



Iraqi soldiers from the 1st Motorized Transportation Regiment wave to onlookers as their unit returns to Camp Taji from a supply mission March 23. The mission was the unit's first operation executed independently from coalition forces. *Photo illustration by Sgt. Joshua Salmons*

Iraqi unit makes declaration of independence

Taji motorized truck regiment plans, completes mission without coalition support

By Sgt. Joshua Salmons
4TH SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE

Like parents waiting for their children to return from the first day of school, members of the Military Transition Team (MiTT) assigned to work with the Iraqi 1st Motorized Truck Regiment waved and cheered as their protégés returned from a supply-delivery mission to the 6th Iraqi army division March 23.

But not just any mission; this venture

marked the first time the Iraqi unit operated independently from the 4th Sustainment Brigade, its American de facto higher headquarters.

"We're very proud of them," said Maj. Earl Mack, team chief, 1st MTR MiTT, assigned to the brigade. "They trained hard. They were so excited, I don't even know if they slept last night."

"I am really proud about my unit's progress and, at the same time, I feel happy,"

said Iraqi Col. E'ad, commander of the 1st MTR, speaking through an interpreter. "My mission is so that my people and I can do this more in the future."

"There was very minimal U.S. input," said Capt. Anthony DeStefano, MiTT liaison officer with the brigade's Special Troops Battalion, speaking of the mission. "They did the route selection and planning, determined their start-point time, and coordinated for a

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Call center allows Soldiers freedom to hear from loved ones

By Sgt. 1st Class Guadalupe Stratman
4TH SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE

Thanks to the Freedom Calls Foundation that sponsors the Freedom Call Centers at Taji and two other locations, every day hundreds of Soldiers get to call their families, e-mail or talk to them through a video teleconferencing system (VTC) for free.

The call center at Taji has been around for two and a half years and is sponsored by companies and organizations who donate money to support Soldiers keeping in touch with their families, said Staff Sgt. Lisa Hamm, an information systems operator analyst with the Combat Service Support Automation Management Office, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Sustainment Brigade. Hamm and a fellow NCO manage the building, troubleshoot the equipment and schedule the VTCs.

"It is a morale booster," said Pvt. Chase Bouton, a petroleum-supply specialist with Company A, 4th Forward Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Division. "You can come in and you don't have to spend \$35 on a phone card. They got time limits, but as soon as you are done, you can sign up again and get back on the phone."

The Taji center has 14 phones and 26 computers and is open 24 hours a day, unless there is a communications blackout, said Hamm. There is a 30-minute limit on the phone or computer usage, but they allow Soldiers to stay on the equipment if there is no one waiting in line behind them. The center is also capable of running three VTCs simultaneously, but they have to close down the phones and computers



Soldiers use the Internet at Camp Taji's Freedom Call Center March 9.
Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux

for the duration of the transmission because they share bandwidth with two other Freedom Call Center sites at Al-Asad and Fallujah.

"The VTC is a 100 percent morale booster," said Sgt. 1st Class Perry Reed, an operations NCO with the STB. "It keeps me informed of what's going on back home. It takes me away from Iraq for a minute or two."

The center is able to connect to five off-post locations in the Fort Hood area and over 5,000 off-post sites all around the United States, Hamm said. Soldiers or units may schedule the VTC for special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries or weddings, but they need to allow a couple of weeks for coordination.

Reed has been away from home several times during his military career, but this is the first time he got to use the VTC for morale purposes. "She progressively gets to monitor my weight loss," he said, referring to how his wife gets to see a crystal clear image of him as they talk to each other.

Hamm enjoys her job assisting Soldiers getting in touch with their loved ones. "The most touching VTC was the one we had recently," she said. "It was a lower-enlisted Soldier and he was able to be there for his wife's ultrasound, to find out what he sex of the baby was."

The center averages about 700-800 users a day. "There is always a little more phone usage than computer," Hamm said.

"We are definitely being supported through this by the American public," Reed said. "That gives a reason to fight and win, knowing that we are being supported by citizens back home."

The WRANGLER

"The Wrangler" is authorized for publication by the 4th Sustainment Brigade for any interested personnel. The contents of "The Wrangler" are unofficial and are not to be considered the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, including the Department of Defense or Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"The Wrangler" is an Army-funded newspaper in accordance with Army Regulation 360-1.

"The Wrangler" is published twice a month by the 4th Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs Office.

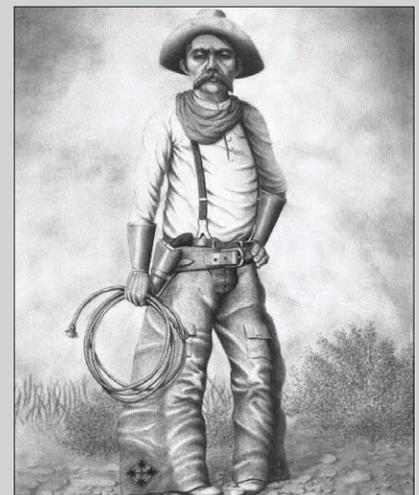
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Spc. Daniel Bennett works on a lens Mar. 11 at the Taji Optometry Clinic which will be fitted into an insert used with safety glasses. Bennett is an optical laboratory specialist with HHC, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Sustainment Brigade. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux.*

STB techs have eyes on customers' vision needs

By Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux
207TH MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT

While Soldiers may have to wait weeks to get a prescription made stateside, the staff of the Optometry Clinic on Camp Taji can fulfill a prescription on the spot in as little as 20 minutes.

Cutting eyeglasses, however, is not the only service the 4th Sustainment Brigade clinic offers.

"The clinic provides all eye services," said Sgt. Michael Kingsbury, an eye specialist from Special Troops Battalion, 4th Sustainment Brigade. "We do full eye exams, long and short flight physicals for pilots, driver's license exams and of course we treat any eye injuries Soldiers sustain while in Iraq."

Their patients come from not only Camp Taji, but also surrounding forward operating

bases, riding in on combat logistics patrols or helicopters to receive care.

The clinic sees between 100-125 patients a week, said Capt. Evelyn Reyes-Cabrera, chief of optometry for the brigade.

Since the clinic's Christmas Eve opening, the clinic has seen almost 1,300 patients. In addition to their Taji operations, the clinic also sends a team to Baghdad once a month to provide support for the 10th Combat Support Hospital, Kingsbury explained.

"I think we have one of the best crews anywhere within the United States Army," he said.

"These guys came to me from Advanced Individual Training (AIT) and we forged a great team here. We work together, we all look out for each other and we all work hard to get the mission accomplished."

Spc. Daniel Bennett, also from the brigade, is the only optical laboratory specialist in the clinic. On an average day he cut out

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After cutting a lens, Bennett grinds down the edges, ensuring smooth corners. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux*

Some Medical Advice



Old pest making new comeback

Bed bugs more irritating than infectious, but still require attention

Bed bugs usually feed at night when people are asleep. They normally bite around the face, neck, upper torso, arms, and hands, each feeding last between 3-15 minutes.

There are not any known cases of disease associated with bed bug bites although a colorless wheal or lump develops at the bite (in contrast, flea bites have reddish centers and occur mainly around the ankles).

Scratching the bites can lead to infection and you should seek medical attention if this happens.

You can prevent bed bug infestation by removing debris from around your building, repairing cracks in walls, and caulking windows and doors.

When you return from traveling it is possible to carry them with



Capt. Kara Escajeda
ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER

you in clothing or luggage.

Infested clothing, mattresses, and bedding can be sealed in black plastic bags and set outside for one day during the summer months in order to kill the eggs, nymphs, and adults.

If you suspect infestation, perform daily monitoring by setting out sticky tape at the foot of your bed and contact Preventive Medicine.

Consider covering your pillow and mattress with a plastic cover if you are unsure about their presence and wash your bed linens frequently (every 1-2 weeks).

Information obtained from the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine Website at:

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/ento>

CG shares stars with deserving 530th troops

By Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux
207TH MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT

SEITZ ANNEX, Iraq – Brig. Gen. Rebecca Halstead paid a visit to Logistical Task Force 530 March 23 and awarded several Bronze Star Medals and Meritorious Service Medals as the unit gets ready to redeploy.

The awards were given to Soldiers of the 77th Maintenance Company, the 227th Quartermaster Company as well as HHD, LTF 530 in three different ceremonies.

Halstead praised the Soldiers for their hard work and joked about not wearing the Desert Combat Uniform like all LTF 530 Soldiers wore. Having been in theater so long they were only issued the DCUs when they deployed.

As the awardees were called out, Spc. Archie Gadson was the only junior-enlisted receiving a Bronze Star.

Gadson is a parachute rigger with LTF 530. He has been in the Army only a little more than two and a half years and this was his first deployment.

“It really didn’t hit me yet how important

the Bronze Star is,” Gadson said. “It is a little weird; I am the only specialist to get it.”

“He is in a unique position,” said Maj. Kevin Upson, the executive officer of LTF 530. “He was one of the first Soldiers who received the training on the ASV (armored security vehicle) and then he trained Soldiers in the LTF. He was also assigned to Task Force Warrior, which was a rigger detachment that

worked at Balad, providing aircraft support. He is an outstanding person.”

Upson went on to complement all of his troops. He said it is the Soldiers what he will most remember from his deployment.

“My Soldiers did an outstanding and unmatched job on this deployment,” he said. “Of course we are airborne out of Bragg, so that make all the difference in the world.”



Spc. Archie Gadson receives a Bronze Star from 3rd COSCOM Commander Brig. Gen. Rebecca Halstead in an awards ceremony Mar. 23 on Seitz Annex. Gadson is a parachute rigger with Logistical Task Force 530.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux



A Soldier from Battery C participates in the Containerized Handling Unit event during the 2-5 Field Artillery Truck Rodeo Feb. 24 on Logistical Base Seitz. The rodeo involved five events using the Palletized Load System. **Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Merrill Wilson**

Ye'haw! *Unit 'Truck Rodeo' helps hone Soldiers driving skills, gives chance to find best battalion driver*

By 2nd Lt. Timothy Culpepper
C 2-5 FIELD ARTILLERY, 18TH CSB

LOGISTICAL BASE SEITZ – Anticipation filled the air prior to the start of Battery C, 2nd Battalion of the 5th Field Artillery Regiment's first Truck Rodeo.

The event kicked off on Feb. 25 near Logistical Base Seitz and included five events. These events tested the skills and knowledge of crews pertaining to the M1075P1 Palletized Load System (PLS). Both driver and the truck commander (TC) were required to conduct each event independently, with the exception of the Containerized Handling Unit (CHU) event.

Each platoon selected three crews or teams, for a total of 12 teams. These teams represented the best of Battery C and were selected from smaller platoon-level trials held prior to the rodeo.

The first event in the rodeo was the Serpentine. The Serpentine is a series of three barrels that the driver must weave between. Drivers were

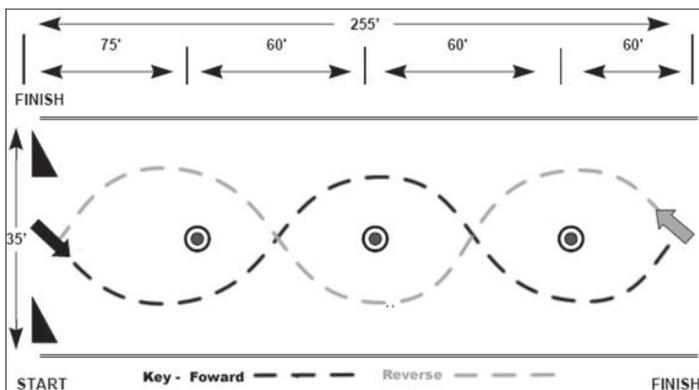
not allowed to leave the designated lane marked off at the corners using cones. Drivers whose vehicles edged the lane were penalized points on their score sheets. Once the driver reached the end of the lane they then had to weave the vehicle in reverse.

The Offset Alley marked the second event of the rodeo. Offset Alley proved to be a daunting challenge as drivers attempted to maneuver the PLS into an offset 45-degree turn. The span of the turn is equal to length of the vehicle. The width of the lane was only six inches wider than the PLS on either side.

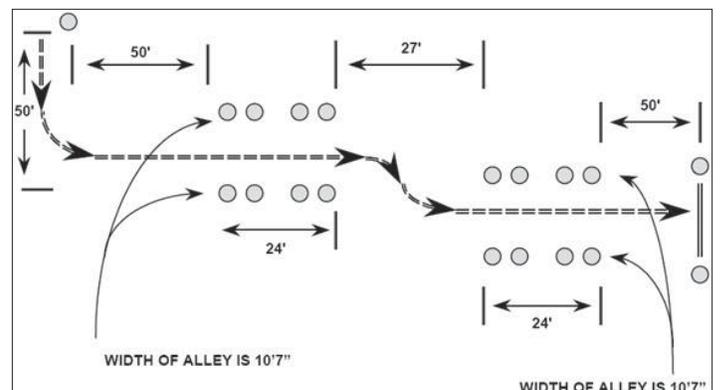
The third event of the rodeo consisted of a diminishing lane. The lane started out with one foot of clearance on either side of the PLS and narrowed to just two inches. This again proved to be a challenging event for both drivers and the cones.

Following the diminishing lane was the controlled stop. Drivers were required with one smooth motion to stop the PLS within six

SEE **RODEO** • Page 7



THE SERPENTINE EVENT



THE OFFSET ALLEY EVENT

Personal Finance Planning

Soldiers urged to get into saving habit

Getting into the saving habit

After you have settled into your budget and have discovered ways to cut your costs, you will likely have the opportunity to save money. You should start saving and investing this money so you may pursue your financial goals.

To reach your goals, you have to save consistently. This is the single most important key to successful saving. Saving should become a habit. And, a good way to get into the saving habit is to make sure that you "pay yourself first" every month.

A look at your savings options

There are a variety of savings and investment vehicles to choose from. Each has its pros and its cons, depending on your financial goals.

Savings accounts (sometimes referred to as "statement savings") offered at banks and savings institutions are the simplest, easiest accounts to set up and maintain. Although these accounts offer relatively low interest rates, they provide easy liquidity and come with deposit insurance.

Money market deposit accounts offered

at banks and savings institutions provide a floating rate of interest based on market changes. Usually these accounts pay a higher rate than you can get with an interest checking or savings account, and they are insured by the FDIC.

Certificates of deposit (CDs) offered at banks and savings institutions are savings tools that guarantee principal and provide a specific interest rate. CDs are insured by the federal government up to the legal maximum and pay a higher interest rate than money market deposit accounts and other insured savings vehicles.

These savings vehicles are not as liquid as others – if you withdraw your money before the maturity date, you may be charged a penalty.

One way to avoid this is a technique called "laddering." Instead of putting all of your money into one CD, you purchase a six-month CD, a 12-month CD and an 18-month CD. If rates are the same or higher in six months,

you roll the six-month CD over for another six months. In 12 months, you can roll over both CDs if rates are higher.

On the other hand, if rates are falling at any "ladder" step along the way, you probably will decide not to renew the CD and invest the money in a vehicle that's paying a better rate.

Money market mutual funds are available through various investment services and mutual-fund companies. They usually pay rates slightly higher than money market deposit accounts, are not insured by the federal government, and typically require

an initial deposit of \$1,000 or more.

Treasury bills, which are often called T-bills, are offered and backed by the federal government and are another option for making short-term savings grow.

They can be purchased in maturities of four, 13 or 26 weeks. Generally, the longer the maturity period, the more interest you earn. These vehicles usually pay higher rates than CDs with the same maturity periods, but they are not FDIC insured. The interest earned is exempt from state and local taxes, so they are particularly useful if you live in an area with high state and local taxes.

Treasury bills are sold with a high minimum investment of \$1,000. While you may be able to purchase T-bills from your financial institution or affiliate, there may be a fee attached.

There's no sales fee when you purchase these securities directly from the federal government. To purchase T-bills from the federal government, call the Treasury Department at 1-800-722-2678.

Each of the savings and investment vehicles above have different uses, depending on the nature of your goals.



Master Sgt. Robin Krieger
BRIGADE FINANCE NCOIC

Combat Nutrition Care

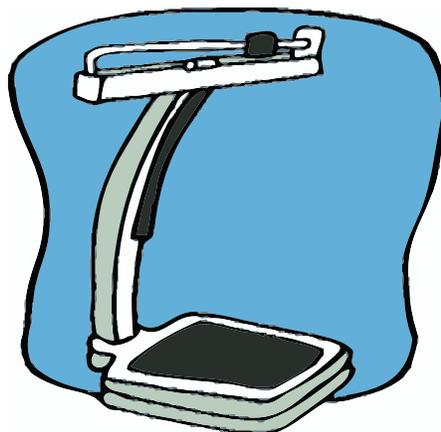
Have you been working out, wearing all this extra gear for months, but do not seem to be losing the pounds or inches?

Are you tired of being taped and would like to avoid that embarrassment?

Are you on the unit's weight control program and would like to get off of it while deployed?

An on-line nutrition program is now available for you. The course will take about five hours (5 x 1 hour sessions).

To sign up, email me at: dawn.orta@taji.sig54.army.mil or report to the Wrangler Clinic from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.



MTR FROM Page 1

link-up with the Iraqis on the other end.”

The operation was the culmination of months of efforts from the 4th SB's Taji-based battalions: the STB and 189th Corps Support Battalion.

Working in tandem, the STB and 189th Corps Support Battalion both work in separate areas to develop the 1st MTR into a competent force.

“Our role as the STB is to assist in mission planning and coordination,” said Lt. Col. William Schiek, STB commander. “The MiTT is under our tactical control and we’re providing the function as the MTR’s higher headquarters, assigning missions and helping with maintenance.”

“The 189th helps with driver’s training and provides intel to the MiTT,” said Lt. Col. Lenny Kness, 189th commander, speaking of his role with the MTR.

“The other thing we do is the uparmoring of the [Iraqi] vehicles.”

Using a combination of Mercedes cargo trucks, donated U.S. five-tons, and Russian “Kraz” trucks, the MTR has a fully uparmored fleet at its disposal, including M1151 humvees the Iraqis use for gun-trucks.

Working with their American counterparts, the Iraqi Soldiers have worked alongside mechanics and welders here on Camp Taji to learn how to support

these vehicles.

“We continue to help teach them how to maintain their vehicles,” Schiek said. “They’ve even taken two Mercedes five-ton trucks and turned them into maintenance contact trucks, complete with generators, air compressors and tools.

“They could probably machine parts in the middle of the highway,” he added, laughing.

“For awhile we had a number of Iraqis come to the DS fabrication shop,” Kness said of his unit’s uparmoring mentoring role. “We taught them how to weld and fabricate, creating patterns to actually armor their own vehicles.”

Teaching the Iraqis to do things themselves is central to the brigade’s focus.

“They are helping us in many areas,” said Ea’ad. “The Americans have helped us a lot in training and they still help my unit when we need it. We share the goal of being fully independent.”

As Americans work with Iraqis on the same camp, toward the same goal, lines of nationality begin to blur.

“With the two teams I work with, we have been working as one team,” Ea’ad said. “We feel like we are brothers and forget that we are Iraqi or American. We both worry about each other.”

“The best that they can do is what we teach them,” said Sgt. 1st Class Gregory Chandler, MiTT S1, who received a purple heart for injuries suffered on a recent escort mission with the 1st MTR.

We feel that we are brothers and forget
that we are Iraqi or American.
We both worry about each other.

Iraqi Col. Ea’ad
COMMANDER, 1ST MOTORIZED TRUCK REGIMENT

“We have not gone down there to try to impose our will on them,” Schiek said.

“There’s a lot of give and take. We’ll ask them how they should handle something and they’ll come up with a solution – often times it’ll be a solution that we would have never considered that is better than what we would have come up with.”

“Their determination to adapt to new things is unbound. I treat them with the same respect that they’ve proven they deserve.

“I’d sacrifice my life for them; I have no issue with that,” he continued.

“They’d do the exact same thing for us. They’re not afraid to fight or die for an American. They’re our brothers in arms.”

RODEO FROM Page 5

inches of a line without going over.

Many drivers found this difficult due to cab-forward design of the PLS and the skewed perspective viewed through the bulletproof glass. Many drivers were unable to achieve this feat. Pvt. Christopher Humphreys recorded a stop of exactly six inches – the closest during the competition.

The last event of the rodeo was the CHU event. The CHU event was the only team event in which the driver and TC did not alternate tasks. The CHU allows the PLS to pick up 20-foot containers from the ground and place them onto the back of the vehicle. This final event was timed and began when the driver and TC rolled into position with the CHU stowed. This meant the crews had to dismount the vehicle and build the CHU before picking up the container.

Soldiers who competed in the event were cheered on by their fellow

platoon members. After many cones were crushed and barrels toppled, only three teams stood victorious. First place went to Humphreys and Sgt. Christopher Prescott, followed by Sgt. Willard Williams and Pfc. Steven Domokos in second, and Spc. Octavio Enriquez and Spc. Craig Schroeder in third.

Battery C’s truckmaster, Sgt. 1st Class Michael Strate, was the overseer of the day’s events, along with his panel of judges.

“These events were designed to be challenging and realistic,” Strate said. “The PLS is a cumbersome vehicle and these drivers experience similar challenges while conducting combat logistics patrols.”

Commander of Charlie Battery, Capt. Andrew Lennox, commented, “The rodeo was a success. The Soldiers of Charlie battery impressed all who watched.”

Although the commander was in second place through the maneuver portion of the contest, he was immediately disqualified for his inability to operate the CHU.



Looking carefully

Capt. Evelyn Reyes-Cabrera examines a Soldier's eyes at the Camp Taji Optometry Clinic Tuesday. Reyes-Cabrera is chief of optometry for the Special Troops Battalion.

Photo by Sgt. Joshua Salmons

A Chaplain's Prayer

All tasks speak volumes of those who do them

The USS Astoria was the first U.S. cruiser to engage the Japanese during the Battle of Savo Island, a night action fought Aug. 8-9, 1942.

At about 2 a.m., Signalman 3rd Class Elgin Staples was swept overboard by a blast when the Astoria's number one eight-inch gun turret exploded.

Wounded in both legs by shrapnel and in semi-shock, he was kept afloat by a narrow life belt that he managed to activate with a simple trigger mechanism.

At around 6 a.m., Staples was rescued by a passing destroyer and returned to the Astoria.

Unfortunately, the Astoria became badly damaged a few hours later and sank shortly after noon, Aug. 9.

Staples, still wearing the same life belt, found himself back in the water.

Fortunately for him, he was picked up again, this time by the USS President Jackson.

On board the President Jackson, Staples for the first time closely examined the life belt that had served him so well. It had been manufactured by Firestone Tire and Rubber Company of Akron, Ohio, and bore a registration number which he wrote down.

Going home for leave, Staples told his story and asked his mother, a Firestone employee, about the purpose of the number on the belt. She said that the company insisted on personal responsibility for the war effort, and that the number was unique and assigned to only one inspector.

Staples remembered everything about the lifebelt and quoted the number. It was his mother's personal code and affixed to every item she was responsible for approving.

(SOURCE: Commander Eric J.

Berryman, U.S. Naval Reserve, Proceedings, U.S. Naval Institute, vol. 15/6/1036 (June 1989), P. 48)



Maj. Gary Bragg
BRIGADE CHAPLAIN

From this story we learn that a tremendous work ethic and attention to detail can save lives.

Sometimes, the work we do might seem insignificant to us, however, someone's life may depend on a very "insignificant" detail. We will never know what might have been if we failed to do our part one day, one critical moment.

Our challenge then is to ask of ourselves, what kind of

diligence and devotion do I apply to my work? Our motivation is the care of the Soldiers with whom we serve, doing what we can to bring them safely home.

Every job is a self-portrait of the person who did it. Autograph your work with quality.

A Few Legal Pointers

Expenses throughout year may be claimed as itemized income tax deductions

Itemized deductions

Taking the standard deduction or itemizing your deductions is one of the choices and decisions that taxpayers need to make when preparing their taxes. Taxpayers who are interested in itemizing their deductions will use Form 1040 and complete the Schedule A form. If you choose to itemize your deductions rather than take the standard deduction, the following are some of the expenses you can deduct.

Medical and dental expenses

There are some limitations on what you can deduct for medical and dental expenses.

You can only deduct what you were not reimbursed.

You can deduct insurance premiums for medical and dental care, including premiums for qualified long-term care contracts. However you cannot deduct insurance premiums paid with pretax dollars because the premiums are not included in box 1 of Form W-2.

Also included as medical and dental expenses are: acupuncturists, chiropractors, eye doctors, occupational therapists, and physical therapists.

Costs associated with x-rays, lab services, and insulin treatments are included. Hospital care, qualified long-term care services, ambulance services and other travel costs to receive medical care are included as itemized medical expenses.

Taxes you paid

This includes federal income taxes, social security, medicare, federal unemployment, customs duties, federal estate and gift taxes.

You can deduct your state and local income taxes that were withheld from your salary in 2005. Forms W-2, W-2G, 1099-G, 1099-R, and 1099 MISC will show the taxes withheld.

You can also deduct state and local general sales taxes. Sales taxes on food, clothing, medical supplies, and motor vehicles are deductible.

Read the Schedule A instructions for further detail on deducting sales taxes. However you can not deduct both income and sales taxes. You can only choose one.

Real estate taxes

You can itemize taxes paid on real estate that you owned that was not used for a business. However, you can not include charges for services, for example, monthly charges for trash collection or monthly fees for lawn mowing services.

You cannot deduct charges for improvements that tend to increase the value of your property. If your mortgage payments include your real

estate taxes, you can only deduct the amount the mortgage company paid in 2005.

You can also deduct the personal property tax you paid, but only if it is based on value alone and it is charged on a yearly basis.

Interest paid

In general you can deduct interest paid in 2005.

One type of interests you can deduct is your home mortgage. This includes first and second mortgages, home equity loans, and refinanced mortgages.

Investment interest is also included. The interest deduction applies to interest paid on money borrowed that is allocable to property held for investment.

Gifts to charity

Contributions or gifts you have made to organizations that are religious, charitable, educational, scientific, or literary in purposes can be itemized.

If you are unsure of the organization's charitable status, check with that organization and they should be able to let you verify its charitable status. Contributions can be in cash.

Keep canceled checks, receipts, or other written records showing the name of the organization and the date you made the donation.

Casualty and theft losses

You may be able to deduct part or all of each loss caused by theft, vandalism, fire, storm, automobile, boat and other accidents.

For families and Soldiers who are victims of Hurricane Katrina disaster after Aug. 24 see Form 4684 and its instructions for details.

Unreimbursed Employee Expenses

You can deduct ordinary and necessary job expenses you paid that were not reimbursed by your employer.

An ordinary expense is one that is common and accepted in your field of trade, business, or profession.

A necessary expense is one that is helpful and appropriate for your business. An expense does not have to be required to be considered necessary.

Some sample expenses may include: safety equipment, small tools, and supplies needed for your job; subscription to professional journals; dues to professional organizations and chambers of commerce.

For further information read the 2005 Instructions for Schedule A & B for Form 1040.



Capt. Eric Lee
JUDGE ADVOCATE

EYES FROM Page 3

about 30 pairs of glasses. "I've actually done about up to 45 a day," Bennett said. "It also depends on how strong the prescriptions are." He is just as enthusiastic about taking care of patients as his NCOIC is.

"The one thing I definitely enjoy the most is that I take a piece of plastic and help people see," Bennett said. "Sometimes the best part of it is when people put on their first pair of glasses, the light in their eyes just shines."

Some glasses take longer than others to make. The clinic offers a variety of frames, both civilian and the classic Army style commonly known as "BCGs."

"I think it is unbelievable that it takes a month in garrison to get glasses and it only takes ten minutes in theater," said Sgt. Maj. Samuel McCray, the brigade S3 sergeant major. He commended the clinic staff on their customer service skills. "The Soldiers are very professional and the service is quick," he said.

Reyes-Cabreara is also very impressed with her handful of Soldiers.

As she explained, her troops have done an amazing job gearing up to the deployment by assisting in the screening of approximately 6,000 deploying Soldiers from Fort Hood.

They continue chugging along, treating patients on a daily basis here in theater, said Kingsbury.



Sgt. Michael Kingsbury shows Sgt. Maj. Samuel McCray how to fit the newly cut lenses into his safety glasses. Kingsbury is an eye specialist with the STB. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux*

No matter what time of the day, they do not turn away anybody. "We bend over backwards and make sure that you get what you need," he said.

The clinic staff cautions Soldiers to wear eye protection not only when they go on missions, but also any time they are outside, even when conducting PT.

"The most common eye injuries are abrasions and inflammations, and some chemical burns," Reyes-Cabrera said. Many of the injuries could have been avoided, if the Soldier wore proper eye protection.

With summer right around the corner Soldiers should start wearing sunglasses, since the sun can cause snow-blindness like symptoms, hindering troops in accomplishing their mission, she added.

Going on Emergency Leave?

Don't forget,



*you MUST
have civilian
clothes to be
able to fly
out!*

*Also make sure you
have a copy of your
orders on you at all
times, even when you
are at home!*

Freedom Radio Frequencies



- 107.7 Baghdad
- 107.9 Sinjar
- 105.1 Mosul, Fallujah
- 107.3 Balad, Kirkurk,
Tallil, Ar Ramadi
- 93.3 Q-West, Tikrit,
Al Asad
- 107.1 Ridgeway
- 102.5 Camp Taji

"Always There, on the Air!"