

DV

Desert Voice Magazine
Serving U.S. and Coalition Forces in Kuwait

January 17, 2007

A man in a brown t-shirt, sunglasses, and camouflage pants is holding a large German Shepherd dog. The dog is jumping or running, and the man is holding a woven basket or bag in front of its head. The background is a chain-link fence and a clear blue sky.

Leaps and hounds

Looking inside the deployed mission of military working dogs and their handlers

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Petty Officer 2nd Class Johnny B. Mitchell, of the ASG-Kuwait's Law and Order Detachment, Military Working Dog Section, demonstrates the capabilities of Grek, a military working dog.

Photo by Spc. Debrah A. Robertson

From the Top

OPSEC is not an option; we must get it right

Operational security, or **OPSEC**, is important for everyone and not just to those servicemembers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. The terrorist threat remains high throughout our area of operations, and some of the most dangerous **OPSEC** violations are simple slips rather than seemingly huge blunders.

There are precautions we can all take in our daily activities to mitigate the risks.

Do not discuss classified topics in open areas

It is very easy to get complacent. We spend our days with the same people at work, in living

quarters, in dining facilities and recreational activities. Not everyone sitting around you at the dining facility has your level of clearance. Most of them do not have a need to know about topics you feel comfortable discussing over your salad. Make it a habit not to discuss business in open areas. You run the risk of disclosing potentially harmful information.

Protecting military information is much like protecting your personal financial information. You wouldn't leave your check book lying around in a public place, and you shouldn't disregard safeguarding details of sensitive topics. It's a balancing act of protecting sensitive information and not becoming paranoid. When Sergeant Smith takes the time to shred a piece of paper with details of an upcoming unit movement, he is preventing the enemy from using these details.

Even a seemingly unimportant piece of information can be used by the enemy to

determine critical details of U.S. tactics, vulnerabilities and capabilities. For example, we should not openly discuss how we are countering enemy improvised explosive devices. If we did, the enemy would learn our tactics, techniques and procedures.

With this knowledge they can alter their own tactics, techniques and procedures to make our efforts less effective. This costs lives.

Think about what you put on the web

We often marvel at technology and the capabilities, opportunities and convenience it brings, but we must also be mindful of the potential vulnerabilities it creates. Many

enjoy the opportunity to share their experiences while

deployed with family and friends back home. But as leaders, we must ensure that our "bloggers" are not putting out information that can risk the safety of troops.

When Major Jones puts a picture on the internet of a Soldier standing in front of an entrance to a U.S. facility, she may unintentionally give critical information to an enemy targeting U.S. forces. This is why we don't allow pictures to be taken of entry control points. We also don't allow pictures of easily identifiable structures such as water towers, satellite dishes, etc. These pictures could allow a terrorist to plot how to gain entrance, pace physical locations on the ground and target heavily populated areas.

Practicing operational security measures like these is not an option in a combat zone. It requires diligence, the application of common sense and can be as easy as thinking twice before you post a picture. Our safety and security depend on it.



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Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb**

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Army surgeon general visits Navy hospital, talks to servicemembers

Story and photos by
Sgt. Sarah Scully
Desert Voice Staff Writer

Weaving through a maze of tents filled with medical equipment, the Army surgeon general talked with patients and doctors about the quality of medical equipment and care provided at Camp Arifjan's Expeditionary Medical Facility-Kuwait, run by Navy personnel supporting Third Army/U.S. Army Central.

Lt. Gen. Kevin Kiley, U.S. Army surgeon general, met with Navy Capt. Forrest Faison, Expeditionary Medical Facility-Kuwait commanding officer, and his Sailors who work to save troops from all military branches wounded in Afghanistan, Iraq and Kuwait.

"Is there something you need that you don't have?" asked Kiley, to Sailors working in each section of the hospital.

That was all the encouragement most of them needed to address specific issues, but for the most part, the Sailors focused on the positive



Lt. Gen. Kiley, U.S. Army surgeon general, discusses medical treatment and hospital facilities with Spc. Jarrett Matchette, a 21-year-old native of Houston, Texas stationed with 4th Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, at the Naval Hospital at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait supporting Third Army/U.S. Army Central.

improvements and successes the hospital has undergone during the past six months.

"Thanks for what you guys are doing," said Kiley. "It's great."

Pausing to talk to the four Soldiers resting in hospital beds undergoing treatment, Kiley asked them what units and area of operations they came from and when they would be leaving the

hospital to return to their units.

"It meant a lot for him to visit – he cares about the patients overseas," said Spc. Jarrett Matchette, a 21-year-old Houston native, stationed with 4th Brigade, 10th Mountain Division in Iraq.

His visit and personal interaction with the staff also left a favorable impression.

"I'm flattered that he visited and learned about the nursing care we are able to perform and care for our troops," said Navy Lt. Camia Las Dulce, a 44-year-old critical care and emergency room nurse from Virginia Beach, Virginia.



Lt. Gen. Kevin Kiley, U.S. Army surgeon general, talks to Capt. Forrest Faison, Expeditionary Medical Facility-Kuwait commanding officer, about pharmaceutical needs at Camp Arifjan's Navy hospital Jan. 6.



Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day

Master Sgt. David Cooper has been an administrative noncommissioned officer for Third Army/U.S. Army Central at Camp Arifjan since arriving in theater last year. He keeps a calendar next to his desk, crossing off each day of his scheduled 12 month deployment.

Hanging with Mr. Cooper

Third Army/U.S. Army Central Soldier serves 'the best two departments in the U.S. Government' and carries a third job

Sgt. Thomas L. Day
Desert Voice Staff Writer

Master Sgt. David Cooper, 53, wears many hats. He is entering his 24th and likely his final year of service in the Army Reserve, working for Third Army/U.S. Army Central's command group. He served all of his time in the Reserve, while pursuing a parallel career with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In his Army uniform, he's an administration specialist. In a shirt

and tie, he does environmental assessment work for the EPA, including several assessments of recently-closed military posts.

In his third career, he is a freelance writer.

Cooper grew up in Milwaukie, Oregon, a suburb of Portland, delivering the *Clackamas County News* as a young boy. When he got older, he quit his paper route and began doing freelance writing for the newspaper, including a short story the paper published.

Through college, his twenties and his career in the Army, Cooper has maintained his part-time freelancing career. In 1992, "I tried to put a little more effort," he said. "That's when I started working on my first novel." **'Death of a Salesman' in the 21st Century'**

Cooper's categorizes his first novel as "speculative fiction."

"It's about a man who wakes up in a better world and how he deals with that...I've explained it to people as "Death of a Salesman" in

Master Sgt. David Cooper does some physical training at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, where he has been deployed since September. Cooper has served 24 years in the Army Reserve and is planning on retiring when he redeploys later this year.



Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day

the 21st Century.” He calls it *The Adjustment*. “Even though you as the reader can figure out for him, he’s still in a state of confusion... It’s a pretty ambitious project.”

The Adjustment was not Cooper’s only try at a full-length novel. Recently he finished a movie script, entitled *The Last Flight of the Blackbird*, about a rogue American pilot who steals an SR-71 jet plane with a nuclear weapon on board.

A producer from Paramount Pictures read the script and gave Cooper positive feedback, but no contract offer. He continues to market the script to potential producers and has rewritten *Last Flight* as his second full-length novel.

“I really can’t complain,” he said. “I’ve had more of a chance than most.”

Cooper has had brief forays with Hollywood before – he recently appeared in a Discovery Channel commercial dressed as a meteorite (“it was supposed to be cheesy,” he claims) – but he has no ambition to appear in front of the camera.

“A pretty lucky guy”

His writing career started covering local politics for the *Clackamas County News*, “just regular stringer work,” Cooper recalled. As a stringer writer, his life as a part-time writer and a part-time public servant began.



Courtesy photo

“It was because I had been covering politics as a freelancer that I became interested in public service,” he said.

Cooper joined the Army at 30, a decade older than when most Soldiers enter the Army.

He has his bachelor’s in Political Science from Portland State University and a Master’s in Public Administration from California State University at Hayward, which he earned going to school at night while on active Reserve duty. “Those were some busy times. I didn’t do much writing.”

Cooper has been in Kuwait with the 416th Engineering Command [the 416th is currently attached to Third Army/U.S. ARCENT] for three months, carrying coworkers like Sgt. 1st Class Louis Bailey through a tireless deployment, scheduled to last through this fall.

“He’s pretty jovial,” said Bailey, who has worked at a desk adjacent to Cooper since the two arrived in theater. “I know he and I have pretty good conversations.”

When Cooper returns home, he will return to the San Francisco area, where he has resided in the northern suburb of Novato for the last six years.

“I work for the two best departments in the U.S. government,” he said, referring to the Department of Defense and the EPA. “To that extent, I’m a pretty lucky guy.”

Cooper’s civilian job is also with the U.S. government, the Environmental Protection Agency, working in their San Francisco office. Cooper has been involved in assessing several closed military posts for the EPA.



Grek, Petty Officer 2nd Class Kris Thompson's partner, takes the ASG-Kuwait's Law and Order Detachment, Military Working Dog Section's obstacle course with ease and grace. The course offers the military working dogs lots of exercise and practice maneuvering in unique situations.

Leaps and hounds

Military working dogs serve and protect

Story and Photos by
Spc. Debrah Robertson
Desert Voice Assistant Editor

Don't be fooled by these canines' wagging tails and happy, pink tongues. They are trained professionals serving their country, just like the men and women who have dedicated their lives to training and perfecting the dogs' skills in everything from base patrols to explosives detection.

The dogs and their handlers are on posts throughout the theater, protecting servicemembers, such as Third Army/U.S. Army Central Soldiers here in Kuwait, from some of these hazards, said Chief Donald Reinhart, kennel master of the ASG-Kuwait's Law and Order Detachment, Military Working Dog Section.

When confronted with situations that would make some people cringe with

doubt, the handlers at the Military Working Dog Section know their partners have their backs.

Military working dogs are willing to go into the dark places where human partners may be unwilling to venture, said Petty Officer 2nd Class Mario Rotilio, a master at arms with the Working Dog Section.

"Working with the dogs is very rewarding, and we definitely deploy to a lot of different parts of the world," continued Reinhart.

The unit coordinates the movement of working dogs and their handlers through Kuwait and into other areas of the theater, including Iraq and Afghanistan.

Having the dogs in theater is "important to the Global War on Terrorism," said Reinhart, "finding explosives, [improvised explosive devices] and terrorists who are trying to get on base."

"When properly utilized, they are the

first line of defense in finding explosives on a compound," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Johnny B. Mitchell, also with the Working Dog Section, on working with his canine counterparts. "You can't beat a



dog's nose."

"Dogs can detect odors so many feet away," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Kris Thompson, with the Working Dog Section. "No one can duplicate that with robots."

Bomb detection robots can be quite expensive, said Rotilio, when compared to the amazing abilities of military working dogs in detecting the same materials.

"Dogs can [detect explosives] just as fast, if not better, at probably one-tenth of the cost," he continued comparing the dogs' abilities to those of explosive ordnance robots.

"The dogs act as deterrents in keeping explosives and drugs off the installations," he said.

"The intimidation factor of a barking dog is awesome," said Mitchell. "People shut their mouths and comply."

Where a terrorist may feel confident challenging a fellow human being, they may be plagued with doubt when it comes to challenging a trained military dog, said members of the Working Dog Section.

The dogs act as "physiological deterrents" when the handlers patrol the bases, said Rotilio.

But in order to get the handlers and their dogs to this level of expertise, it takes a lot of time and patience.

The canines go through schooling much like human servicemembers, including patrol and detection, said Thompson. Then they are sent to different bases.

Once at their respective bases, they are assigned to handlers who are thoroughly trained themselves.

"It's just more training from there," Thompson continued. "We're always looking for ways to excel our dogs to a higher level."

"With a person, you can give them a book, show them once and they learn it pretty easy," he said. "Whereas, with a dog, you have to go through baby steps. You have to start at a lower level and work up. You keep showing it to them and they eventually pick it up. It just takes a lot of time and a lot of patience."

The dog handlers of the Law and Order Detachment said they do not do it for the recognition. They do it for the love of the animal and the love of their jobs.



Petty Officer 2nd Class Kris Thompson, a member of the ASG-Kuwait's Law and Order Detachment, Military Working Dog Section, demonstrates Anty and Rita's outstanding ability to work as a team to bring down terrorists who are trying to escape custody.

Eagerly awaiting his next command, Grek, gazes up at his partner Petty Officer 2nd Class Kris Thompson, a member of the ASG-Kuwait's Law and Order Detachment, Military Working Dog Section. A bond must be forged between the master at arms and his canine companion in order to build the trust that could someday save their lives.

Camp Arifjan



Spc. Jason Raimondo, an Army medic deployed in Kuwait, checks the tires of an ambulatory humvee, recently. The vehicle is available so medics can transport wounded troops to Camp Arifjan's hospital.

Medics and Corpsman team up for emergencies

Story and Photos by
Sgt. Chris Jones
Desert Voice Editor

For medics stationed in Kuwait, it doesn't matter what unit you are in or whether you're Army or Navy, when an emergency strikes across the Iraqi border, everyone is involved.

When an urgent medical problem occurs at the Kuwait border, as many as three groups of medical

technicians stationed in Kuwait are available for help.

The first-line responders are the quick-reaction force Army medics, then there are the ground ambulance medics, and there are also a handful of Navy Corpsman whose primary job is at the Troop Medical Clinic on Camp Navistar, supporting Third Army/ U.S. Army Central.

During emergencies, it is crucial that all three come together, said Cmdr. Ellen Argo, officer in charge

of the TMC. Argo is also the only medical provider at this remote desert location.

"The medics and Corpsman here are incredible," said Argo. "They think autonomously. I've groomed them that way because I can't work 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Most of the time, the TMC is where both the Corpsman and the ground ambulance medics spend their days – treating common illnesses, cuts, sores – but they are



(Top) Navy Corpsman Petty Officer 3rd Class Jose Herrera practices IV procedures at a Troop Medical Clinic in Kuwait. Navy Corpsmen are the primary medical staff at the TMC.

(Left) Army medics Spc. Zachary Hall (foreground) and Spc. Jason Raimondo perform preventive maintenance checks and procedures on their medical vehicle, recently. The two medics use the vehicle in case a medical emergency requires them to transport servicemembers to the hospital on Camp Arifjan.

all aware that medical missions are unpredictable.

That unpredictability requires every medic and Corpsman here in the desert to not only be available for any mission, but mentally and physically ready for it.

“The reason I got in the [medical] field was to take care of Soldiers,” said Spc. Zachary Hall, a ground ambulance medic who spends most of his days at the TMC. “Knowing what I was going into, I realized that me and my guys would be in harm’s way.”

Hall’s daily duties at the TMC could be overshadowed by the need to leave camp on an ambulatory mission. If a servicemember is wounded near the border of Iraq, Hall and fellow medic Spc. Jason Raimondo may be called on to dispatch their medical humvee and drive the wounded servicemember to an ambulance exchange point where the U.S. Navy Hospital is located.

An exchange point is established beforehand to ensure the medics are not away from camp for too long, in the event that another emergency across the border should arise.

If the medical problem is considered less than an

emergency, the servicemember could be treated at the TMC on Camp Navistar by Argo or one of the Navy Corpsman.

One of those Corpsman could be Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Jose Herrera, an Anaheim, Calif., native who has been deployed to Kuwait for 18 months. His initial deployment orders were for six months, but he volunteered to extend for another 14 “because I get to do Corpsman stuff here.”

Like Hall, Herrera has grown more passionate about the medical field while deployed. He now wants to become a Navy doctor after redeploying this spring.

“I always liked taking care of people, ever since high school,” said Herrera. “I wanted to become a nurse, but after being here people ask me, ‘why don’t you go be a doctor?’”

Indeed, he now intends to pursue a medical doctorate, but he plans to practice that medical knowledge in the Navy. Although he loves the medical field, Herrera said it is during a deployment where he finds his job to be the most rewarding.

“I think the biggest reason why I like being here is you never know what’s going to happen,” said Herrera.



Lt. Col. Tom Powell, a 10th Mountain Division staff officer, discusses improvised explosive device counter-measures in a slide show presentation at Camp Arifjan Jan. 11.

Meeting of the Minds

Story and Photo by
Sgt. Thomas L. Day
Desert Voice Staff Writer

Third Army/U.S. Army Central hosts servicemembers from Iraq and Afghanistan for counter IED conference

U.S. Soldiers and Marines, British officers and officials from Department of Defense contracted companies came together at Camp Arifjan this week to discuss improvised explosive device counter-measures. They left after the three-day conference with one synchronized gameplan on how to counter the most deadly threat in Iraq and Afghanistan: IEDs.

Soldiers and Marines from Iraq and Afghanistan came to Kuwait for the conference.

“The broad mission is to synchronize

the counter IED fight,” said Maj. Lee Hicks, Third Army/U.S. Army Central’s top counter-IED officer. “We don’t want units coming over here to see things for the first time.”

The conference also served to share counter-IED technology and the most up-to-date information from Iraq and Afghanistan. Representatives from Close Combat Systems and Assured Mobility Systems, two contracted engineering companies, attended the conference, looking for new ideas.

Counter-IED training was the most common topic during the conference, with the first day entirely devoted to that subject.

“Every Soldier coming into Afghanistan, every unit coming into Afghanistan needs to be trained up on the basics of shoot, move and communicate in an IED environment,” said Lt. Col. Tom Powell, a 10th Mountain Division operations officer, who has served in Bagram, Afghanistan, since August 2006.

Practice OPSEC

Don't discuss over unsecure connections:

- ▶ Detailed information about the missions of assigned units
- ▶ Locations and times of unit deployments and redeployments
- ▶ Details concerning security procedures
- ▶ Personnel transactions that occur in large numbers, i.e., pay information, wills, powers of attorney
- ▶ References to trends in unit morale or personnel problems



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Just One Question...

What do you look forward to every week?



“Going home - seeing my wife and four children.”

Sgt. 1st Class John Lemke
1st Bn., 121st Field Artillery Regt.
Platoon sergeant
Fond du Lac, Wisc.



“I look forward to coming to Camp Navistar because they have the best dining facility. It's basically the same food, it's just prepared with more love.”

Petty Officer 2nd Class Anthony Avenson
Patrolman
OIF/OEF Law and Order Detachment
Bremerton, Wash.



“A week being ended and the next one starting so I can get out of here.”

Navy Lt. Epi Atencio
Electronic Warfare Officer
1st Bn., 121st Field Artillery Regt.
Milton, Fla.



“Church on Sundays - that's the only place you can get peace of mind.”

Staff Sgt. William Hill
Truck commander
1st Bn., 121st Field Artillery Regt.
Las Vegas, Nev.



“Talking to my husband in Iraq and my kids in Winnfield, La.”

Sgt. Ursula Scott
C1 Headquarters administration NCO
38th Personnel Service Battalion
Winnfield, La.

Hometown Hero



Sgt. 1st Class Doug Heckenkamp, MWR NCOIC at Camp Navistar with 107th Quartermaster Battalion, Michigan National Guard, from Jackson, Mich.

Heckenkamp's job allows him to bring joy and well-being to his fellow troops.
Heckenkamp talks about what he misses about his hometown of Jackson, Mich.

“Being able to go where I want to go on my motorcycle (with the Proud Veterans Motorcycle Club). Being with my friends. It's where all my friends and family are.”

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