

The Expeditionary Times

Proudly serving the finest expeditionary service members throughout Iraq

Vol. 5, Issue 17

July 27, 2011

Farewell loyal ‘Expeditionary Times’ readers

CAPT. MICHAEL GARCIA
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES MANAGING EDITOR



After eight years of being the only publication of its kind, “The Expeditionary Times,” a 16-page weekly newspaper with a circulation of 3,500 editions distributed throughout Iraq, is sadly seeing its final publication today. It’s been an incredible experience working on it here at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

When I tell people that I work with the news media that covers Iraq, the general reaction is “Wow that sounds like a tough job.” To that, I say I have the best job in the world.

I have the privilege of representing young American men and women who are doing a difficult job in a dangerous place. The reposturing of forces and equipment from Iraq during the historical drawdown phase, as well as the importance of the sustainment and retrograde operations, are extremely difficult stories to tell, and yet the public affairs

teams, past and present, have done it professionally with ease and skill.

It has been my honor to serve alongside all of the amazing people who have been supporting the expeditionary sustainment command mission and those who have ensured those experiences were shared with all of you. On behalf of my crew – Sgt. Benjamin Green, Sgt. Felicya Adams and myself – we wish all those that remain in Iraq a safe and satisfying deployment and a smooth transition home to their families.

To our two Mobile Public Affairs Detachment teams, the 109th MPAD with Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Askew, Sgt. Tracie Slempa, Spc. Matthew Keeler and Spc. Zane Craig; and the 29th MPAD with Sgt. 1st Class Rob Barker, Sgt. Stephen Scott, Sgt. Edwin Gray and Spc. Aimee Fujikawa; thank you for your dedication and hard work. Keep up the superb job you do; your service will have lasting effects on people and on our future both here in theater and around the world. We have been blessed to have you. You are family and will

truly be missed.

I would be remiss if I didn’t thank our down-trace units that contributed to ensuring we were able to provide you a quality product each week. It was because of professionals with the 77th Sustainment Brigade, 4th Sustainment Brigade, 53rd Movement Control Battalion and all Unit Public Affairs Representatives sending in hundreds of professional products that ensured both the Department of Defense and Army logistics stories were told.

Please enjoy our final edition as we say farewell to “The Expeditionary Times.” This final paper is a re-printing of feature spreads from our previous editions, covering the diverse aspects of the 310th ESC’s vast footprint in Iraq. Enjoy this edition as an artistic representation of the 310th ESC’s sustainment and retrograde operations in Iraq.

As a final note, I think J.F.K. said it best: “Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.” Continue to learn and lead the way. We wish you the best of luck in the future with “fair winds and following seas.”

Victory Through Support

The Expeditionary Times

310th ESC Commanding General:
Brig. Gen. Don S. Cornett, Jr.

“The Expeditionary Times” is authorized for publication by the 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command. The contents of “The Expeditionary Times” are unofficial and are not to be considered the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government.

“The Expeditionary Times” is a command-information newspaper in accordance with Army Regulation 360-1 and is reviewed by the ESC G2 for security purposes.

“The Expeditionary Times” is published weekly by the “Stars and Stripes” central office, with a circulation of 3,500 papers per week.

The Public Affairs Office is located on New Jersey Avenue, Building 7508, DSN 318-433-2154. Expeditionary Times, HHC 310th ESC, APO AE 09391. Web site at www.dvidshub.net/units/310ESC.

310th ESC PAO, Managing Editor
Capt. Michael Garcia
michael.garcia@iraq.centcom.mil

310th ESC PA NCOIC, Design Editor
Sgt. Benjamin Green
benjamin.green@iraq.centcom.mil

310th ESC Operations NCOIC
Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Askew
kevin.askew@iraq.centcom.mil

310th ESC Marketing NCOIC
Sgt. 1st Class Robert Barker
robert.barker@iraq.centcom.mil

310th ESC Staff Writers
Sgt. Edwin Gray
edwin.gray@iraq.centcom.mil
Sgt. Stephen Scott
stephen.e.scott@iraq.centcom.mil
Sgt. Felicya Adams
felicya.adams@iraq.centcom.mil

Spc. Zane Craig
zane.craig@iraq.centcom.mil
Spc. Matthew Keeler
matthew.keeler@iraq.centcom.mil

Spc. Aimee Fujikawa
aimee.fujikawa@iraq.centcom.mil

Contributing public affairs offices
77th Sustainment Brigade
4th Sustainment Brigade
53rd Movement Control Battalion
3rd Combined Arms Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment
1st Combined Arms Battalion, 163rd Infantry Regiment
332nd Air Expeditionary Wing

For online publication visit:
www.dvidshub.net/units/310ESC
keyword: Expeditionary Times

Contact “The Expeditionary Times” staff at:
escpao@iraq.centcom.mil

Mission Statement: “The Expeditionary Times” staff publishes a weekly newspaper with the primary mission of providing command information to all service members, partners, and families of the 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command team and a secondary mission of providing a means for units on Joint Base Balad to disseminate command information to their audiences.





Brig. Gen. Mark Corson, commanding general of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and a Maryville, Mo., native, presents a 103rd ESC trophy to Maj. Gen. Edward Cardon, deputy commanding general for support for United States Forces-Iraq, during the Transfer of Authority ceremony between the 103rd ESC and the 310th ESC April 1 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SPC. MATTHEW KEELER
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – In the half-light of Sustainer Theater April 1 on Joint Base Balad, Iraq, a golden cloth flag was gently folded by two Soldiers who cared deeply for that single piece of cloth. They both took time and care to wrap and secure it before sliding an Army-Combat-Uniform-patterned sleeve over it.

These were no ordinary Soldiers, but Brig. Gen. Mark Corson, commanding general of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), a Maryville, Mo., native, and Command Sgt. Maj. LeRoy Haugland, command sgt. maj. and senior enlisted advisor of the 103rd ESC, a Cresco, Iowa, native.

“The casing of the 103rd Sustainment Command Expeditionary’s colors signifies the completion of the mission and is symbolic of the outgoing command’s journey,” said Sgt. 1st Class Ray Calef, the public affairs noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the 103rd ESC, a Des Moines, Iowa, native, and the master of ceremony for the Transfer of Authority ceremony.

The cloth was the colors of the 103rd ESC, and the

covering of their colors during the ToA formally transitions the mission to the 310th ESC, the unit replacing the 103rd.

“Today marks the end of the 103rd ESC’s 275 days on-mission sustaining U.S. Forces-Iraq, supporting the ISF’s [Iraqi Security Forces] supply and train mission, and re-posturing the force,” Corson said. “It has been a great privileged to be a part of U.S. Forces-Iraq, and making history here. And, that whatever our sacrifices, it was worth it.”

When the 103rd ESC arrived in country, the Soldiers and command element were put to the test.

“We knew we would assume this mission in the middle of what was called ‘the waterfall,’ as we completed the responsible drawdown of forces from 130,000 to 50,000, in only four months,” Corson said.

The responsible drawdown signified the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom and began the new mission of Operation New Dawn. Corson admits that there were naysayers, who did not believe that the 103rd ESC could responsibly draw down forces from Iraq by the September deadline.

However, the 103rd ESC, along USF-I, proved them wrong by completing the mission 10 days early and seamlessly changing the mission over to OND.

“Sustainment does not take care of itself,” Corson said. “It happens through the dedicated effort of the 5,000 Soldiers,

Airmen, Sailors, and 6,500 contractors of the expeditionary sustainment command working with our strategic partners and the brigade support battalions.”

The sheer amount of time, effort and equipment that the 103rd ESC helped coordinate and track is something that is amazing.

“In the last 275 days, the sustainers executed about 31,000 convoys consisting of about 1.2 million vehicles that sustained the force to re-posture equipment,” Corson said. “That, on an average day, that would be tons of food, thousands of bottled water, hundreds of tons of mail, and thousands of gallons of fuel to contingency bases around Iraq.”

What that means is that every Soldier got their mail, and any other mission essential equipment every day, Corson said.

“That more than anything is the real story,” he said.

“Today is a kind of bittersweet day as the 103rd ESC, but I’m heartened to know that my battle buddy, Brig. Gen. Cornett, and our sister unit, the 310th ESC, are here to relieve us,” Corson said. “Though part of my heart will remain with the dedicated sustainment Soldiers still here continuing this mission, I know they will be in great hands with Don [Cornett] and his great 310th team.”

With the unfurling of their colors, the 310th ESC, after about a year of training, is ready to take over the mission



Changing hands Sustainment mission, drawdown become 310th ESC’s responsibility

Brig. Gen. Don S. Cornett, commanding general of the 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and an Aurora, Neb., native, and Command Sgt. Maj. Debbie Schroder, command sgt. maj. and senior enlisted advisor for the 310th ESC and a Bloomington, Ill., native, unfurl the colors of the 310th ESC, marking their commitment to the sustainment mission during the Transfer of Authority ceremony April 1 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. The 310th ESC took over the mission from the 103rd ESC, a unit from Des Moines, Iowa.



Brig. Gen. Mark Corson and Command Sgt. Maj. LeRoy Haugland pull a cover over the colors of the 103rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) during the Transfer of Authority ceremony April 1 at Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

in Iraq from the 103rd ESC, said Brig. Gen. Don S. Cornett Jr., commanding general of the 310th ESC, and an Aurora, Neb., native.

“This deployment will be demanding and will bring new challenges as we conclude Operation New Dawn,” Cornett said. “I am proud to serve with every one of you”.

Even as the green cactus and golden cloth of the 103rd’s colors are covered, it does not mean that the mission of the 103rd is completely over.

“I’m looking forward to some much-deserved rest for all the Soldiers; this is not end of mission, it is a change of mission because we have 6,000 Army Reserve Soldiers in 77 units in six different states that we are responsible for,” Corson said.

Before leaving the podium, Corson wanted the gathered Soldiers, Airmen and Sailors that he had commanded for 275 days to know how much he appreciated their work.

“To the sustainment Soldiers, Airmen, and Sailors, the great work that you have done cannot be measured on a spreadsheet, and your achievements are monumental,” he said.

Corson said he was constantly reminded by the service members’ selfless service and commitment that they are a volunteer force, which stood up during a time of war and said ‘Send me.’

Sustaining the Sustainers



Cargo is removed from a customer’s vehicle to be shipped out of Sather Air Base, Iraq. Outbound cargo goes back to the United States for redeployment, to Kuwait and even to Afghanistan to support Operation Enduring Freedom.

Tech. Sgt. Shawn McVay, the cargo noncommissioned officer-in-charge for the 37th Movement Control Team, 53rd Transportation Battalion, 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and a Saint Louis, Mo., native, tightens down straps on a container for a customer. The 37th MCT assists in moving cargo by air for Army customers on Victory Base Complex, Iraq.



Senior Airman William Wilson, a movement control team member with the 37th Movement Control Team, 53rd Transportation Battalion, 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and a Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, native, removes the container packaging for a waiting customer who is picking up a shipment on Sather Air Base, Iraq. The 37th MCT is responsible for the movement of cargo into and out of Iraq through the air base, serving a vital role in the reposturing of equipment in theater.

Team serves as hub for supplies shipped into and out of theater

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SGT. FELICIA ADAMS
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

SATHER AIR BASE, Iraq – A Combat Support Hospital requires supplies like syringes, IV bags and medicine to operate. The base firehouse needs a fire truck to function. Even the judge advocate general’s office needs common office supplies to be fully operational.

All of these materials and equipment have one thing in common: They all arrived in the country with the help of service members who work on a movement control team.

The 37th Movement Control Team, part of the 53rd Transportation Battalion, 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command, serves here as one of the largest hubs in United States Division-Central. The team receives and ships supplies and equipment to support units on deployment and redeployment.

“The MCT here is in charge of moving and processing all Army cargo for Victory Base Compound by air,” said Lt. Sarah Bennett, commander for the 37th MCT and a Jackson, Miss., native.

The 37th MCT is a unique team, considering they are an Air Force unit working for the Army.

Master Sgt. Casey Richmond, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the 37th MCT and a San Jose, Calif., native, said, “It’s been a challenge and a great experience to see how the Army does their process, and we are adapting

tion].”

Considering the team had to make some major adjustments from familiarizing themselves with Army acronyms to following an Army chain of command, they all continued to have a positive outlook on the change.

“It’s kind of different working on an air base and working just for Army customers, but I think it’s awesome and we’ve learned a lot,” Bennett said.

The team quickly realized that no matter what branch you serve in, all service members are on the same team working toward the same mission.

“I love working with the Army,” said Senior Airman Daniel Quickel, the airman-in-charge of day-shift operations with the 37th MCT and a Geneva, Ohio, native. “They give us a lot of respect for helping them, because it’s all one team, so them giving me respect, in turn, I actually respect the Army a lot more than I thought I would.”

Not only has the 37th MCT overcome and adapted to the Army way of life, but everybody on the team came from a different Air Base and had to all learn how to work together quickly.

“We are all new to this and we are all new to each other,” Bennett said. “There was a little bit of friction at first, everybody got along, but it took us a few weeks for everyone to get on the same page.”

After only two months of the new team being in Iraq, they have made some valuable changes to the cargo yard.

Bennett said when they first arrived at VBC they had a lot of frustrated cargo that had been sitting there for seven or eight months prior to their arrival, and they didn’t know where it was suppose to go.

“Frustrated cargo” is cargo that may be improperly identified or was stopped for some unknown reason prior to reaching its final destination.

“One of the biggest things we’ve been working on is cleaning up the cargo yard and getting all that frustrated

now we’re down to 15 that we are trying to get out of here, and we’ve done that in a matter of a month and a half.”

Quickel added there was no accountability for a lot of equipment and their team addressed the issue immediately by finding out what customers and units the items belonged to.

In addition to clearing out the cargo yard, the team has plans on making more positive changes for the overall mission.

“We work closely with the ground MCT here so I hope that we can help alleviate some of their stuff because we can send some of their cargo by air,” Bennett said. “I don’t know if all of our customers know that, so my goal is to let our customers know that there’s other options so they don’t have to send everything by ground.”

Richmond is also making long-term goals for the team as well to help future MCTs carry on the mission.

“I want to get it up to a point so that when we finally do get replaced, the turnover will be really easy, that our replacements will understand the operation and be able to smoothly transition and keep on moving like nothing has changed,” Richmond said.

Richmond and his team of 16 airmen are a 24-7 operation responsible for the cargo coming into Sather Air Base and the cargo being shipped out or redeployed back to the states, to Afghanistan, and to other locations around the world.

They receive items to support units on VBC, whether it is general office supplies, Humvees and even fire trucks, Richmond said.

Most of the cargo is received on cargo airplanes, and larger aircraft come to pick up the oversized cargo like the Humvees and fire trucks. They also use helicopters to transport cargo, whether it be a CH-47 Chinook or UH-60 Blackhawk, Richmond said.

Richmond said so far they have shipped approximately one million pounds worth of cargo and received about 300 to 400 pounds of cargo inbound.

Although the Air Force is working alongside a different service, it’s still one team working toward the same mission. Whether it is common office supplies or parts for Humvees, the military as a whole cannot complete the operation accurately without the help of the MCT shipping the materials and equipment in and out of country.



Senior Airman Lorenzo Powell, an airman with the 37th Movement Control Team, 53rd Transportation Battalion, 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and a Marbell, Ark., native, helps inventory supplies being moved out of the cargo yard on Sather Air Base, Iraq. The 37th MCT monitors all



Kellogg Brown & Root contractors move a customer’s materials to the 37th MCT cargo yard to be stored until an aircraft transports the cargo to its final destination. Outbound cargo goes to the United States, to Kuwait and even to Afghanistan to support Operation Enduring Freedom.



Senior Airman Lorenzo Powell, a movement control team member with the 37th Movement Control Team, 53rd Transportation Battalion, 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and a Marbell, Ark., native, helps remove straps on a container for a waiting customer. Customers for the 37th MCT consist of Army and Air Force personnel and contractors who work for the Army units on Sather Air Base, Iraq.

Spin Strong

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SPC. FELICIA ADAMS
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

The tent overflowed with squeaky cardio machines, overused workout benches, heavy weights, different exercise equipment, and a large fridge full of ice-cold water. Disorganized dumbbells, faded medicine balls, raggedy mats and more weights covered the rubber-plated floor.

In the back of the dimly lit tent on an older-model spin bike cycled a tall, muscular middle-aged man. His calves burned as he pedaled furiously with both shoes securely buckled into the pedals. His well-fitted gloves grasped the handlebars while he concentrated deeply on his breathing, posture and the heavy base line from his techno music.

Nothing could get in the way of his focused gaze. Neither the cool breeze of the air-conditioning unit, nor the musty smell of sweat, or even



Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Stoltie, the communications and services division helpdesk noncommissioned officer-in-charge and a Fort Wayne, Ind., native, spins his way to fitness during his deployment at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. Stoltie is dedicated to train for cycling tours and relays and to stay in shape.

the creaking sound of the spin-bike wheel could distract him. He continued to stay determined even as he began to feel tired.

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Stoltie, the communications and services division helpdesk noncommissioned officer-in-charge with the 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and a native of Fort Wayne, Ind., is a dedicated cyclist. When he deployed to Joint Base Balad, Iraq, he brought his lifestyle and hobby with him to help keep him motivated, to keep his long-term goals on track, and to stay in shape.

Stoltie has been avidly cycling for almost 14 years. Previously, he was a committed runner, but after two knee surgeries, Stoltie was not able to run anymore.

“I use to run then I switched over to cycling because I beat my knees up pretty bad,” Stoltie said.

From that point on, his interest in cycling developed into a new lifestyle for him. Not only did cycling replace running in his life, but it made a huge impact on his rehabilitation time after each surgery.

“After each surgery I went into spinning and then on the road for cycling and it actually improved my recovery time by two-fold,” he said.

He also had some influence from others to help fuel his cycling ambitions.

“I watched a lot of the Tour de France and picked up on it,” Stoltie said. “A lot of my buddies did triathlons, so I just started riding with those guys and it grew from there.”

This is Stoltie’s third deployment to Iraq, but it is his first time bringing his personal equipment and way of life with him. Instead of bringing his expensive cycling bike and bike trainer, which converts his road-bike into a stationary bike, Stoltie took a few pieces of gear off his bike from back home and transported them here.

“My bike is too expensive, it’s almost \$4,500, so I’m not going to have it shipped here,” he said. “I took the pedals off my bike and put them on the spin-bike here, and my road shoes I brought over just clip into them.”

Stoltie said he also brought the saddle from his cycling bike, and positioned it on the spin bike here along with his very own pedals.

Even though he’s passionate about cycling, he doesn’t plan to cycle on the road here in Iraq. In place of cycling he uses the spin bikes to stay in shape. Stoltie did acquire an inexpensive bike while on deployment for transit purposes.

“I have a little, cheap bike, a \$99 bike that doesn’t fit me,” Stoltie said. “It’s actually hard to ride and I’m used to a fitted bike. This thing is awful, but it’s nice to be able to get around on.”

Stoltie has been biking on a consistent basis since he arrived in Iraq and has all intentions to start biking as much as he did back home.

“Hopefully, I will be able to get back into it here for about an hour to an hour and a half a night, and at least once a week I’ll do a three-and-a-half- to a four-hour ride on the spin bike, because it’s my time to let go, to decompress on the bike,” he added with enthusiasm.

In addition to wanting to stay in shape, Stoltie’s background has been a huge factor that influences his drive and determination to cycle.

“All my uncles, except for one, and my dad all died before the age of 50 from cancer,” he said. “I’m 42, but I’m not going to let it beat me if I get it.

If I do get in that fight, I’m going to win. It’s in the family, so I just want to stay fit.”

In fact, his entire right thigh is colored with inspiration from his family. “The tattoo on my leg, it says ‘Livestrong,’ but if you look at it, you can see my dad and all three of my uncles initials who have died of cancer,” Stoltie said as he proudly showed off his meaningful ink work.

The passion was evident in his eyes as he continued to tell what his tattoo represented.

“My uncles and my dad have all inspired me because they didn’t stay fit or work out,” Stoltie said. “I’m probably more fit than those guys were ever in their lives, so I definitely like to stay in shape for that reason.”

Not only does he permanently wear “Livestrong” on his body, Stoltie donates to Lance Armstrong’s foundation to help with cancer research. In the summer of 2012, when he returns home from deployment, he will be riding with Team Livestrong in the Ride Across Iowa, Stoltie said.

“I’m biking and training to help with cancer research,” he said.

Stoltie was supposed to ride with the team in 2011, but because he’s currently in Iraq, he will be participating in 2012.

In addition to the Ride Across Iowa, Stoltie has quite a few more goals he’s looking forward to when he returns home.

“I definitely want to do Ride Across Indiana and the Hilly Hundred,” Stoltie said. “I also want to get into racing and do some longer rides. One of them is called the Race Across America; it’s a 3,000-mile ride from California to Maryland.”

Regardless of his limitations with cycling on the road here in Iraq, Stoltie plans on getting in better shape during this deployment to prepare for all of his future rides.

“I’m trying to get back down under 180 pounds so that when I do get back home and start riding on the road again, I’ll be close to being in race shape,” he said.

It’s difficult for him to track his mileage here, but he said his main cycling goals are to stay fit, keep his weight down and stay motivated to help prepare for those races and tours.

Without a doubt, Stoltie is truly devoted to his lifestyle of being a cyclist, but he also puts the same emphasis on his military career.

Sgt. Maj. Paul Rooney, a senior signal sergeant with the 310th ESC, and a Columbus, Ohio, native, said he has known Stoltie for quite a while and remembers him bringing his bike to annual training and seeing him in his spandex with a big smile riding down the road, but more importantly he remembers Stoltie making a significant, selfless decision.

“He was with [U.S. Army Reserve Command] as a recruiter, and as I was bringing him over to my unit to mobilize with us and he had to make a decision because he was chosen to ride with Lance Armstrong, and he actually gave up riding with Lance for a period of time to start going through the mobilization process with us,” Rooney said.

While Rooney talked admirably about Stoltie, he also mentioned that he was interested in riding with him when they both returned from deployment.

“I know he’s been starting it back up here and maybe one of these days when we get to Indy we can go on a long trip,” Rooney said.

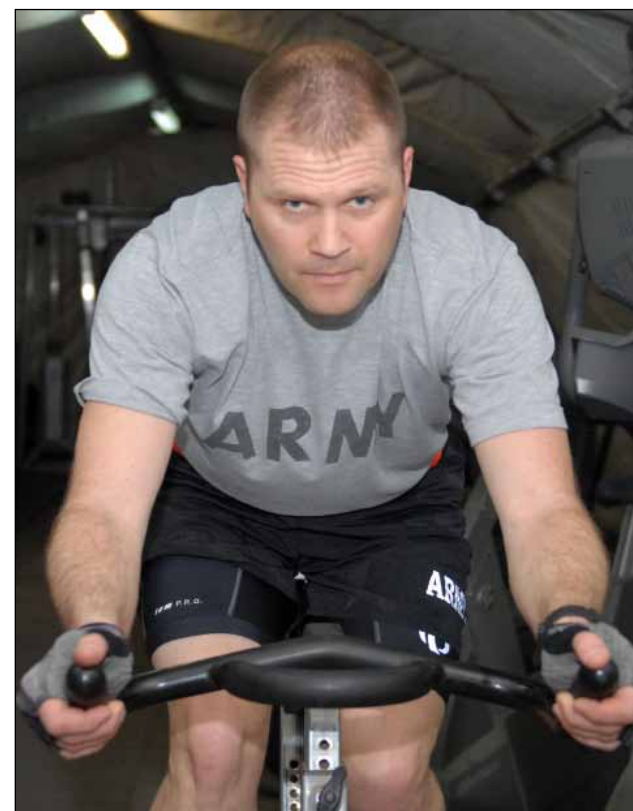
With all his motivation, dedication and drive not to give up, Stoltie has the conviction to maintain his lifestyle on deployment while meeting all his goals.

After the workout, his uniform was completely drenched in perspiration, and sweat continued to pour down his beet-red face as he carefully climbed off the bike. He ripped his soggy gloves off, slid off his custom-fitted bike shoes, and took the weight off his feet by sitting down. As soon as he gulped down a half a bottle of ice-cold water, he was ready to stretch his tired but solid legs.

With music still blaring, the humidity in the tent bearing down, and his muscles tired and fatigued, Stoltie still managed to effortlessly display the look of passion that he would continue to fight and work for his family, his country and himself.



Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Stoltie, the communications and services division helpdesk noncommissioned officer-in-charge and a Fort Wayne, Ind., native, spins his way to fitness during his deployment at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. Stoltie is dedicated to train for cycling tours and relays and to stay in shape.



Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Stoltie, the communications and services division helpdesk noncommissioned officer-in-charge with the 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and a Fort Wayne, Ind., native, maintains his focus on pedaling, breathing and maintaining perfect posture while spinning.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Allyson Parla

Sgt. Christian Delgado (right), a gunner for the Personal Security Detachment for the 77th Sustainment Brigade, 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and a native of Queens, N.Y., watches Spc. Michael Blount, a driver for the PSD and a native of Egg Harbor Township, N.J., practice breathing techniques before completing the underwater egress training on Joint Base Balad, Iraq, July 9. The training aimed to prepare Soldiers with the skills, knowledge and confidence to deal with a real underwater escape situation.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Allyson Parla

Sgt. Christian Delgado shows the proper use of a compressed air tank and the risks associated with using compressed air July 9 during underwater egress training on Joint Base Balad, Iraq.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Allyson Parla

Sgt. Christian Delgado (right), a Personal Security Detachment gunner for the 77th Sustainment Brigade, 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and a native of Queens, N.Y., demonstrates breathing using a compressed air tank and navigating through an underwater obstacle course as he is guided by Spc. Zachary Schechner, a gunner for the PSD of the 77th Sust. Bde., and a native of Tinicum, Pa., on Joint Base Balad, Iraq, July 9 as part of underwater egress training.

The Great Underwater Escape

Vehicle egress training at Joint Base Balad prepares Soldiers traveling on Iraqi roads for conditions that may be present during a rollover near water

STORY BY
SGT. ALLYSON PARLA
77TH SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – Iraq is sometimes referred to as “Belad al Rafidain”, or “the country of two rivers”, referring to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that connect in southern Iraq in an area known as the Basra province. The rivers have historically been an important transport route in a largely desert country.

During convoy operations, Soldiers stationed at Joint Base Balad often pass through areas surrounding these rivers. To help protect and prepare them in case of a vehicle rollover or submersion, approximately 20 Soldiers with the 77th Sustainment Brigade, 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command participated in shallow-water egress training here at the indoor pool July 9. The class was aimed to prepare Soldiers with the skills, knowledge and confidence to deal with a real underwater escape situation.

The instructors worked hard to create a scenario as close as possible to what would actually occur while travelling in a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle rolling over into a body of water. The students were tasked to complete an underwater obstacle, equipped with body armor, “black out” goggles, and an Army Combat Helmet, said Sgt. Christian Delgado, a gunner for the Personal Security Detachment with the 77th Sust. Bde., instructor for the class, and a Queens, N.Y., native. Delgado was joined by another instructor, Spc. Zachary Schechner, a gunner for the PSD for the 77th Sust. Bde. and a native of Tinicum, Pa.

Training the Soldiers on rollover procedures when travelling on roads close to water, is essential to ensure that

everyone in the vehicle is able to escape with minimal injuries, said Sgt. 1st Class Marc Acevedo, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of operations for the PSD with the 77th Sust. Bde., and a native of Somerset, N.J.

Delgado, a former Navy diver knows the importance of underwater egress training.

“We have to do this training because it’s going to save our life,” said Delgado. “For me, it’s not about going under water and breathing for 30 seconds –anybody can do that. If you actually roll over it’s going to be pitch black, and you’re just not going to be able to see anything.”

The idea was for the Soldiers to feel as close as possible to what would happen in a real life situation, and prepare for the worst case scenario.

Equipped with more than 30 pounds of protective equipment and having no visibility underneath the water, the Soldiers were tasked to breathe underwater using a compressed air tank. Using their fingers to feel for a cord located at the bottom of the pool, they felt their way through an obstacle, an improvised egress hatch made from a hollowed out garbage can cover.

“The garbage can is four inches smaller than the [actual] egress hatch,” said Delgado, who once held the job of diving underneath nuclear submarines for the Navy while stationed in Connecticut. “If they can fit through that, then they can get through an actual hatch.”

Many Soldiers have difficulty maneuvering out of the MRAPs during escape drills using an egress hatch in broad daylight, added Delgado.

One of the major concerns conducting the training is making sure that the Soldiers are safe at all times, because water egress training carries a high potential for hazards.

A Soldier’s tendency to panic underwater in a stressful

situation can easily lead to death by drowning, said Delgado.

Panicking can cause one to hyperventilate, which in turn creates carbon dioxide. Breathing in compressed air and not properly surfacing can lead to arterial gas embolism, the condition that causes gas bubbles in an artery, which may stop blood flow to an area fed by the artery.

“It can happen even in five feet of water,” said Delgado. “People can die, [and] people have died.”

The class proved to be successful, as 100 percent of the students who participated passed.

“I think they kind of underestimated it. They thought it was going to be easy,” said Delgado.

Some of the Soldiers did not know what to expect during the training.

“At first, I was a little nervous when I did it the first time”, said Spc. Michael Blount, a driver for the PSD with the 77th Sust. Bde., and a native of Egg Harbor Township, N.J. “The second time, I was able to succeed.”

Although training certification is needed just once to travel off base, Delgado believes that in order for Soldiers to be competent and comfortable underwater, one must continue to train.

“It’s not a one-time deal. Whoever is not comfortable with the training will go through it until they feel comfortable,” said Delgado. “Once they say, ‘this is too easy,’ then I know they’re good to go.”

While the Tigris and Euphrates rivers will always pose a threat to service members travelling on the road, the Army takes great pride in reducing the risks associated with threats. When it comes to training, there can never be enough.

Muscle memory, or learning by repetition, is critical for the success of the mission, said Blount.



Soldiers place the mission first but still hold on to thoughts of home

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SPC. SEAN MCGUIRE
4TH SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE ADDER, Iraq – The sky is pitch black. The only illumination stems from hulking gun trucks lined up one after the other. For some, June 3 is just another night in Iraq, but with only a few minutes remaining for these Montana National Guardsmen, it's almost go-time.

"I have a weird feeling going into this mission," said Spc. John Jodsaas, a .50-caliber machine gunner and Missoula, Mont., native, who is in the trail vehicle on this mission.

His strange gut feeling is shared by fellow "Outlaw," Sgt. Brandon Paye, a truck commander and the mission's assistant convoy commander.

"There's been a lot of activity in the southern region lately," said Paye, a Belgrade, Mont., native.

These Soldiers of Company Bravo, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 163rd Infantry Regiment, 4th Sustainment Brigade, 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command have

been on the roads since November. Before that, they spent two months at Fort Lewis, Wash., training for their tour, totaling at this point eight months away from home.

They run convoy escort and security missions for civilian contractors and third country nationals as well as fellow Army transportation units, who bring commodities all around United States Division-South's area of responsibility.

Only sometimes do they have the luxury of air weapons teams providing eye-in-the-sky cover.

Out of all the teams in the battalion, they have one thing going for them.

"We're still the only guys to not see contact – knock on wood," Paye said.

While they have been lucky enough thus far into the deployment not to encounter any attacks, the Soldiers are constantly watching the roads for signs of possible improvised explosive devices as well as assisting with numerous vehicle breakdowns.

On this mission alone, Paye would stop and dismount three times, including one halt to sort out a fuel truck's crossed break lines, which can cause a fire.

"There aren't any rules on these roads. But I'd take breakdowns anytime, just as long as there aren't any [explosively formed projectiles]," Paye said.

Everything these infantry Soldiers have seen stands in stark contrast to previous years in a country that has had a U.S. presence since 2003.

"Back in 2004-2005 when I was with Charlie Company, it was all about kicking down doors," said Sgt. 1st Class Clay

Cooper, a truck commander with 19 years of Army service.

Cooper's last time with the 163rd Inf. Regt. in Iraq was days spent on foot and in Humvees, many without armor.

"For now, it's about getting safely from point A to point B. It's not a sexy job, but it's a job and one we signed up for," he said.

Paye, as a noncommissioned officer, is a leader in Iraq. Back home, he's a stone mason and has a wife and an eight-month-old baby girl who was born three weeks before the unit left for pre-deployment training.

"I fell in love with having work I enjoy and still being able to serve," said Paye, who enlisted in 2005.

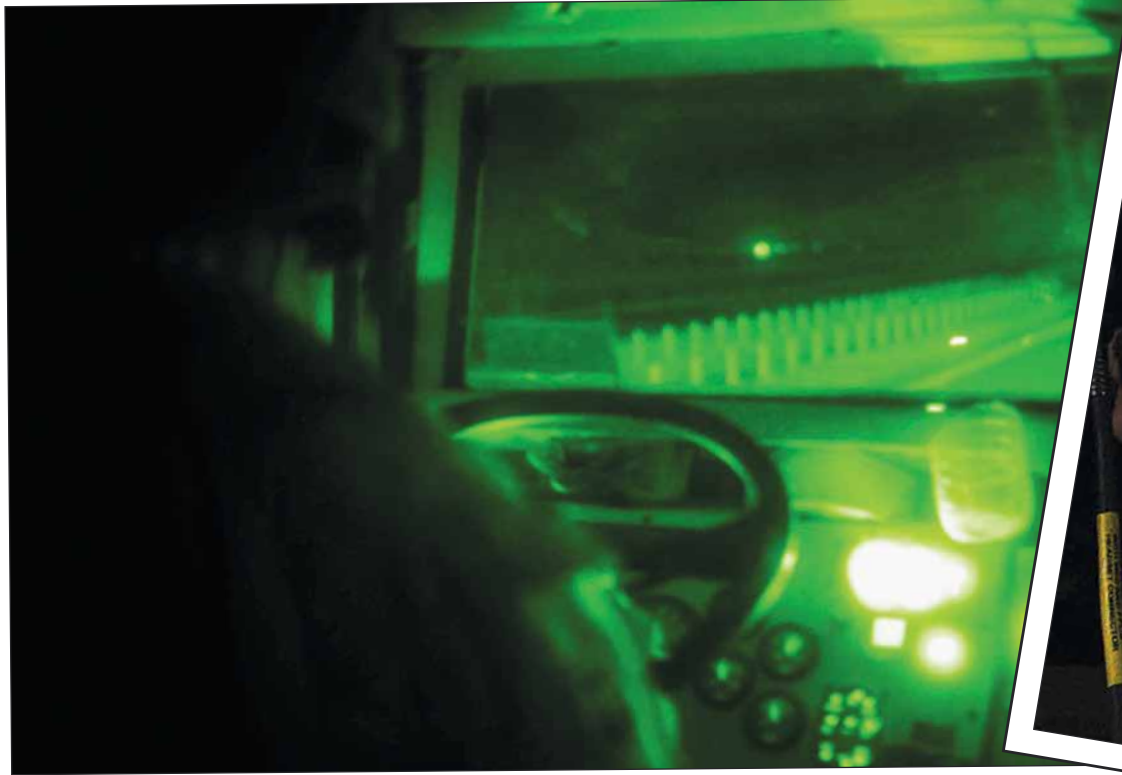
As for Jodsaas, he wants to eventually enter schooling to become an emergency medical technician and a firefighter. First and foremost, however, he will be going back to his wife of nearly two years.

Sgt. 1st Class Cooper is eyeing retirement.

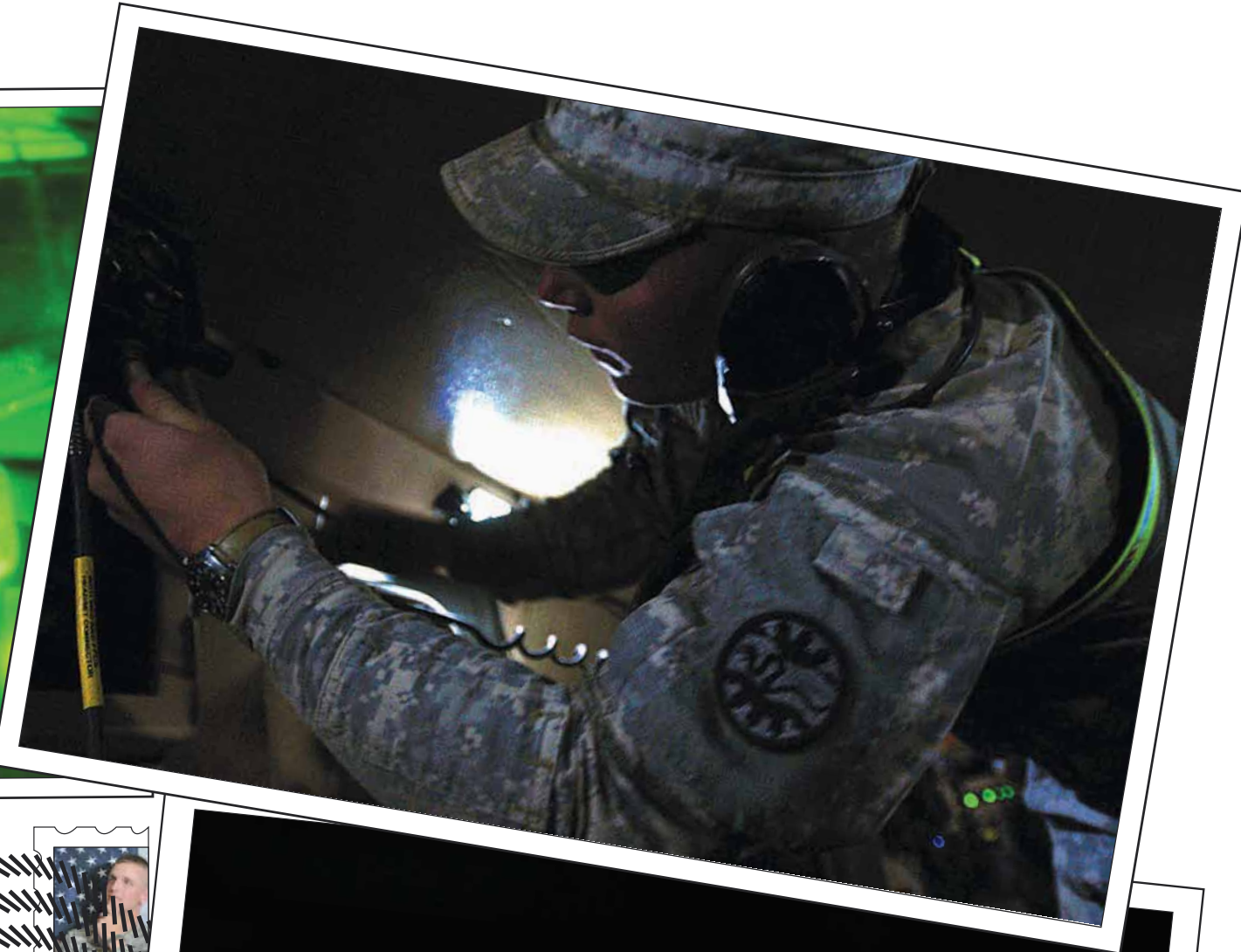
Before Paye, Cooper, Jodsaas and the rest of the 163rd Inf. Regt. can head home, they must keep driving on.

"We aren't here to argue over the big picture," Paye said. "We're here to keep our head down and get the job done until we can go home."

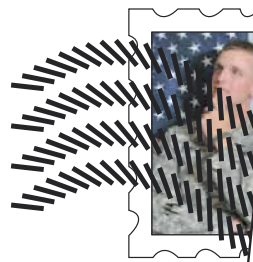
After nearly a year away from their spouses, children, friends and the mountains of Montana, there are mere months remaining for these Soldiers. When they return home, they will again become masons, students, firefighters and most importantly reacquaint themselves with the life and family they left behind to serve their country.



(Top) Spc. Steve Spencer, an infantry Soldier with Company Bravo, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 163rd Infantry Regiment, 4th Sustainment Brigade, 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command, drives a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle during a convoy escort and security mission June 3 heading away from Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq.



(Top Right) Spc. John Jodsaas, a .50-caliber machine gunner and native of Missoula, Mont., performs radio checks June 5 before his team from Company B moves out on the back-end of their convoy escort and security mission.



Joe
133
Shel

(Right) A view from inside the cab of a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle of a convoy escort and security mission conducted by members of Company B June 5.

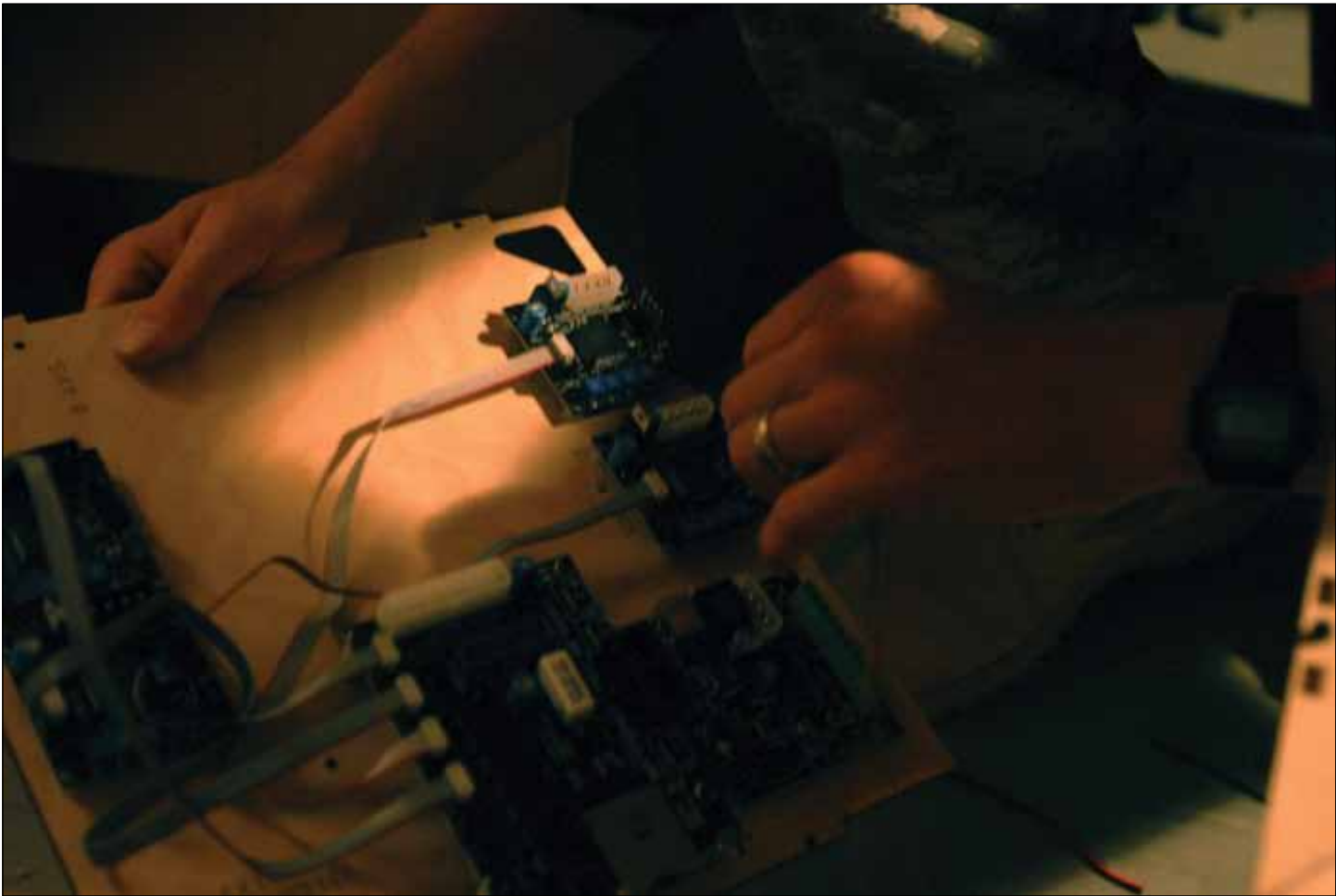
(Below) Sgt. Brandon Paye, a truck commander for Company B and a native of Belgrade, Mont., talks to his driver June 5 during a convoy escort and security mission bringing his set back from Victory Base Complex to Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq.





U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Benjamin D. Green

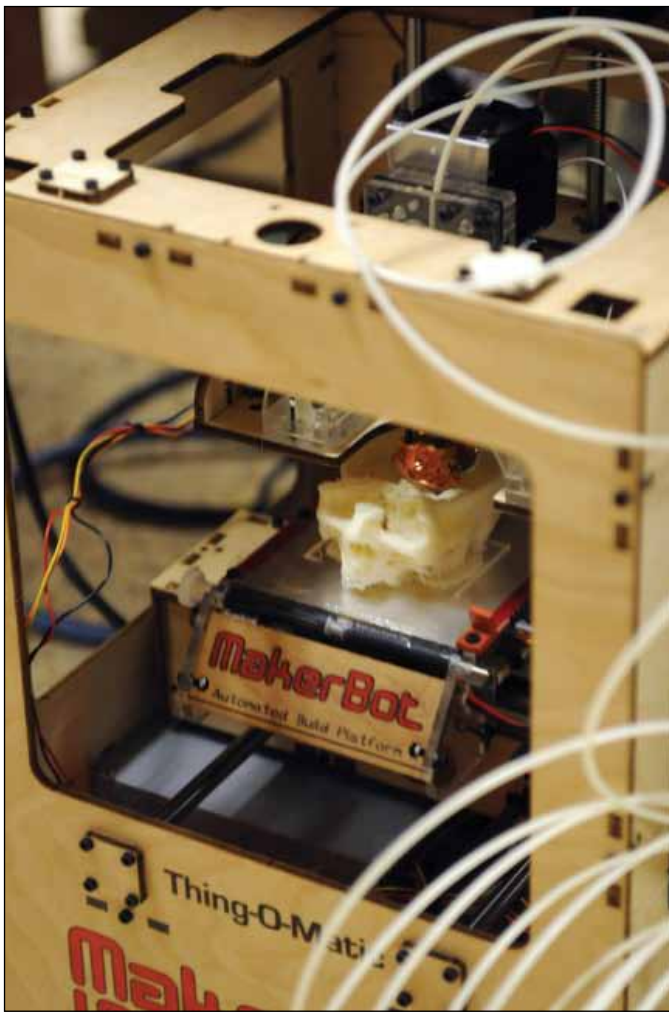
Staff Sgt. Joshua J. Rucinski, an essential personnel services noncommissioned officer with the 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and a Twin Harbors, Minn., native, works in his room to put the finishing touches on his three-dimensional printer.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Benjamin D. Green

Staff Sgt. Joshua J. Rucinski, an essential personnel services noncommissioned officer with the 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and a Twin Harbors, Minn., native, works in the limited light of his room to check the soldered components on his 3-D printer. Rucinski built the printer in his containerized housing unit during his spare time on Joint Base Balad, Iraq.

Outside the X



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Stephen Scott

This 3-D printer was assembled by Staff Sgt. Joshua J. Rucinski, an essential personnel services noncommissioned officer with the 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and a Twin Harbors, Minn. native. Rucinski will print plastic prototypes to help conceptualize a geodesic dome he plans to build upon redeployment.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Benjamin D. Green

Staff Sgt. Joshua J. Rucinski, an essential personnel services noncommissioned officer with the 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and a Twin Harbors, Minn., native, checks the wiring of his 3-D printer to ensure he has made all of the proper connections. Rucinski built the printer in his containerized housing unit on Joint Base Balad, Iraq, and plans to ship the printer home when he leaves.

Personnel noncommissioned officer uses his free time to build prototype printer during deployment at JBB

STORY BY
SGT. STEPHEN SCOTT
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq – So, what did you do with your downtime during deployment?

Some service members might say they watch movies or read books to pass the time. Others may say they used that time to take some online classes or re-dedicated themselves to physical fitness.

The more proficient time managers will probably say they did all of those things, but it's doubtful any of them will say they did the same thing as Staff Sgt. Joshua J. Rucinski, an essential personnel services noncommissioned officer with the 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command.

The Southern Illinois University architecture student recently completed the construction of his very own open-source, three-dimensional printer. He ordered it online, and the six weeks it took to get it delivered, was twice as long as it took him to build it.

The assembly of this testimony to the advancement of technology mainly took place in Rucinski's central housing unit, but there was some soldering involved. Luckily he was able to find a soldering gun at the Iraqi Free Zone.

Once completed, its rectangular shape, with openings that make up half of each side, help this 16-inch-tall structure resemble a miniature arcade claw machine. It is a little more difficult to explain in layman terms how a 3-D printer works as opposed to how it looks, but Rucinski tried.

"It heats up the plastic that comes in a big spool, melts it, and shoots through... an exceedingly small hole," said Rucinski. "That draws a tiny line of [plastic], and it just welds itself because it's super hot. It's like a hot spider web."

He went on to say the plastic is deposited onto a platform that moves front-to-back and side-to-side, and the plastic is dispensed from the printer head that moves up and down.

Printing to a 3-D printer takes input from a computer just as using a regular printer would, but it takes more than just a click of the mouse to get the job done. Rucinski has used a generative modeling script called grasshopper to model objects in a 3-D drafting program called Rhinoceros 4.0.

"Basically you have little visual boxes and you link them with little virtual wires and it makes a programming language; that's the script," said Rucinski.

To date, Rucinski has printed a replica whistle, a snake, a skull, and what seems to be a piece of abstract art, but the playful nature of these fabrications belies their true function. While fun to make, these are just

test runs to get a better understanding of how the printer works before he begins his actual project.

"I developed a program to [manufacture] connectors to build a geodesic dome out of pipes or any sort of hollow cylindrical item," said Rucinski. "I got interested in three-d printing because it was a way that you could prototype that."

Rucinski laughed a little at the bewildered look that followed the mention of geodesic domes, and it prompted a Disney-themed explanation.

"It's a dome that's only made out of triangles, like Epcot Center has that big geodesic dome in the center of it," said Rucinski.

At first glance, it's difficult to see why he would want to make pieces to build domes. However, behind Rucinski's Army issued spectacles, his eyes are focused on the future, and this foresight is the reason for his current ingenuity.

"My goal is to start off making the prototype connectors for the domes, and one day I want to make cheap and easy to build housing," said Rucinski.

Once the connectors are complete, Rucinski plans on using them to create a small geodesic dome using drinking straws, but he said he would enjoy the experience even if it didn't work out that way.

"I really enjoy being creative," said Rucinski. "To me, that's God's gift to us that sets us apart from all the other animals on earth."

Rucinski has felt this way since he was a small child in Twin Harbors, Minn.

"I've been into creating things since I was very young," said Rucinski. "I always had an interest in drawing, and my father raised me as a carpenter from an early age."

He credited this combination of nature and nurturing as the reason behind the choice of his college major.

"It was a marriage of creating drawings plus carpentry, so it just equals architect," said Rucinski with a smile.

Though childhood interests and guidance gave him direction with school, Rucinski said he was happy he waited until his late twenties to start college because he felt he was more serious about it.

"I didn't feel obligated to hang out with the kids and do the kid things," said Rucinski.

It is this matured passion that is visible when Rucinski is discussing his geodesic endeavors and the economical impact he hopes they will have.

"It's an opportunity to come up with something very economical and friendly and beneficial," said Rucinski. "My biggest desire is to see how low I can drive the price down."

Rucinski is using his creativity to work toward fulfilling his goal of providing economically friendly housing.

What are you doing with your downtime?

the journey of a lifetime



Injured combat vets take trip they'll never forget, help to mend their unseen wounds

The wounded warriors of Operation Proper Exit X fold an American flag after paying their respects. Each veteran was given the opportunity to raise an American flag over Al Faw Palace in Baghdad, Iraq.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SGT. FELICIA ADAMS
EXPEDITIONARY TIMES STAFF

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq - The last time retired Sgt. Saul Martinez was in Iraq, he was driving on a mission when an improvised explosive device suddenly hit his Humvee.

He remembered everything: the initial blast, the most thunderous noise imaginable, the smell, the smoke, and the radiant heat after the blast. He could even remember being tossed to the top of the crow's nest, then being slammed back down into the

Humvee before his vehicle began rolling. And, he could even remember the vehicle stopping, and then being medically evacuated from Iraq.

Even after his traumatic incident and the injuries he sustained, Martinez willingly made a trip back here along with six other wounded service members who also share similar experiences as him.

Six Soldiers and one Marine returned to Iraq for Operation Proper Exit June 26. OPE is a program which provides service members who were injured during their deployment in Iraq the opportunity to return and see the changes that have occurred because of their sacrifice, and affords them a chance to continue their healing process.

"It has real meaning and real value," said Rick Kell, the

executive director of Troops First Foundation, who escorts the wounded warriors back to Iraq. "What the program does is provides them with the opportunity to see the changes in person. It also allows them to come and talk to the boots on the ground here."

The other topic people talk about with this program is closure.

"This trip now gets us to 77 men that have been back on the program, and there are 77 different stories about closure and what it means to them individually," Kell said. "There are a lot of good stories and a lot of good results, but closure is an individual thing."

During the weeklong visit, the seven wounded warriors traveled the country visiting the three United States divi-

sion headquarters, a few outlying bases, and the location where each of their incidents occurred. Upon arriving at each location, the wounded warriors shared their stories with service members who are currently deployed here.

Most people would assume that returning to the combat site where they were injured would be the highlight of their trip. In fact, most of the veterans agreed that something as simple as wearing the uniform again, listening and learning from the other wounded warrior's stories, and just talking to troops was by far the best part of their OPE experience.

"As great as it was going back to my site, I'd be lying if I said that was the best part of the trip," said Martinez, who was previously deployed with the Heavy Brigade Combat



Combat veterans arrive in Iraq to participate in Operation Proper Exit June 26. Seven veterans spent a week in country touring bases, talking and sharing their story with troops and revisiting the location they were injured. The program is designed to give the veterans the opportunity to return and see the changes that have occurred because of their sacrifice, find closure and leave Iraq on their own terms.



Seven wounded warriors returned to Iraq for the first time since they were injured and receive a warm welcome June 26 at the Al Faw Palace in Baghdad, Iraq. The veterans were medically retired, and they returned to the combat zone to find a sense of closure.

Team, 3rd Infantry Division. "Being in uniform, being called sergeant again, and being in the other Soldiers' presence [and] talking to them one on one here in this theater where my life changed, was the best part of my trip."

Retired Sgt. Kurtis Edelman shared the same views on the trip as well.

"For me, I thought my healing point would be the grid, but it wasn't," said Edelman, previously with the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team. "It was wearing the uniform, and also being here on the ground is what really solved it for me."

One of the things this program has done is help change some of the veterans' liveliness through bonding with the other wounded warriors, hearing their individual stories, how they are dealing with it and what they are going through.

"Although it's a horrific event, sharing that horrific event with someone who gets it is absolutely immeasurable," said retired Marine 1st Lt. Denis Oliverio, who was previously with the 1st Tank Battalion, Bravo Company. "I

can talk about this at work, but I quickly out talk the audience, they don't understand or know what it's like. But in this crowd, with these six other guys, they understand, and it is so helpful and beneficial to do that with these guys."

For most of the wounded warriors, being back in country and seeing first hand how all of their hard work, effort and sacrifice was a relief in the long run.

"Seeing the technological advancement and the [reposure], which is a good thing, means that it worked and we were successful," Oliverio said.

For other wounded warriors it was great to see and hear the commitment that their sacrifice had achieved.

"Being able to come back here and see the progress, and hear everybody's reassurance that they are going to complete the mission is one of the best parts of this trip," Martinez said.

Although they all have a different story to tell, OPE provided each and every one of the combat veterans with the same thing, something they weren't able to get the last time they were here: a proper exit, on their own terms.



The 310th Expeditionary Sustainment Command is the executing agent in coordinating, synchronizing and implementing the reposturing of forces and equipment from Iraq. In addition to this, the 310th ESC is simultaneously maintaining sustainment operations throughout the Iraqi theater.

