

# REMEMBERING 35 YEARS SINCE OPERATION DESERT STORM AT FORT MCCOY



FEBRUARY 2026: SPECIAL EDITION CELEBRATING THE 35TH ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM

## SHIELD TO A STORM: A look back Fort McCoy's impact supporting Operation Desert Storm

BY SCOTT I. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

Between August 1990 and March 1991, Fort McCoy was a hub of mobilization and support for Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm.

According to history, Operation Desert Storm (Jan. 17 – Feb. 28, 1991) was a U.S.-led coalition military campaign to liberate Kuwait after Iraq's August 1990 invasion. Following months of buildup (Desert Shield), a five-week air campaign crippled Iraqi defenses, followed by a decisive 100-hour ground assault that expelled Iraqi forces.

### First mobilization in 40 years

At the time, this was the first major mobilization at Fort McCoy since the Korean War in the early 1950s. Fort McCoy history shows there were 74 units from nine states processed through Fort McCoy in 1990–1991. More than 18,000 service members and more than 3,000 pieces of equipment were mobilized or shipped from Fort McCoy.

History also shows Fort McCoy's mission included processing, weapons qualification, equipment prep (including desert paint), land navigation, medical readiness, and deployment staging.

Retired Col. Raymond G. Boland, commander of U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy during Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm, was a guest during the first May 1 National Prayer Brunch in 2025 at Fort McCoy. During his guest speaker portion of the event, he discussed the call-ups of units for Operation Desert Shield/Operation Desert Storm.

In a Sept. 7, 1990, article in The Triad newspaper at Fort McCoy, in a story written by Lou Ann Mittelstaedt, titled "McCoy supports call-up," Boland was quoted discussing how the post was ready to take on a mobilization effort.

"Practice makes perfect," the article states. "Fort McCoy has banked on this philosophy for many years. And, in terms of the installation's mission as a mobilization station, the practices of the past will place the post in an excellent position to support the needs of the reserve component Soldiers processing through here when called to active duty in support of Operation Desert Shield.

"Although the installation has not been used as an actual mobilization processing site since the Korean War, it has been the site of many mobilization training exercises, according to Garrison Commander Col. Raymond G. Boland.

"These exercises have allowed our staff to continually test and refine our mobilization plans and procedures in preparation for this eventuality," Boland said. "Now, when the order to serve in this capacity has come down from headquarters; we find ourselves very prepared to complete the mission."

During the prayer brunch Boland further explained the Desert Shield mobilization started at McCoy.

"I met with the 181st last week and mentioned that we were actually doing a mobilization training exercise when the balloon went up in 1990," Boland said. "The guys were in the ops center next to the post headquarters. One of them came in to see me and said, sir, something strange is happening. I said, 'Oh now what?' He said, 'Well we think we're getting real mobilization messages. ... This ain't April Fool's Day. Well sure enough it was true. And lots of things started to happen really fast.'"

### Getting the job done

And between September 1990 and January 1991, Fort McCoy did what it was called to do — mobilize personnel and equipment.

Here's a look at the timeline of events from January to March 1991 at Fort McCoy:

— **Jan. 7–16, 1991** — Early deployments and processing — As Desert Storm buildup continued, units processed through Fort McCoy and prepared for deployment rotations.

— **Jan. 15, 1991** — Congressional authorization for combat, UN deadline passes; hostilities imminent — Desert Storm's air campaign is set to begin.

— **Jan. 17, 1991** — Air campaign begins — U.S. and coalition aircraft begin strikes against Iraqi targets in Desert Storm.

— **Early February 1991** — Units depart from Fort McCoy — Multiple units deployed directly from Fort McCoy in early February (five units and counting), and additional Soldiers continued training and processing.

— **Feb. 8–15, 1991** — Military police and transportation units advance — The 822nd Military Police Company (Army Reserve) deployed; detachments from Wisconsin and Illinois activated and processed at Fort McCoy, including transport and rail-ops squads.

— **Feb. 26, 1991** — Ceasefire announced — Ground operations conclude after rapid coalition offensive; Fort McCoy begins preparing for redeployment and return of units.

— **March 1991** — Units begin redeployment through Fort McCoy.

Not mentioned a lot in historical files related to Fort McCoy and Desert Storm is the fact that many installation civilian employees volunteered to go to Saudi Arabia to support the operation as well.

In an article from the Jan. 4, 1991, edition of The Triad Newspaper at Fort McCoy by Hugh Williams of the newspaper staff of the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office entitled "Post civilians join Desert Shield," it described this effort.

"Eleven Fort McCoy Department of the Army civilian employees are now in or en route to Saudi Arabia to help support Operation Desert Shield," the article states. "The 11 are among 51 post civilian employees who volunteered for Saudi duty in response to an Army Materiel Command message asking for civilian volunteers with certain skills and occupational specialties.

"The employees were first sent to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., for about one week of pre-deployment processing. Seven of the Fort McCoy volunteers departed La Crosse for Aberdeen on Dec. 16, while the remainder left Dec. 30.

"The normal tour of duty is 179 days. Nine of the 11 men from Fort McCoy work for the Directorate of Logistics (DOL) and two from the Directorate of Engineering (DE).

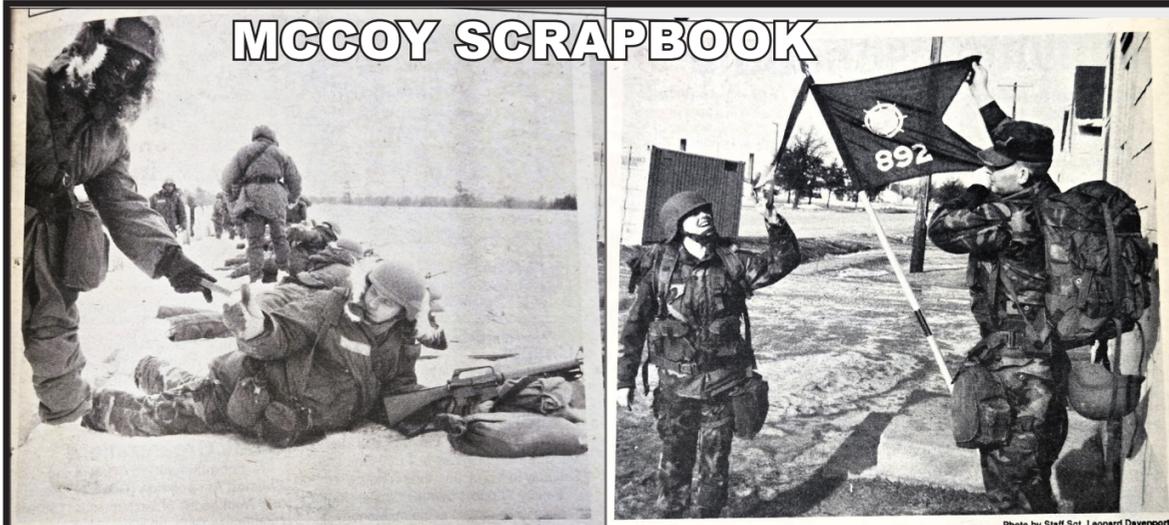
"Those who departed Dec. 16 were: Elwood Decora, electronics mechanic, DOL; Randy Goldsmith, heavy mobile equipment mechanic, DOL; Norval Miller, fabric worker, DOL; Jim Pacer, heavy mobile equipment mechanic, DOL; Everette Patterson, warehouse worker/motor vehicle operator, DOL; Duaine Rasmussen, warehouse worker foreman, DE; and Jim Scorsone, electronics mechanic, DOL.

"Departing Dec. 30 were: Robert Bemis, automotive worker, DOL; Dennis Brueggeman, warehouse worker, DOL; John Crooks, painter, DE; and Tom Habegger, warehouse worker foreman, DOL. Rita Verkerier, a personnel staffing specialist at the Directorate of Civilian Personnel (DCP) said all volunteers are in a temporary duty status and will remain attached to Fort McCoy during their deployment. Of the original 51 Fort McCoy volunteers, some changed their decision, and others did not have job skills matching those needed.

"Verkler said the only real pay incentive being offered is a pay differential of 20 percent, payable after 42 days in country. "There also will be considerable overtime, since they will be working six days a week, 12 hours a day," she said.

"Miller, who lives in Viroqua (Wis) with his wife Alma, said he volunteered for two reasons — to support the troops who are over there and to see a different part of the world. "It should be a good experience, and my family, though they have some doubts, are supporting

(See DESERT STORM AT MCCOY, Insert Page 2)



### MCCOY SCRAPBOOK

#### One more round

A soldier from the 892nd Transportation Company, a U.S. Army Reserve unit from Belleville, Ill., accepts a magazine from a range controller during weapons qualification. The 892nd was the last unit deployed from Fort McCoy to support Operation Desert Storm.

#### To guide them on

Two soldiers from the 892nd Transportation Company, a U.S. Army Reserve unit from Belleville, Ill., display the unit guidon. A total of 74 units representing more than 8,700 soldiers were activated and processed through Fort McCoy to support Operation Desert Storm.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Leonard Davenport

The eight members of the 220th Medical Detachment from Madison, Wis., salute the American flag during the post's Command Retreat ceremony.



Photo by Spec. Phil Pharr

**2361st support:** Switchboard operators Spec. Carol Maratta and Staff Sgt. David Noaker, both of the 2361st Signal Center Detachment, assist at the Fort McCoy switchboard. Approximately 50 members of the Akron, Ohio-based U.S. Army Reserve unit were activated to provide the post with around-the-clock communication's capabilities.

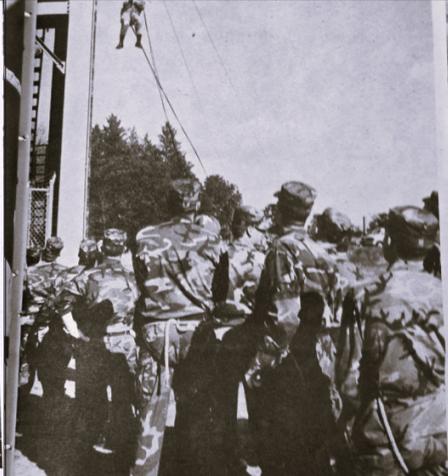


Photo by Rob Schuette

**Rappelling:** A member of the 915th Transportation Corps Company, Council Bluffs, Iowa, slides down a rappelling rope while other soldiers wait their turns. Rappelling was part of many units' physical conditioning and also served as a means of relieving soldiers' stress and tension.

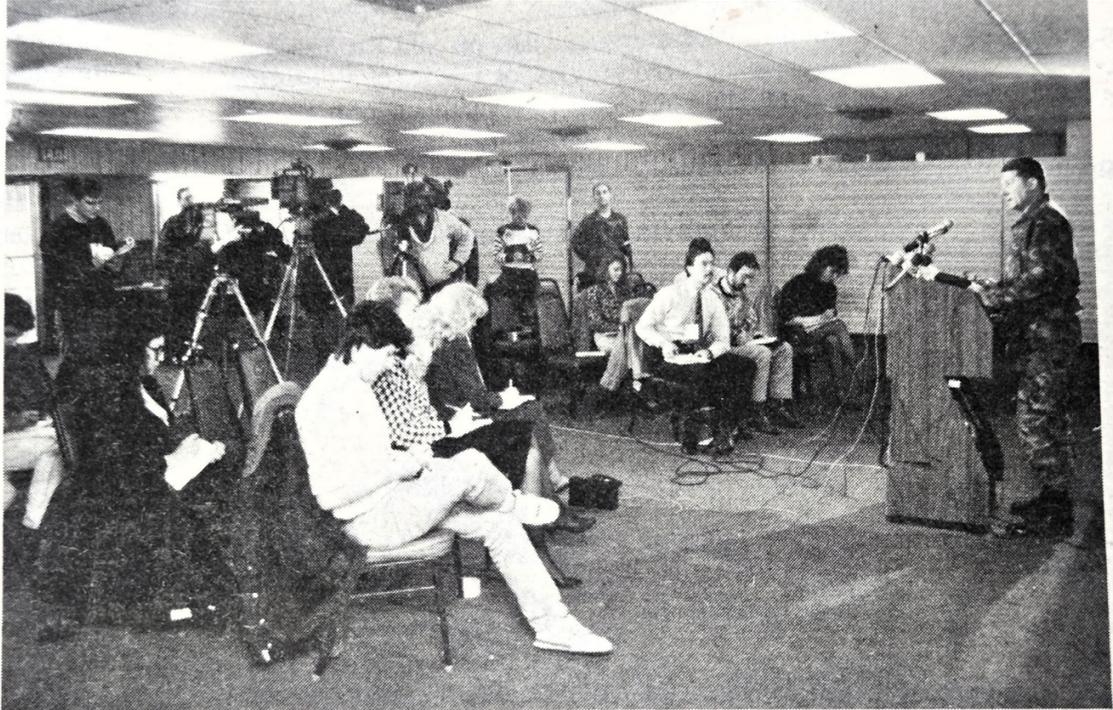


Photo by Rob Schuette

Garrison Commander Col. Raymond G. Boland addresses members of the media during a press conference held the day after Operation Desert Storm commenced.

# DESERT STORM AT MCCOY

from Page 1

my decision 100 percent,' he said."

## Starting to slow down

By February 1991, Fort McCoy leaders noticed a change in the pace of operations for Desert Storm support as the orders for mobilizing units began to slow down.

An article by The Triad staff in the Feb. 1, 1991, edition of the paper entitled, "McCoy's ODS role winding down," it shows an update from the garrison commander.

"Morale remains high among the Soldiers completing processing and training at Fort McCoy for deployment to the Operation Desert Storm theater of operations, said Garrison Commander Col. Raymond G. Boland.

"Boland said that although the post is in a winding down stage for the deployments, it is awaiting word of further missions. The short-term mission will include processing and training about 840 additional Soldiers for deployment.

"More than 90 percent of these troops are with the 224th Engineer Battalion (Combat Corps), an Iowa National Guard unit that has its headquarters in Fairfield. The 224th has subordinate units in Mount Pleasant, Burlington, Ottumwa, Muscatine, Centerville, and Keokuk.

"The remainder of the Soldiers are from two smaller military police detachments, the 34th and 146th. The 34th is an Iowa National Guard unit from Camp Dodge, and the 146th is a Michigan National Guard unit from Owosso. Each unit has about 30 personnel.

"Beyond that, the post had no further word of possible activations, Boland said. Fort McCoy is prepared to handle any future activations, he added, and preparations are being made for processing and returning re-deployed Soldiers to their Reserve units."

## Training received

Another newspaper article from the Feb. 15, 1991, edition of The Triad newspaper discusses some of the types of training Soldiers were receiving in preparation for Desert Storm.

The article, "Training: CRTA staff prepares Desert Storm Soldiers," also written by Hugh Williams, highlights one of the post's training organizations.

"Things are returning to a degree of normalcy for four subordinate units of the Fourth U.S. Army Consolidated Regional Training Activity (4A CRTA) as Phase II of Operation Desert Storm training here winds down.

"Lt. Col. Orman House, 4A CRTA deputy commander, said that the majority of units reporting to Fort McCoy for processing and training received training from a 4A CRTA unit before deploying.

"House said training was provided by the Light Fighter Academy (LFA), the Non-Commissioned Officer Academy (NCOA), the Regional Training Site (RTS)-Maintenance, and the Fourth Army Intelligence Training Army Area School (Fourth ITAAS).

"Between early September and mid-January, a total of more than 13,000 deploying troops trained with the four units,' he said. The LFA provided preliminary rifle instruction (PRI) for 5,992 Soldiers. LFA Commandant Capt. Jeffrey Smits said PRI prepared soldiers for the rifle range. The eight-hour class included basic shooting techniques, safety, zeroing in mechanically, and dry-fire exercises. After completing this instruction, the students went to the range for live firing.

"The Soldiers are very attentive during training,' he said. 'They all realize it would be to their benefit to become as proficient with their weapons as possible before they deploy.'

"Smits said the LFA also provided specialized training when requested. Sling loading, night vision, and fitness training were examples Smits cited. 'We have a total staff of 18, and all

were involved in the training one way or another,' Smits said. 'We would generally have 10 people instructing at any one time,' he added.

"The NCOA provided land-navigation training to 5,916 Soldiers according to Command Sgt. Maj. Ron Packard, academy commandant. Land navigation training included map reading, use of hand-held navigational instruments, and three to four hours in the field. Students were divided into teams of three to five Soldiers for the field training which took place in training area 108.

"Each team, equipped with a compass, protractor and map, was to find three specific points within the training area as quickly as possible. Though the length of the field course varied, it is usually between 3,000 and 4,000 meters (1.8 to 2.5 miles).

"The training has been pretty tough due to the deep snow conditions in the woods,' Packard said. 'In some areas the snow was knee deep,' he added. However, in spite of conditions, Packard said there have been no complaints.

"We show them a map of the Saudi Arabian area, and all they see is brown, which denotes sand, and grid lines. It makes them realize a knowledge of land navigation could someday be necessary for survival. The instructors usually get total attention.

"Packard said that most Soldiers consider the land navigation course a real confidence builder, and most units have done quite well. The course record before the snows came was 38 minutes; with the deep snow, it was 53 minutes. 'Both are darn good times,' Packard added.

"The NCOA has a staff of six, four of whom are instructors. 'We really had to push to get all the training done in the times allotted,' Packard said. 'At one point, we went three weeks straight without a break, and there were only three days off during the holidays.'

"Packard also noted that all training

was accomplished without an injury, and that only two classes were canceled due to subzero temperatures. 'We had a lot of real cold days out in the field, but it was important that the Soldiers received the proper training.'

"RTS-Maintenance provided operator and organizational level maintenance training to 383 Soldiers. According to Chief Warrant Officer Jim Thompson, RTS-Maintenance director, much of the training involved heavy-wheel recovery operations. RTS-Maintenance combined classroom work and hands-on training to provide the student with the best training possible.

"Thompson said the deploying Soldiers were good students. 'I'm sure they realized that maintenance could be a real problem in a desert environment, and they wanted to learn all they could.' RTS-Maintenance operates with a staff of nine, four of whom are instructors.

The Fourth ITAAS didn't get involved in Desert Storm training until November, when it was tasked to provide language training for units deploying to Germany. According to Fourth ITAAS Operations Officer Maj. John Gibbons, the school provided German language training for 820 Soldiers from three different units."

## When the war was won

After the successful campaign of Operation Desert Storm, Fort McCoy shifted into the effort to support Soldiers redeploying back home, just like was done during World War II and the Korean War.

And in the March 15, 1991, edition of The Triad newspaper, the transcript of President George Bush's address about the Desert Storm conclusion was a good reminder of what everyone at Fort McCoy and other installations across the then-Department of Defense completed to win the effort.

"Never have I been more proud of our troops, or more proud to be your commander in chief, for today, amid prayers of thanks and hope, the Kuwaiti flag once again flies high above Kuwait

City," Bush stated in his address. "And it's there because you and your coalition allies put it there. Kuwait is liberated, and soon hometowns across America will be welcoming back home the finest combat force ever assembled — Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Marines, Air Force — the brave men and women of the United States of America.

"Saddam Hussein's dreams of dominating the Middle East by the terror of nuclear arsenal and an army of a million men, threatened the future of our children and the entire world, and the world was faced with the simple choice — if international law and sanctions could not remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, then we had to free Kuwait from Saddam Hussein. And that's exactly what you did.

"Throughout seven long and arduous months, the troops of the 28 nations stood with you, shoulder to shoulder, in an unprecedented partnership for peace. Today, we thank you for the victory in Kuwait was born in your courage and resolve.

"The stunning success of our troops was a result of superb training, superb planning, superb execution, and incredible acts of bravery. The Iraqi Army was defeated. Forty-two divisions were put out of action. They lost 3,000 tanks — almost 2,000 armored vehicles — more than 2,000 artillery pieces, and over half a million Iraqi soldiers were captured, defeated or disarmed.

"You were as good as advertised," Bush said. "You were indeed, good to go.' This is a war we did not seek and did not want. But Saddam Hussein turned a deaf ear to the voices of peace and reason, and when he began burning Kuwait to the ground and intensifying the murder of his people, the coalition faced a moral imperative to put a stop to the atrocities in Kuwait once and for all. Boldly, bravely, you did just that, and when the rubber met the road, you did it in just six weeks, and 100 decisive hours.

"The evil Saddam has done can never be forgotten. But his power to attack his neighbors and threaten the peace of the region is today grievously reduced. He has been stripped of his capacity to project offensive military power. His regime is totally discredited, and as a threat to peace, the day of this dictator is over. And the bottom line is this: Kuwait's night of terror has ended.

"Thomas Jefferson said that the price for freedom is eternal vigilance. We must remain vigilant to make absolutely sure that the Iraqi dictator is never, ever allowed to stoke the ashes of defeat into the burning embers of aggression. The sacrifice you've already made demands nothing less. The sacrifice of those who gave their lives will never be forgotten.

"Saddam made many mistakes," the president said. "But one of the biggest was to underestimate the determination of the American people and the daring of our troops. We saw in the desert what Americans have learned through 215 years of history about the difference between democracy and dictatorship. Soldiers who fight for freedom are more committed than soldiers who fight because they are enslaved.

"Americans today are confident of our country, confident of our future, and most of all, confident about you. We promised you'd be given the means to fight. We promised not to look over your shoulder. We promised this would not be another Vietnam, and we kept that promise. The specter of Vietnam has been buried forever in the desert sands of the Arabian peninsula.

"Today, the promise of spring is almost upon us, the promise of regrowth and renewal. Renewed life in Kuwait. Renewed prospects for real peace throughout the Middle East, and a renewed sense of pride and confidence



**Face paint:** Soldiers from the 132nd Quartermaster Company of Cando, N.D., practice camouflage make-up techniques. The exercise was part of the

Photo by Spec. Phill Pharr



Photo by Phill Pharr

## Embarking

Deploying soldiers settle into their seats as final preparations are made for their departure from Volk Field to the Desert Shield theater of operations.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Leonard Davenport

A soldier from the 311th Evacuation Hospital, Bismarck, N.D., greets his wife and family upon his return to Volk Field.

here at home. And we're committed to seeing every American Soldier and every allied POW home soon, home to the thanks and the respect and the love of a grateful nation, and a very grateful president. Yes, there remain vital and difficult tests ahead, both here and abroad, but nothing the American people can't handle. America has always accepted the challenge, paid the price, and passed the test.

"On this day, our spirits are high as our flag, and our future, as bright as Liberty's torch. Tomorrow, we dedicate ourselves anew, as Americans always have, and as Americans always will. The first test of the new world order has been passed. The hard work of freedom awaits. Thank you, congratulations and God Bless The United States of America."

## Monumental effort overall

After all was said and done, what Fort McCoy completed to aid in the victory during Operation Desert Storm could be considered impressive, particularly in the short amount of time where everything was coordinated, supported, and completed.

First, according to records, following are some Army Reserve and National Guard units that processed and trained at Fort McCoy for Desert Storm:

— **890th Transportation Company (Army Reserve)** — Land navigation, weapons quals, vehicle preparation.

— **Army 892nd Transportation Company (Army Reserve)** — Arrived early February with 220 Soldiers; trained and prepped equipment.

— **822nd Military Police Company (Army Reserve)** — Prepared at Fort

McCoy before deployment Feb. 8-15, 1991.

— **224th Engineer Battalion (Iowa National Guard)** — Over 90 percent of Soldiers training at McCoy in February 1991.

— **Army detachment units** — 757th, 1150th, 1151st, and 1152nd Transportation Company detachments from Wisconsin. Through late-February 1991, approximately 65 units with 8,200 total personnel had been processed, trained, and deployed via Fort McCoy since August 1990.

From February 1991 alone, historical reports at Fort McCoy showed the last five units deployed from Fort McCoy in early February 1991. And at the point, Fort McCoy had processed and trained a total of 64 units with more than 8,000 Soldiers for deployment. In total, 3,076 pieces of equipment were shipped on 1,150 rail cars, which, placed end to end, would stretch over 19 miles.

## Behind the scenes:

— **Logistics, training equipment prep** — Nearly 3,000 vehicles and equipment pieces repainted in desert tan colors and prepared for shipment.

— **Transportation coordination** — Fort McCoy worked with Volk Field Air National Guard Base and commercial carriers for troop and equipment movement.

— **Air movements** — Over 100 air missions used aircraft like C-141 Starlifters and C-5 Galaxies to support deployment phases.

Boland later was also impressed in what was accomplished. He noted that Fort McCoy's role in Desert Shield/Storm strengthened its status as a criti-

cal Total Force mobilization and power projection platform, supporting Army Reserve and National Guard units' transition from U.S. soil to overseas operations.

"Fort McCoy is proud of its contribution to the war effort," Boland said in the May 18, 1991, edition of The Triad. "Members of the units that were trained here, as well as representatives of their higher headquarters, consistently have praised the installation for affording them the finest degree of support possible. The outstanding manner in which Fort McCoy performed its mission of processing, training, and preparing these troops for war was no coincidence. From the start, it required teamwork on the part of every unit member and Fort McCoy's military and civilian workforce."

Fort McCoy's motto is to be the "Total Force Training Center." Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin. The installation has provided support and facilities for the field and classroom training of more than 100,000 military personnel from all services nearly every year since 1984. Learn more about Fort McCoy online at <https://home.army.mil/mccoy>, on Facebook by searching "fimmccoy," on Flickr at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fortmccoywi/>, and on X (formerly Twitter) by searching "usagmccoy." Also try downloading the My Army Post app to your smartphone and set "Fort McCoy" or another installation as your preferred base. Fort McCoy is also part of Army's Installation Management Command where "We Are The Army's Home."

# Operation Desert Storm veterans recall pre-deployment training at Fort McCoy, wartime service with 890th Transportation Company

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

Thirty-five years after the completion of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, former Army Sgts. Mark Christensen and Phillip Cornelius remember their service with the Army Reserve's 890th Transportation Company quite vividly.

And through all the time since they served together in the deserts of Southwest Asia in 1990 and 1991, both men have remained the best of friends. Some would even say they are like brothers.

## How it started

History shows Desert Shield and Desert Storm, also known as the Gulf War, took place from Aug. 2, 1990, to Feb. 28, 1991. On Aug. 2, 1990, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein led a well-equipped Iraqi army into Kuwait, a major supplier of oil to the United States.

According to a Department of Defense report in 2019 by Shannon Collins, it states the U.S. had supplied Iraq with military aid during its eight-year war with Iran, giving Iraq the fourth-largest army in the world at that time. This posed a threat to Saudi Arabia, another major exporter of oil. If Saudi Arabia fell, Iraq would control one-fifth of the world's oil supply. The Iraqi leader also was repeatedly violating United Nations resolutions, so the U.S. had U.N. support in responding to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait with Desert Shield and then Desert Storm.

Once the Gulf War began, thousands of Guard and Reserve services members were called to active duty — including Christensen and Cornelius. An Oct. 10, 1990, Associated Press news article by Robert Burns states that on that date the 890th was among many activated.

"More than 33,000 military reservists have been called to active duty in support of the U.S. buildup in the Persian Gulf area — nearly as many as were activated during crises in Vietnam and Korea in 1968," the article states. "The Army today activated 12 National Guard and 24 Army Reserve units from 24 states and Puerto Rico, for a total of 4,846 troops. Meanwhile, the Marine Corps said Wednesday it was calling up about 160 reservists. Those actions brought to 33,252 the number of reservists from all services activated since Aug. 22 when President Bush authorized their use in support of Operation Desert Shield."

The 890th, in 1990, was headquartered in Green Bay, Wis., and that's the area where both Christensen and Cornelius still reside. When the 890th was mobilized, that meant training had to be completed. To do that training, they went to Fort McCoy.

## Training at Fort McCoy

By October 1990, Fort McCoy had already had many units — both Guard and Reserve — already busily training and preparing for Operation Desert Shield. Soldiers with the 890th were among them and had already been preparing for deployment in September.

"While at McCoy, we painted the trucks, did weapons qualifications, and basic field combat training," Christensen said.

Just before leaving on deployment, 890th Soldiers were featured in a Nov. 16, 1990, article by Rob Schuette with the Fort McCoy Triad newspaper (now The Real McCoy). The article discussed land-navigation training the unit had completed on Fort McCoy's South Post in late-October 1990.

"Training has been keeping people very busy," said 890th's 1st Sgt. Calvin Thomson in the article. "They're enthusiastic because they know that their survival could depend on what they learn." Thomson noted that the 890th's mission is to haul containerized military cargo on 40-foot trailers.

Spec. John Panosian of the 890th also mentioned in the article, "We've got our trucks ready and in working order. I'm anxious to get over there and get the mission completed."

890th's Sgt. James Socha discussed how busy their time training at McCoy was in the article: "You put in a lot of long hours during something like this."

Christensen and Cornelius were among the many 890th Soldiers doing the land-navigation training and so much more before deploying. Christensen

said his unit's mobilization training at the "Total Force Training Center" was "excellent."

By early November 1990, the 890th finished their two-plus months of mobilization training at Fort McCoy and departed the installation. The unit's Soldiers arrived at their deployed location in Saudi Arabia on Nov. 14.

## In the fight

Christensen and Cornelius both knew when they arrived in Saudi Arabia that they had to hit the ground running to be ready for anything.

Both Soldiers served as truck drivers for the unit and had an important mission.

"We provided combat support," Christensen said. "We were responsible for transporting ammunition, bombs, Patriot missiles, multiple-launch rocket systems, 155-millimeter rounds for tanks, water, and pallets of food."

In the book "United States Army Reserve in Operation Desert Storm: Ground Transportation Operations," which was released in January 1994, it shows the 890th supported the 766th Transportation Battalion and operated from Logistical Base Echo in Saudi Arabia.

The book states the units within the battalion primarily hauled spare parts, Patriot missiles, ammunition, and basically whatever was needed in support of the Army VII Corps.

"Their line-haul before the air combat began was from the port of Dammam (Saudi Arabia) to Log Base Echo, which was a 500-mile trip one way," the book states. "During the ground war, continual transportation support of sustainment supplies — food, ammunition, and repair parts — was provided to the VII Corps elements as they moved deep into Iraqi territory. Once the ground phase ended, the 766th started to provide support to the XVIII Airborne Corps redeployment as well as the VII Corps. The 766th also hauled relief supplies into Kuwait while the corps were withdrawing."

Both Christensen and Cornelius were part of those long hauls from the port to their base as well as other areas, especially in February 1991.

"We were all over," Christensen said. "We were in Saudi, Kuwait, and Iraq."

The book states the 766th experienced the same problems with inadequate communications for command and control as other units had during the war along with other issues. But the mission got done because Soldiers like Christensen and Cornelius were working hard.

"Some of the line-hauls were almost 1,000 miles one way, and days would go by before contact was re-established," the book states. "Good platoon leadership and responsible E-4 and E-5 drivers kept things on the right track."

The book's review about the battalion Cornelius and Christensen were assigned to also states that for the entire period of the deployment, the battalion's operational rate exceeded 95 percent, which was "a remarkable performance attributed to the versatility and multiple talents of the Reservists' civilian skills. These units didn't have to wait on direct support maintenance units for repairs. Their own mechanics could change a diesel engine in a tractor in one day or rebuild a transmission."

In essence, Cornelius and Christensen and their fellow transportation Soldiers achieved amazing results despite the tough missions they faced in a wartime environment.

## Looking back 35 years later

After three-plus decades since they survived the war and did their part in liberating Kuwait, Christensen and Cornelius recall their service there as a hard one because of what they faced and experienced. But that service has also kept them bonded like brothers.

"What I remember most are the special friendships that I made and how well everyone worked together," Christensen said. "I remember how hot it was during the day and cold at night. I remember the oil fires in Kuwait."

"I came home angry because we didn't finish the job," Christensen said. "I was feeling guilty because of helping in the killing all those people. Trivial things that bothered me before deployment were no longer a big deal, and I appreciated all that I had going for me at home."

Cornelius added, "It feels like we didn't finish the



File Photo by Robert Schuette, Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office

**Soldiers with the 890th Transportation Company, an Army Reserve unit based in Green Bay, Wis., complete land-navigation training Oct. 28, 1990, at Fort McCoy, Wis. The company was doing the training as part of mobilization training to deploy to Operation Desert Shield.**



Courtesy photo

**Army Sgts. Mark Christensen and Phillip Cornelius with the 890th Transportation Company, an Army Reserve unit based in Green Bay, Wis., are shown in Kuwait City, Kuwait, on Feb. 27, 1991. Both Soldiers were part of the deployed 766th Transportation Battalion and operated from Logistical Base Echo in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. Both Soldiers became best friends during the operations and are still friends today. Both trained at Fort McCoy, Wis., prior to deploying for the Gulf War.**

job that we were sent to do. I have suffered from hearing loss and PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). But even with these issues, I'm very proud to have served my country. I would do it all over again with my brothers and sister who I served with."

Christensen talked about some things he and his fellow Desert Storm vets have done since the Gulf War.

"If I knew then what I know now, I would have done my full 20 years instead of getting out at 12 years," Christensen said. "Having kids made me decide that I didn't want to take the risk of being deployed. I saw how it affected my unit members who did have kids at home. Also, while deployed, I made the best friend for life that a person could ever ask for. That is Corny (Cornelius)."

"When we got home, along with another friend of ours, Dave Rasmussen, had an idea to start a group similar to the Vietnam Vets of America,"

Christensen said. "We all started the Desert Veterans of Wisconsin. The group is not only desert vets. It is open to any service member who was honorably discharged or is still in service in any branch of the military."

Sadly, Rasmussen — also a 890th Soldier who served with them in Desert Storm — died in 2009 at the age of 39 from cancer. He is remembered by all the founding members of the Desert Veterans of Wisconsin with fondness and respect. Through the group, Christensen said they make a difference in the lives of veterans and their families every day, and he knows Rasmussen is proud of everything the group does.

The 890th Transportation Company completed its active-duty activation for the Gulf War in June 1991. The unit's service, along with many like them in the Gulf War, helped end an invasion and occupation, and returned freedom to a foreign nation. It also made two men brothers for life.

# Two 88th RD mechanics recall equipment volume, condition during Operation Desert Fix

STORY & PHOTOS BY CHERYL PHILLIPS  
88th Readiness Division Public Affairs

Many people are familiar with Operation Desert Shield/Storm and Operation Desert Fox. But not as many are aware of Operation Desert Fix where the heroes were the mechanics assigned to the Equipment Concentration Site (ECS) 67 at Fort McCoy.

Starting in spring of 1991, ECS 67 started receiving equipment and vehicles for repair from the Middle East after the conclusion of Operation Desert Storm, which grew to "hundreds of hundreds" recalled George Hafner, one of only two current employees at ECS 67 (in 2022) who were there at the time of Desert Fix. Presently a work leader, then he was a "straight 8" or wage grade 8 mechanic. Hafner has been with ECS 67 since December 1990.

Joining him was Timothy Lawrence, then an automotive worker and now a heavy mobile equipment repair supervisor. He joined ECS 67 the same month and year as Hafner. Currently, ECS 67 belongs to the 88th Readiness Division dual headquartered at Fort Snelling, Minn., and at McCoy. At the time of the mission, the ECS fell under the 86th Army Reserve Command.

For six to eight months, Lawrence and Hafner were joined by about two dozen other mechanics to repair the flood of equipment and vehicles surging into the ECS. Other shops located here also participated in Operation Desert Fix over the course of a year.

"The volume of the equipment coming in was taking away from our mission, so halfway through we went to two shifts," Lawrence said.

Lawrence feels that two reasons ECS 67 was chosen for the mission were the location and availability of manpower. "A lot of the equipment belonged to units located around here. We maintain and store Army Reserve equipment from Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Indiana and parts of Ohio," he said.

One positive was that the mechanics saw no equipment that they hadn't worked on in the past. Hafner spent most of his time at the trailer shop where he mainly repaired M872 three-axle flatbed trailers. "Most of them were pretty rusty...they were really in tough shape," he said.

Lawrence worked largely on tactical wheeled vehicles, such as deuce-and-a-halves, 5-ton, cargo trucks, and tractors.

Hafner said he saw the competing requirement to repair the equipment coming in for Desert Fix and continue to execute the dual mission to support the Army Reserve units as the biggest challenge.

He also noted that another difficulty was that "the condition of the equipment was so bad, rusty, rusty, rusty. Trying to repair equipment when it's rusty is really rough. It's hard to get it apart, hard to repair."

Lawrence said the poor equipment condition was the result of the climate, from the desert environment, sand and exposure to salty sea water and sea air during transport to and from the Middle East. "All that coming together really takes a toll on the equipment," he said.

One of the lessons Hafner learned from the experience was "being



**George Hafner and Timothy Lawrence review the parts list for an air compressor unit March 9, 2022, at the 88th Readiness Division Equipment Concentration Site. Both men were part of the original team of mechanics that supported Operation Desert Fix.**

flexible with my schedule. At a moment's notice you could be pulled to work on something else."

Lawrence said that one of the advantages of being involved in the historic mission was that the work "enhanced my learning and broadened my maintenance skills."

He added that "the completion of the mission, having a sense of purpose and supporting the troops" gave him fulfillment.

Hafner also felt a sense of accomplishment from the mission. "Seeing a piece of equipment after it first came in, getting it apart and repairing it back to (Technical Manual) 10-20 standards was the best part about the mission. Seeing a trailer go out ready for a mission was by far the best, and we know the units that used the equipment were

appreciative of the work we did."

Lawrence recounted an interesting story. The mechanics had an issue with a 10-ton crane.

"The hydraulics weren't working. They got to the point where they drained the reservoir; you're looking at 50 gallons of hydraulic fluid. When they started draining it, they noticed chunks of rubber, like inner tube rubber. They could see this thing laying in there. It was an AK-47 [rifle] a troop wanted to bring back to the States. He wrapped it up in tire rubber and dropped it in the hydraulic tank and was planning to recover it at the Reserve Center."

The unidentified Soldier didn't get to keep the rifle.  
(Editor's note: This article is reprinted from 2022.)

# Army Desert Storm vet, Bradley driver, recalls service in ground operations for Gulf War

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL  
Public Affairs Staff

Growing up in Wakefield, Mich., in the state's western Upper Peninsula, former Army Spc. Arthur L. Saily II was described by many of his school friends as "one tough kid."

Wakefield sits in the heart of "Big Snow Country," where every winter the snowfall totals are in the hundreds of inches, and people native to the area are considered the hearty, tough, independent type. That certainly describes Saily, he'll admit.

Throughout his youth, Saily said, he enjoyed working to help his family get through tough winters, doing things outdoors, and having good friends. However, once he graduated from Wakefield High School in the spring of 1987, he also knew he wanted more adventure in his life. So, not long after graduation, Saily signed up to "be all he could be" in the U.S. Army.

## Joining the Army

After completing Army basic training in summer 1988, and then advanced individual training to further his Soldier skills and become the operator of an M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle, Saily was assigned to Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas.

Fort Hood is surrounded by the Killeen, Copperas Cove, Harker Heights, Belton, Gatesville, Temple, and Lampassas communities and was an area like a foreign country to a young man from Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Saily said.

According to the Fort Hood website, it's a 214,968-acre installation and is the only post in the United States capable of stationing and training two armored divisions. Saily said he was happy to be at a new place doing something new.

As an M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle operator, Saily was in control of one of the Army's newest armored vehicles at one of the busiest active-duty Army installations.

The Army introduced the M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle in the mid-1980s, according to Britannica.com. The armored vehicle weighs 27.6 tons, has a three-person crew, can carry six infantry Soldiers, and is armed with a turret-mounted 25-millimeter cannon and an antitank missile launcher.

"I enjoyed driving the Bradley and did it for three years before Desert Storm," Saily said. "I became very good at it."

## Getting call to Desert Shield

By August 1990, when Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein sent his military forces into Kuwait on an invasion to take over the country's oil supply, Saily was a well-trained warfighter who had honed his skills as a Bradley driver.

As Operation Desert Shield began at that same time, Saily said he knew they were going to get the call. And he knew they were ready for anything.

"Prior to going to combat, we did three, three-week tours in a year and a half at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif., in the Death Valley desert," Saily said. "That was very helpful."

On Oct. 1, 1990, Saily said his unit went on lockdown, and they were finalizing their deployment to Desert Shield to Saudi Arabia.

"During that time, we got a lot of medical shots, did our packing, and so much more," Saily said. "I felt nervous and excited at the same time."

By Oct. 6, 1990, Saily said he boarded a plane at Fort Hood wearing full combat gear and headed to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

"After arrival, we went through quarantine for a week, picked up brand new Bradleys and ammunition, and headed northeast to a neutral zone that Iraq had taken over. We dug in positions on the

border there and waited for orders."

## Transitioning to Desert Storm

Saily said he and his fellow Soldiers stood guard at their positions for three months.

"We trained doing what we could do with our guard up," Saily said. "There was lots of radio watch and guard duty. I got bored."

However on Jan. 17, 1991, everything changed. Operation Desert Shield transitioned to Operation Desert Storm with the start of the air war. The air war continued daily until the ground war started on Feb. 24.

Saily recalled some of his missions.

"I went on a reconnaissance mission in late February to blow up communication towers," said Saily who operated the Bradley Fighting Vehicle with his unit's commanding officer. "That was exciting because we called for fire from artillery and watched from a distance at night as that mission got done."

A day after that mission, Saily said his unit received orders to go forward through the Wadi Al-Batin border area. Wadi Al-Batin is an intermittent river in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait. It is the lowest and final section of Wadi al-Rummah, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. It runs 45 miles in a northeast-southwest direction through the Al-Dibdibah plain and has been recognized since 1913 as the border between Kuwait and Iraq.

After crossing the Wadi Al-Batin, Saily said, all hell broke loose.

"Right away we engaged the enemy bunkers, artillery, and tanks," Saily said. "We lost two Bradleys and three comrades. Two of those comrades were good friends."

"During this time, I did my job on instinct as the training took over," Saily said. "This was the most afraid I'd ever been in my life so far. I was sweating horribly during what was a 7-hour battle. I was praying as I was driving and taking orders from my captain."

Saily said that after he experienced that first contact, he was a changed man.

"I was so alert about everything and feared at some point my life could be taken," he said.

Saily said his unit continued to advance and they came across other skirmishes as the ground war continued. Officially, the timeline states the ground war lasted 100 hours. In reality, Saily said, there was more to everything they faced, but overall, the fight didn't last an extended time.

## Looking back 35 years

In February 1991, Saily was in combat putting his life on the line. In February 2021, he still relives the combat he experienced and the things he saw in war and has severe PTSD.

Saily said he gets treatment and care for his condition, but it is not easy.

"I still stress out every time the third week of February comes around," Saily said.

Now approaching 57 years old, Saily is back living in his native Upper Peninsula. He's not in his native city of Wakefield on the west end of the peninsula — rather 300-plus miles east on the eastern section of the Upper Peninsula in Detour.

Saily said he misses the camaraderie he had with his fellow Soldiers, and is glad he was part of the Army. "Even though I had to experience and see what I did, I would do it again," Saily said. "Proud to be an American!"

According to the Department of Defense, about 697,000 U.S. troops took part in the war, with 299 losing their lives — including the three Soldiers who served with Saily. Additionally, the U.S. and 40 allied nations, including several Arab nations, flew more than 18,000 air deployment missions, more than 116,000 combat air sorties, and dropped 88,500 tons of bombs.



Courtesy photo

Army Spc. Arthur Saily II with the Army's Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Division of Fort Hood, Texas, peers out the hatch of an M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle on Feb. 23, 1991, near the Saudi Arabia/Iraq border. Saily was part of combat operations in the ground war for Operation Desert Storm. Saily is a Wakefield, Mich., native.



XVIII Airborne Corps History Office photograph by Spc. Randall R. Anderson

This is a left front quarter view of an M-2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle shown on Nov. 20, 1990, at the Theater Ammunition Supply Point outside Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in the Eastern Province while the Soldiers were on guard duty.

# Reviewing 83rd, 86th, 88th Army Reserve Commands during Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm

BY WARD ZISCHKE  
88th Readiness Division Historian

The U.S. Army Reserve is undergoing change and transition today. To better understand today's changes, let's go back several transitions ago to 1990-91 during Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

The U.S. Army Reserve Command, or USARC, was in carrier status during Desert Shield/Desert Storm. The Army Reserve units were divided into Armies, and each Army controlled several Army Reserve Commands, or ARCOMs, for a total of 20.

The 83rd, 86th, and 88th ARCOMs were under Fourth Army, located at Fort Sheridan, Ill., and are now inactivated. These ARCOMs wore the same shoulder patch as the 83rd Army Reserve Readiness Training Center (ARRTC), 86th Training Division, and 88th Readiness Division.

The 83rd ARCOM's headquarters were in Columbus, Ohio, and it mobilized 19 units for Desert Shield/Desert Storm from Ohio. Of these units, six are still active today in the same state.

The 86th ARCOM's headquarters was in Forest Park, Ill., and it mobilized 32 units from Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Of these units, the 395th and 826th Ordnance companies remain in the same state today, as do seven other units.

During Desert Shield/Desert Storm, the 86th ARCOM controlled Equipment Concentration Site (ECS) 67 on Fort McCoy, which was also involved in Operation Desert Fix (see page 3) for equipment returning from the theater. Plaques commemorating Desert Fix are still on the wall at ECS 67.

The 86th ARCOM also had the 12th Special Forces Group under its control, but this unit did not go to Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

The 88th ARCOM headquarters were located at Building 506 on Fort Snelling, Minn., where the 88th commanding general resides today. It mobilized 14 units to Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

Five units mobilized from their home stations on Thanksgiving Day 1990. Of the mobilized units, only the 79th Military Police Company exists today in the same state.

The 88th also had command and control of the 205th Infantry Brigade (Arctic) (Light). Part of the obstacle course on Fort McCoy today was used by the 205th for their school — the Light Fighter Academy.

Each of the ARCOMs also had several Army Reserve Forces Schools. The 5042nd Army Reserve Forces School, 88th ARCOM, conducted emergency training for several critical military occupational specialties on Fort McCoy during Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

The 83rd, 86th, and 88th ARCOMs also had civil affairs and psychological units, as well as 105mm, 155mm, and 8-inch artillery battalions under their command and control. Examples of these artillery pieces are located at the Fort McCoy Commemorative Area and the 88th Readiness Division Headquarters at Fort McCoy.

The ARCOMs lost all these units due to the Offsite Agreement of December 1993. The 83rd, 86th, and 88th ARCOMs were inactivated in 1996, and their territories were combined to become the 88th Regional Support Command (RSC) from 1996 to 2003.

(Editor's note: Elements of the 83rd ARRTC [Fort McCoy Non-commissioned Officer Academy], 86th Training Division, and 88th Readiness Division are tenant organizations at Fort McCoy today.)



Little Britany Russell greets her returning father, 1st Sgt. Bruce Russell, 758th Maint. Co.



Courtesy photos

