberlain. "Putting that effort out there, and the determination no matter

how hard it is; it's worth it! And by remembering that you're helping a person it becomes much easier."

Chamberlains work during the brigade's yearlong deployment has not only benefited the individuals that he has taught, but also contributed to the operational readiness of the brigade.

"This work has directly impacted the brigade's readiness," said Knowlton. "Dozens of service members who have had issues during the deployment have been able to sit down with Leon and learn coping methods. If not for his intervention, those Soldiers may have been sent home making it difficult to accomplish our mission."

Approaching potential problems early is just the beginning; following through is what makes the difference.

"I would like to see that this process doesn't stop here," said Chamberlain. "I wish it was a bigger part of the Guard and Reserve, but these services are still accessible and available to Soldiers when they go home."

Contact the Military One Source for information for yourself or a family member on how to meet with a behavioral health officer in your area by calling 1-800-342-9647 or on the web: www.militaryonesource.com.



Col. Richard Knowlton, commander of the 115th Fires Brigade, looks over a brigade formation early in the deployment. He ensured that the Soldiers in the brigade would have the support they needed by bringing a behavioral health officer on the deployment in order to accomplish the goal to bring every Soldier home physically, mentally and spiritually intact.

A Natural in America

Story by Spc. Matthew H. Oda

Freedom and liberty is the American way of life. People born in the United States are automatically a U.S. citizen and granted these liberties.

A natural American citizen, however, might have a different appreciation of what it actually means to be an American citizen, compared to someone who was born in another country and had to earn their citizenship like Pfc. Kamara McKoy, a Headquarters, Headquarters Battery, 115th Fires Brigade Soldier currently deployed to Kuwait.

Since McKoy was a little girl growing up in Spanish Town, Jamaica, she has dreamed of coming to America because of the things she saw on television.

"When I was growing up in Jamaica, I would always see things on T.V. that were going on in the U.S. and say, 'oh my God I want to go there so I can live the glamorous life,'" said 23-year-old McKoy. When I got here I loved it



On the beach in Kuwait city, Pfc. Kamara McKoy celebrates during a Thanksgiving celebration sponsored by contractors at the Hilton hotel for Soldiers deployed to Kuwait. (photo by Sgt. Robert Walden)



Pfc. Eugene Royce, left, and Staff Sgt. Maralina Schoenfelder, right, congratulate PFC Kamara McKoy during a Naturalization ceremony held for service members being awarded their citizenship at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait Feb. 10. Schoenfelder and Royce, paralegal specialist, 115th Fires Brigade, completed the paperwork that helped make McKoy's citizenship possible. (photo by Spc. Matthew Oda)

and I didn't want to go back," she added.

Her father left Jamaica to live in America when she was two-years-old, to make a better future for her. When she was nine, he filed paperwork with the immigrations office to bring her to the U.S. and she moved to N.Y. to live with him.

"One of the hardest things when I first came to America was that I had a very strong accent, said McKoy. "When I started elementary, I use to get teased a lot because kids would be kids. I remember this one kid that sat next to me and would not leave me alone. He would hit me and I would tell him 'stop, don't hit me or I'm going to tell on you,' which I did and the teacher told him to stop but of course he didn't," she said. "I told him if he did that one more time, I would hit him back. When he hit me again, I grabbed the chair and slammed it on him many times. They called my dad after that but I didn't get

in trouble because the teacher told my dad I did come to him to complain about the boy bothering her, who didn't stop after being told to stop. My dad said 'well he got what he deserved; he shouldn't be beating up my daughter.' So that was the end of that situation and later I found out the boy liked me," she said laughing.

"Later on in high school I came across him again but he seemed to have changed," said McKoy. He played football and got much much bigger. I went up to him and said, 'hey do you remember when I beat you up,' and he said, 'yea but I bet you can't do that again!'"

She went to college after high school to further her education, but later realized maybe it wasn't for her at the time.

"I didn't like going to college. Maybe because I picked the wrong college but I just didn't like it so

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PFC Kamara McKoy and her daughter Briyana sit for a family portrait.

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when I came home one day from campus, I told myself I'm not going back," McKoy said. "I met this Army recruiter one day and he told me I should join the Army. I told him if I'm going to join the military it's going to be the Air Force because I want to be a pilot and do a barrel roll," she said. "He then told me, 'there are a lot of pilots and helicopters in the Army.' I told him, 'but they can't do barrel rolls,' and he said, 'yes they can!' Of course I said, 'no they can't!' He told me to wait one second because he had a video to show me. So he went and got the video and it was basically a Hooah, Army Strong video with rock and roll, head banger music playing in the background showing an Apache helicopter flying over a hill and all of sudden, it did a barrel roll! As my jaw dropped, I fell in love with the Apache and then joined the Army," she added.

She joined the Active Army as quickly as possible as a unit supply specialist, hoping to apply for flight school. As time went on in the Army, she continued to get distracted and never went to the school.

"My first duty station was with an aviation unit at Fort Riley, Kan. Even though I didn't get to be a pilot, I got to be around a lot of different helicopters and other aircrafts all day long so it was good and I enjoyed it a lot," said McKoy, "but I still love the Apache!"

Toward the end of her active duty enlistment, she got pregnant and decided to separate from the Army.

"I separated from the Active Army due to my pregnancy when my contract was almost up," McKoy said. "At that time, I wanted my baby to be with Family instead of at Fort Riley away from everyone, so I decided to go back home to New York to be with my dad and step mom," she added.

She got to spend what little time she had at home together with her new baby girl Briyana, before being called on active duty again.

"I've been separated from the Army for a year and a half, and then all of a sudden I got called back to Active duty from the Inactive Ready Reserve to go on this deployment," she explained.

While being recalled from the IRR was inconvenient, there were some benefits.

"In 2008 I tried to file for citizenship but it was too much money so I started putting it off. When I got mobilized for this deployment, they told me they would waive the fee so I decided to do it now," she said.

The process of getting a citizenship while on deployment took about six months from the time she began the paperwork, to the time she swore in and was awarded her citizenship.

"You need to submit paperwork first, and then have an interview with someone from the immigrations office. If you pass the interview, you have a ceremony after to be sworn in to be a U.S. citizen," she explained.

When this deployment comes to an end, she plans on visiting her Family still in Jamaica, which she has not seen since 2003.



Pfc. Kamara McKoy, Headquarters, Headquarters Battery 115th Fires Brigade, gets ready for a party by striking a superwoman pose at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait last Halloween. (photo by Master Sgt. Dave Largent)

960th BSB Improves Camp Efficiency, Supports Military Movements

Story and photos By Brandon Quester, Public Affairs Specialist, Wyo. National Guard

Situated between one tract of sand and the next, Camp Virginia is not an exceptional site in the ex-

ceptional desert landscape of Kuwait.

Sand and dust follow close on the heels of sturdy breezes that whip through rows of tents and semi-permanent trailers as the rumbling sound of generators fill the air.

Massive concrete barriers line pas-

sageways and structures throughout the camp. They are known according to size. The smallest is the Jersey Barrier – like those dividing highways and construction zones throughout the United States. The Alaskan rivals that of a two-story home.

Similar to a history book with pages strewn throughout the encampment, previous units have symbology painted and signed on the 12-foot-high Texas Barriers – marking their time of service. As each new command arrives, and eventually leaves, barriers are shuffled about to make room for a new tenure of command.

Droves of service members traveling in and out of Iraq have seen this place.

Sometimes the camp is a stop on their way in. Most other times, it is the first stop on their long journey home.

For the Wyoming Army National Guard's 960th Brigade Support Battalion, the camp has been home for the last nine months. Its Texas Barrier is painted bright with landscapes of home, marking yet another concrete page in the history of Camp Virginia.

The battalion acts as the command and control for the camp, running everything from security escort missions to destroying weathered uniforms battered by military service throughout the globe.

The unit conducts sustainment and replenishment operations, provides security and maintains a safe redeployment mission for U.S. and coalition forces within Multi-National Corps – Iraq. The mission is to “ensure a secure permanent party and transient tenant life support area, with the best possible quality of life.”

The camp is like that of a small town, requiring the support and services of any other self-sustaining community. This requires that each element within the unit work together in order to successfully accomplish daily tasks.

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The Wyoming Army National Guard's 960th Brigade Support Battalion displays its symbology on a painted Texas Barrier at Camp Virginia, Kuwait. The unit is currently deployed under the Wyoming Guard's 115th Fires Brigade and serves transient service members traveling in and out of Iraq.

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Imagine coordinating each individual function of a city equivalent in population to many of Wyoming's small rural communities – including every element from the town mayor to the sheriff's deputy and the school lunch lady's menu.

For example, the Camp Virginia dining hall will have provided meals for a number of service members equal to slightly less than the entire population of Wyoming throughout the unit's stay.

Isolated from the long stretches of Kuwaiti highways and urban metropolises, the camp is self-sufficient. Generators run everything from the camp's telephone lines to the lights spotlighting the Wyoming flag flying high above the ground.

Quality of life is no small task

For some within the unit the deployment is a welcomed relief compared to previous mobilizations, where they kicked-in doors and patrolled Iraqi streets on foot. Others prefer the higher pace of war, and have likened this deployment to that of Bill Murray's recurring escapades with Punxsutawney Phil in the 1993 movie "Groundhog Day."

Still, though the dangers are less obvious at Camp Virginia, the mission is no less important.

When the unit arrived in 2009, the camp was in need of reorganization in order to streamline the all-encompassing support processes.

According to Sgt. Danny Laughner, of Custer, S.D., accountability of resources was an early issue to reevaluate.

"We went from jumping through hoops, working 15 to 16-hour-days, to now, we can do it in 8 to 9-hour-days," Laughner said. "Now, we've got 100 percent accountability."

This increased efficiency enables the unit to properly source and support the different flows of transient service members coming through the camp. Now, he said, they know how

much of something they have, how long it will last and whether or not they need to order additional supplies such as water or ice.

Unit Supply Sergeant, Sgt. Kandy Gorsuch, of Douglas, Wyo., said it is important to provide for these service members – making sure they are properly equipped to make the trip home or abroad.

"Basically, we're here to help the other Soldiers in any way we can," she said. "We're a team here."

Another portion of this support is the utilization of contractors. Besides the command and control elements provided by the 960th, most other services are contracted out and executed by individuals known as third country nationals, or, TCNs. These services include everything from conducting waste removal to maintaining roadways and managing contract food vendors.

Master Sgt. Adam Martinez, of Cheyenne, Wyo., helps to manage these contractors and said that building relationships is vital. Although language and cultural barriers can be difficult to deal with at times, he said they have been successful at building working and personal relationships beyond superficial interactions.

"Relationship building here is more

in-depth than it is at home," Martinez said. "It is part of our mission to teach (the TCNs) things."

And maintaining these relationships is critical to the overall goal – providing a quality living environment for service members traveling in and out.

"Everything must be running when they get here," Martinez said. "Bottom line is, I'm trying to take care of customers. Some days its hundreds, some days its thousands."

Equally important is that each person has a place to sleep.

Sgt. First Class Timothy Smith, of Torrington, Wyo., the force flow and billeting non-commissioned officer in charge, deals with current and future force flow issues.

"Over the last nine months, we've gotten pretty good at adapting," Smith said.

His job is to provide current and future personnel projections, which ultimately affect the planning and preparation of support for the rest of the camp.

He said the job is certainly different than a traditional ground-pounding mobilization, but no less important. The job is rewarding, he added, because it provides the "ability to send folks

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Soldiers enjoy down time while catching up with family and friends at the USO within Camp Virginia, Kuwait. The complex at the camp includes computers, telephones, video games, television sets, a movie theater, and a "United Through Reading" room.

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through Camp Virginia and send them home.”

Near the top of this structure is Command Sgt. Maj. Candice Anderson, of Cheyenne, Wyo.

Anderson said the key focus point for the mission is providing the “best possible quality of life.”

In order to maintain this excellence, she said high standards must be maintained from senior leadership down to the lowest ranking Soldier within camp.

“If you have Soldiers that have personal courage to do the right thing, that’s exceptional,” Anderson said. “I think we are extremely successful.”

Anderson cares deeply about the Soldiers within the permanent party of the camp as well as those transitioning through. She said the battalion’s role is to provide a safe and comfortable environment for them to operate and that she and her Soldiers take that responsibility very seriously.

She added this could be the first stop out of combat areas where service members have been operating. It is because of this, Anderson said, that the mission is imperative to begin their journey home in a quality environment with quality support.

Anderson said “pad managers,” or

Soldiers responsible for specific billeting areas, provide a critical link between the comfort of transitioning service members and those responsible for such support.

The pad managers execute a non-standard mission, she said, but do so exceptionally.

“These (transient service members) don’t want for anything,” she said. “Our (pad managers) are exceptional.”

Yet higher still in this chain of command is the 960th BSB Commander, Lt. Col. John Papile of Fort Collins, Colo.

“(Col. Papile) is the true driving force,” Anderson said. “He sets the standard.”

And although Papile is regarded highly among his peers, he attributes the battalion’s success to the individual Soldiers that make the unit whole.

“We’ve got a lot of really talented Soldiers here,” Papile said. “They take such pride in the work that they are doing. I feel like we hit a home run with this one.”

He said one of the keys to the success of the unit was understanding each other’s roles, and executing those tasks to the best of their ability.

Still, learning roles in a new battalion that was split up among the entire brigade did bring early difficulties. Papile said one of the biggest challenges was

to deal with losing portions of his unit while reassembling and redistributing the rest.

When the 960th Brigade Support Battalion deployed as part of the 115th Fires Brigade in spring 2009, it had been established less than two years prior to departure from Wyoming. The unit had only trained together twice prior to their pre-mobilization training at Fort Hood, Texas.

But staying true to the Wyoming National Guard mentality, the unit adapted and overcame these difficulties to ultimately earn an exceptional reputation not only with service members traveling through the camp, but also throughout the entire operating region of Kuwait.

In the end, the message from Wyoming Soldiers is that of pride in the job they continue to accomplish and the example they are striving to leave.

“You’ve seen the difference that you’ve made,” Anderson said about the battalion’s accomplishments. “Camp Virginia becomes a part of you. We have to leave knowing that we did a good job.”



Pad managers are responsible for maintaining high standards for the semi-permanent trailers and tents. This is a hefty task due to the infamous sand and dust at Camp Virginia.



Tents are used to house transient Soldiers on their way through Camp Virginia.

To view more photographs please visit our Facebook page at:

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

or visit the Brigade Web Page at: www.115firesbrigade.com

MWR Trips Allow U.S. Service Members To Catch a Glimpse of Kuwait City

