



DISPATCH

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Movie Armory established for Soldier Morale

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FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq – Finding avenues for entertainment between missions can become quite a challenge for Soldiers deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom 3. The MWR Movie Armory provides that entertainment by allowing Soldiers the means to borrow movies.

For Soldiers like Spc. Yvonne P. Paden, medical specialist, Company E, Main Support Battalion, 42nd Infantry Division, the simple act of watching a movie in her room means more to her than watching Hollywood's latest box office hit at a stateside theater.

"For me, watching a movie during my personal off-duty time is an escape, providing me peace of mind," Paden said.

A few Soldiers said a lot of people share the same view.

"Movies are one of the only way to escape the everyday monotony of being deployed," said 1st Lt. Tom A. Kenniff, legal assistance attorney, Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 42nd ID. "With a movie, I can spend a couple of hours relaxing and escaping."

Recognizing the need for an escape other than the usual evening at the gym, library or Internet café, Air Force Tech. Sgt. Kevin Johnson, Alaska Air National Guard, sought out a solution to this dilemma.

He noticed the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center offered a television and DVD player for viewing entertainment.

"The Army provided the equipment but didn't provide the movies," Johnson said.

At the time, television programming was full of news reports of the war in Iraq and MWR only had a small selection of movies to choose from.

"These movies were for Kellogg, Brown and Root employee usage. Troops couldn't borrow them," Johnson said. "So, that was another

reason for the Movie Armory."

It was this observation that got Johnson's wheels turning, said Kara Luginbill, MWR technician and Movie Armory supervisor, FOB Speicher.

What could he do to lift the spirits of his fellow service members to make their off-time more enjoyable?

While Johnson was stationed at FOB Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq, in September 2004, he corresponded with Veterans of Foreign Wars posts and Girl Scout councils back in the United States requesting DVDs and CDs.

"I emailed the VFW and Girl Scouts in June and the packages started to arrive in August," Johnson said.

In no time at all, more and more people became directly involved.

From this the FOB Speicher Movie Armory was born.

Over a 14-month span, the Armory has grown from 300 to 700 DVDs, Luginbill said. "All duplicate donations are distributed to other FOBs in Iraq."

"It has grown quite a bit since I first joined (the Movie Armory)," Kenniff said. "They have a lot of old classics as well as new releases."

Even though Johnson is no longer in Iraq, his heart still is. Through a Web site (www.dvds4troops.org) he created, anyone can obtain information on how they can get involved.

In his absence, Luginbill runs the Armory while Johnson keeps the movies coming all the way from Alaska.

The mission of the Armory is to provide movies for checkout for no cost to those participating.

"This is really convenient," Paden said. "I come here everyday and get a new movie. This also saves me money, instead of having to spend \$20 every time I want to watch a movie."

The program is pretty simple, Luginbill said.

Movies are sent to Johnson in Alaska. There he boxes them up and takes them to local schools where kids decorate them prior to shipment

to Iraq.

Once Luginbill gets the movies, she catalogs them in the computer so troops can begin checking them out.

Before service members can sign out a DVD, they have to fill out a media release form, which is put on file.

Release forms contain Soldier information which allows Luginbill to contact participants that have movies past the two-day lending period.

"On a whole, everyone has been very good about getting the movies back on time," she said. "They know

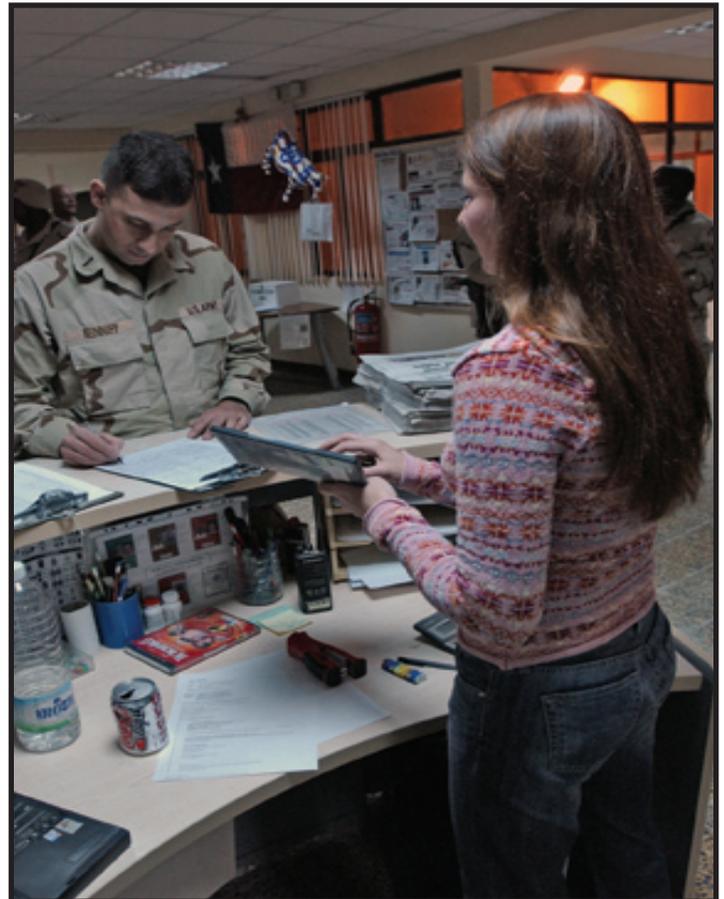
that other troops want to see them too."

When asked how many DVDs she gets a week, she replied, "Just the other day, we input an additional 73 movies into the Armory."

Luginbill feels DVDs For Troops has raised morale and the quality of off-time.

"The troops just love the support they are getting from the folks back home. They are so enthusiastic about the program, they have been donating movies too," Luginbill said.

Currently, Johnson has nine boxes of DVDs on the way.



1st Lt. Tom A. Kenniff, legal assistance attorney, Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 42nd Infantry Division, signs out a DVD at the Movie Armory from Kara Luginbill, MWR technician and Movie Armory supervisor, at FOB Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq.

Civil Affairs Soldiers assist in the reconstruction of Iraqi office facilities



1st Lt. Doug Maritato of Rockway, N.J., Task Force 3-69, gives money to the manager of the Meteorological Center in Samarra, Iraq, for repairing the locks in the Center.

Sgt. Blake Kent
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE BRASSFIELD-MORA, SAMARRA, Iraq – The four-man civil affairs team from Forward Operating Base Brassfield-Mora patrols the city of Samarra and the surrounding villages, aiding in the

reconstruction of Iraqi public utilities and offices.

“The overall intent of our mission is to disengage the military by getting the Iraqi government and people back on their feet,” said Capt. Rod McCauley of Niantic, Conn., 411th Civil Affairs Battalion. “The biggest thing we are doing is aiding in the transition from military control to civilian control.”

The team oversees projects in Samarra, Al Huwaish, Al Qalaa, Al Somon and Al Ereqqa and has 41 projects currently in progress and another 45 that are already pending approval.

There has been roughly \$24 million put into projects in and around the Samarra area over the past six months, said 1st Lt. Doug Maritato of Rockway, N.J., projects officer, 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor.

A normal patrol for the team consists of many stops, both visiting projects already in progress, other offices to see what supplies they need, and even more stops to scout out locations for new projects.

“We try and find out what kinds of things the people need to operate and then the next time we make patrols we try and bring it to them or provide them the money to get the materials on the local economy,” Maritato said.

The team is able to help the government offices acquire small items, such as security locks and office materials, to larger project items, such as building repairs and vehicles.

One project, the Samarra Fire Station, is in need of fire-fighting equipment and more fire trucks.

“The station serves more than 200,000 people with only one working fire truck,” McCauley said. “They are definitely going to need some help.”

The civil affairs team is already working on getting the station breathing equipment, suits, axes and other needed tools.

The team makes trips into the city on a weekly basis, often taking fire from anti-Iraqi Forces, but the Soldiers have yet to be deterred from their mission.

New communications system advances signal abilities, reduces manpower

Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DAGGER, Tikrit, Iraq - The Army has revolutionized the efficiency of their communication abilities with a new system which is cutting down on the amount of Soldiers needed.

The 1st of the 3rd Brigade Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Liberty, is the first to employ the joint network node communication system in a combat zone.

The JNN system can perform communication operations at a much greater pace than the former system used by the Army. It does this through the use of commercial satellite systems.

“The JNN is a commercial network that we use for tactical purposes,” said Spc. Danny Ferguson, a JNN systems operator for the battalion. “We use commercial satellites to bring in and send out communications to all brigade elements.”

Soldiers work less and can produce more with the JNN. This can be done through the amount of data the Soldiers who work with the JNN can transmit and receive, Ferguson said.

“The biggest benefit is the high increase of data we can receive and transmit to and from multiple subscribers,” Ferguson said. “The old (mobile subscriber equipment) could only pull

in one megabyte of bandwidth. A bandwidth is power behind the push of a signal to a specific source. The new JNN system has the capability of eight megabytes. That’s obviously much more power.”

Since the JNN is a brand new system, it still has the ability to communicate with the old MSE system until everyone gets one, Ferguson said.

The JNN not only enhances the quality and quantity of 1st BCT’s communication abilities, it also can be maintained with a fraction of the manpower.

“You get more services with less equipment to maintain,” said Capt. Kathleen Cage, Company A, 1-3 BTB commander. “The holistic benefits are that it takes much fewer Soldiers to operate the new system than the old node center we had before.”

The old node center was operated by more than 20 Soldiers, Cage said.

“If you look at the bigger picture, the company and the brigade have fewer Soldiers to support logistically with the use of the JNN system,” Cage said. “The company as a whole is streamlined by using the JNN instead of the node center.”

“This is the first JNN in the theater of operations in a combat zone,” she said. “I think it is very cool for our Soldiers to be able to say that.”

Since 1/3 BTB is the first unit to use the JNN

in theater, there were a lot of kinks to work out before the unit was ready to take the system with them to Iraq. With the help of civilians who were familiar with JNN, 1/3 BTB became proficient and confident in their ability to use the system.

“It took a lot of civilian help back in garrison to get our Soldiers up to speed on the JNN,” Cage said. “We got most of the bugs worked out, and we are pulling in a strong signal now. It will just take time to get used to operating it.”

One of the greatest benefits of the JNN is that it is less terrain dependent.

“Leaders who want to have the ability to place their units in certain positions won’t have to worry about getting to a certain spot on the terrain to communicate with their command elements,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Michael Rivera, 1st BCT network technician. “The reason this is possible is because communications are satellite based instead of depending on line of sight communication.”

“The way things worked before JNN, each unit out in the field was locked into a certain block of satellite capacity, whether or not they were using it,” said Brian Hupp, a JNN field support representative. “With the new system, all the units are locked into the same hub. This sends all signals back to a central location, giving them communications abilities on demand.”