

ANACONDA TIMES

May 2, 2007

PROUDLY SERVING LSA ANACONDA

Well-Done

Unit receives a taste of home at cookout

Page 7

Full speed ahead

Biathlon fun

Page 10



Vol. 4, Issue 17

Free tax help office on base will close soon

by Sgt. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown

Anaconda Times Staff

LSA ANCONDA, Iraq - As tax season comes to a close, there is no need for servicemembers to worry about dwindling deadlines. Extensions are given and filing help is available here until May 15.

"All deployed servicemembers automatically have a 180 day extension to file their taxes," said Sgt. Bethany Becker of Hutto, Texas, the legal assistance noncommissioned officer in charge, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary). "The 180 days starts when they redeploy."

There is also filing assistance for servicemembers on Anaconda, much like on any active duty Army base in the States. The consolidated legal center, located at building 9103, can help servicemembers prepare forms 1040a and 1040EZ.

"We offer electronic filing of federal and state taxes," Becker said. "If servicemembers have any other tax issues, I will do my best to help or find someone who can help them."

Assistance at the tax center is free, and if servicemembers file their taxes using the E-file program, they can receive their refund in as little as 10 days, Becker said.

As most servicemembers know, all enlisted wages earned in a combat zone are tax free, and leave days accrued while in a combat zone are also tax-free.

Although the April 15 deadline has passed, servicemembers can wait until they return home to file their taxes, but free help is available here.

The Anaconda tax center is open Mondays from 9 a.m. till noon, Wednesdays from noon till 8 p.m., and Fridays from 9 a.m. till 6 p.m.

Call 829-1838 for more information.

Long distance in the desert

"This is obviously the godfather of marathons. It's history on it's own right here"

- 1st Sgt. Joseph Brown

See Page 15



Photo by Sgt. Amanda Solitano

Maj. Troy Weiland (center), the 1034th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion executive officer, and 1st Lt. Fredrick Leytham, the company commander of Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 1034th CSSB, speak with an Iraqi Army officer during a recent humanitarian mission. The 1034th CSSB delivered hundreds of school supply packages to a village near LSA Anaconda, April 16.

"I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough."

I am Master Sgt. Terry L. Underwood, Trussville, Ala.
Company D, 1/131 Avionics Battalion>>Company 1st Sgt.



What *our* leaders think:

Lt. Col. Bill J. Davis

13th SC (E) Chief of the Iraqi Security Forces Cell

(The Anaconda Times Staff will provide its readers weekly interviews with experienced officers and sergeants major to explain their role within the senior logistics headquarters in Iraq.)

Lt. Col. Bill Davis is the chief of the 13th SC (E) Iraqi Security Forces Cell. The ISF Cell provides logistical expertise to Iraqi Logistics units as they form and integrate into the Iraqi Army.

What is your job with the 13th SC (E)?

I am the chief of the Iraqi Security Forces Cell responsible for advising the Commanding General and subordinate commanders within the 13th SC (E) in the development of the logistics force structure for the Iraqi Army. Additionally, I provide logistical expertise into the organizational structure, training and capability assessments for developing a self sustaining Iraqi Army.

How do you interface with maneuver units and the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNST-I) in training ISF units?

Interfacing with Iraqi Army maneuver units is a gradual process occurring as the Motorized Transport Regiments are trained. At various times during the training period, the 13th SC (E) Commander along with members of the ISF Cell will visit each of the MTRs in training to discuss key issues with the MTR Commander and the Military Training Team Commander. Additionally, MTR Commanders will invite their respective division commanders and their key staffs to review training and discuss issues. Each MTR's associated MiTT plays a key part in these meetings, providing the Iraqi



Photo by Staff Sgt. Gary Witte

Lt. Col. Bill Davis, the chief of the 13th SC (E) Iraqi Security Forces Cell, talks with an Iraqi military officer.

Division Commander information from a Coalition perspective. Concerning MNSTC-I, their primary role occurs prior to the beginning of training. They are responsible for equipping the MTRs, as well as coordinating for their manning through the Iraqi Ministry of Defense. Thus, when the MTR begins training, we interface with MNSTC-I to discuss and alleviate equipping and personnel issues within the MTR.

What type of ISF logistics units are you assisting and how close are they to being trained?

What type of ISF logistics units are you assisting and how close are they to being trained? The 13th SC (E) is partnered with the 2nd MTR and the 7th MTR. Each MTR is roughly equivalent

to a US Army brigade support battalion in size, with the mission of providing commodity distribution as well as what the US Army would call direct support maintenance to their supported divisions. Each MTR has a 10 person MiTT led by a lieutenant colonel and comprised of a variety of officers and non-commissioned officers of various logistics related military occupational specialties. This team lives with their respective MTR seven days a week, advising the officers and NCOs of the MTR on how to build a training process that takes the unit from improving and adding to their soldiers' individual skills through becoming proficient on platoon and company level collective tasks and battle drills. The MiTT also assists in training staff actions and procedures, to include battle staff planning and tactical operations center actions.

It is said that the Iraqi Army is recruited nationally while the Iraqi Police are recruited locally. Are Iraqi logistics units built to mirror the demographics of Iraq?

Yes. The intent is that each Iraqi Division is comprised of soldiers of the same sect or sects in direct proportion to population represented in that Division's area of responsibility. For example, Al Anbar Province is predominantly Sunni, so the 7th Division's soldiers are predominantly Sunni.

What are the qualifications for Iraqis to join the different jobs within ISF logistics units?

After their initial training and upon assignment to an MTR, Iraqi soldiers compete for certain jobs within the MTR based largely upon their education level, previous training and aptitude to do particular jobs.

How do Iraqis vet and recruit their logistics recruits?

Iraqi soldiers, regardless of potential branch or military occupation, are recruited through typical military recruiting offices in larger cities, as well as through mobile "offices" that travel to smaller towns and villages.

Al-Sadr recently urged Iraqis not to work with the U.S., specifically calling on the Iraqi army and police to join resistance against Americans. What effect does this type of thinking have on ISF recruiting, training, operations?

Just speaking from my vantage point of ISF 2nd and 7th MTR logistics operations, Muqtada al-Sadr's comments have had no significant effect upon 2nd and 7th MTR logistics operations. In fact, the contrary is true. Personnel strength of each Regiment has increased within the last 90 days. Also, each

Regiment continues to train in order to assume sustainment responsibilities of their respective divisions.

Iraqis being able to handle their own security is one of the biggest barometers determining when coalition forces will be able to pull out of Iraq. What role does creating a logistics foundation have in building the overall ISF?

Any viable military force must have the ability to sustain itself. Thus, a strong logistics foundation is a key building block to a strong Iraqi Military, and directly linked to the Coalition's ability to transfer the security of Iraq to its own forces. The sooner the Iraqi Military is able to take the lead in the security of Iraq, the sooner the Coalition will be able to leave a stable and secure Iraq.

How would you measure the self sustainment of the ISF today and have you seen steady progress toward full self-sufficiency?

The ISF continues to make strides toward logistics self sufficiency, with 80 percent of the Iraqi Army's logistics units transitioned to and supporting their assigned divisions. By mid summer 2007, all currently formed Iraqi Army logistics units will be transitioned to and responsible for the sustainment of their divisions.

How has the surge affected ISF logistics operations?

The increase in Iraqi Army operations tempo (OPTEMPO) brought about by the surge has given Iraqi Army Logisticians another challenge. It is a challenge which they have overcome. Iraqi Army MTRs that have transitioned to their respective divisions, along with the 9th Mechanized Division's Logistics Battalions, continue to support their respective units in a professional manner.

ANACONDA TIMES 13th SC(E) Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Michael J. Terry

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411 Engineer Brigade
164th Corps Support Group
657th Area Support Group
1/34 Brigade Combat Team
45th Sustainment Brigade
82nd Sustainment Brigade
593rd Corps Support Group
15th Sustainment Brigade

Heroism during mission earns pilots Distinguished Flying Cross

by Staff Sgt. Lorin T. Smith

36th Combat Aviation Brigade PAO

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq - Four pilots from Company B, 1st Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment (Attack), 36th Combat Aviation Brigade, have been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism and extraordinary achievement while flying a combat mission in Ramadi, Iraq. The award was presented to the pilots April 16.

Earning the award were: 1st Lt. Matthew Salo, Chief Warrant Officer Marcus Moore, Chief Warrant Officer Robert Stacy and Chief Warrant Officer William "Dub" White.

They distinguished themselves by their actions in Ar Ramadi, Dec. 19. The mission was to provide air cover for Coalition Forces who were establishing an observation post within the city.

The Apache pilots searched for insurgents from the air while the forces were on the ground moving from building to building, clearing the way and looking for the best location to set up an observation post. Within seconds of one Coalition Force squad entering a building, the pilots heard over the radio that an improvised explosive device had detonated. Salo said several Iraqi Army soldiers were hurt, and most of the squad's communications equipment had been damaged or destroyed. The ground troops continued clearing the building, and set up a perimeter around it. About 40 minutes later, another IED went off. The Marines on the ground decided that they had to move the casualties out of the building, and needed to call in a casualty evacuation. A third IED exploded and the enemy began firing at the Marines still inside the building.

With the Coalition Forces having limited communications, the troops on the ground had no way of letting the tactical operations center back at Camp Ar Ramadi know the situation. So, the Apaches became a radio relay between

the ground forces and the command post many miles away. Salo said enemy fire seemed to be coming from everywhere.

"We couldn't identify where the fire was coming from in that urban environment, but we thought we could draw some fire away from the ground guys, make some noise and keep the bad guys' heads down," Salo said. "That's when we started getting shot at the first time."

Low on fuel, taking fire and providing a vital communications link, the Apaches stayed long enough to allow the Humvee convoy to evacuate the wounded Soldiers before heading back to Camp Corregidor to refuel. While assessing battle damage, White and Moore discovered they had taken enemy fire to the aircraft's tail wheel, belly and transmission. Salo and Stacy sustained damage to their helicopter's flight systems. All four pilots could have determined that their aircraft were not safe to fly and headed back to LSA Anaconda, but they all decided to go back into the firefight and continue the mission.

"We knew the mission was vital and we had to go back in," Salo said.

Within minutes of returning to support the Marines, the Apaches again began taking fire from the insurgents. At this time, Salo and Stacy saw one of a helicopter pilot's worst nightmares coming straight for them - a rocket-propelled grenade. They banked away, saw the airburst of the RPG miss them, and flew back into the fight to continue monitoring the radios for the ground guys.

"The Marines were obviously in the middle of it. Since we were able to talk to them, we could relay the situation to their command post, which was finally able to dispatch a patrol to get out there and establish a relay station for them; providing additional support," Moore said. Once the wounded Coalition Forces were on their way out of the area and headed to safety, the Apaches left their station to return to the forward area re-



From Left, 1st Lt. Matthew Salo, Chief Warrant Officer Marcus Moore, Chief Warrant Officer Robert Stacy and Chief Warrant Officer William "Dub" White, all with Company B, 1st Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment (Attack), 36th Combat Aviation Brigade, earned the Distinguished Flying Cross April 16 at LSA Anaconda, Iraq. The Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded for heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight.

fueling point at Corregidor to get more fuel and access damage to their aircraft. This time, damage was found in a rocket pod of the Apache flown by White and Moore.

Since the mission was not complete and Coalition Forces were still in harm's way, the 36th CAB Soldiers returned to the heart of the battle. The Marines had their observation post operational by then. With more casualties, the Marines needed to egress out of the dangerous area. Similar to the "Mogadishu Mile" executed by Rangers, in "Blackhawk Down", the Marines made a run for it on foot to get out of the dangerous area. With the Apache pilots providing security and cover, the Coalition Forces were able to safely get back to their base.

The Apache pilots never fired a shot during the entire mission. "We couldn't

identify where the enemy fire was coming from, and there were civilians all over the place," Salo said. Rules of Engagement require U.S. Armed Forces to have positive identification of the enemy engaging in either a hostile act or exhibiting hostile intent. "This is a major city, it was in the middle of the day, and the only thing we could do was provide cover for the Marines by getting over the top of them. [We had to]...keep an eye out, and draw the enemy's attention away while the Marines got out of the city," he added.

Stacy said the toughest part of the mission was actually identifying the people doing the shooting. "The enemy doesn't have any dead giveaways or fire any tracer rounds," White said. "The enemy doesn't move in columns out in the middle of the desert; this is urban war-

fare, everyone and no one is a target," Salo said.

These Apache crews have worked with the same Marines they supported on that particular day, on several occasions. They know each other very well. E-mail excerpts from the Marines involved said if the Apache pilots hadn't been there, many more casualties could have been incurred.

"Someday I'll get to meet those brave Marines," White said. "The ground guys are in the thick of the battle every day, and we just come in to help them out when we can," he said.

A few days later, the same aircrews were back in Ar Ramadi, providing the same type of air coverage for the ground troops there. "This is our job," White said. "Protecting the heroes on the ground is what we love to do."

On the street with Staff Sgt. Angela Archie

"Have your eating habits changed while deployed, and how?"

Sgt. Chris Ryan



"I'm eating less over here. I've been averaging about one meal a day, snacking in between. When I get off duty, I go to my room, shower and relax."

Staff Sgt. Nekeysha Lewis



"My eating habits have varied because with my work schedule, I'm not guaranteed a set time to eat. At home, I'd eat healthier food than what's offered here."

Staff Sgt. Bernay Robinson



"I'm eating more here than I was at home, because the chow hall food is pretty good and the fast food is open 24/7. Going to go get something to eat is pretty much the highlight of the day."

Staff Sgt. William DeLoatch



"I eat more here. Starting out, I was eating 3 times a day and getting cake and ice cream with lunch and dinner. I've had to cut back on fast food and desserts and start going to the gym more."

Food sustains bases, replenishes the fight

by Sgt. KaRonda Fleming

Anaconda Times Staff

Al ASAD, Iraq - Servicemembers living on forward operating bases may find it hard to receive subsistence and other health and comfort items while in Iraq.

With the help of the 24th Quartermaster supply company out of Fort Lewis, Wash., the Marine Combat Logistics Battalion - 2, from Camp Lejeune, N.C., and civilian contractors, those items are readily available at the Class I yard.

"I supervise to make sure that the items are pulled, the customers receive the correct quantity requested, and that the Forward Operating Bases are taken care of," said Staff Sgt. Earline Citizen, the Class I noncommissioned officer in charge from Eunice, La.

"We make sure all the refrigerated units and generators are running," said Marine Sgt. Quincy S. Clarke, Marine Class I NCOIC with CLB - 2. "That way

if any one of them goes down, I can contact our technicians to quickly get the problem fixed."

It is essential to ensure that the refrigerated units are maintained and properly working, because that is where the food is stored, Citizen said.

Clarke said, "If they go down, we are in a world of trouble. Hence, keeping them operational all the time is very important. We have to be on top of their maintenance."

It would be hard for servicemembers to understand the concept of not having supplies sent to them in a timely manner, he said. As a result, each FOB receives their essentials as fast as possible.

Transient units are sent to FOBs which keep needed supplies refrigerated and are traded out when empty, Citizen said.

Clarke said "Food is what re-sustains the troops in the fight."



Photo by Sgt. KaRonda Fleming

Marine Cpl. Carlos G. Lovera (right), an office clerk, and Lance Cpl. Chad W. Shurtz, a motor transporter, both with the 8th Engineer Support Battalion from Camp Lejeune, N.C., wait for their Class I supplies to be loaded onto a truck.



MI unit steps down as new watchful eyes take over

by Sgt. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown

Anaconda Times Staff

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq — With a backdrop of unmanned aerial aircraft, a transfer of authority ceremony between the 224th Military Intelligence Battalion, and the 15th Military Intelligence Battalion, was held here April 20.

The transfer of authority marks the end of the mission for the 224th, and the beginning of the 15th's in the field of intelligence support.

During their deployment here, the Hunter Army Airfield, Ga.-based unit assisted with intelligence missions which strengthened the Coalition Forces' edge in Iraq.

"(We helped) in the discovery of thousands of items used in the manufacture of Improvised Explosive Devices, and most importantly, after providing actionable intelligence, (we helped) save the lives of

countless U.S. and other Coalition Force personnel," said Lt. Col. Scott Sanborn, commander of the 224th.

The 224th was also responsible for pumping jet fuel, manning guard towers, and conducting intelligence reports.

"I cannot tell you how proud I am of each and every member of Task Force Vigilance," Sanborn said. "You have all served your country with honor and have exceeded the high standard that was

set before us. After all this, it is time to pass the torch."

As the flags were transferred from the 224th M.I. to the 15th M.I., with a color guard of Soldiers from both units, Task Force Nighthawks assumed the full duties and responsibilities of their intelligence support to Multi-National Corps-Iraq.

"In the few weeks we have spent together, it is clear that you are ready for this mission," Sanborn said.

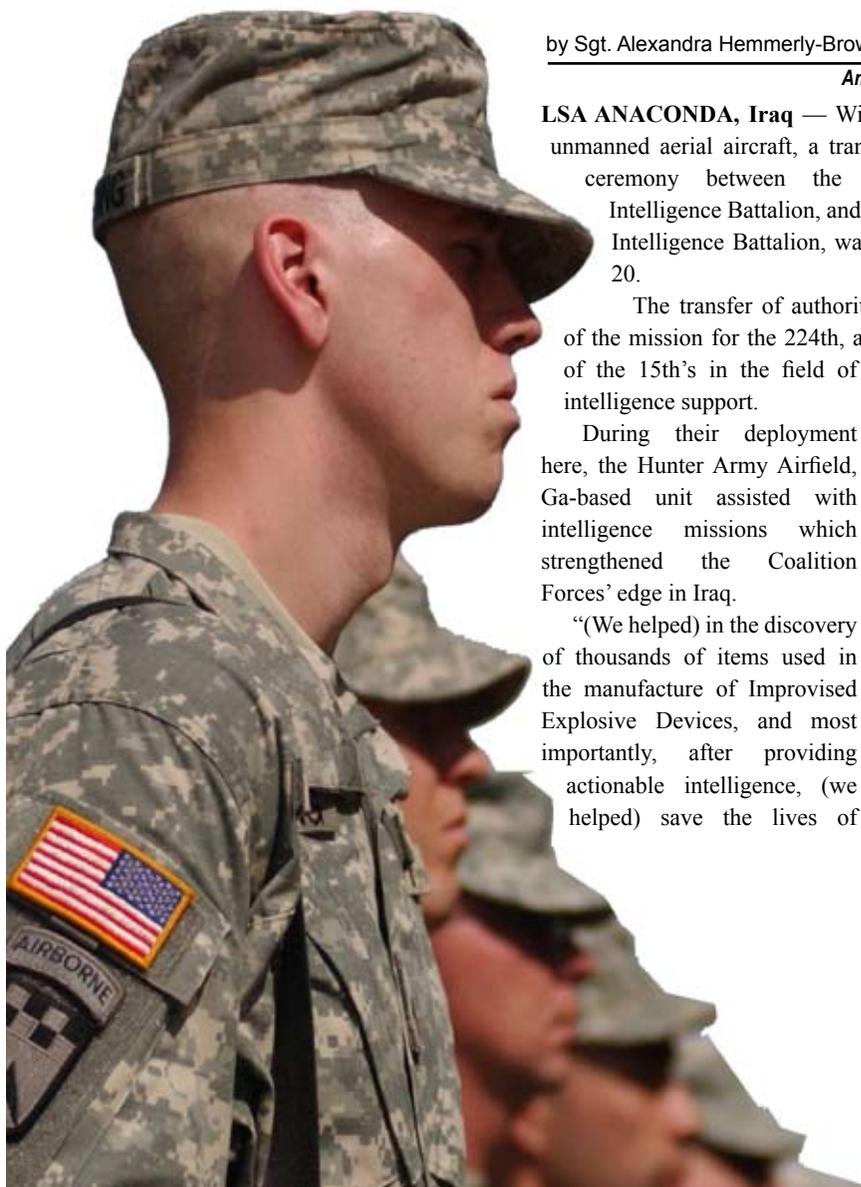


Photo by Sgt. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown

Lt. Col. Barrett Peavie (left), commander of the 15th Military Intelligence Battalion, and Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffery Fairley (right), command sergeant major of the 15th MI, unfurl their unit's flag as they take over command from the 224th MI Battalion April 20. (Left) Soldiers of the 224th Military Intelligence Battalion stand in formation during their transfer of authority ceremony for the incoming 15th Military Intelligence Battalion, April 20.

Combat Stress Control

13th Medical Company (CSC)

829-1402

• individual counseling by appointment or walk-in

• command referrals

• services for combat and operationally stressed soldiers

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

MONDAY TO SATURDAY

3:30 TO 4 P.M.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

MONDAY AND THURSDAY

10 TO 11 A.M.

HOME FRONT ISSUES

MONDAY AND THURSDAY

5 TO 6 P.M.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

WEDNESDAY AND SATURDAY

11 A.M. TO NOON

ANGER MANAGEMENT

TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

11 A.M. TO NOON

ANXIETY AWARENESS

WEDNESDAY

3 TO 3:30 P.M.

SATURDAY

10:30 TO 11 A.M.

SLEEP HYGIENE

MONDAY AND THURSDAY

6 TO 6:30 P.M.

GOAL SETTING

MONDAY AND THURSDAY

11 A.M. TO NOON

DEPRESSION AWARENESS

WEDNESDAY

2 TO 3 P.M.

SATURDAY

10 TO 10:30 A.M.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

10 TO 11 A.M.

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WEDNESDAY

9 TO 11 A.M.

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829-1402

Airmen help keep peace inside the wire

Searches, escorts, essential duties for Balad security

by Senior Airman Candace Romano

332nd AEW Public Affairs

BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq - The Airman performing a vehicle search may be a C-17 loadmaster; the Airman providing escort for local nationals could be a medical technician.

Regardless of their primary Air Force specialty code, force protection Airmen assigned to the 332nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron have one mission: to maintain base defense inside the wire through steely-eyed vigilance.

"Force protection provides security for the base, ensuring Air Force assets and personnel are kept safe," said Master Sgt. John Romo, superintendent in charge of force protection under the 332nd ESSS.

"We also make sure the foreign nationals and host nationals entrusted to us are under the care of vigilant, alert Airmen."

More than 120 force protection Airmen carry this responsibility with them every day as they perform vehicle and personnel searches, provide escort and issue identification for third-country and local nationals working at Balad.

Force protection Airmen undergo a three-day training course shortly after arriving here to certify them as escorts for the many foreign and host nationals who work on Balad.

"The responsibility these Airmen have is immense," said Staff Sgt. Victoria Miller, a dental laboratory journeyman deployed from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.



Photo by Senior Airman Candace Romano

Senior Airman Nicole Collins, 332nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron force protection, sweeps a third country national using a metal detector at Scorpion Control, the control center for force protection. Force protection Airmen perform vehicle and personnel searches and provide escort for third country and local nationals working at Balad.

"We search every vehicle for weapons and unauthorized items and conduct personnel sweeps to make sure they're safe to go out and do their work on base."

Threats "inside the wire" can pose as much a threat as those outside, according to force protection Airmen, who never let their guard down and keep constant vigilance.

"It's a challenge to maintain the first line of defense inside the base," said Airman 1st Class Lance Benedietto with force protection, a hydraulic systems specialist deployed from the 31st Maintenance Squadron at Aviano Air Base, Italy.

"Back home, I maintain jets and am responsible for the pilots' lives. Here, it's not just the pilots' lives, it's everyone on base we're providing defense for."

Force protection Airmen provide the means for vital projects like filling sandbags and working construction to be completed without tying up other critical military manpower. It also provides an opportunity for local and foreign nationals to seek job opportunities on base.

"Interacting with them on a daily basis has made me realize they have faces and families ... talking to most of them, I've found they all love America, even though they only know three places: New York, Texas and California," said

Senior Airman Levi Scott, a C-17 loadmaster deployed from McGuire AFB, N.J.

"They're all glad to have their jobs and send money back home. They're all trying to make a living, just like everyone else."

Working in close proximity to local and foreign nationals has changed some Airmen's views, many who initially had reservations about interacting with local nationals.

"I feel a bit more comfortable after interacting with them every day," Benedietto said. "I'm more accepting of the cultural differences ... they're definitely not the stereotypes you see on TV."

EOD handle great responsibility, take on dangerous duty

by Master Sgt. Bryan Ripple

332nd AEW Public Affairs

BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq - Airmen assigned to the 332nd Civil Engineer Squadron's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Flight have a very special mission - helping keep their fellow Coalition Forces safer.

Most would agree it takes nerves of steel and a very steady hand to do the work these Airmen do. After all, getting anywhere near an IED isn't something most people want to do.

Airmen from the EOD flight put their extensive combat training and experience to the test every day. When they're not on a mission, they keep busy maintaining their equipment, vehicles and robots for their next time out, or they're destroying unexploded ordnance from in-direct fire attacks or munitions that have exceeded their shelf lives.

"I'm amazed at how the battlefield is ever changing. We get smarter, but so does the enemy. It's a crazy 'Cat and



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael R. Hobsworth

Airmen with the 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Flight conduct a controlled detonation at Balad Air Base, Iraq.

Mouse' game. Sometimes we win, sometimes the enemy does. Thankfully, we win a lot more!" said Master Sgt. Michael Pitts, 15th Civil Engineer Squadron EOD flight, Hickam AFB, Hawaii, as he is on his third deployment.

These Airmen have two distinct missions, one on base and one outside the wire. Their EOD missions vary from day to day. One day their teams might respond to UXO on base, or provide dam-

age assessment to buildings and equipment after an indirect fire attack. The next day, they may head off base to perform their Army "in-lieu-of" mission. This can range from rendering safe IEDs that have shutdown a convoy route, to conducting a post-blast analysis on coalition vehicles struck by IEDs.

The latter mission can be the most difficult to perform.

"We see ... the personnel who were in-

jured or killed in these attacks. It's hard to focus on the task at hand seeing all the destruction, but we have to. The intelligence we gather from these incidents and others allows us to gain valuable intelligence on how the enemy operates," Pitts said.

The equipment and vehicles EOD Airmen have used over the years have evolved to keep up with the ever-changing requirements of the tactical battlespace.

Senior Airman Stephen Ohge, 36th Civil Engineer Squadron EOD flight, Anderson AFB, Guam, operates the new joy stick controlled technology provided within his vehicle as easily as a young person playing a favorite video game.

"Cutting-edge technologies are paramount to today's EOD operations outside the wire," Ohge said. "As new equipment emerges and is integrated into our career field, situational awareness and efficiency are intensified; this results in, an immeasurable increase in our mission capabilities," he said.



Members of the Stillwater, Minn.-based 1/34 Brigade Combat Team's convoy escort team pose for a photo in front of their Humvee at Camp Adder, Iraq.

Soldiers come to aid of fellow convoy attacked on road

by Spc. Dustin Perry

1/34 Brigade Combat Team PAO

LSA ADDER, Iraq - During their mission, a convoy escort team was on the road when they witnessed the detonation of an improvised explosive device followed by a shower of small-arms fire. Neither of the attacks was meant for them, but the team responded just the same.

Members of the Stillwater, Minn.-based 1/34 Brigade Troops Battalion were escorting supply trucks to a base in southern Iraq. They had stopped at a checkpoint along the route, when a large blast rang out several hundred meters ahead, hitting another convoy in front of them. Soon after, the Soldiers of the 1/34 BTB saw a barrage of tracer rounds hitting that convoy.

Sgt. Grant Johnson, the acting convoy commander, said it didn't take long for him and the rest of his team to respond.

"At that point, we decided to push our front two gun trucks up to support them by fire, because to us, it looked like they were getting hammered pretty hard," said Johnson, 36, a policeman from Champlin, Minn. "As we started moving in and getting closer, we immediately began taking small-arms fire. There

were red tracer rounds coming from everywhere, some as close as right off the road."

Johnson was the gunner of the lead Humvee and began returning fire. The scout Humvee ahead had also joined in and was receiving the bulk of the rounds. Johnson heard on the radio that the rear of his convoy became engaged, so he ordered them to move

up past the threat. Johnson said he decided to maneuver his Humvees to lay down suppressive fire.

"As they started pushing through, we shifted left to allow the convoy to get by while we were slowly moving up the road."

The small-arms fire lasted for about five minutes, Johnson said, and the rest of their convoy was able to get through. After ensuring none of the Soldiers on the team were injured, the lead and scout vehicles turned around to check on the supply trucks and their drivers.

Sgt. Paul Crosby, acting team

leader of the convoy, exited his vehicle and headed to a truck with its cab on fire. Crosby put the fire out with an extinguisher and noticed another truck in a nearby ditch. He went to check on the driver's condition when rifle fire started up again. Crosby continued to check for the driver while Johnson covered his comrade's position and returned fire.

"You're thinking about yourself and the people around you getting hurt ... there was a job we had to do."

- Sgt. Grant Johnson

"It was kind of scary, I guess you could say," said Crosby, 35, a nuclear security officer from Clearwater, Minn. "The tracer rounds were unbelievable; we refer to it as a 'Star Wars'-type scenario, there was so much flying through the air."

After a while, the secondary fire stopped and Crosby continued with his recovery mission. He found the driver of the supply truck, who had suffered a few serious bumps and bruises, and a medical evacuation team was called while Johnson and Crosby cleared the area. Aside from the driver, only minor injuries were reported,

Johnson said.

It was a little nerve-racking having to make quick decisions and deal with the threat, but Johnson immediately went into the mind frame of what he needed to do, he said.

"I want to say I was nervous, but it was controlled anxiety. I knew chaos was happening, but I had enough training going through my head, so the anxiety wasn't able to take over," Johnson said. "You're thinking about yourself and the people around you getting hurt, but at the same time, there was a job we had to do."

Reaching the convoy and assisting them with suppressing their attackers was the first thought that went through Crosby's mind, he said. He was so focused on what he was doing, the close proximity of the enemy fire didn't become a reality until the fight was done, and he saw the side mirror of his Humvee had been shot out, Crosby said.

Teamwork and proper training are what led to the convoy's success against the enemy, Johnson said.

"Everything clicked pretty quickly, everybody knew their roles," said Johnson. "There wasn't a lot of confusion; there was no uncertainty.



The passenger-side mirror of Sgt. Paul Crosby's Humvee, was shot out during a firefight with enemy combatants, during a convoy of supply trucks to a base in southern Iraq.

That made it easier because I was able to let go as convoy commander and have it go right and not have to worry about it."

"Until you're tested, you don't know how you're going to act," continued Johnson. "We got tested and we acted properly, so we became more confident in what we do."

A well done meal: Soldiers get a taste of home



Sgt 1st Class Paul Oakes (left) places one of the first steaks provided by Serving Our Troops on a grill Sunday at LSA Adder, Iraq, as Staff Sgt. Joseph Douty watches. Several hundred Minnesota Guardsmen of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, feasted on the steaks provided by Mancini's of St. Paul, Minn., while simultaneously military family members gathered at Roy Wilkins Auditorium in St. Paul, Minn. This is the third year that the Serving Our Troops volunteer group has organized a dinner for Soldiers.



These soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, stationed at a small combat outpost were the first to dine on steaks provided by Serving Our Troops at LSA Adder, Iraq.



Staff Sgt. Curtis Theis, of Circle Pines, Minn., 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, was the first 1/34 BCT Soldier to talk to a family member at Camp Adder, Iraq. This live satellite communication was part of Serving Our Troops, which sent thousands of steaks to the Soldiers.

by Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Wood
1/34 Brigade Combat Team PAO

LSA ADDER, Iraq – Several hundred Minnesota Army National Guard Soldiers got a taste of home April 15, here.

The Soldiers, most from the Bloomington, Minn.-based 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, dined on 12-ounce steaks sent from St. Paul Minn.

Simultaneously, 5,000 Guard family members were served steaks at Roy Wilkins Auditorium in St. Paul. A satellite system, comprised of more than 25 Digital Video and Imagery Distribution Systems in Iraq, also linked the two events, allowing approximately 50 Guardsmen to speak with their families.

Sgt. 1st Class Jim Rolshouse of Maple Grove, Minn., said the event was “well done.”

“It is a good event,” he said. “The steaks are wonderful.”

Spc. Justin Moen’s steak was extra “wonderful.” He and his fellow Soldiers had just rolled in driving their Humvees from their small combat outpost. They were enroute to the camp’s dining facility.

“It is a pretty nice steak,” said Moen of White Bear Lake, Minn.

The live satellite transmission also was “nice” for the selected Soldiers when

it came to talking to family members.

Staff Sgt. Lisa Fleck of Cottage Grove, Minn., said it was just good to hear her family’s voices and laughs from home. She talked to her sister and brother-in-law, Amy and Donnie Balliet.

For Spc. Shantell Hoff of Lino Lakes, Minn., who talked to her parents, twin sister, brother and brother in law, it was nice for them to see her.

“At least they got to see me, that was the biggest thing,” she said.

Spc. Traci Edwin of Burnsville, Minn., said it was nice to hear her mother’s cheers for her. She also talked to her father, sister, niece and nephew.

This is the third time that Serving Our Troops has organized a dinner for Guardsmen serving their country. The first time was from St. Paul to Kosovo followed by from St. Paul to Camp Shelby, Miss., where the 5,000-strong BCT trained up for their 16-month deployment to Iraq.

John Mancini was in the Middle East all week helping to organize the event. Meanwhile, his brother Pa was in St. Paul, Minn., minding Mancini’s Char House and working on the local version of the feast.

With the assistance of a St. Paul City Council member and other local restaurateurs and friends, the Mancini’s helped arrange the shipment of the 11,500 steaks to Iraq.



Sgt. 1st Class Scott McDonald of Mapleton, Minn., 1/34th Infantry Division, enjoys a steak provided by Mancini's of St. Paul, Minn. at Camp Adder, Iraq.

'Rough Riders' are top notch in maintenance repairs

Maintenance company proves mettle with a 98 percent vehicle readiness story and photos by Sgt. KaRonda Fleming

AIASAD, Iraq - The 497th Maintenance Company, 630th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 593rd Corps Support Group, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), has a 98 percent organizational equipment readiness in which

their vehicles are equipped to go outside the wire at any time, said Sgt. 1st Class Mel Glenister, the motor maintenance supervisor.

The main repairs handled by the maintenance shop, also known as the 'rough riders'

are level I maintenance, in which there is an exchange of parts, for example an engine, starter, or tire axle, said 1st Lt. Warren T. Posey, equipment readiness officer from Durham N.C.

Posey said over the last eight months, he has noticed several vehicles being hit by improvised explosive devises and electronically formed projectiles.

Depending on the damages, he said many of the vehicles are able to be given back to the fleet. An estimated cost of damage determines whether vehicles are coded out or repaired.

"We are a maintenance section comprised of about 15 mechanics coming out of Fort Lewis, Wash.," Glenister said.

Generally, the company fixes five-ton medium-light vehicles; however, since their arrival to Iraq, they have been working on the heavy equipment of 10-tons and above, he said.

Glenister said "The biggest hurdle we had to get over was having to adjust fire from working on five-tons to working on 10-ton vehicles."

We do all kinds of maintenance repairs for palletized loading systems and heavy equipment transporters, said Staff Sgt. William R. Mobley, PLS supervisor from Sacramento, Calif.

"We do a lot of moving around equipment from one place to a different place," Mobley said. "If we don't get it done, then there's no one else here to get it done. We have to keep it rolling so servicemembers can get their mission accomplished."

Having a good maintenance shop doesn't come single-handedly. Servicemembers must also remember to keep their vehicles in good shape by checking them on a routine basis.

"The most important thing for Soldiers is to perform preventive maintenance checks and services on their vehicles by the book, by the manual, no shortcuts," Posey said.

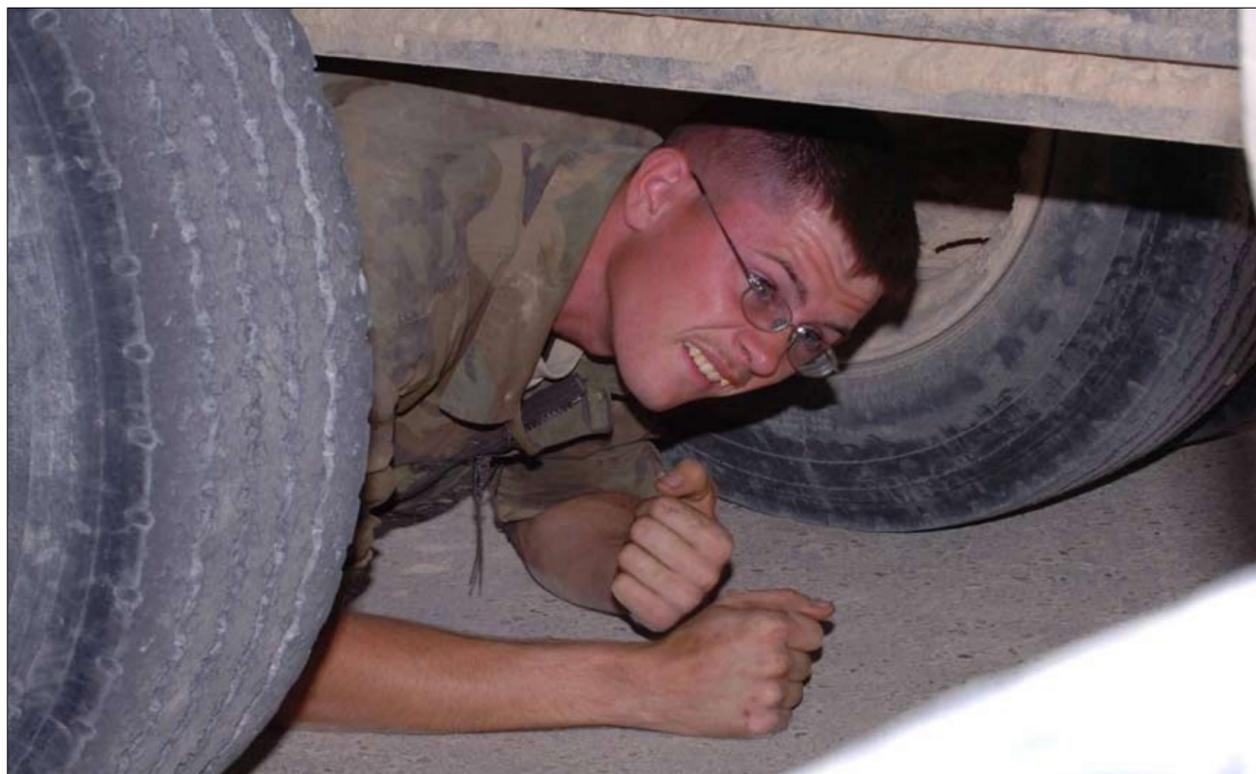
"The technical manuals the Army provide for us for every piece of equipment has a lot of engineering and a lot of data that you can't memorize," he said. "So, PMCS by the book, to the standard, is the foundation and the key to our success here."

"The most important thing for Soldiers is to perform preventive maintenance checks and services on their vehicles by the book, by the manual, no shortcuts."

- 1st Lt. Warren Posey



(Above) Spc. Andrew M. Nord, a mechanic with the 497th Transportation Company checks the oil of a heavy equipment transporter during a routine preventive maintenance checks and services. Nord is from Kansas City, Mo. (Below) Spc. Andrew M. Nord checks each tire of a heavy equipment transporter to see if they are flat or if they are missing any lug nuts, which could deadline the vehicle. (Bottom Left) Sgt. Louis Olvera, a palletized load list specialist from Davidson, Okla., 497th Transportation Company out of Fort Lewis, Wash., processes parts received from the SSA in Al Asad, Iraq.



(Above) Pfc. Steffen Weiss, a wheeled mechanic, 497th Transportation Company out of Fort Lewis, Wash., changes the alternator belt on a heavy equipment transporter in Al Asad, Iraq. (Below) Staff Sgt. Travis J. Patterson, a shop foreman with the 497th Transportation Company updates a tracking sheet, which follows the status of vehicles returning from a mission outside the wire. Patterson is from Clinton, Iowa. (Left) Staff Sgt. Dusty A. Davis, senior wheeled vehicle operator, 497th Transportation Company, tightens the bolts of a palletized loading system. Davis is from Twin Falls, Idaho.



On your mark!

Anaconda Biathletes splash towards the finish line

by Sgt. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown

Anaconda Times Staff

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq — Anaconda athletes rose early April 22, to test their speed, endurance and get a little wet during this month's "Splash & Dash" biathlon.

Participants competed in a 500-meter swim and 5-kilometer run to complete the event.

The 22nd Personnel Services Battalion and the 510th Fighter Squadron were among several sponsors that donated gifts for the winners, including DVD players, CD players and speakers.

Contestants' time started in the pool, and ended when they crossed the 5K finish line; during a biathlon, the clock keeps ticking even in the changing room.

The first place male winner was Capt. Martin E. Wennblom of Elk Point, S.D.,

with the 60th Ordnance Company, with a finishing time of 27 minutes, 31 seconds. Col. Christine M. Gayagas, of Honolulu, Hawaii, the 13th SC(E) deputy commander, placed first among females with a total time of 36 minutes, 46 seconds.

Of 43 people signed up for the race, and 42 participated. That is the highest ratio of show-ups of any event held to date, said Meredith Waters, a civilian contractor who coordinated the biathlon.

The biathlons on Anaconda are progressive, Waters said, which means facilitators attempt to make them more challenging throughout the year by adding swimming or running distance. Biathlon participants can look forward to another biathlon in a few months, but in the mean time, there will be a "BolderBoulder" sister 10K race held here on Memorial Day, May 28.



Photos by Sgt. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown

1st Lt. Anthony Calingo, a platoon leader for the 368th Cargo Transfer Company at Logistical Support Area Anaconda, placed third in the male category for Logistical Support Area Anaconda's "Splash & Dash" biathlon April 22. Calingo's total time was 30 minutes, 9 seconds.



Biathlon competitors wait to start the "Splash & Dash," 500-meter swim and 5-kilometer run at Logistical Support Area Anaconda.



(Above) Sgt. Bethany Becker of Hutton, Texas, the legal assistance noncommissioned officer in charge, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), runs toward the finish line during Logistical Support Area Anaconda's "Splash & Dash" biathlon, April 22. Becker's total time was 41 minutes, 54 seconds. (Below) A grader keeps track of biathlon runners' times April 22 during Logistical Support Area Anaconda's 500-meter swim and 5-kilometer "Splash & Dash." (Left) Biathlon swimmers make waves April 22 during Logistical Support Area Anaconda's "Splash & Dash."



Father enlists son through long-distance communications

by Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner
15th Sustainment Brigade PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – When the time came for Sgt. Brennen Carter to re-enlist for six more years of Army service, he needed an officer to conduct the oath.

The Heavy Equipment Transport driver from Chillicothe, Mo. chose a man whose leadership and guidance he's been following since birth; his father, Lt. Col. Bryan Carter.

"My dad has been my hero; I look up to him," said Sgt. Carter. "If anybody was going to re-enlist me, it would be my father."

Being separated by one country, two mountain ranges, and more than 1500 miles didn't stop either man from making the ceremony. Thanks to video tele-

conferencing, Sgt. Carter, stationed on Camp Eggers in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Lt. Col. Carter, on Camp Taji, Iraq, stood face to face.

"I'm very proud of him," said the elder Carter. "He's continuing a family tradition that started with his great-grandfather, back in the trenches of World War I."

Four generations of the Carter family have volunteered for service to the nation. Lt. Col. Carter's father served in Korea, his siblings have worn the uniform, and he now serves as the personnel officer for the 15th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

The younger Carter joined the Missouri National Guard his junior year of high school and completed his basic training over the summer before his senior year. Lt. Col. Carter recalled joining the guard just three days after his graduation from the same high school in Milan, Mo.

"I was scared to death," he laughed. "I can only imagine what he felt ... especially since he went split-option."



Lt. Col. Bryan Carter, personnel officer with the 15th Sustainment Brigade, re-enlists his son from the brigade's conference room on Camp Taji, Iraq.

"He's continuing a family tradition that started with his great-grandfather."

- Col. Bryan Carter

For Sgt. Carter, deployment to Afghanistan is his first time overseas. Growing up an Army brat, he lived life watching his father pack to leave. Now, he has a better understanding of what his dad has done.

"There have been a lot of times I couldn't see him," he said. "It's been great to be able to share this with my dad."

Dad couldn't be prouder. He said his son is a huge spokesperson for the Mis-

souri National Guard and the military in general. Even at a young age, he said, he has been an outstanding supporter. With his passion and drive, his influence prompted 20 to 30 others to join.

"I wanted to serve my country longer," said Sgt. Carter on his six-year commitment. "I love being in the Army and the National Guard."

The two talked and joked together, each watching the other from opposite sides of the war. When the elder Carter teased his son about needing half of his re-enlistment bonus, the younger countered with the pay difference between sergeant and officer.

"But if he needs it," he grinned, "He can have it."

East Coast Swing Dance Lessons



All the dances in the ballroom had their roots in a foreign country. The Lindy Hop was created in Harlem, New York at the Savoy.

It was an American dance that had soul and swing, which is what made it popular everywhere it was introduced.

- Norma Miller

POC: Heather Bard
bardh@mmcs.army.mil
& Stacey Pierce
pierces@mmcs.army.mil

Beginner/Intermediate - Tuesday's at the East Recreation 2000-2200

Advanced Flips/Dips- Sunday's at the East Gym Aerobics Room 1930-2130



CALLING ALL POETS
SPOKEN WORD
POETS WANTED

If you would like to speak
Email cmark6673@yahoo.com

"Just Came Here To Chill Again"



Who: Everyone
What: Open Mic Poetry, Old School, Jazz, Dominoes, and Spades
When: **May 6, 2007 and May 20, 2007**
Where: EAST MWR MAIN ROOM
Time: 1900-2030 DOMINOES, SPADES, AND MUSIC
2030-2200 POETRY

POETS WANTED EMAIL CMARK6673@YAHOO.COM

DISCLAIMER: ALL POETRY MUST BE IN GOOD TASTE. REMEMBER, THIS IS A PROFESSIONAL ATMOSPHERE YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT YOU SAY.

Old School ReSB

May 2

Green Bean Karaoke
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

8-Ball Tourney
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Spades & Ping Pong
8:30 p.m. and 2 a.m.
H6 MWR Recreation

Dance Aerobics
5:30 a.m., East Fitness Center

Aikido
5-7 p.m., East Fitness Center

Step Aerobics
5:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Open Volleyball
6 to 8 p.m., MWR Circuit Gym

Floor Hockey
8 to 10 p.m., MWR Circuit Gym

Spin Class
3:30 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

Cardio Funk
8 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

Aerobics
7 p.m., West MWR

Dodgeball
7 p.m. West Fitness Center

Martial Arts
9 p.m. West MWR

May 3

Console Game Tourney
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Country/Western Dance Class
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

9-Ball Tourney
8:30 p.m. and 2 a.m.
H6 MWR Recreation

Karaoke Night
8:30 p.m., H6 MWR Recreation

Pilates
7:30 p.m., West Fitness Center

Aikido
10:00 a.m. to noon., East Fitness
Center

ANACONDA ACTIVITIES

Your one-stop connection to activities around LSA Anaconda
to add your activity to the event calendar, email anaconda.times@balad.iraq.centcom.mil

Tae Kwon Do 1
8 - 9 a.m., East Fitness Center

Tae Kwon Do 2
7 - 8:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Spin Center
6 a.m., H6 Fitness Center

Korean Martial Arts
4:30 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

Water Aerobics
7:45 p.m., Indoor Pool

May 4

Hip-Hop Coffee Shop
9 - 11 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Scrabble Tourney
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Chess Tourney
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Hip-Hop Dance Class
7-11 p.m., East MWR Recreation

R&B Music Night
9:30 p.m., H6 MWR Recreation

Open Volleyball
7 p.m., West Fitness Center

Self Defense Class
7:30 p.m., West Fitness Center

Step Aerobics
5:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Dance Aerobics
5:30 a.m., East Fitness Center

Friday Night Spikes
7 p.m., East Fitness Center

Spin Class
3:30 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

May 5

Country/Western Dance Class
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Texas Hold'em
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Salsa Dance Class
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

Bingo Night
8:30 p.m., H6 MWR Recreation

Wrestling
9 p.m., West Fitness Center

Aerobics
7 p.m., West MWR

Boxing
3 to 4:30 p.m., West Fitness Center

Pilates
11 a.m., West Fitness Center

Aikido
5-7 p.m., East Fitness Center

Tae Kwon Do 2
7 - 8:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

May 6

Magic, The Gathering
11 a.m., West MWR Recreation

Green Bean Karaoke
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Spades, Dominoes & R&B
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Poker
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

Poetry Night
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

Salsa Dance Class
8:30 p.m., H6 Recreation

Gaston's Self Defense
7:30 p.m., West Fitness Center

Boxing
3 to 4:30 p.m., West Fitness Center

Aikido
10 a.m. to noon, East Fitness Center

Swing Dance
7:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Spin Class
1:30 a.m., H6 Fitness Center

Abs Salute
8 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

May 7

Martial Arts
9 p.m., West MWR

Poetry Jam
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

9-Ball Tourney
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Karaoke
8 p.m., East MWR Recreation

Texas Hold'em
8:30 p.m. and 2 a.m.
H6 MWR Recreation

Aerobics
7 p.m., West MWR

Martial Arts
9 p.m., West Fitness Center

Dance Aerobics
5:30 a.m., East Fitness Center

Tae Kwon Do
8 to 9:30 a.m., East Fitness Center

Step Aerobics
5:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Boxing
7:30 to 9 p.m., East Fitness Center

Floor Hockey
8 - 10 p.m., MWR Circuit Gym

Spin Class
3:30 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

Cardio Funk
8 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

May 8

Martial Arts
9 p.m., West MWR

Foosball/Ping Pong
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

8-Ball Tourney
8:30 p.m. and 2 a.m.
H6 MWR Recreation

Pilates
7:30 p.m., West Fitness Center

Martial Arts
9 p.m., West Fitness Center

Aikido
10 am to noon, East Fitness Center

Tae Kwon Do 2
7p.m. - 8:30 p.m., East Fitness
Center

Combative Training
8:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Spin Class
3:30 and 8:30 p.m., H6 Fitness
Center

Korean Martial Arts
4:30 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

Kung Fu
7 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

May 9

Aerobics
7 p.m., West MWR

Dodgeball
7 p.m., West Fitness Center

Green Bean Karaoke
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

8-Ball Tourney
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

9-Ball Tourney
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

Spades & Ping Pong
8:30 p.m. and 2 a.m.
H6 MWR Recreation

Dance Aerobics
5:30 a.m., East Fitness Center

Aikido
5 p.m., East Fitness Center

Step Aerobics
5:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Open Volleyball
6 to 8 p.m., MWR Circuit Gym

The Days of Remembrance

Remembering the Holocaust

May 6-13

For more information contact SFC Leontin Kent at
leontin.kent@balad.iraq.centcom.mil



Shout outs from home

Jonathan,
I have always been proud of you. A verse in the Jaycee Creed reads "that service to humanity is the best work of life." I believe that not only are you serving your country, but you are in a way serving all of humanity in that part of the world to make life better and more meaningful.

I love you and hope that God will keep you safe. Your mother, your brothers and I patiently look forward to the day we see you return home. Again, I am so proud of you.
Love, Dad

John Cruz,
Hey John we love you and miss you down here in Florida. Be safe and may God bless all of you.
Maria

Johnny Cruz,
Hi cuz! The family here in Florida is wishing you a speedy home coming.
Much love,
Evelyn

Brad Smith,
I can't wait for you to come home to us. Be safe. We love you very much.
Anna

Jonathan Terry,
Hey there "little" cousin! My family and I want you to know that we are thinking of you and that you and all the other troops that are there are always in our prayers. May you come home safely and as soon as possible. Thank you for what you are doing to protect

our freedom and to make this world a better place in which to live.
May God continue to watch over you and keep you in His grace.

My family missed not being able to meet you last year and are looking forward to doing just that when you get back. So hurry home and come visit us in SoCal (Edwards AFB isn't that far away from the beautiful California beaches).

With all our love, thoughts, and prayers
God bless, Noel, Bridgett, and the kids

Jonathan Terry,
You are in my thoughts every day. When you get home I want to see you. How nice it would be to sit down and talk and get to know my handsome nephew better. Please remember that you are surrounded daily with a strong safety net of caring from all of your family and friends back home. I'm sending a big hug and lots of love.
Aunt Charla

John J. Elam,
Thanks for keeping us updated on all your projects. We are so proud of all that you and the other engineers are doing. Keep up the good work.
Love, Mom and Dad

Col. John J Elam,
Hi Jeff! We miss you. Stay safe. See you soon! Keep up the good

work!!

Jonathan Terry,
Hey bud, just wanted to let you know that I miss you and can't wait to see you this summer.
Love ya,
Ethan

Jonathan Terry,
Hi Son, Miss you, love you and am SO PROUD of YOU! Thank you for all you do! See you soon. BE SAFE!
Love, Mom
Jonathan Terry,
Thanks Jonathan for serving and be safe! May the Lord watch over you!!!!!!
Vicky & Wayne Armenta

KaRonda,
Happy Birthday to our lovely daughter! Wish we were there to celebrate.
Love Mom, Dad, and E.J.

Hi Son (Daniel Bell),
I want you to know how very proud I am of you! I pray for you every day. Loving you more today than yesterday.
Mom

Dennis A. Sedlacek,
I'm Very Proud to have you for a son. Take Care Love Mom

Steven Angell,
Hope this finds you well, and SAFE.

We miss you and your brother, and are going to be so glad when we get the news that you are done with your rotation, and are back home. I am going to send the same note to your brother. God Bless, we pray for you guys safety daily. Say hi to the Marines for me.

Justin Angell,
Hope this finds you well, and SAFE. We miss you and your brother, and are going to be so glad when we get the news that you are done with your rotation, and are back home. I am going to send the same note to your brother. God Bless, we pray for you guys safety daily. Say hi to the Marines for me.

Edgar Rollins,
We are very proud of you, and love you very much. We can't wait for you to come home. Stay safe. We are sending all our love.

Sgt Ross Haselhorst,
Hey Ross, just wanting you to know we all are here for you and miss you and sending lots of love to you! Take Care!
Jan & Ron

John Ornelaz,
I love you and I'm very proud of you...I'm here waiting for you Andrew Filips, Andy we love you and miss you so much. We are so proud of you.
Kelly

Jeff Elam,
Hey Jeff I got this email today, so I thought I would respond and say hi. Hope all is going well. Take care!
Glenda Rix

Hi Jeff Churchill,
Someone emailed me this today, so I thought I would say hi. Take care. We love and miss you very much. Love Aunt Glenda

Kevin Morvant,
Happy Birthday!
Love,
Sherri, Seth and Sammy

Evan Carter,
We miss you and are excited about your return! Love ya Gobs!
From Ma, Brad, Bros, and Sis, Cous, Aunts, Uncles & Friends!

Evan Carter,
Stay safe. Barb and I pray for you daily.
Uncle Reginald

Evan Carter
Hey Evan,
Hope all is well! I can't wait for you to come home soon! We will have to get together!
Love, Dani

What's up Stanley Caldwell!
Renae sent this link out to some of us. Hang in there. See you home soon.
Rusty



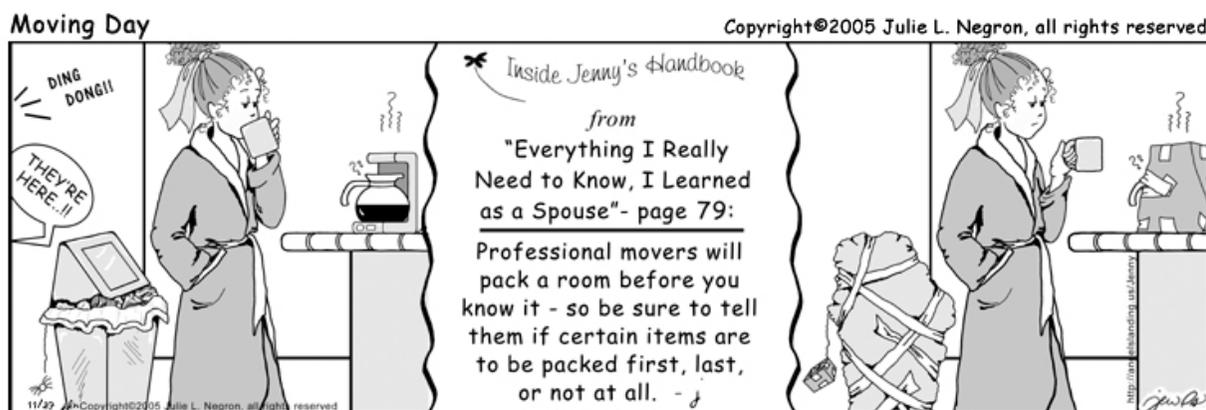
SUSTAINER REEL TIME THEATER

(Schedule is subject to change)

- Wednesday, May 2**
5 p.m. Hannibal Rising (R)
8 p.m. Norbit (PG-13)
- Thursday, May 3**
5 p.m. Vacancy (R)
8 p.m. Daddy's Little Girls (PG-13)
- Friday, May 4**
2 p.m. The Number 23 (R)
5 p.m. Fracture (R)
8:30 p.m. Spider Man 3 (PG-13)
- Saturday, May 5**
2 p.m. Music and Lyrics (PG-13)
5 p.m. Spider Man 3 (PG-13)
8 p.m. Astronaut Farmer (PG)
- Sunday, May 6**
2 p.m. Spider Man 3 (PG-13)
5 p.m. Astronaut Farmer (PG)
8 p.m. Fracture (R)
- Monday, May 7**
5 p.m. Fracture (R)
8 p.m. Spider Man 3 (PG-13)
- Tuesday, May 8**
5 p.m. Music and Lyrics (PG-13)
8 p.m. Spider Man 3 (PG-13)

Jenny, the Military Spouse

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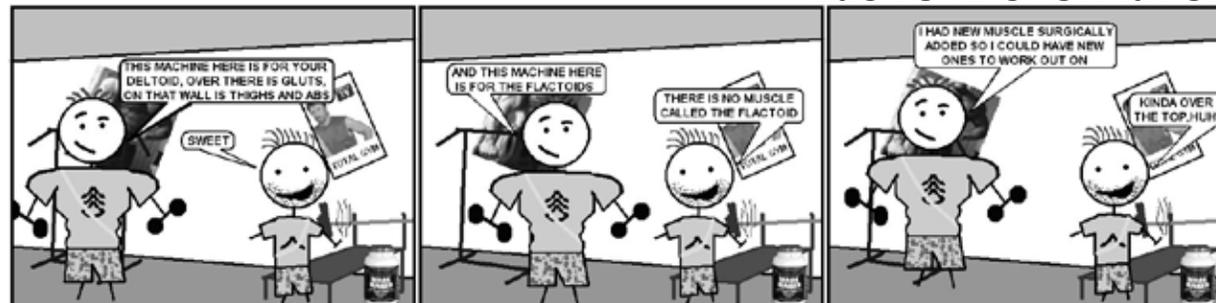
http://jennyspouse.com

Pvt. Murphy's Law



http://www.pvtmurphy.com

Back of the Formation



Unofficial race for those who wanted to go distance

by Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner

15th Sustainment Brigade PAO

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Before the sun began to peak over the horizon, the runners stretched and joked in the cool early morning air. They waited for final instructions and the start of the Coalition Air Force Training Team's Boston Marathon.

The 26.3-mile run was the idea of Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Sean Marchal, senior air traffic controller with CAFTT. His plan was to run the famous race in Boston this year, but deployment orders to Iraq cancelled his chance. Instead, he organized his own marathon on the Iraqi Air Force controlled side of Camp Taji.

"I ran the Boston Marathon last year," said Marchal. "I couldn't get to Tallil for the satellite Boston Marathon, so I decided to put this [race] on."

Chaplain (Capt.) Troy Morken, an avid marathoner from the 15th Brigade Troops Battalion, 15th Sustainment Brigade, was unable to make it to the Tallil race as well. The CAFTT marathon would be his sixth race in two years and his first international one.

True to his calling, Morken said he tries to

meet each grueling mile with a positive attitude; encouraging other runners along side him that they can make it.

"Usually the last couple of miles I'm not as upbeat," he said. "(When I finish) I feel terrible; then I ask when is the next one."

As race organizer, Marchal outlined the cramped route and unique obstacles runners would face. He said that the course would be a mind-numbing 1.33-mile loop for 20 turns. Hazards included water, mud, gravel, Iraqi sheep and Sasha--an amicable but highly protective stray dog that wanders the CAFTT compound.

He said that, unlike the course in Tallil, held on the coalition forces' side, the CAFTT marathon is the first one run on Iraqi controlled turf.

In addition to the full marathon, Marchal planned a half marathon, a "nearly" four-miler and the Battle Rattle Ramble--one lap in helmet, body armor with protective plates and weapon.

Senior Airman Michael Schweers, a maintenance production scheduler with CAFTT, wanted to challenge himself and put his new fitness level in perspective.

"I just lost 25 pounds, so I put the 25 pounds of battle-rattle back on to see how it felt," he said.

He couldn't believe he had been running with that much weight in the past.

Marchal ran with a yellow, "Servin' for Irven" banner attached to the back of his shirt. It was his tribute to life long friend and mentor, Army Sgt. Irven Murphy, who passed away last St. Patrick's Day.

Marchal worked for Murphy, a retired World War II veteran, at the parks department in his hometown of Greenville, Ohio, prior to joining the Air Force.

"He knew me since I was born. He was the proto-typical sergeant; always had a three-quarters smoked cigar and a flat-top haircut," he said.

With the chest-thumping drone of Apache and Blackhawk helicopters from the neighboring flight line, runners ticked off the miles using colored rubber bands around their wrists. At the start, each marathon runner was given 20 rubber bands; one for each lap. When the bands were gone, the 26.3-mile ordeal was over.

Morken finished first, in 3 hours, 4 minutes and 38 seconds. Marchal completed the course in 3 hours, 25 minutes and 44 seconds.

Both said they're looking forward to the next



Chaplain (Capt.) Troy Morken from Bismarck, N.D., 15th BTB, 15th SB, crosses the finish line in 3 hours, 4 minutes, 38 seconds, to win the marathon April 13 on the Iraqi side of Camp Taji, Iraq.

Additional leave offered to Soldiers with quick deployment turnarounds

by Sgt. Sara Wood

Army News Service

WASHINGTON – The Defense Department recently unveiled a program to reward administrative leave to servicemembers whose service in combat does not meet the department's goal for the time at home-station between deployments.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates directed the development of this program Jan. 19, when he implemented a force-management policy stating that DOD's goal was to give active-duty troops two years at home-station for every year deployed, and reserve-component troops five years at home-station for every year deployed. At the time, Gates recognized that national security concerns would require servicemembers to be deployed more frequently than this goal, so he an-

nounced a compensation plan to make up for frequent deployments.

Under the new policy, active-duty servicemembers who are deployed for more than 12 months in a 36-month period will earn one day of administrative absence for each month beyond 12. If servicemembers are deployed for more than 18 months in a 36-month period, they will earn two days of administrative absence a month. Past 24 months, they will earn four days a month.

Members of the reserve components will earn one day of administrative absence a month for every month beyond 12 they are mobilized in a 72-month period. Members of the reserve components will also earn two days a month if they are mobilized past 18 months in a 72-month period, and four days a month if they are mobilized past 24 months in

the same period.

Administrative absences are days off authorized by the commander, and are separate from normal leave accrued by a servicemember.

In a Pentagon news conference announcing the policy, Michael Dominguez, principal deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, said that this program is meant to recognize the sacrifices servicemembers make, but is in no way trying to put a physical value on their service.

"Secretary Gates and all of us honor the service of the men and women in uniform, particularly in these demanding times," Dominguez said. "This program can't be viewed as being commensurate with the level of service that they offer to the nation. In many respects, while it is substantive and it is tangible, it's also

symbolic. It's part of our recognition that we're keeping them in our thoughts and we're trying to do something for them."

The policy is retroactive to Jan. 19, so any servicemember who was deployed or involuntarily mobilized from that day forward, whose service exceeds the time frame in the policy, will earn the days off, Dominguez said. Also, troops who were deployed within the last three years, and are deployed now, will earn administrative leave for their current deployment, he said.

In deciding what compensation to give servicemembers who are deployed more frequently than DOD would like, defense officials considered a wide range of options, Dominguez said. Monetary compensation was considered, he said, but time off seemed the logical choice to reward increased frequency and inten-

sity of service.

"We weren't trying to find some meta-physical balance between the service you were rendering and buckets full of gold, or any other thing we can do for you," Dominguez said. "This was about telling men and women of the armed forces that we know when we ask you to do something extraordinary."

DOD has had a policy since 2004 that pays servicemembers who are extended in theater beyond 12 months \$1,000 a month, Dominguez said. That policy is still in effect, he said, and applies to Army personnel who now have to serve 15-month tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The administrative leave servicemembers earn under this policy will stay with them through their military career and can be used anytime, with commander approval, he said.

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1st Lt. Elias Gonzalez of Tampa, Fla., a supply officer with 1st Battalion, 111st Aviation Regiment, won the Boston Marathon run at Logistical Support Area Adder with a time of 2 hours, 35 minutes, 50 seconds.

Not quite Boston, but marathon carries on

by Staff Sgt. Gary Witte

Anaconda Times Staff

LSAAdder, Iraq - More than 250 servicemembers took part in an official Boston Marathon race held at Logistical Support Area Adder Saturday, April 14.

The 26.2-mile route took the runners past the Ziggurat of Ur, a 4,000-year-old monument within the boundaries of the base in southern Iraq. Nearly 100 volunteers helped with the race, which was hosted by the 82nd Sustainment Brigade.

A total of 273 runners completed the race, which included those who ran a half marathon and those who competed as part of teams.

The first place male finisher for the full distance was 1st Lt. Elias Gonzalez of Tampa, Fla., a supply officer with 1st Battalion, 111st Aviation Regiment, with a time of 2 hours, 35 minutes, 50 seconds.

Gonzales said he hoped to improve on his time by this November in order to qualify for the Olympics. It was only the second time he has competed in a marathon, although he said he doesn't count the last race because the course was too long.

"It's a good accomplishment," Gonzales said after the race. "(But) you always think you can do better."

The first place female finisher for the full distance was Staff Sgt. Jennifer Yurczyk of Holdingford, Minn., a dining facility supervisor with Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 134th Brigade Support Battalion, with a time of 3 hours, 34 minutes, 49 seconds.

She too, is a newcomer to marathon competition, having previously only run a half-marathon. She said the location and conditions of the Saturday event made an impression, since it started at 5 a.m. under stiff winds and the threatening clouds of a lightning storm.

"I loved it. This was the best," she said, smiling. "You couldn't see how far you had to go. This is like history."

Yurczyk said she was running partly to represent her National Guard unit, which has endured an extension of its deployment in Iraq.



Lt. Col. William Hughes, deputy commander of the 82nd Sustainment Brigade, places a laurel on Staff Sgt. Jennifer Yurczyk, who was the first place female competitor.

"I guess this whole deployment has been a marathon," she said.

The satellite run, officially sanctioned and supported by the stateside Boston Marathon, attracted runners from throughout Coalition Forces, including the Australian army's Overwatch Battle Group (West)-2 and the Romanian 495th Infantry Battalion.

The second place male finisher, 1st Lt. Anthony R. Calingo of Congers, N.Y., a platoon leader with the 368th Cargo Transfer Company, spent two days trying to get a flight from his base at Logistical Support Area Anaconda to take part in the Tallil run.

"I'm just happy to be here," he said. "I would say that getting down here was the toughest part."

Calingo finished at 2 hours, 51 minutes, 37 seconds, which would have been lower had he not missed a turn near the finish of the open course. He started running marathons in 2002 and had originally thought he would miss this year's Boston Marathon because of his deployment.

Several of the runners said the connection with the stateside event meant a lot to them, considering the location. 1st Sgt. Joseph Brown of Dallas, Texas, of Headquarters, Headquarters Company of the 82nd Sustainment Brigade, noted that participants in the normal event had to qualify to compete.

"This is obviously the godfather of marathons," Brown said. "It's history on its own right here ... I definitely feel honored to do it."

It was the first marathon for Sgt. Russell James of Fayetteville, N.C., a truck driver for the 1451st Transportation Company. He said his only goal was to complete the race, which he accomplished.

"I think it will be neat when I get home to be able to say I ran 26 miles in the desert," James said.

Capt. Tom Tolman of Fayetteville, N.C., company commander of the 82nd Signal Company, finished third for the complete race with a time of 3 hours, 12 minutes, 10 seconds.

The second and third place female complete distance runners both serve with the Australian army's Overwatch Battle Group (West)-2. Capt. Sarah Hingston came in at 3 hours, 54 minutes, 50 seconds and Pvt. Michelle Theuerkauf had a time of 4 hours, 5 minutes, 15 seconds, organizers said.



A total of 273 runners completed the Boston Marathon run at Logistical Support Area Adder, which included those who ran a half marathon and those who competed as part of teams. Runners faced high winds and storm conditions during the event.



Spc. Donald Cunningham of Towanda, Kan., a gunner with 2nd Platoon, 731st Transportation Company, assembles his .50 caliber machine gun with the help of his vehicle commander, Sgt. Gary Wenke of Wichita, Kan.

Transportation unit begins its protection mission

by Staff Sgt. Gary A. Witte

Anaconda Times Staff

“Rescue me O Lord, from evil men; protect me from men of violence, who devise evil plans in their hearts and stir up war every day ... who plan to trip my feet.”

- Convoy prayer

LSA ADDER, Iraq – Sgt. Jasmine J. Jaheeb, a chaplain’s assistant with the 11th Transportation Battalion, handed out prayer cards as the Soldiers put on their armor for the long drive ahead.

She said some Soldiers stick the card in their windows – a reminder that even if they don’t always have control over a situation, it’s still under control by someone.

“It’s good to know that something as small as a little card can get you through,” Jaheeb said.

The 11th Transportation Battalion from Virginia Beach, Va., officially began its convoy protection mission in March, a newcomer to the desert of southern Iraq and its dangerous roads.

The unit, which has already come under small arms fire and multiple improvised explosive device attacks, is a mix of active

duty and National Guard Soldiers from several different states. One of those components is the 731st Transportation Company from the Kansas National Guard.

Spc. Donald Cunningham of Towanda, Kan., a gunner with 2nd Platoon, was about a week into the mission when a rock the size of a cement block was thrown from an overpass and struck him in the back of his helmet. Although he was later diagnosed as receiving a concussion, he dismissed it as not being that serious.

“It was a little bit of a wakeup call,” Cunningham said. “Complacency is a big issue for some ... It certainly made me more aware of the environment.”

His vehicle commander, Sgt. Gary Wenke of Wichita, Kan., said one of the differences between his training and his experiences guarding convoys is how fast a situation can change. An IED you miss on one trip may be used against you the next trip, he said.

“You just have to stay on top of everything,” Wenke said.

The civilian convoys they protect travel to bases throughout southern Iraq, but also go west to places such as Al Taqueddum and north to locations such as Logistical Support Area Anaconda. The distances mean long hours on the road for the convoys and their security escorts.

Wenke, for one, is used to traveling. In civilian life, he works as a transport driver, hauling tractor trailer loads on regular 500-mile round trips. He said one advantage to the convoy security work is how the Soldiers keep each other alert through constant communication, which also helps the time pass more quickly.

“We’ve got a lot of good people we’re working with,” he said.

The Soldiers joked with each other as they prepared their vehicles for the next trip, playing songs such as “I’m a Fobbit” while they assembled and checked their heavy machine guns.

Spc. Christopher Leech of Minneapolis, Kan., who works as the gunner for another vehicle, said the platoon has bonded from the start.

“It makes missions run a lot smoother,” he said.

Lt. Col. Tammie J. Pettit, the commander of the 11th Trans. Bn., said many of her Soldiers have shown themselves to be natural leaders, regardless of their rank and what they were doing prior to the

deployment.

“I’m pleasantly surprised at how well the units are doing,” she said. “They’re all just pulling together.”

Pettit noted that the companies’ record of finding improvised explosive devices is already on par with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, the battalion’s higher command.

She said she has also pushed her staff members to ride with the convoys, since the experience will result in better service for the Soldiers who regularly handle security escort duties.

“The battalion isn’t just sitting back in their air conditioned offices,” Pettit said. “It’s important for them to understand what these guys are going through.”

Maj. Ralph A. Lounsbrough, the battalion executive officer, said he has been impressed by the network of organizations out on the roads supporting the convoy mission – personnel ranging from route clearance units to Iraqi Police securing checkpoints.

“It’s pretty impressive. You’re never alone,” Lounsbrough said. “There’s always someone else out there helping you do your job. It’s nice to know you aren’t out there all by yourself trying to find this stuff.”

The battalion, which is trained to run cargo transfer operations by air, sea, land and rail, found out its mission would be exclusively convoy protection in June of last year.

“We had plenty of time to change gears,” Lounsbrough said. “It really wasn’t that big of a transition for us.”

The Soldiers continue to pick up lessons with every mission they conduct.

During one recent pre-mission briefing for the 731st Trans. Co., Staff Sgt. Gerold Gibson of Wetmore, Kan., assistant convoy commander, gave members of 3rd Platoon the most recent intelligence information, ranging from locations of IED attacks the night before to suspect vehicles they should be on the lookout for.

He noted the importance of communication checks, proper escalation of force procedures, and added a warning for them to remember.

“There are no safe zones,” Gibson said.

Afterwards, Spc. Marce N. Collier of Sandusky, Ohio, who is a driver with 3rd Platoon, shrugged her individual body armor on. She was reactivated from the Individual Ready Reserve for this deployment and is still getting used to the weight of her protective gear.

The convoy preparing to leave would be her second mission outside the wire.

“It’s still fresh and new,” she said. “I’m trying to learn all I can.”



At center with notebook, Staff Sgt. Gerold Gibson of Wetmore, Kan., an assistant convoy commander with 3rd Platoon, 731st Transportation Company, shows members of his team alerts and descriptions of suspected insurgents.