

1st CORPS SUPPORT COMMAND

# BLACKJACK

provider

**READY  
and  
RELEVANT**

**AIRBORNE**



The Army's only contingency support command  
Fall 2004

Volume 3

# Blackjack Provider

1st COSCOM: The Army's Only Contingency Support Command

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Soldiers committed to winning the war on terrorism, Photo by Spc. Timothy Hettich, 1st COSCOM PAO

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### Blackjack Provider

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## Letter from the command

This summer, the 1st COSCOM has completed many mission requirements, exercises and various preparations to ready our subordinate units for deployment. The time has now come for much of the 1st COSCOM to deploy and support an Army at war.

I expect to see the same dedication, tenacity, and resolve that you display here daily while we are in Iraq. Deploying to a hostile environment is serious business and we are deploying to do our part to ensure that the newly liberated Iraq stays that way.

Since notification, we have trained continuously on convoy live-fire exercises and various small arms and crew-served ranges. We have scheduled and completed other training such as combat life saver, advanced marksmanship, LINES training and others that will

instill the skill and confidence that I know each Soldier will need to succeed in the mission.

We have been issued many items of individual equipment that in the past have not been available to combat service support units.

We have come a long way since the day we were notified that we would be headed to Iraq. I have seen all of the preparation, coordination, and training that you have done. Good Job! I am confident in your ability to complete your assigned mission.

While in Iraq, you will be ambassadors of the United States and its military. You must also be good stewards of democracy, and do what is right. Never lose focus on why you are there and remain steadfast.

Many of us will be taking block leave soon. Use this opportunity to spend time with your family and to take care of any last minute

personal things that are outstanding. Take the time to remind your families of why you are deploying and its importance. In doing all of this you are setting your family up for success and ensuring that they are "combat ready".

We have a great Family Readiness Group program in place where family members will have the opportunity to see how their loved ones are doing. We will have a website and a monthly newsletter available. Our rear detachment units will be available to aid family members with any issues or concerns that they may have. Don't leave your families in the dark; ensure that they have access to this information. The FRG will be your family's support system while you are deployed.

For those of you not deploying, the mission you have is extremely important. Rear detachments will continue to provide support to many Fort Bragg units that are



**Brig. Gen. Yves J. Fontaine**  
Commanding General

not deploying. They will ensure that our deploying units are properly prepared for what lies ahead. Other units will be preparing themselves for additional deployments in the months ahead. I am confident that our units remaining at Fort Bragg are capable of performing the mission assigned to them.

I am proud to be part of 1st COSCOM "First Team" and all the preparation that have been made in the past quarter. We are ready for what lies ahead, so let's get to it!

**ATW, FIRST TEAM!**



**Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Allen**  
1st COSCOM

We all know that we will be deploying shortly to Iraq. I have witnessed

all of the effort you have put into ensuring that our troops are combat ready. Continue to focus on the training that will aid us downrange. Pre-combat checks are a must. They are the last step to defense prior to crossing over into enemy territory.

Members of the team operating as rear operations must understand how vital

they are to our mission. You carry the burden of assisting forward and rear troops. This heavy task does not go unrecognized. We have a strong team in the rear and this contributes to our combat readiness.

Part of being combat ready also includes prepping your family. Ensuring that you, your soldiers and your family members are prepared is

vital to a successful deployment. Ensure that your family engages with the FRG. The FRG is a support group that is there for them.

And finally, remember the warrior spirit that has been instilled into you during your tenure here. Never quit, never accept defeat, teamwork is how we will win.

**FIRST TEAM!**

# Commanding general gets his star

By Capt. Sonise Lumbaca, 1st COSCOM PAO

The 1st Corps Support Command officer in charge has been flagged.

Col. Yves J. Fontaine, commander 1st Corps Support Command, was promoted to brigadier general by Lt. Gen. John R. Vines, commander XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, August 4 at the 1st COSCOM Memorial Site.

“It is a great day for the Fontaine family. It confirms what all we knew, that he (Fontaine) is a great Soldier, a great leader and one of high morale principle,” said Vines.

Fontaine took command of the over 5,000 strong COSCOM July 18, 2003 after arriving from U.S. Army Special Operations Command where he served as the chief of staff from December 2001 to July 2003.

Fontaine was born in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium in 1952. He came to the United States to study in 1971 and obtained his U.S. naturalization in 1973 while attending Valley Forge Military Junior College.

He graduated from La Salle University and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Ordnance Corps. Since then, he has worked in a variety of logistical and combat arms units and has deployed during Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

“Fontaine has made an indelible mark not only on the Army but also on Fort Bragg,

because he has the focus and organization on being ready that perhaps is the key organization in the XVIII Airborne Corps, and that is the 1st Corps Support Command,” said Vines.

“If 1st COSCOM fails, XVIII Airborne Corps will fail and XVIII Airborne Corps is in many cases carrying the main effort of the Army. They will be doing that in Iraq next year,” Vines said.

In the fall over 2,000 soldiers from the 1st COSCOM will deploy to Iraq to provide logistical support to a variety of units already deployed and preparing to deploy. 1st COSCOM’s is the Army’s only contingency support command that provides support to the XVIII Airborne Corps anywhere worldwide. In the past year, 1st COSCOM provided logistical support to conflicts in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Iraq.

“It is an honor to have a proven airborne leader and warrior promote me to this rank,” said Fontaine.



Yves J. Fontaine, middle, commander 1st Corps Support Command, receives general Officer stars from his wife Kathleen, and Lt. Gen. John R. Vines, commander XVIII Airborne Corps, during a promotion ceremony August 4 at the 1st COSCOM memorial site. Photo by Spc. Timothy Hettich, 1st COSCOM PAO.

“I am truly humbled today, because as we all know, one does not succeed in any leadership position by himself. We all get help from a lot of people in and out of the military, active and retired and particularly at Fort Bragg from the surrounding community of Fayetteville, Spring Lake, and Hope Mills,” Fontaine said.



Following Brig. Gen. Yves J. Fontaine’s promotion, attendees had the opportunity to celebrate with him. Photo by Spc. Timothy Hettich, 1st COSCOM PAO.

## Paintball aids in convoy live-fire training

By Spc. Mary R. Xenikakis  
HHC, 1st COSCOM

Many Fort Bragg unit have taken what used to be just a recreational activity and turned it into a high speed Soldier training tool.

Paintball training, on the morning of September 9, by Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Corps Support Command, was just one step in the preparation process for their upcoming deployment. These Soldiers used paintball equipment to practice convoy live fire scenarios before actually going to



**Combat life savers practice first aid during the HHC, 1st COSCOM paintball training at Smith Lake. Photo by Capt. Sonise Lumbaca, 1st COSCOM PAO.**

a live fire range, using real ammunition.

“When you go to war there is no bang bang, shoot shoot,” said Sgt. Franchasca Deboe, non-commissioned officer in charge of training, HHC, 1st COSCOM. She added, that this type of realistic training prepares them by simulating the feeling of actually being fired upon and its affects.

Soldiers participating in the exercise ranged from medics to administration personnel. “We want our team to be able to react

without hesitation, should one of their buddies be hit by enemy fire,” said Deboe.

Staff Sgt. Norman Creek Jr., acting convoy commander during the paintball training, HHC, 1st COSCOM, commented on how unconventional the training is, while at the same time, it being a good tool to simulate the conventional way of training.

Soldiers, from 1st COSCOM, have used the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement Systems (MILES gear) in the past. The MILES gear is a system worn by Soldiers, which uses sensors that are transmitted to a device attached to the muzzle of the weapon. If another’s laser hits a Soldier, a sound will come from their gear letting them know they have been hit. Using paintball guns gives the training a more physical aspect.

“The MILES gear only makes a sound when you get hit,” Creek Said. “When you get hit by a paintball you feel the sting, and it lets you know you were hit both physically and visually, because of the paint.”

This is good training by any standard, said Spc. Damian Quiles, a lithographer for HHC,



**A Soldier from the Troop Support Battalion takes cover behind a tree as opposing forces fire paintball rounds at him during the HHC, 1st COSCOM training held Sept. 9 at the Smith Lake paintball facility. Photo by Capt. Sonise Lumbaca, 1st COSCOM PAO.**

1st COSCOM. “Training like this will build more confidence before the deployment.”

Paintball training was the walking stages in the convoy live fire training. These Soldiers will be spending three days at the live fire range on Fort Bragg in the upcoming weeks to complete their training before deployment.



**HHC, 1st COSCOM Soldiers conduct convoy drills at the Smith Lake paintball facility Sept. 9. Photo by Capt. Sonise Lumbaca, 1st COSCOM PAO.**

# Military Pay Exclusion: Combat Zone Service

By [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

**Q-1: I am a member of the U.S. Armed Forces performing services in a combat zone. Is any part of my military pay for serving in this area excluded from gross income?**

A-1: Yes, if you serve in a combat zone as an enlisted person or as a warrant officer (including commissioned warrant officers) for any part of a month, all your military pay received for military service that month is excluded from gross income. For commissioned officers, the monthly exclusion is capped at the highest enlisted pay, plus any hostile fire or imminent danger pay received. For 2002, the most an officer could earn tax-free each month was \$5,532.90 (\$5,382.90, the highest monthly enlisted pay, plus \$150 hostile fire or imminent danger pay). The Emergency Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-11) raised the imminent danger pay to \$225 per month through September 2003. The 2004 National Defense Authorization Act extended this higher rate through December 2004. For 2003, the monthly combat pay exclusion for officers totals \$5,957.70. For 2004, it totals \$6,315.90. Amounts excluded from gross income are not subject to federal income tax.

**Q-2: My husband and I are both enlisted personnel serving in the U.S. Armed Forces in the combat zone. Are we each entitled to the income tax exclusion for military pay?**

A-2: Yes, each of you qualifies for the income tax exclusion for your respective military pay.

**Q-3: I am a member of the U.S. Armed Forces stationed on a ship outside any combat zone. I fly missions over a combat zone as part of the military operations in that combat zone. Is any part of my military pay excluded from gross income?**

A-3: Yes. The combat zone includes the airspace over it, so you are serving in the combat zone. See Q&A-2 above for a discussion of the amount of your military pay that is excluded.

**Q-4: If I am injured and hospitalized while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces in a combat zone, is any of my military pay excluded from gross income?**

A-4: Yes. Military pay received by enlisted personnel who are hospitalized as a result of injuries sustained while serving in a combat zone is excluded from gross income for the period of hospitalization, subject to the 2-year limitation provided below. Commissioned officers have a similar exclusion, limited to the maximum enlisted pay amount per month. (See Q&A-2 above.) These exclusions from gross income for hospitalized enlisted personnel and commissioned officers end 2 years after the date of termination of the combat zone.

**Q-5: My wife is currently serving in the U.S. Armed Forces in a combat zone and will be eligible for discharge when she returns home. If she is discharged upon her return, will the payment for the annual leave that she accrued during her service in the combat zone be excluded from gross income?**

A-5: Yes. Annual leave payments to enlisted members of the U.S. Armed Forces upon discharge from service are excluded from gross income to the extent the annual leave was accrued during any month in any part of which the member served in a combat zone. If your wife is a commissioned officer, a portion of the annual leave payment she receives for leave accrued during any month in any part of which she served in a combat zone may be excluded. The annual leave payment is not excludable to the extent it exceeds the maximum enlisted pay amount (see Q&A-2 above) for the month of service to which it relates less the amount of military pay already excluded for that month.

**Q-6: I am an enlisted person serving in a combat zone. If I reenlist early while I am in the combat zone and receive my reenlistment bonus several months later when I am stationed outside the**

*See IRS, page 9*

# 507th Corps Support Group test their strengths and fears at Pre-Ranger Course

Story and photo

by Spc. Amy L. Brown, 1st COSCOM PAO



A Soldier from the 507th Corps Support Group negotiates a water and rope obstacle at the 82nd Airborne Division Pre-Ranger Course July 8. Obstacles at this course tested teamwork and individual fear of water and heights.

Seventy-five Soldiers were poised and ready to roll out at the start line of the Pre-Ranger obstacle course. The Soldiers were ready to take on whatever was about to come their way, however these Soldiers were not pre-ranger candidates. These Soldiers were logisticians.

Soldiers from the 507th Corps Support Group, 1st Corps Support Command, ran through the 82nd Airborne Division Pre-Ranger Obstacle Course July 8. The training was open to all officers and senior non-

commissioned officers in the unit.

The Pre-Ranger Course is designed to prepare Fort Bragg Soldiers' for Ranger School at Ft. Benning, Ga. The obstacle course is usually the culmination of thirteen days of training said 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Donald Walton,

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***“No matter which battalion you come from, which rank you wear on your collar-when you have a mission, teams need to come together.”***

**--Capt. Josielyn Carrasquillo, 507th CSG**

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82nd Airborne Division, Pre-Ranger Battalion.

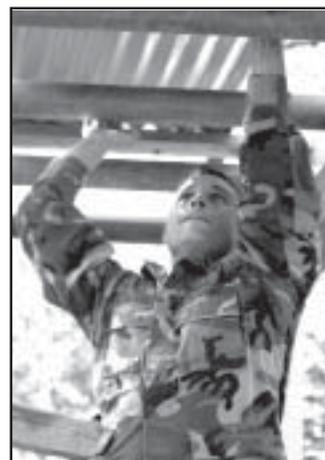
“Any unit can schedule this obstacle course, but very few take advantage of the opportunity. I think this is something that a lot more units should do,” said Walton.

Walton says that the obstacle course challenges each Soldier to do his part, as well as trust their buddies to do the same.

There were many obstacles for the Soldiers to overcome, individually and as a team. Obstacles such as cargo net climb, rope bridge cross, and the three tier tower climb were a few

***See Obstacles, page 9***

A Soldier from the 507th Corps Support Group negotiates the “monkey bars”, a height and strength obstacle, at the 82nd Airborne Division Pre-Ranger Course July 8.



# Chaplains host airborne operations to celebrate 229th birthday anniversary

By Timothy Hettich, 1st COSCOM PAO

As the sun streamed down from the sky and a light breeze meandered over the drop zone, the sound of an aircraft could be heard in the distance. As it flew overhead jumpers exited its doors one at a time and slowly descended towards the earth on the blessed day that was the 229th anniversary of the Chaplains Corps.

The commemorative

jump followed by an anniversary luncheon took place July 21 at Sicily drop zone and was hosted by the 1st Corps Support Command's Unit Ministry Team. Heading up the event was the 1st COSCOM chaplain Col. Charles Reese, officer in charge of air operations assisted by non-commissioned officer in charge Sgt. 1st Class Keith Davis, Headquarters and Headquarters company, 1st Corps Support Command.

"The day was a team effort all the way around," said Reese. "To get something done requires a dedicated team of horses pulling the same direction, but you have to have one strong lead horse – that was Sgt. 1st Class Davis."

Although the Chaplains Corps was officially formed on 29 July (1775), the occasion was celebrated early due to ongoing missions.

The legal origin of the Chaplains is found in a resolution of the Continental Congress, adopted

July 29, 1775, which made provision for the pay of chaplains. The National Defense Act of 1920

created the office of the Chief of Chaplains.

The invitation was extended post wide to paratroopers from units all over Fort Bragg and family members were invited to watch and join in to celebrate the day.

Soldiers from units such as 1st COSCOM, 35th Signal Brigade and 7th Special Forces Group not

only jumped but also supported the operation. "We were able to jump 263 paratroopers from across 55 units at Ft. Bragg," said Reese.

Although numerous Chaplains jumps are held year round at a unit level, a post wide Chaplains jump occurs only once a year, said chaplain Maj. Ed Ahl, deputy chaplain, 1st COSCOM and ground commander for the jump.



A paratrooper exits the rear of a Casa 210 aircraft over Sicily Drop Zone July 21 during an airborne operation conducted to commemorate the Chaplain Corps 229th birthday. Over 200 Soldiers throughout the major commands of Fort Bragg participated. Photo by Capt. Sonise Lumbaca, 1st COSCOM PAO

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***"It's a great way to recognize the unique nature of the ministry in the airborne community."***

**- Col. (CH) Charles D. Reese, 1st COSCOM Chaplain**

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See Airborne, page 21

**IRS** ————— *from page 6*  
**combat zone, is any part of my reenlistment bonus excluded from gross income?**

A-6: Yes. The reenlistment bonus is excluded from gross income although received in a month that you were outside the combat zone, because you completed the necessary action for entitlement to the reenlistment bonus in a month during which you served in the combat zone.

**Q-7: My brother, who is a civilian in the merchant marine, is on a ship that transports military supplies between the United States and the combat zone. Is he entitled to the combat zone military pay exclusion?**

A-7: No. Those serving in the merchant marine are not members of the U.S. Armed Forces. The combat zone military pay exclusion applies only to members of the U.S. Armed Forces. Neither federal civilian employees nor civilian defense contractors deployed with U.S. forces qualify for an exclusion of income earned while working in a combat zone or qualified

hazardous duty area. They may, however, qualify for an extension of deadlines to file and pay taxes. The U.S. Armed Forces include all regular and reserve components of the uniformed services that are under the control of the Secretaries of Defense, Army, Navy, and Air Force, and the Secretary of Homeland Security with respect to the Coast Guard.

**Q-8: My husband is a member of the U.S. Armed Forces performing services related to a combat operation but he is not in the combat zone and he is not receiving hostile fire/imminent danger pay. Is he entitled to the military pay exclusion?**

A-8: No. U.S. Armed Forces personnel serving outside the combat zone are not entitled to the military pay exclusion unless they are serving in direct support of military operations in the combat zone for which they receive hostile fire/imminent danger pay. The Department of Defense certifies areas that meet these requirements.

For more details see Publication 3, Armed Forces' Tax Guide from the IRS website.

**Obstacles** ————— *from page 7*

obstacles that these Soldiers had to test their fear of height and water against.

The obstacles are designed to challenge each participant and foster teamwork. Some obstacles such as the rope bridge force participants to face the fear of heights, some like the "monkey bars" test physical strength. Other obstacles enforce teamwork because they cannot be negotiated alone without jeopardize safety.

"The obstacle course was a positive thing," said Capt. Josielyn Carrasquillo, S-1 Officer In Charge, 530th Supply and Service Battalion.

"No matter which battalion you come from, which rank you wear on your collar, when you have a mission, teams need to come together," said Carrasquillo.

"Our group is going to support Operation Iraqi Freedom and this kind of event helps each member of the 507th CSG to work as a team; challenge confidence and the decision making process," said Carrasquillo.

"The officers and senior non-commissioned officers enjoyed getting a chance to meet soldiers from other units," said Sgt. Maj. Peggy Collazo, S-3 Sgt. Maj. . , 507th CSG. Overall, the group



**Three Soldiers from the 507th CSG work together to negotiate an obstacle July 8 at the 82nd Airborne Pre-Ranger Ostacle Course. Photo by Spc. Amy Brown, 1st COSCOM PAO.**  
was glad to have the opportunity for a change of pace in the training environment, said Collazo.

# Ready to deploy

## 1st COSCOM conducts live-fire exercise

By Spc. Amy L. Brown, 1st COSCOM PAO

In a continuing effort to provide world class logistical support, maintain and gain technical and tactical proficiency, Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Corps Support Command completed a two-weeklong convoy live-fire exercise September 12 to 22 at range 63.

This exercise was one of the many exercises that 1st COSCOM Soldiers have conducted in preparation for their upcoming deployment to Iraq.

Lt. Col. Anita M. Raines, senior observer controller for the CLFX, 46th Corps Support Group, said that the premiere training event was commanding general's, Brig. Gen. Yves J. Fontaine, 1st Corps Support Command, desire "to properly train up all headquarters element in 1st COSCOM for their mission in Operation Iraqi Freedom, particularly focusing on convoy training."

Prior to the September exercise, Soldiers from 1st COSCOM participated in a number of CLFX's to familiarize themselves with the training.

During these earlier exercises, Soldiers were trained to pull perimeter security, react to Improvised Explosive Devices, and recover casualties and



1st COSCOM Soldiers firing live rounds while on the back of a tactical vehicle during their convoy live-fire exercise held September 12 to 22 at range 63. Photo by Capt. Sonise Lumbaca, 1st COSCOM PAO



1st COSCOM Soldiers receive instructions on the AK-47, a foreign weapon system used by insurgents in Iraq, during their convoy live-fire exercise held September 12 to 22 at range 63. Photo by Capt. Craig Christian, HHC, 1st COSCOM

equipment, all while maintaining effective communication.

When the Soldiers displayed their proficiency in conducting the exercises, the September culmination exercise was scheduled.

During this culmination exercise, tasks were added and scenarios became increasingly difficult.

When asked about the effects of the added pressures of time constraints and verbal coaxing by the OCs, Capt. Brian A. Eli, convoy commander, Corps Distribution Command, cited the Army's crawl, walk and run philosophy as the training tool that made his unit successful.

"The training was very methodical, there was a lot of talk and thought in the beginning," said Eli. "Gradually, as we gained experience, we increased pressure on ourselves."

Additional tasks included reacting to contact from the driver or truck commander side of the vehicles, driver and TC communication while



**1st Sgt. Brian C. Veney, first sergeant, Headquarters, CDC, is interviewed by a public affairs Soldier from the 1st COSCOM PAO, during the 1st COSCOM live-fire exercise held September 12 to 22 at range 63. 1st COSCOM Soldiers participated in an array of realistic training to include media training. Photo by Capt. Sonise Lumbaca, 1st COSCOM PAO**

under fire, and mounting and dismounting vehicles under fire while maintaining perimeter security.

“It was good to train like this because not only did I get to fire my weapon, but working with other people and watching everything come together boosted my confidence,” said Pfc. Amber Caridad, a driver during the live-fire exercise, CDC. She added that the training also gave her experience and the ability to handle all of the stress that will come with the mission in Iraq.

Combat Life Savers also had the opportunity to practice their skills during simulated casualty scenarios. CLS administered first aid and gave intravenous fluids to “casualties” while observer controllers evaluated them. Some Soldiers volunteered to receive multiple IVs in order to help the CLSs become proficient in their tasks.

A number of weapon familiarization classes were also conducted.

Soldiers were able to familiarize themselves with enemy weapon systems such as the AK-47 and the rocket propelled grenade launcher.

During this familiarization training, Soldiers of the 1st COSCOM had the opportunity to disassemble and assemble each weapon and

also learn how to fire them. Other weapons training included U.S. weapon systems such as the M249 light machine gun, M203 grenade launcher, and the 50 caliber crew served weapon, to name a few.

“The purpose of familiarizing all of the Soldiers with these weapons is to ensure that during a worse case scenario, if someone gets injured or worse, their buddy, who is well trained on the system is able to take over and fire that weapon,” said Capt. Christopher D. Lange, Range Officer in Charge for the CLFX, 530th Supply and Service Battalion.

The Soldiers also conducted refresher training on radio communications, Precision Lightweight Global Positioning Device Receiver, and utilization of the Movement Tracking System; a messaging and vehicle-tracking device that mounts to tactical vehicles.

Raines said that the feedback that she was given from the Soldiers is that they appreciate the amount of realism that Fort Bragg can offer in aiding units with their exercises and the careful planning that was put into CLFX.

“Soldiers certainly, pending deployment, understand the urgency and the need to get this right prior to exposure in the theatre,” she said.

The 1st COSCOM is scheduled to deploy to Iraq this fall in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



**A 1st COSCOM combat life saver provides intravenous fluid to a “casualty”, while another Soldier provides support during their live-fire exercise held September 12 to 22 at range 63. During the training CLS were evaluated on giving IVs and first aid. Photo by Capt. Sonise Lumbaca, 1st COSCOM PAO**

## SHARP SHOOTER



1st COSCOM Soldiers participating in the May Fort Bragg Corps Warfighter Exercise.



Soldiers from HHC, 1st COSCOM conduct squad tactics during sergeant's time training at Area Echo, Fort Bragg.

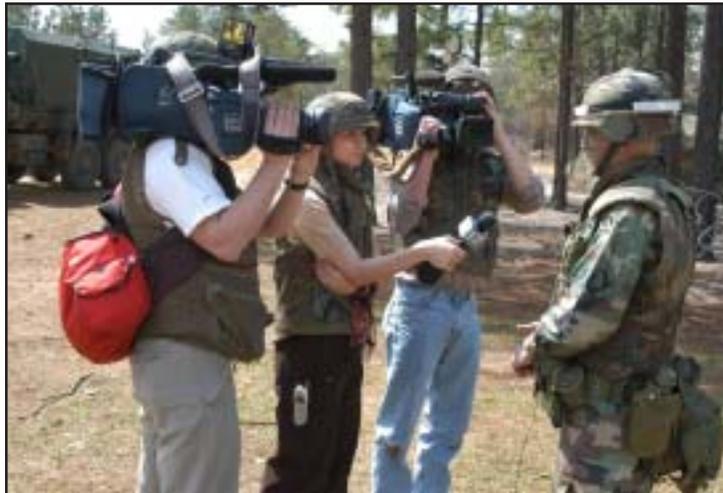


(Above) Cooks from Charlie Company, Troop Support Battalion conduct an after action review after participating in the large Garrison Philip A. Connelly Competition. (Right) Soldiers from HHC, 1st COSCOM receive their Desert Camouflage Uniform packet prior to deploying. (Below) Soldiers from the 264th Corps Support Battalion while deployed to Iraq.





(Above) A rigger from the 623rd Quartermaster Company repairs a parachute. (Right) a Soldier from the Troop Support Battalion fires a 50 caliber machine gun during a range. (Below) Lt. Col. James Woodard, commander, 530th S&S Battalion conduct an interview with various news agencies during a convoy live-fire exercise.



(Above) A jump master gives a paratrooper the "GO" tap after completing a Jump Master Personnel Inspection at the 507th CSG Airborne Operation held in June. (Below) children playing on an static display of an HMMWV at the 46th CSG Family Readiness Group predeployment brief held August.



(Above) Various Soldiers from 1st COSCOM enjoying the festive enviroment at the annual 1st COSCOM Formal held in August at the Fort Bragg Officer Club.



# Dignity, reverence and respect

## *COSCOM Soldiers conduct Mortuary Affairs training*

By Spc. Amy L. Brown, 1st COSCOM PAO

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Soldiers from the 1st Corps Support Command attended a Mortuary Affairs Officers Course here September 27 through October 8.

Nine officers from 46th Corps Support Group, 1st Corp Support Command, a staff sergeant from the Corps Distribution Center, and a Marine from Marietta, Ga. attended the two-week joint service course in order to be certified in mortuary affair operations.

The class, usually held twice a year at the Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Lee, Va. was taken on the road for the first time ever to provide officers with the opportunity to gain the Mortuary Affairs additional skills identifier of 4V.

The additional skills are added to the duties of the primary military occupational specialty. Enlisted soldiers may attend the class for mortuary affairs knowledge; however the 4V ASI is reserved for officers said Capt. Kelly Dobert course instructor and doctrine writer, from Fort Lee, Va.

The 4V qualification provides a basic knowledge of Mortuary Affairs planning and execution. The course is designed to train officers on

the doctrine and procedures for planning, collection, and transportation of fallen comrades.

“Second to doing everything within our power to keep a Soldier alive the next greatest thing is doing everything you can for the family,” said Capt. Strohm, Support Operations, 46th CSG.

Earning this identifier and having the skills to perform this function for a soldier that gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country brings a sense of honor, said Strohm.

Approximately 280 quartermaster officers Army wide carry the additional skill identifier for mortuary affairs. Although the unit and duty position that an officer fills may call for the 4V ASI, qualification is not granted until officers attend the two-week course, said Dobert.

Although this is the first time the course has gone on the road, Dobert said she would be open to coordinate more opportunities for qualification through mobile training teams.

Mortuary affairs planning is not something that a commander or any Soldier wants to think about, but it is something that is very important, said Dobert.

The Mortuary Affairs Officer Course takes the myth and mystery out of the tasks involved with the collection and preparation of remains. “The more knowledge you have the better off you are,” says Dobert.

Marine Warrant Officer Roger Causey, embarkation officer, Headquarters and Service Battalion, 4th Service Support Group was also in attendance for the joint service class. Causey’s unit is preparing to perform the mortuary affairs function for the Marine Corps.

“What this course has done for me is to help me understand where the doctrine for mortuary affairs came from because the Army basically created the doctrine,” said Causey.

“Now when I go back to my command to create our doctrine I will be able to closely mirror the Army so that we can be on the same page whether in country or out,” said Causey.

Although mortuary affairs is an unpleasant part of war, training like this course prepares Soldiers to handle the final needs of a fallen comrade and their families with the best possible care they deserve.

# Armor of life

## Maintenance company assists civilian contractors with armor plating their vehicles

**By 2nd. Lt. Clay Whitman  
659th Maintenance Company**

KUWAIT-The Logistics Task Force 264th (Airborne) answered America's call and deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. LTF 264, also a 1st Corps Support Command corps support battalion, spent almost a month in Kuwait preparing for the convoy that would bring them to their final destination, the Camp Victory Annex, Baghdad, Iraq.

There are many threats facing our service men and women include improvised explosive devices (IEDs), rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), and small arms fire during convoys. The Army's response was to "up-armor" its vehicles.

Up-Armoring, or hardening, means to literally bolt on or weld armor plates to the doors and other vulnerable area on the vehicles.

To accomplish this, the Army hired a civilian company to professionally install armor on its vehicles both in Kuwait and Iraq. The contractors used steel specifically hardened to stop small arms fire. Soldiers from LTF 264 also assisted with the up-armor, which included adding bulletproof glass.

Along with the installation, the civilian company provided training on installing the armor plating and installing and repairing vehicle air conditioning systems.

For vehicles that did not have the bolt on armor professionally

installed, the 659th Maintenance Company welded armor on to the vehicles that were to travel across the border into Iraq.

The 659th Maintenance Company cut the steel to fit into the doors of the Light Medium Tactical Vehicle (LMTV) trucks. The welders made a template of the inside of the LMTV and used it to cut each door to the proper specifications.

"Although the steel does not cut well, it is easy to attach to vehicles and other areas that need additional protection from small arms fire," said Pfc. Gregory Dow, Welder, 659th Maintenance Company.

In order to place the plating inside the window frame, the maintenance company removed the glass from the inside of the doors. This method was used to harden the door and to provide protection for the driver as well as the assistant driver.

The company's Service and Evacuation section began acquiring and welding the metal to the outer portions of the LTF vehicles.

After initially working during the day, the company's welders found that it would be more practical to weld and cut at night.

This was due to the soaring temperature of 120 degrees during the daytime. As a result, they began to work on the vehicles after sundown, which meant that they would start work around 6 p.m. and end work early next morning.

After two weeks of working on the vehicles, the task was finally completed. The units began their travel to the north.

In many cases, such as small arms exchanges, the up-armor helped to protect Soldiers by absorbing or deflecting the round. In other situations, the up-armor also assisted protection from IEDs by catching or deflecting shrapnel, which could cause harm to Soldiers inside the vehicle.

Overall, the up-armor process saves lives. This, in turn, gives the Soldiers more confidence in their equipment. They also understood that it would work and that their commanders have their safety and welfare in mind.

"It is very satisfying after seeing the finished product on the vehicles," said Warrant Officer David Cheshire, Service & Evacuation Section Shop Tech, 659th Maintenance Company.



A HMMWV after being up-armored with armor plating by members of the 659th Maintenance Company in Kuwait Aug. 12. Photo by unknown.

# The Family Readiness Group

LIFESTYLES

By Capt. Sonise Lumbaca  
1st COSCOM PAO

When Soldiers are scheduled to deploy, there are many considerations that have to be taken into account. One of the biggest things is ensuring that their family members have access to the variety of the program made available to assist them with medical, financial, and other quality of life concerns. Ensuring that these concerns are addressed helps the Soldier and his or her family become "combat ready".

According to the Army Community Service web site, a Family Readiness Group is, "An organization of family members, volunteers, and Soldiers belonging to a unit that together provide an avenue

of mutual support, assistance, and a network of communication among the family members, the chain of command, and community resources."

A deploying command is serious business and ensuring that families have a resource to reach out to while their loved ones are deployed is next to none.

1st Corps Support Command has taken this program and put a friendly face on it. April Thornal is the FRG coordinator for the 1st COSCOM.

Her office is located next to the 1st COSCOM Army Community Service satellite office at the retention center at the corner of Gruber Road and Logistics Street.

There are a number of things that the FRG can do for the family of service members. FRGs can reduce social isolation among spouses and family members, especially for those who are new to the area. Being a part of the group can give a family member



a feeling of belonging, self-reliance (while their service member is away), and self esteem. Family includes spouses, parents of the service members, children and those who are dependent on the service member.

The group also has the capability to give family members contact information to help resolve problems that they may be having or provide a point of contact with personalized support depending on the situation.

The command tries to encourage every spouse to become an active member of the FRG so that they may receive help should they need it, or help

those that may require their assistance. In participating in the FRG, members can gain knowledge from experience of those who are avid participants in the FRG.

Thornal is the bridge to units and their family readiness groups.

She had the capability to help units and FRGs plan functions and events. She also can help units with getting families energized about joining.

The best thing to gain from being a member of the group is the fun a family member can have with the many activities and events normally scheduled by the groups.

There are also many internet sites that family members can go to in order to obtain information about

the agencies that are available for them. These sites include information on TRICARE, Army Emergency Relief and American Red Cross, to name a few.

While deployed to Iraq, the 1st COSCOM FRG will have a monthly newsletter and a website where family members will receive up to date information on their deployed service member. Other services that the command plans to have in operation is a monthly video teleconferencing where family will have the opportunity to see and talk to their loved ones.

The 1st COSCOM FRG coordinator can be reached at 396-6198.

# Chaplain's Corner

## Biblical Prescription For Success



**CH (Lt. Col.) Timothy A. Lance,  
Assistant Chaplain, 1st COSCOM**

As the day quickly approaches for the COSCOM to deploy, I would like to give you the prescription for success according to the Bible.

In the book of Joshua chapter 1, verses 5 through 8, (New Living Translation) the Bible declares: “5 No one will be able to stand their ground against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you. 6 ”Be strong and courageous, for you will lead my people to possess all the land I swore to give their ancestors. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Obey all the laws Moses gave you. Do not turn away from them, and you will be successful in everything you do. 8 Study this Book of the Law continually. Meditate on it day and night so you may be sure to obey all that is written in it. Only then will you succeed. 9 I command you—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

This passage of scripture clearly reveals that the key to success in all that we do rest with our obedience to the word of God. The

Lord God declares that He will never leave us, nor forsake us. His love for us is unconditional. However, He has commanded us to be obedient to His word. Throughout the Word of God there is a call for obedience. God desires our obedience more than our tithe and offerings. For he declares in 1 Samuel 15:22-23, “What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Obedience is far better than sacrifice. Listening to him is much better than offering the fat of rams. 23 Rebellion is as bad as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as bad as worshiping idols.”

Let this thought rest in your hearts and your mind as you travel to far away places. There is no substitute for obedience to God. Obedience secures the presences and protection of God, and unlocks the door to success. Through obedience we become “more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37). In addition to that, the Word declares in Isaiah 54:17 (NLT); “no weapon turned against you will succeed.”

To the soldiers of the mighty 1<sup>st</sup> COSCOM, I encourage each of you to take the Word of God with you. Meditate on His word each and every day. Never let it depart from you. In the midst of trying situations, stand firm on the Word. Keep your faith in the Almighty God who, “By his mighty power at work within us, is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.” Ephesians 3:20 (NLT)

## From the Mule's Mouth Down Range

What do you most like about  
living/ working in Iraq?



“I like the environment. People are nice and everything I need is here (Internet, phone, etc).”

-Pvt. Jennifer Seeman, 259th Field  
Service Company



“Our laundry returns items in two days and the 24 hour Internet Café helps us keep in touch with families for free.”

-Pfc. Clayton Kloehn, HHD, 264th  
Corps Supprt Battalion



“I like the fact that we live in a building with air conditioning and we actually have showers and toilets that flush. It's much better than what I experienced when I came out here last year.”

-Spc. Simone Watson, HHD, 264th  
Corps Supprt Battalion

# BlackJack dining facility serves it up multicultural style

By Spc. Mary R. Xenikakis, HHC, 1st COSCOM

The 1st Corps Support Command's Blackjack Dining Facility has more to offer than the typical food a Soldier may find at other dining facilities throughout the Army. The Blackjack cooks offer multicultural food in a relaxing environment.

Blackjack cooks take pride in being able to serve a variety of cultural dishes. They stir up meals ranging from Italian to Mongolian. Occasionally, they will dedicate a day to a special

event, like September's Hispanic Heritage Month. September 30, they will present displays of the



**A Soldier from the 44th Medical Brigade samples a dessert from the Hispanic cultural menu at the 1st COSCOM BlackJack dining facility. The DFAC prepared an array of dishes September 2004.**

Hispanic culture and offer authentic dishes.

"We get a great response from our patrons," said Spc. Tamarajones, Blackjack DFAC food service specialist. "I think they enjoy knowing what they're going to get each week."

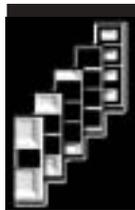
Tuesdays and Thursdays are the busiest days, Jones said. "My

favorite day is Tuesday. We serve soul food that day. Food like barbecue ribs, macaroni and cheese, collard greens, southern fried catfish and much more."

The Blackjack Dining Facility is the only DFAC on the 1st COSCOM side of post, but just because it is the only one doesn't mean that it isn't the best. The Blackjack DFAC has become one of the best in the Army. "Other dining facilities from around Fort Bragg visit Blackjack DFAC to compare what they're doing to what we're doing," said Sgt. 1st Class Clara Gloeckler, Blackjack DFAC administration non-commissioned officer.

She said they also get many Soldiers from outside the 1st COSCOM area, because of all of the options they can choose from including their multinational menu. "We offer fresh baked bread, pasta bar, potato bar, taco

**See Multicultural, page 21**



## Warrant Officers' Corner

by Chief Warrant Officer  
**Joseph L. Jimenez**  
G3 Air, HHC, 1st COSCOM

As the Soldiers of the 1st Corps Support Command prepare for deployment to Iraq, they are participating in mandatory training, convoy live-fire exercises, ranges, and combat life saver courses just to name a few.

There is an additional training requirement that a select group of deploying Soldiers will attend. A pre-deployment airborne operation. Airborne Soldiers of the 1st COSCOM will make one last parachute jump prior to leaving.

The purpose of the jump prior to deploying is to get all deploying paratroopers jumped ahead, so while

deployed they continue to receive hazardous duty incentive pay (jump pay).

The Department of Defense Pay and Allowances Entitlement Manual governs hazardous duty pay. To receive hazardous pay, Soldiers must perform the duty in a three-month period. Military operations, combat operations in a hostile fire are, or absences of jump equipment are the only reasons for not complying with these requirements. Minimum jump requirements may be waived by the member's commanding officer.

The XVIII Airborne Corps has released a memorandum, dated January 2004, which covers soldiers deployed for combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Upon returning from deployment, paratroopers must attend Basic Airborne Refresher (BAR) and perform one jump within three months to maintain parachute pay.

# 1st COSCOM Soldiers give from the heart

*Annual Toy Run provides gifts to less fortunate children*

Photo and story by Capt. Sonise Lumbaca  
1st COSCOM PAO

When one thinks of Santa, the image of a jolly man wearing a red and white suit with rosy cheeks, spectacles and long white whiskers comes to mind. The image of a man in a sleigh delivering toys to thousands of children, to include the less fortunate, also comes to mind.

For three community-based organizations, this year's Santa comes in a set of battle dress uniforms and shiny combat boots.

Soldiers from the 1st Corps Support Command held their annual four mile Toy Run October 1 in the 1st COSCOM area in order to collect and donate toys to local charities.

Prior to the run, which began on Seay Field, Soldiers turned in an array of toys at a turn in point. The donation resulted in hundreds of toys including bicycles, dolls, action figures, stuffed animals and more.

"I want to thank all of the soldiers for bringing so many toys. (The Soldiers) brought us about six



Lt. Col. Timothy Lance (left), assistant chaplain, 1st COSCOM, and Elmo McKenzie, director, Operation Blessing of Fayetteville, at the annual 1st COSCOM Toy Run held October 1, at Seay Field. Operation Blessing of Fayetteville is one of the charities that the 1st COSCOM donated their toys to.



**1st COSCOM Soldiers donated hundreds of toys, covering six pallets, during their annual toy run October 1. Dolls, bicycles, games, and stuffed animal were just some of the many toys given to the charities.**

pallets worth of toys and as usual the 1st COSCOM Soldiers stood to the line and provided great things to deprived children," said Brig. Gen. Yves J. Fontaine, commanding general, 1st COSCOM.

Once collected, the toys were then donated to different charities and the Fort Bragg Yule Mart's Santa's Secret Workshop.

"This annual toy run was pretty good. I enjoyed it and giving toys. I felt bad that I couldn't give more," said Pfc. Amy L. Golden, cargo specialist, 403rd Transportation Company.

Upon completion of the run, six pallets worth of toys was distributed to three organizations, the Falcon's Children Home, Operation Blessing of Fayetteville, and Santa's Secret Workshop.

Operation Blessing is an international community outreach organization that operates within the United States and abroad. It is home based out of Virginia Beach, Va.

In 1984 a chapter was chartered into the Fayetteville community. Fayetteville operations also cover the southeastern portion of the United States.

*See Toys, page 22*

# Tough love makes Soldiers combat ready

Story and photo by Capt. Sonise Lumbaca  
1st COSCOM PAO

Having a successful pregnancy and producing a healthy child, and then getting back into shape and passing the Army Physical Fitness test is a significant hurdle for many female Soldiers to overcome after returning from convalescent leave.

When a Soldier discovers she is pregnant, she can no longer perform the same type of physical training as her fellow Soldiers. The same holds true for a short period of time after delivering the child. Potential problems for women continue due to persistent musculo-skeletal and cardiovascular changes due the growth of the baby within the womb and the repositioning of organs to accommodate the unborn child.

There are many things to consider when working with Soldiers who have recently given birth, especially if these Soldiers are “new moms”.

The XVIII Airborne Corps’ postpartum PT program is in place not only to guide expectant and new mothers through a safe workout but also to keep them educated.



**Postpartum Soldiers from various Fort Bragg units conduct a burn-out session at Dal Gym October 6 at 6:30 a.m. A burn-out session requires soldiers to do push-ups and sit-ups until their muscles burn; this is followed by an isometric exercise that works the same muscles.**

“The postpartum PT is a great way for female Soldiers to get back into the APFT and height and weight standards,” said Capt. Michael Barton, nurse, Womack Army Medical Center Community Health Nursing.

“It also provides an atmosphere where all post-delivering Soldiers can get into shape, with others in the same position,” said Barton.

WAMC Community Health Nursing trains Soldiers to become PT instructors and ensures that they are conducting PT in a safe manner.

Sgt. 1st Class Ruby A. Murray, material management supervisor, Corps Distribution Command, 1st Corps Support Command, knows all too well the difficulties that these

female Soldiers have to endure during and after pregnancy.

“During unit runs, I would see Soldiers who returned from convalescent leave after giving birth, fall out of the runs. I would drop back with them to try to motivate them to keep up. I made it my personal goal to keep these Soldiers with the group,” said Murray.

Murray is the XVIII Airborne Corps’ Postpartum PT Instructor. Although

the program is operated in the 1st COSCOM area and by a 1st COSCOM Soldier, it is regulated out of WAMC.

Murray volunteered to be the instructor two years ago. The program has been around since 1994. Soldiers from all of the major commands on Fort Bragg attend her training sessions.

“I love coming here and being around other female Soldiers like me,” said Spc. Bobbie Evans, Corps Distribution Command, 1st COSCOM. “A lot of (female) Soldiers are struggling and going through a lot of the same things I went through like postpartum depression. I was going to get out of the Army, but then I came to the PT. Sergeant Murray and the PT

**See PT, page 22**

## Multicultural

from page 18

bar and ice cream along with many choices on the main line.”

One way they are able to keep their Soldiers coming back is through a counsel meeting, which is open to all Soldiers. This meeting allows Soldiers the ability to voice their opinion about what they enjoy or what they want to have improved. They hold this meeting every third Tuesday at 2:30 p.m. at the DFAC.

“We’re especially looking for input from meal card holders since they are the ones who eat at the facility the most,” said Gloeckler.

Jones also encouraged the idea of using the customer comment cards, which allow Soldiers who are not able to participate in the

counsel meeting to express their concerns or give ideas to better their dining experience.

The Blackjack dining facility management has been working with the Culinary Arts School here on Fort Bragg by sending at least two of their food service specialists to school for further training each month.

“All of the cooks work collectively to make the Blackjack DFAC the best Department of the Army dining facility in the South Eastern region,” Gloeckler said. Thursdays, which they call Blackjack Days, they serve gourmet dishes that are professionally displayed to prepare them for the Connelly Award competition, which will

take place October 7. This day the Soldiers get to display their talents, Gloeckler said.

The Connelly Award competition next month will determine if 1st COSCOM’s Blackjack cooks are the best in the Army. The Blackjack DFAC will be competing against three other regions for the title.

“The Soldiers are doing a wonderful job,” said Sgt. Maj. Rodney Price, U.S. Army Food Service. “The Blackjack DFAC has made a significant improvement since last year.”

The cooks of Blackjack have proven that they can make dining enjoyable for their comrades through a relaxing environment and multicultural food with many options to choose from.

## Airborne

from page 8

“It’s a great way to recognize the unique nature of the ministry in the airborne community,” said Reese.

The day was also celebrated with refreshments and free food for all. The 82nd Airborne Division UMT handled this part of the celebration.

“We had a catered picnic lunch with hamburgers, hot dogs, ribs, potato salad, macaroni salad, cole slaw, potato chips, drinks and slushies,” said Ahl. “We also had a birthday cake for the Chaplains Corps. It was cut by the youngest chaplains assistant (on the drop zone), Pvt. Bradley Porter, 82nd Division Artillery and the oldest Chaplain Col. Gustaf Steinhilber, Headquarters and Headquarters,

Company United States Army Garrison.

“We are the XVIII Airborne Corps. What better way to celebrate the 229th Chaplains Corps anniversary than with a jump that is non-stressful and fun,” Ahl said.

“I think it (the day) was a resounding success,” Reese said. “Sgt. 1st Class Davis and I were especially pleased to have so many junior enlisted soldiers and NCOs participate in this one-of-a-kind event.”

“We couldn’t have pulled this off without the tremendous cooperation of the units across 1st COSCOM, from the rigger companies to the transportation folks with the refrigerator van for the drinks,” said Reese.



Col. Charles D. Reese, 1st COSCOM chaplain looks out the doorway of a Casa 210 aircraft to locate his ground reference points prior to sending paratroopers out of the aircraft during the July 21 “chaplains’ jump” onto Sicily Drop Zone. Photo by Spc. Timothy Hettich, 1st COSCOM PAO

“We enjoy the continued sponsorship and partnership from the Fort Bragg community. I know that deployments are ongoing as I speak and we are here to serve and take care of those families any way we can. I know that Army takes care of its own, but we are there to stand in the gaps”, said Elmo McKenzie, director of Operation Blessing of Fayetteville Incorporated.

The Falcon Children’s Home, a second charity that received donations from 1st COSCOM, offers stability, consistency and the opportunity for children needing care over a period of six months or more.

“It is a local charity, and that was one of the things we wanted to do, was to not only support the Yule Mart but also the balance to go to the local community; to benefit not only some of the Soldiers that live out in the civilian community but some of the other citizens of Fayetteville. So it is really a great program,” said Col. Charles D. Reese, 1st COSCOM Chaplain.

The donations from the 1st COSCOM didn’t end there. Each year, Fort Bragg hosts its Annual Yule Mart.

During the Yule Mart, there is a separate Santa’s Secret Workshop where children up to the age of 10 can come in and go shopping. For a small amount of money, children can purchase items for their families and have them wrapped as a surprise on Christmas morning, said Deborah Kalisz-Wehr, a co-chair for the Santa Secret Workshop.

“The Santa Secret Workshop is a tremendous opportunity for us to do fundraising for the entire Fort Bragg Community. We receive donations from units on post like 1st COSCOM with fabulous toy donations,” said Kalisz-Wehr.

Thanks to the generosity of Soldiers from the 1st COSCOM, some less fortunate children will have toys in their stockings and under their trees this winter.

“The run was a good thing and the whole reason behind it was great. It is great for us to give something back to the community to the kids that are less fortunate,” said Sgt. 1st Class Samuel C. Grant, India Company, 4/159th Aviation Regiment.

motivated me to stay in,” said Evans.

Evans completed postpartum PT August 26. She said that the motivation that the program brought her caused her to return to the program as an instructor.

“I wanted to let other Soldiers in the same situation as me know that they have a lot to give to the Army. Postpartum PT helps motivate them mentally and physically. Sergeant Murray can also look at a Soldiers and tell if there is “more going on” with the Soldier who may need help,” said Evans.

Spc. Joy Tringo, HHD, 264th Support Battalion, 1st Corps Support Command, delivered her baby four months ago and has been in the program for two months.

Tringo and many of the other Soldiers in the program took their first APFT since delivering their babies October 4. The Soldier are given diagnostic and record PT tests while in the program to measure how far they have come.

“I ran it in 15:36 which is the max. This was a diagnostic which was okay, but I would like to get back to my score of 295,” said Tringo. The score for maxing the APFT in all categories is 300.

“Sergeant Murray really pushes despite the fact we have just had babies. I see no difference in the PT that we do compared to my unit. We work just as hard. The difference is we are all female who are going through the same things and she takes her time with each of us,” said Spc. Rosemary Hernandez, 3-4, Air Defense Artillery Regiment.

Three hundred and ninety six Soldiers have come through the program and have passed the APFT, 15 scoring 300 on their test, since Murray has been the instructor. Fifteen of the Soldiers ran the Army Ten Miler. Murray attributes these successes to individual motivation and helping the Soldiers feel that they belong.

“Our motto is ‘tough love’ to get Soldiers combat ready,” said Murray.

XVIII Airborne Corps Postpartum PT runs from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. and occurs five days a week at Dahl gym located on Logistics Street.



### by Fort Bragg Liaison Office Newsletter

United Service Organizations has distributed more than 300,000 Operation USO Care Packages to troops since the program began in September 2002, USO officials announced recently.

Initiated by the USO of Metropolitan Washington, Operation USO Care Package is a way for the American people to show their support for service members, officials said, and is endorsed by the Defense Department.

The packages include items specifically requested by military personnel serving in Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, such as prepaid international call cards, disposable cameras, toiletries, snacks and playing cards.

“The tremendous success of Operation USO Care Package is a true testament to the support USO volunteers and the American

people provide for our men and women deployed in the war against terrorism,” said Edward A. Powell, president and chief executive officer of USO World Headquarters.

“This is but one example of the bridge the USO provides to individuals and corporations to reach out to and show their support for military personnel.”

Expanding its outreach to troops, the USO opened a center in Kuwait last December, and recently opened centers in Qatar and in Vicenza, Italy. The Qatar center offers troops a 96-hour pass through the Rest and Recuperation program, where they can take a break and enjoy cultural and sporting activities.

Another special program for deploying troops is USO Operation Phone Home. Donations to this program help the USO purchase prepaid, international calling cards for

service members, including those stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

To help boost troop morale, the USO also increases the number of celebrity entertainment tours over the last few years. These included numerous tours to Iraq, Afghanistan and other locations in the Persian Gulf region, as well as stateside “welcome home” celebrations for returning troops, USO officials noted.

To support these special programs and other services the USO provides to military personnel and their families, people can call 1-800-USO-7469 toll free or go to the USO World Headquarters web site. People also can contact local USO centers, USO officials added, to volunteer their time and services or to make monetary contributions. Locations and web links can be found on the USO headquarters site—[www.uso.org](http://www.uso.org).

## ***Free packing material for deployed service members***

The United States Postal Service (USPS) is offering **free** packing materials to spouses, families and friends of military members deployed overseas. To take advantage of this service call 800-610-8734 (press 1 for English or 2 for Spanish and then 3 to speak to an operator). The USPS will send you free boxes, packing materials, tape and mailing labels. These products

are to be used to mail care packages to deployed service members. For additional information on mailing packages overseas, visit the USPS “Supporting our Troops Frequently Asked Questions” webpage at <http://www.usps.com/supportingourtroops/supportingfaqs.htm>



