



the

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The Mark of a Infantryman

By Cpl. Trisha Betz

Those who chose to enter the ranks of the citizen-soldier infantry are a breed a part from the rest. Often times volunteering to serve in the most dangerous and demanding ways for the needs of the U.S. Army. It's these soldiers' military occupational specialty that has become increasingly important to the U.S. in a world where small-scale acts of terrorism and unconventional warfare are the order of today's battlefield, but what sets an infantryman apart from his peers?

Earning the coveted Expert Infantryman Badge not only designates an infantryman elite in his career field, but it is considered to be 'the mark of an infantryman'.

Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, currently deployed to Kuwait, hosted an EIB validation for the first time with the Army's new revised testing standards for the EIB.

Maj. Jeffery Blowers, the battalion's Operations Officer-In-Charge, oversaw all plans for the validation as he watched his soldiers strive for what is considered a must-have accouterment for any infantryman.

"It means a lot to be able to offer this for soldiers to go through," said Blowers. "It hones a great skill level one task that all infantrymen should be experts at and to allow soldiers to earn the coveted Expert Infantryman's badge which is only worn by less than 10 percent of all infantrymen in the Army today and is something they can be proud of—they are true expert infantryman."

In 1993, while stationed on Fort Lewis, a young private Blowers proved the mastery of his skills and earned his EIB. Before any deployment, validating on the EIB is rarely an option for most National Guard infantry soldiers because of how time consuming and labor intensive the training and validation for the EIB is.

1st Sgt. Paul Oakes, grader and Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division First Sergeant, agreed.

Depending on where the unit is in their mission training cycle for deployments it typically can't be fit in, said Oakes, we just have so much to do and minimal time to do it in.

EIB committee members at Fort Benning, Ga., took into account the constant combat since Sept. 11 and attempted to create a test that would fit between repeated deployments and added updated combat-related situations.

The outcome is a 12-day process and requires less time, personnel, and resources. Following the new test standards, soldiers had seven days to train on required tasks and five days of testing.

On first day of validation, EIB candidates took an Army Physical Fitness Test and had to score 75 points or higher in each event in order to move on to the next day along with passing a day and night land navigation course separate from the lanes.

Over the next three days, soldiers ran through three lanes: urban, patrol and traffic control point. Each lane had 10 to 12 tasks including moving under direct fire, engaging an enemy target with a grenade, providing first aid to a simulated casualty, and one decision task which had the soldier applying critical thinking while performing their mission.

Oakes noted that there is an added level of stress since soldiers had to take on multiple tasks throughout the lanes as opposed to the focusing on one at a time at individual stations like in the previous test.

This, he said, affects not only the candidates, but the test graders as well.

"Before, graders only validated one task," Oakes explained. "Now that one grader has to know 10 to 12 different tasks and master them."

If a soldier is deemed a "no-go" on a task, he does not have the option to retest like the old standards allowed.

On the final day of testing, the soldiers who are left set off to

complete a 12-mile foot march in less than three hours.

For soldiers, such as Oakes, who earned his EIB in 1991 with others in the 1st Ranger Battalion based out of Savannah, Ga., there's something that makes earning an EIB even more highly regarded – being a "True Blue" EIB holder.

"True Blue" means a Soldier completed every task without a "no-go," thus every "go" box on his score sheet has a blue mark all the way down the page.

Staff Sgt. Robert Ehrreich, an infantryman with A Co., 1st Combined Arms Bn., 194th Armor, was the first of 53 soldiers to cross the finish in around two hours, 12 minutes.

"It means everything—it means that now I'm an Infantryman, but not only am I an Infantryman, I'm one of the best infantrymen out there," said Ehrreich.

Even after accomplishing so much throughout testing, it was his service in the Minnesota National Guard he was most proud of.

"I plan on staying in the military for quite some time as long as a can," said the infantryman from Roseville, Minn. "I'll be in the Minnesota National Guard leading troops and taking on anything that I can—now I just have to find something new to challenge myself."

Out of 294 soldiers, 53 earned their EIBs.



Soldiers from 2-135 INF are awarded their EIB on Jan. 27, 2012.

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11 Soldiers from 1/34th BCT participate in a revised EIB qualification during their deployment to Kuwait.

1st BCT can be followed on:



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THE RED BULL EXPRESS

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134th Brigade Support Battalion
1/34th Brigade Special Troops Battalion
1st Combined Arms Battalion, 194th Armor
1st Squadron, 94th Cavalry
2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry
1st Battalion, 180th Cavalry
1st Battalion, 160th Field Artillery
112 Military Police

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One of the best things the Army has done in the past 5 years is recognize the importance of providing Servicemembers with resources related to healthy relationships.

With apologies to David Letterman, I offer:

TOP 5 SIGNS YOUR RELATIONSHIP MAY BE IN TROUBLE

- 5. You've started sleeping in separate beds, in separate houses, in separate time zones**
- 4. You're so unhappy together that the only thing that cheers you up is seeing the hilarious new movie "The Break-Up," now playing at a theater near you**
- 3. You look back at the drunken, bottle-throwing fights as "the good times"**
- 2. Her response to your marriage proposal: "I guess."**
- 1. She keeps asking, "Why can't you be more like Brad Pitt?"**

Let's be honest: Relationships are tough. Half of all marriages fail and most fail needlessly. Success and contentment in relationships is often fleeting, which has a negative effect on units at home and those who are deployed, hampering our ability to provide a competent, ready force for our state and nation. Married soldiers often say with regret, "if I had only known more ahead of time..."

Strong Bonds Retreats are basic and straightforward. They have provided hundreds of Minnesota Servicemembers with an educational and practical opportunity to learn what works in marriage and what continues to make marriages last, focusing on communication skills.

The weekend retreat is completely free and held at beautiful local venues throughout Minnesota. We'll offer four separate Strong Bonds retreats this summer.

In the past, Single Soldiers have felt overlooked when it came to relationship resources. The good news on that front is that we're offering a free weekend in Brainerd for single soldiers this September 7-9, 2012, with 30 slots still available for signup as of late January.

To sign up for a Strong Bonds Retreat or for more information, see your unit Chaplain, or visit <http://www.beyondtheyellowribbon.org/strong-bonds-marriage-retreats>.

If you keep doing what you've been doing, you're going to keep getting what you've been getting. I strongly encourage you to engage this free and helpful resource to keep you on the right path in a crucial area of your life.

Best regards,

CH (MAJ) Buddy Winn

**Chaplain, 1/34 HBCT
Brigade Chaplain
Camp Arifjan, Kuwait**

DSN 430-6524
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About Your Event!

Step 1

Go to www.StrongBonds.org.

Step 2

Click the "Find an Event" button.



Step 3

Choose Army National Guard as your component.



Step 4

Click "Jump to Events List." If prompted to login with your CAC, you may cancel and proceed.



Step 5

Search for all events in Minnesota to choose what you are interested in.



The Red Bull Justice Newsletter is published by the 1/34 HBCT Legal Section. This newsletter contains a summary of Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) actions resolved during the period 1 December 2011 through 30 January 2012. This publication does not contain matters resolved by administrative action, such as administrative letters of reprimand and administrative separations, unless the administrative action was a component of the final disposition of the UCMJ action.

Courts-Martial – 1 Soldier was charged and found guilty of misconduct at a Summary Court-Martial proceeding.

A Corporal from 1-180 CAV was found guilty at Summary Court-Martial for assaulting a Staff Sergeant. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private First-Class.

Nonjudicial Punishment – 38 Soldiers were charged, found guilty of misconduct and punished pursuant to Article 15 of the UCMJ between 1 December 2011 and 30 January 2012. Of the Article 15s, 21 were Field Grade, 11 were Company Grade and 6 were Summarized.

A Private (E2) from 1-180 CAV was found guilty at a Field Grade Article 15 hearing for violating General Order 1-b. The Soldier intentionally inhaled an amount of compressed air. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private (E1), forfeiture of \$366.90 and 45 days extra duty.

A Staff Sergeant from 1-94 CAV was found guilty at a Field Grade Article 15 hearing for wrongfully using provoking speech to antagonize another Soldier. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Sergeant.

A Specialist from 1-94 CAV was found guilty at a Company Grade Article 15 hearing for shoving a NCO. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private First-Class.

A Private First-Class from 1-160 FA was found guilty at a Field Grade Article 15 hearing for violating General Order 1-b and assault. The Soldier consumed alcohol and shoved another Soldier and then struck him in the face. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private (E2) (reduction to Private (E1) suspended) and forfeiture of \$383.00 for 2 months (suspended). The suspended sentences were later vacated and implemented due to further misconduct.

A Specialist from 1-160 FA was found guilty at a Summarized Article 15 hearing for violating General Order 1-b. The Soldier consumed alcohol. The Soldier was sentenced to 7 days extra duty and 14 days restriction.

A Specialist from 112 MP was found guilty at a Company Grade Article 15 for dereliction of duty. The Soldier negligently failed to maintain positive accountability of their weapon. The Soldier was sentenced to 7 days extra duty.

A Specialist from 112 MP was found guilty at a Company Grade Article 15 hearing for disrespectful language to and failing to obey a NCO. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to

Private First-Class (suspended) and forfeiture of \$520.00.

A Specialist from 1-180 CAV was found guilty at a Field Grade Article 15 hearing for unauthorized wearing of a Ranger Tab. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private First-Class (suspended), forfeiture of \$250.00 for 2 months and 45 days extra duty.

A Staff Sergeant from 1-94 CAV was found guilty at a Field Grade Article 15 hearing for violating Army Command Policy by engaging in an inappropriate relationship, violating the ASG-Kuwait housing policy and making a false official statement. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Sergeant (E5) (suspended) and a letter of reprimand filed in their official record.

A Specialist from 1-125 FA was found guilty at a Company Grade Article 15 hearing for disrespectful language towards a NCO. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private First-Class.

A Specialist from 1/34 BSTB was found guilty at a Summarized Article 15 hearing for violating the USCENTCOM Leave Policy by wrongfully failing to contact their unit to report an unexpected change in travel. The Soldier was sentenced to 14 days extra duty and 14 days restriction (both punishments suspended).

A Private First-Class from 59th Chemical Company was found guilty at a Company Grade Article 15 hearing for actions prejudicial to good order and discipline. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private (E2) and 14 days extra duty.

A Sergeant from 1-180 CAV was found guilty at a Field Grade Article 15 hearing for unauthorized wearing of a Combat Infantryman Badge. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Specialist (suspended), forfeiture of \$250.00 for 2 months and 45 days extra duty.

A Private First-Class from 112 MP was found guilty at a Company Grade Article 15 hearing for assaulting another Soldier. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private (E2) (suspended) and forfeiture of \$455.00.

A Specialist from 112 MP was found guilty at a Company Grade Article 15 hearing for assaulting another Soldier. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private First-Class (suspended) and forfeiture of \$495.00 (suspended).

A Specialist from 2-135 IN was found guilty at a Summarized Article 15 hearing for failing to following clearing barrel procedures which lead to the negligent discharge of a weapon. The Soldier was sentenced to an oral reprimand.

A Corporal from 2-135 IN was found guilty at a Summarized Article 15 hearing for a negligent discharge. The Soldier was sentenced to 7 days extra duty and 7 days restriction.

A Corporal from 2-135 IN was found guilty at a Summarized Article 15 hearing for a negligent discharge. The Soldier was sentenced to an oral

reprimand.

A Specialist from 1-160 FA was found guilty at a Field Grade Article 15 hearing for wrongful use of marijuana, a controlled substance, while on leave. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private (E2) and forfeiture of \$822.00.

A Master Sergeant from 1-94 CAV was found guilty at a Field Grade Article 15 hearing for violating Army Command Policy for engaging in an inappropriate relationship, violating the ASG-Kuwait housing policy and making a false official statement. The Soldier was sentenced to forfeiture of \$2,284.00 for 2 months (the second month was suspended) and a letter of reprimand filed in their official personnel record.

A Specialist from 2-135 IN was found guilty at a Summarized Article 15 hearing for a negligent discharge. The Soldier was sentenced to 14 days extra duty and 14 days restriction.

A Sergeant from 2-135 IN was found guilty at a Field Grade Article 15 hearing for violation of General Order 1-b for consuming alcohol. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Specialist, and forfeiture of \$1000.00 for 2 months (suspended).

A Private (E2) from 2-135 IN was found guilty at a Company Grade Article 15 hearing for committing adultery. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private (E1) and forfeiture of \$347.00 (suspended).

A Specialist from 2-135 IN was found guilty at a Company Grade Article 15 hearing for committing adultery. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private First-Class and forfeiture of \$462.00 (suspended).

A Sergeant from 1-180 CAV and tasked to 108 ADA in Bahrain was found guilty at a Field Grade Article 15 hearing for violation of the theater drinking policy for consuming alcohol off of post. The Soldier was reduced to Specialist, forfeiture of \$1,182.00 for 2 months, 45 days extra duty and 45 days restriction.

11 Soldiers of the rank of Private First-Class and Specialist from 1-180 CAV and tasked to 108 ADA in Bahrain were found guilty at Field Grade Article 15 hearings for violation of the theater drinking policy for consuming alcohol off of post. They were sentenced to a reduction of 1 grade, a forfeiture of ½ months pay, 45 days extra duty and 45 days restriction.

A Private First-Class from 2-135 IN was found guilty at a Company Grade Article 15 for submitting a false official statement. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private (E2) and an oral reprimand.

A Private First-Class from 59th Chemical Company was found guilty at a Company Grade Article 15 for failing to obey a lawful order for not maintaining their post until properly relieved. The Soldier was sentenced to reduction to Private (E2), forfeiture of \$410.00 (suspended), extra duty for 7 days and an oral reprimand.

Snipers Lead the Way

By 1st Lt. Joseph Kelly

The Sniper Platoon from the Mankato, Minn. based Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry Regiment were getting ready for the Brigade-wide Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB) testing.

The platoon started with two training periods per week where a team leader was the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of each Army Warrior Task (AWT) that was specified by the EIB Board as testable. The sessions consisted of approximately one hour per AWT followed by one to two hours of hands on training on the task.

In January, after the missions to support the Iraqi drawdown were complete, the section trained eight to twelve hours per day on five to ten AWT's per day for six days a week. Team leaders and their teams were in charge of critiquing each soldier's performance of the tasks.

"Lieutenant Kelly's goal was to have each soldier be so proficient at each task that when the Soldier walked up to the weapon that the Soldier's brain would be taken out of the equation and muscle memory took over," remarked Staff Sgt Dustin Eggum, the Sniper Platoon Sergeant from Mankato, Minnesota.

When the time came for the Brigade-wide round robin training the week prior to the testing, the men were well versed in the performance steps required to pass each AWT. "Round robin week ended up being more of just a review for us," said Sgt. Jeffrey Liebl of Willmar, Minnesota.

After ramping up their preparation from December through January 20th, the EIB test started on January 23rd with the Army Physical Fitness Test. "We hold our Platoon to a higher physical standard than the Army, which raised the leadership's expectation of our performance," noted Staff Sgt. Eggum.

The Platoon had 12 out of 18 Soldiers make it through the PT Test. The

Platoon then was tested on day and night land navigation. The following day the Platoon had 11 men start day one of lane testing where they'd have to prove their proficiency in 10 AWT's and one 'decision task'. The lanes focused on current missions with an Urban lane, a Patrol lane and a Traffic Control Point lane.



SPC. Matthew Wegge, a sniper from Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 135th Infantry Regiment based in Mankato, Minn., demonstrates his proficiency with a lensatic compass and the M240B machine gun while testing for the Expert Infantry Badge (EIB). The Oakdale, Minn. native was up to the task as he was part of the thirteen percent of soldiers who earned the EIB. (Photo by SPC Dylan Hauer)

The platoon had seven soldiers remaining after the first day of lane testing. It was a particularly hard pill to swallow as the Platoon had so much time invested in training on the tasks. "I really want to take the test again. I want it badly," said Specialist Ronnie Aldrich from Austin, Minn., one of the snipers to receive a "No Go" on his first day of lane testing.

On the second day of testing, the Platoon lost one more soldier to a lane. "I can't wait to try again," said Specialist Sean Richman, a sniper from Rosemount, Minn. On the final day of testing, the six remaining snipers passed their lanes.

All that was left was the 12 mile ruck march. The Sniper Platoon had been

doing ruck marches one day a week since arriving at Camp Buehring so the snipers knew they were ready—the point of Army training.

The ruck march started at 0630 on Friday morning and the EIB candidates had 3 hours to complete the ruck march with a packing list containing a minimum of 35 pounds plus water. At 0930, the ruck march was complete with all six snipers passing the final challenge separating them from the EIB.

At 1000, six Soldiers from the Sniper Platoon, 1st Lt. Joseph Kelly from St. Paul, Minn., Staff Sgt. Dustin Eggum, Sgt. Jeffrey Liebl, SPC. Matthew Wegge of Oakdale, Minn., SPC. Mitchell Harris of Pine Island, Minn., and SPC. Jerry Thompson from Mankato, joined 47 other soldiers from across the 1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, 112th Military Police Company, and 1st Cavalry Division in getting pinned with the prestigious Expert Infantryman Badge.

The six Soldiers from the Sniper Platoon represented the highest number of EIB recipients out of any other Platoon in the Brigade. Their 33% success ratio was two and a half times the Brigade average and over two times better than the Army-wide average pass rate of ten to fifteen percent.

"Knowing that when you walked up to the weapon, you knew exactly what to do made the testing seem much less stressful. The hours and hours of hands on training truly paid off," said SPC. Matthew Wegge.

The Sniper Platoon holds itself as having a high level of responsibility to maintain a high level of proficiency and readiness and they proved themselves during this testing. The Sniper Platoon members that did not receive their EIBs look forward to the next opportunity to prove themselves.

Crazy Troop Embraced with Strong Community Support

Story Sgt. 1st Class Troy Smith

The eyes of the international community descended on the final days of American operations in Iraq. Media reporters from all mediums traveled to several of the final cities housing the last American bases to broadcast stories on the final days of the American effort before becoming history. As part of the effort, politicians were interviewed for their varying opinions on the issue and senior ranking officials were interviewed to remark as to their unit's role in the closing days of American Troops in Iraq. While the Soldiers of Crazy Troop did not receive the media attention, they were undoubtedly a key part of writing America's final chapter in Iraq. The last Crazy Troop Convoy Escort Team (CET) convoy completed its final mission in Iraq and crossed the border into Kuwait just under 24 hours before the final American convoy officially ended Operation New Dawn, transitioning America's war in Iraq into the annals of American History.

While Crazy Troop did not take the historical footnote as the last convoy out of Iraq, the Cloquet Soldiers were assigned to command the Brigade's last CET mission

that traveled north of Baghdad. That mission was also the largest mission of the 94th Cavalry's deployment, encompassing seventeen vehicles, more than four times the size of the normal CET mission. This last Crazy Troop convoy traveled through neighborhoods and areas whose violence once adorned the nightly news in America. These were the same neighborhoods that once erupted into sectarian violence, eventually quelled through the successful U.S. "surge" strategy. In this final night they were still tense and serious areas as the Cloquet Soldiers rolled along, protecting their large convoy en route back to Kuwait. The seriousness of the area was compounded by the fact that Camp Victory, the largest American base in Baghdad had already closed, meaning the Cloquet Soldiers and their load would have had very little options for a safe haven to maneuver towards, had they fallen to a serious insurgent attack. On this night, the only help left in Iraq would come from the air, or over three hours away by ground from the South. Fortunately for the Cloquet Soldiers, the tense looks of war weary Iraqi locals were the only concern on the night. The Crazy Troop Soldiers, themselves weary from the pace of recent operations, crossed over into Kuwait just after 2am Minnesota time on December 17th, ending both their individual and Cloquet's Crazy Troop's impact on history during Operation New Dawn.

For many of the Troop's leaders who have served multiple combat tours in Iraq, it was an unreal moment. "It just seems unreal that the war in Iraq is actually over" remarked Cloquet native and Staff Sergeant Timothy Schlenvogt, days after commanding this final Crazy Troop mission. Adding to the surreal aspect of the war's final moments was the suddenness that America's operations in



Pvt 1st Class Andrew Whiffen from Esko, Pvt 1st Class Anders Lund from Wrenshall, and Pvt. 1st Class Alex Gillespie of Superior are captured enjoying some of the good old fashioned home baked Christmas treats the unit received from various organizations as part of the overwhelming support the unit received during the Christmas season. (US Army photo from Sergeant First Class Troy Smith, Crazy Troop, 1-94 CAV).

Iraq ended. While the media community repeatedly remarked on the December 31st deadline in the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), the Soldiers secretly knew that the Army planned to deceive the enemy and have all American assets pulled out before Christmas. This plan would then deny the enemy any final plots to cause American casualties. Just about 24 hours after Crazy Troop's final mission, the final Minnesota Army National Guard convoy crossed into Kuwait around 4am Minnesota time on December 18th. This marked the end of Iraqi operations for all the Minnesota soldiers of the famed "Red Bulls" of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division.

As the Cloquet Soldiers absorbed the moment of each of their parts in this chapter in American History, the holidays seemed to sneak up on them. A Minnesotan cannot be blamed for such, with the sands and moderate temperatures of Kuwait making a poor excuse for the winter wonderland of a good old fashioned Northland Christmas. For the Veterans in the group, it was 'another' Christmas in the desert; their past memories capable of helping the younger soldiers cope with being far from home during the "most wonderful time of the year" as the song declares. For the soldiers of Crazy Troop, the burden of being in the middle of a sandy desert and away from home on Christmas and New Year's was eased by the overwhelming support the Troop received through care packages during the holiday season. Since Thanksgiving Week, the unit received a steady flow of good old fashioned American Patriotism



Specialists Nathan Hainline and Michael Maruca, both from Duluth, show off some of the movies, games and electronics they received as part of a Best Buy program that sent over 3,300 robust care packages to the Middle East, one for every Minnesota Army National Guard Soldier deployed to forward locations as part of the Global War on Terror. (US Army photo from Sergeant First Class Troy Smith, Crazy Troop, 1-94 CAV).

as package upon package found their way from the great people of the Northland to the Cloquet Soldiers in Kuwait. The packages showed the support for their senders and lifted spirits and warmed the hearts of the soldiers who were ever thankful to have received them. "I have never seen anything like this" said Private 1st Class Daniel Henagin, a Cloquet resident. The effort involved scores of businesses, civic groups, and patriots from Carlton County, across the Northland, and even greater Minnesota. The 'surge' of packages for the Cloquet Soldiers began with the toiletries and goodies received from Kid's Corner School Age Daycare of Cloquet. Soon after, the Cloquet Soldiers found themselves receiving dozens of large boxes from AmericInn Hotels of Proctor and Two Harbors. The unit received so many packages from AmericInn they lost count. These packages were filled to the brim with goods for the troops, including scores of beef sticks from Duluth's historic Old World Meats. Before these boxes could even be fully distributed came a load of fudge from Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory of Duluth. The delicious fudge came as two large boxes each containing 20 pounds of individually wrapped fudge squares. The fudge was a collaborative effort between Rocky Mountain Fudge and the Duluth chapter of Gold Stars Mothers.

The packages kept coming as other organizations took part. One business with an employee whose brother is deployed with Crazy Troop, held their own event. Allianz Life from the greater Minneapolis-St. Paul area only has one soldier connected with Crazy Troop, but it was enough to create a major showing of support. One email asking for permission to put a box in one office quickly spread, and shortly there were goods and boxes to send several dozen boxes to the Crazy Troop Soldiers. Another well received effort came from Northland Perkin's Restaurants, who sent well over 100 metal tins of cookies to Minnesota Soldiers in time for the Holidays. Crazy Troop was even blessed with a gift from Duluth's Buffalo Wild Wings, who sent over enough of their famous barbecue sauce to allow the Cloquet Soldiers to conduct a desert version of the "blazing challenge" well known at the franchise. Amongst all the packages that found their way through the winding Army mail process to the Soldiers in Kuwait, the effort from the

Best Buy Military Employee Business Network (EBN) stood out. Through this amazing effort, Best Buy and other Minnesota business partners shipped just over 3,300 care packages, one for every Minnesota Guard Soldier deployed in combat, which meant one for every Crazy Troop Soldier. The packages were filled with food, sets of headphones, newly released movies and games, but the highlight was that each package contained a very nice digital camera for the soldier. Crazy Troop received numerous care packages from local churches and school kids, complete with cards and artwork spreading their Christmas cheer to the Cloquet Soldiers in the form of wreaths, snowman and gingerbread houses. Crazy Troop cannot forget various other packages from VFW Posts, American Legion Posts, and other Veteran organizations from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan.

Each of the packages, big and small, was the product of patriotic Minnesotans showing support for their Minnesota Army National Guard Soldiers deployed during the holidays, that special time of year when everyone focuses on their families, friends, and those closest to them in their lives. The time of year dedicated to gatherings, celebration, and showing our love for one another through gift giving. Everyone knows what it is like to "miss out" during some aspect of the Holidays, whether having to work a late shift or possibly being stuck on business away from home. That said, very few know the feeling of being in uniform so far from home in a sandy combat zone, thousands of miles from those you care about during the



(Top) Soldiers from Crazy Troop pose just before the start of the Desert version of Buffalo Wild Wing's "Blazin' Challenge", hosted by Crazy Troop Commander Captain Michael Boelk of North Branch. Pictured from left to right are Spc. Robert Meysembourg of St. Paul, Spc. Bryan Schneider of Cotton, Cloquet resident Sgt 1st Class Raffy Johnson, Sgt. Jason Harstad of Esko, Spc. Jake Tvedt from Bruno, and Spc. Jeremy Zaic from Ely. All soldiers are member of Cloquet's Crazy Troop. (US Army photo from Sergeant First Class Troy Smith, Crazy Troop, 1-94 CAV). (Bottom) Crazy Troop soldiers Pvt. 1st Class Daniel Henagin of Cloquet and Pvt. 1st Class Stephen Nelson of Duluth gather up boxes of donated goods from the unit mail area from Specialist Adam Peterson of Saint Paul to distribute the appreciated goods to Crazy Troop soldiers in their living areas. The boxes were part of the overwhelming showing of support from the community the unit received during the Christmas season. (US Army photo from Sergeant First Class Troy Smith, Crazy Troop, 1-94 CAV).

Holidays. This feeling is ever more so for those with little children who don't quite understand why mommy or daddy isn't there on Christmas morning. To describe the feelings a Soldier experiences is difficult, but it is lessened by the presence of their brothers and sisters in arms, their military family, whose presence and camaraderie lifted one another up while so far from home. The care packages brought aide in the same endeavor, thoroughly lifting spirits and warming hearts of soldiers young and old. The care packages made an unbearable time in an unbearable place, a little bit more bearable. The men and women of Crazy Troop are ever thankful for all the support they received this past holiday season, and throughout their deployment. The strong community support of the Cloquet Soldiers is part of what drives them to serve in arms at a time of war- it can be easily said that they wouldn't have been able to mark their moment in American History without it.

Expert Infantryman Badge for 1-194 AR By Sgt. Nick J. Scholer

Many of the Alpha Company “Avengers” from the Alexandria, Minn. based 1st Combined Arms Battalion 194th Armor, have a new mission to accomplish in the desert of Kuwait, they are training for the Expert Infantryman Badge or more commonly known by Infantry Soldiers as the “EIB.” The EIB is a challenging three day event that will test the Soldiers knowledge, physical stamina, and dedication to duty.

The EIB test started in 1944 when 100 Noncommissioned Officers from the 100th Infantry Division, Fort Bragg, NC were tested on weapons, two ruck marches, one 25 miles in eight hours and the other for nine miles in two hours. There was a physical fitness test, combat course, grenade course, and military subject test. When the testing had concluded on Mar. 29, 1944, Tech. Sgt. Walter Bull was the first Infantry Soldier to be awarded the EIB.

Today the EIB consists of three days of qualifying expert with the M4/M16 series rifle, passing the Army Physical Fitness Test by achieving 75 points in each of three events (push-ups, sit-ups, 2 mile run), Day/Night land navigation, the Urban lane, the Patrol lane, the Traffic Control Point lane, and finally a 12-mile ruck march in three hours. Each of the lanes will challenge the Soldier with ten tasks. For example the Urban lane has the Soldier prepare a military radio for operations, perform first aid on an open head wound and then request a medical evacuation.

To prepare for the EIB testing the Alpha Company Soldiers have been conducting training at Camp Virginia. One of the more grueling events is the 12 mile ruck march. The ruck must weigh a minimum of 35 pounds. The best way to prepare for this event is to grab your ruck and go for a march. One sunny Camp Virginia day, Alpha Company’s Third Platoon Soldiers did just that. They went a total of 6 miles and Cpl. Daniel Post, an Infantryman from Sauk Center, Minn., kept the pace to EIB standards.

There has been weapon training in the barracks area. Pfc. Nathan Duitsman, an Infantryman from Oakdale, Minn., was one of the first to be trained and tested on the M2 .50 cal machine gun. The EIB standard for the M2 machine gun requires the Soldier to set the headspace and timing within five minutes. Then load, correct a malfunction and unload the weapon. Spc. Robert Johnston, an Infantryman from Hanely Falls Minn., practiced loading, correcting a malfunction and unloading the MK- 19 40mm grenade launcher. One thing the first EIB Soldiers did not have back in 1944 was the FBCB2 Blue Force Tracker. The Blue Force Tracker is how the modern day military increases battlefield situational awareness. Staff Sgt. Joseph Brown gave a block of instruction for his squad members on how to send a free text message using the Blue Force Tracker.

On Jan. 6, 2012, the EIB candidates from Alpha Company went to the Kabari Range to qualify with the M4 weapon. A Soldier is required to hit a minimum of 36 targets out of 40 targets to qualify expert. The day on the range started



Cpl. Daniel Post, an Infantryman from Sauk Center, Minn., with Alpha Company, 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 194th Armor, instructs Expert Infantryman Badge candidates on how to properly set the head space and timing on the M2 .50cal machine gun. This training was conducted around the 1-194 CAB battalion area prior to sending Soldiers to Camp Buehring for additional training.

out with a scenic sunrise as Alpha Company went about the business of preparing the range for operation. This quickly changed when the wind picked up to what felt like at least 30 mph. As the Soldiers fired, the sand was blasting into the faces, although that did not stop the Avengers determination to score expert.

From Jan. 16 through Jan. 20, the EIB candidates conducted training at the EIB round robin site located on Camp Buehring. This week of training gave the candidate a chance to perfect their skills on all the tasks required to earn the EIB. At each station there was an EIB grader who is a current EIB holder. The EIB grader was there answer the candidate’s questions and assist them with learning each task to Army standards.

On Jan. 21 the EIB graders were put to the test. The three testing lanes were set up on FOB Gerber and each lane was validated to ensure the EIB standards were upheld. The EIB graders had to conduct the lane as they would when testing the candidates under the watchful eye of the EIB committee.

With all three lanes validated, the EIB candidates will meet on Camp Buehring Jan. 23 to conduct the Army Physical Fitness Test. After the APFT is completed the candidates will have a short time to prepare for the day and night land navigation testing. The Soldiers that make it through the APFT and land navigation will meet the next day on Fob Gerber for lane testing. All Soldiers involved with the EIB, as a candidate, a grader, or on the EIB committee have shown great devotion to duty to ensure that when the dust settles after upon completion of the 12 mile road mach the Soldiers left standing are truly Expert Infantryman.

Hitting the Ground Running

By Sgt. 1st Class Chad Gohman

As part of Delta Company's ongoing training mission in Kuwait, the unit hit the ground running during an Advanced Close Quarters Marksmanship (ACQM) live fire training exercise. ACQM is a practice in the quick and effective engagement of threats at ranges of 25 meters or less. For the Soldiers, this differs significantly from the standard individual weapons training which customarily operates in a symmetrical fashion on a firing range with stationary targets. ACQM breaks the mold by integrating collective maneuver, target discrimination, alternate firing positions, and rapid magazine change drills which are all in an effort to further develop and challenge the Unit's marksmanship abilities.

On today's battlefield and ever-changing geopolitical climate, it is vital for all Soldiers, regardless of duty assignment, to have razor-sharp competence in their most primitive yet indispensable survivability skills—shooting, moving, and communicating. According to Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Gamble, 1st Platoon Sergeant from Woodbury, Minn., the application of engaging enemy threats that often fight up-close in an intrepid manner reaffirms the urgency that his Soldiers are furnished with training events to replicate situations faced in combat. "I want my Soldiers to learn from their mistakes here so they are mentally and physically prepared to take the fight to the enemy on any front. By the end the day, there was an air of confidence among my Soldiers not witnessed at any other time during our deployment. I am proud to see my Soldiers forging trusting relationships with each other and unifying our Platoon toward a common goal."

Throughout the day, the Soldiers not only engaged enemy targets, they were required to exercise extreme caution in order to avoid shooting silhouettes depicted as civilians on the battlefield (COBs). Operating in an urban environment where the enemy uses structures and urban obstacles for concealment, unarmed civilians can unwittingly get caught in the crossfire. On his second deployment, Staff Sgt. Scott Whittemore, 3rd Platoon sergeant from St. Cloud, Minn, stated, "across the spectrum of our current theater of operations, COBs present significant challenges to U.S. Soldiers and are often used by enemy forces to drive a wedge between them and us. ACQM is a very realistic means of ensuring my Soldiers are equipped with the skill set and confidence

to employ their weapons in an environment where the enemy is evasive and blends in with the local populace."

Among the exercises, Soldiers advanced toward the enemy on foot while simultaneously firing and quickly changing magazines on the move. Sgt. Jamie Kangas, the unit's administrative noncommissioned officer from Baxter, Minn., was impressed with the level of professionalism and technical expertise exhibited by the Soldiers. "Our Soldiers make it look so natural and possess outstanding muscle memory enabling them to efficiently exchange magazines once all of their rounds have been expended. It has been several months since I have vacated the confines and comforts of my office; but once I was able to knock the rust off of my tactical discipline, I quickly felt a sense of battle focus reemerge that I have not experienced since Basic Combat Training. Overall, the range was an invaluable learning experience, and it provided welcome relief from the typical stressors I encounter on a daily basis."

In another exercise, Soldiers worked in teams while providing cover fire for each other as they moved closer to the enemy positions. As teams were being formed and Team Leaders were selected, Spc. Joseph Helmbrecht, an armor crewman from St. Cloud, Minn., received the opportunity he was always looking for. For the first time in his career, Spc. Helmbrecht would test his mettle by experiencing first-hand what it takes to lead a team of Soldiers into a combat situation. "I couldn't have been more excited yet timid at the same time. Once my team started sending rounds downrange, my vocal orders were rendered useless. I resorted to hand and arm signals along with the sweet sound of barking M4s as our primary means of communication. The adrenaline rush was second to none. The lessons I learned will be lasting throughout my entire career."

This kind of holistic training provides Soldiers with the opportunity to combine several individual tasks into a collective exercise for functionality on the contemporary battlefield. When going into combat, repeated exposure to realistic training can be the single decisive factor in achieving victory. While no Soldier relishes the opportunity of going into battle, conducting specific dress rehearsals ensures that when our Soldiers find themselves in harm's way, they are optimally prepared.

Canadian Armed Forces

Story and Photo by 1st Lt. Sean Carstensen

Back in September of 2011, a Canadian Armed Forces unit—SLOC DET Kuwait—began full operations at Camp Patriot. The 1st Bn, 125th FA was responsible for the life support of the roughly 100 new tenants here at Camp Patriot. The support included providing living space, setting up office trailers, and coordinating regular cleaning of the trailers.

The primary mission of the Canadian unit was to provide logistical support to their troops coming out of Afghanistan.

The support was not a one-way street. Two of the Canadian service members were recognized by the 1st Bn, 125th FA for their outstanding service while at Camp Patriot.

Cpl. Vicky Hamelin assisted with everyday operations in the Troop Medical Center, which included the administration of an influenza vaccine to almost every service member on the camp.

“Chaplain (Cpt.) Greg Girard demonstrated faithful and selfless service to the service members of Camp Patriot and assisted in the Camp Patriot Chapel,” said Chaplain (1Lt.) George Messer, chaplain, 1st Bn, 125th FA. Chaplain Girard also covered the various religious services while Chaplain Messer was home on R&R leave.

As a result of their dedication and service, both were awarded with an Army Achievement Medal by Lt. Col. Troy Soukup, commander, 1st Bn, 125th FA, on Jan. 12, 2012.

It is much rarer for Canadian service members to receive awards than it is for U.S. service members. After the presentation both Cpl. Hamelin and Chaplain Girard were congratulated by other members of their unit as they looked over their certificates.



Fighting the Daily Grind with 1/34th BSTB By 1st Lt. Aaron Rindahl

As the 1/34 Brigade Special Troops Battalion rolls through the eighth month of their deployment to Kuwait, Soldiers get creative in their methods to break up the day to day business. Some play video games, some go to the gym, but others fulfill their need for speed with remote controlled (RC) cars.

RC cars, much like full size cars, come in many different styles, options, and price ranges. The RC cars are approximately 18 inches long and are driven by a battery powered electric motor. The battery is the biggest factor in the speed of the car. Lithium Polymer (LiPo) batteries can push the RC cars to speeds of 80+ miles per hour. Other battery types such as Nickel-Cadmium don't provide the speed; provide more user time between re-charging. Other aftermarket parts such as aluminum frames, improved shock absorbers, or tires, can also be purchased to improve the handling and overall performance of the RC car.

At Camp Arifjan there are many tenant Soldiers that use RC cars as a source of recreation. Camp Arifjan has an outdoor race track for RC cars, as well as a large area on the inside of a one-half mile running track designated for RC car use.

Within the 1/34 Brigade Special Troops Battalion, there is a wide range of experience with RC cars. 1st Sgt. Jeffrey Kasprzyk from Oakdale, Minnesota has 15 RC cars total. He enjoys the RC cars because they are fun to play with and he enjoys working on them in his downtime. One of 1st Sgt. Kasprzyk's RC cars was won from "RC CarAction" for a photo that he submitted. When he is in Minnesota, he enjoys taking his RC cars to Taylors Falls, Minnesota and camping areas near Stillwater, Minnesota.

Sgt. 1st Class Derek Bronson from Eagan, Minnesota is new to RC Cars. He recently bought his RC car before the deployment. He purchased it for something to pass the time while he is in Kuwait. "It's a lot more fun than I expected, and the area we get to use for it makes it even better" said Bronson.

All of the Soldiers from the 1/34 Brigade Special Troops Battalion with RC cars meet up one night a week to race their cars and have fun while sharing a common interest.



1/34 Brigade Special Troops Battalion Soldiers stand behind their RC cars at Zone 6 Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. From left to right: Sgt. Ryan Marshik from Little Falls, Minnesota, 1st Sgt. Jeffrey Kasprzyk from Oakdale, Minnesota, Sgt. 1st Class Roy Sullins from Coon Rapids, Minnesota, Sgt. 1st Class Derek Bronson from Eagan, Minnesota, and Spc. Zechariah Boch from Prescott Wisconsin.



Kuwaiti & American Forces Play Soccer

By 1st Lt. Jeremy Williams

The fans were vibrantly reacting to every move on the gridiron. When the whistle blew sounding the end of the game, both squads knew it would be too late. Knowing victory was the only way to end competition, focus needed to remain on one thing and one thing only. Veering the circular pigskin into the net would put the superior force on display, if only for a moment. This is the kind of tenacity Kuwaiti, US Army, and US Air Force players brought to the engagement. We use the term Gridiron, for this was no ordinary soccer (a.k.a. “football”) game.

When considering all the ways to build relationships with foreign countries, one option appears to move to the forefront. Athletic fields are meant for competition. With competition, comes mutual respect among opponents. The Kuwaiti Friendship Sports Tournament provides teams a ball, a field, and a cleverly disguised Kuwaiti player dressed as the referee. The 6-8 week schedule is short enough to not burden participants’ Monday morning work requirements, but long enough to rebound from a stinging defeat. Competition play is open to all service members based at Army LSA and Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait.

All outcomes are meticulously documented by the courtside scribe, who just happened to be the first one who fell asleep on the previous nights guard shift. One might ask how a US team mentally prepares for a “football” match hosted in a country that teaches its children to shoot on net prior to learning how to walk. “I study Kuwaiti soccer theory from open source reports, and then establish a working group which conducts team capability and vulnerability assessments”, states Camp LSA Executive Officer Maj. Bruce Kelii, from Bloomington Minn., deployed with the 134 Brigade Support Battalion from the Minnesota Army National Guard.



2nd Lt. Christopher Bernick plays soccer against a Kuwaiti soldier. Bernick’s unit is deployed to Ali Al Salem Airbase and regularly plays soccer against the Kuwaitis.

For those who prefer not to compete on the fresh tropic dust, a game of volleyball takes slippery sports surfaces to a whole new level. When asked about playing on a surface that never was tickled by a mud-soaked mop, Camp LSA Safety Officer 1st Lt. Jacquelyn Rodrigues from Clearlake, Minn., said “some of the players provide great comic relief, when attempting to make contact with the ball”. The real question is do the Kuwaitis use this as an offensive tactic, or claim janitorial innocence.

When all that’s left are the stories, smiles, bruises, and bumps from a day in the life of a US service member



Contrary to typical athletic events, conversations during play are permitted. Both sides use the time to observe the disposition of the other country. After frustrations are cast, and opportunities made or lost, friendships emerge. “I have yet to receive a facebook friend request from a Kuwaiti”, says Spc. Joshua Schley, from Fairbault, Minn., Schley works as a signal systems support specialist.

and international sports participate, much appreciation is shown to our host nation. Not only do they partner with us to assure mutual safety, but they also go out of their way to befriend us in the best way they know how. From this grateful participant, the Kuwaiti Friendship Sports Tournament earns two thumbs way up.

“Soldiers of the 219th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Indiana Army National Guard”

By CPT BRENT P. HILL, COMMANDER, A BTRY, 1ST BN 160TH FA, OKARNG

Alpha Battery, 1st BN 160th Field Artillery, Oklahoma Army National Guard, played an instrumental role in the end of 2011 Presidential Order to drawdown troops from the Iraq Theater.

Alpha Battery's mission was to safely escort troops coming out of Iraq to the Kuwait City International Airport for redeployment. In order to successfully complete the mission, the unit requested additional vehicles and personnel to accomplish the high profile task. The request for additional vehicles and personnel was granted with help from the 160th FA Battalion, 1st HBCT 34th ID, and 1st TSC.

In November 2011, seven soldiers from the 219th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Indiana Army National Guard, were augmented to Alpha Battery 1st BN 160th Field Artillery to assist with the drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq. The 219th BSB soldiers came to Alpha Battery during a critical time in the month. The drawdown was now in full effect and Alpha Battery soldiers were conducting 24 hour operations in order to meet the deadline. The Indiana Army National Guard soldiers quickly adapted to Alpha Battery's policies and procedures and became instant support for the unit.

Throughout the months of November and December, Alpha Battery, with the help of the augmented 219th soldiers; executed 2502 missions, escorted 112,699 soldiers, and drove more than 192,000 miles.

These seven INARNG soldiers proved to be more than capable citizen-soldiers who could complete any task given to them. With over ten consecutive years of war, Army National Guard soldiers have been asked to complete non-standard missions and tasks. The ARNG proves yet again that citizen-soldiers are highly flexible and can complete any mission they are given. Alpha Battery takes great pride in having working with soldiers from the Indiana Army National Guard to complete a mission that few thought could happen.

FIRE FOR EFFECT: By Capt. James Robertson

180th Mortar Live Fire Range

Specialist Justin Ford heard the command “Hang it!” and placed the high explosive mortar round in the top of the tube. Seconds later, he heard the command “Fire!” and dropped the round in. The mortar cracked as the round flew into the air. Seconds later, the round exploded over two kilometers away, ripping the target apart. For Specialist Ford and the other mortarmen in the Squadron, this was just another day at the office.

In the early morning hours of January 15, 2012, the 1-180th's mortar soldiers, with the military occupation specialty of 11C, checked conducted their final equipment checks and rolled out, along with a group of artillery forward observers. The small task force moved out to Observation Post 10 near Camp Buehring and began setting up their mortar systems and laying out ammunition. Observation Post 10 is well renowned for being one of the best mortar ranges in the world. It is often used by servicemen from all branches of the military, as well as from militaries all over the world. In addition, it is not unusual to for soldiers to see a herd of camels in the area.

For the rest of the day, the Squadron's forward observer prepared fire missions of training targets to their front and sent them to the mortar fire direction center, which used the information to calculate data that was sent to the soldiers on the gun line, enabling them to fire their mortars and destroy the targets.

The Squadron mortarmen are masters at their craft. They are well trained and capable of being deployed anywhere, anytime to support their Troops with mortar fire. They give their commander the extra fire power needed to defeat the enemy to allow their fellow soldiers to complete the mission. After all this training, they are ready for anything.



268th MP Company Family Readiness Group Fills a Vital Role in Unit's Success

Sgt 1st Class Michael Mann

To keep pace with the high tempo of deployments, training exercises and operations, National Guard units prepare extensively to ensure all tasks and duties will be completed successfully. But there is no duty area more important to mission success as that of the Family Readiness Group, also known as the FRG. The Family Readiness Group of 268th Military Police Company is a superb example of how building and maintaining strong relationships among a unit's families and communities enables Soldiers, units and Commanders to accomplish their duties with the confidence that their families are being taken care of properly.

The Family Readiness Group is vital to a unit's ability to accomplish the mission "because it gives Soldiers a sense of comfort that there is a group of people back home to answer questions about military life, and to provide information on benefits for families while the Soldier is away," said Capt. Paul Gross, Commander of the 268th Military Police Company.

The importance of the FRG is not just realized during deployments. "The FRG can help younger Soldiers' families get through difficult times," said Sgt. Robert Brown, a military police Soldier in the 268th Military Police Company. "It's there to help Soldiers during deployment or even during annual training," said Sgt. Brown. "It is a great way to make new friends and socialize with people who have something in common," agreed Tammy Mann, 268th MP Company Family Readiness Group Leader.

As with any military operation, coordinating and managing a FRG can be a challenging task. One of the biggest hurdles to overcome is getting the entire membership involved in group events. Nearly half of the Soldiers assigned to the unit live over 50 miles from the armory, and over a quarter of the assigned Soldiers travel more than 100 miles to attend training. "Getting family members to participate when they live far away has been by far the biggest challenge," said Tammy Mann.

One way the FRG has overcome the problem of families living across the state is with the use of social media. The FRG maintains a Facebook page, where family members and Soldiers can share information, and the Unit leadership can keep the entire FRG updated on the latest news involving the unit. "Facebook has helped greatly, especially showing [people back home] what Kuwait is like," said Tammy Mann. "Creation of the Facebook page as a focal point of information and communication has been pivotal to the success of the FRG" said Capt. Gross.

Despite the many challenges, managing a Family Readiness Group is a rewarding experience. One of the biggest accomplishments for the FRG was preparing Christmas



stockings for every Soldier in the Company. The stockings sent by the FRG was a touch of Christmas every Soldier seemed to enjoy," said Capt. Gross. Beyond the labor of putting the packages together, the real reward is seeing the family members and volunteers work together for the Soldiers. "Getting the snacks and items for stockings couldn't have been done without help. I have learned that there are great folks in our group," said Tammy Mann.