



'Big Guns' turn wrenches

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

To meet mission requirements, many units and even individual Soldiers have had to adopt new skills in support of the War on Terror.

So did Battery C, 1st Battalion, 377th Field Artillery Regiment when they found out they would deploy to Iraq as a gun-truck company. They doubled in size, gained Soldiers with different military occupational specialties, and even had to send some of their own troops to school to become mechanics.

"Normally we have a maintenance sergeant, two mechanics, one skill level two light-wheel vehicle mechanic and a PLL [prescribed load list] clerk," said 1st Sgt. Joel Peaslee, battery first sergeant.

Currently the motor pool has 17 Soldiers, said Capt. Brian Cummings, battery executive officer.

A year ago there were already rumors of the battery deploying. "We fired our last rounds as an artillery battery in April of 2005," Peaslee said. "We put our guns away and we started focusing completely on gun-truck operations."

The first sergeant hand-picked the Soldiers who could re-class to become mechanics from a pool of volunteers within the battery. He based his decision on their total Soldier concept, work ethic, character and their ability to go on temporary duty for the duration of the class.

Battery C is the only 155 mm field artillery battery from their brigade based out of Fort Campbell, Ky. They are the "Big Guns" providing 155 mm Howitzer field artillery support to the 101st Airborne Division.

The other eight batteries are from Fort Bragg, N.C., and also were transformed into gun-truck companies around the same time. The North Carolina National Guard established a training program, where the selected Soldiers of Battery C and all other batteries acquired mechanical skills and upon graduation were awarded the light-wheel vehicle mechanic MOS.

"We went through six weeks of school and then they pretty much threw us in the motor pool to experience it," said Spc. Daniel Troha, a former cannon crew member turned mechanic.

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Sgt. Hiram Provorse, a light-wheel vehicle mechanic with Battery C, 1st Battalion, 377th Field Artillery, drains the oil of a vehicle in their motor pool. Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux

Cargo company synchronizes with 1BCT, CAB

Nearly one-thousand pieces of retrograde move in less than one week

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

The 4th Sustainment Brigade at Camp Taji recently assisted in the turn-in of 913 pieces of retrograde military equipment in only six days.

This equipment is being turned in as part of a theater-wide battlefield-cleansing initiative.

The equipment belonged to 1st Brigade Combat Team and the Combat Aviation Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division.

"The 4th Sustainment Brigade was notified about this mission about two weeks before the operations at the Central Receiving and Shipping Point (CRSP) yard began," said Maj. Jared Longfield, 4th Sustainment Brigade S4.

The brigade had to coordinate with the Army Materiel Command's Retrograde Property Accountability Team (RPAT), participating units and the CRSP yard, which is run by the 115th Cargo Transfer Company.

"This is the first-large scale Class VII operation the yard has participated in," said 2nd Lt. Andrew Colsia, the CRSP yard OIC. "It was just recently turned into a CRSP yard from a distribution center."

During normal operations, the yard processes 20 to 25 vehicles a week.

Each day of the retrograde mission, they processed around 150 vehicles.

"My Soldiers are definitely doing a good job taking on this theater-level mission," Colsia said. "It is sometimes hard for Soldiers to see the bigger picture, but I think my guys have a really good concept on that and they are willing to take on any mission no matter how big it is."

The 4 ID units who unlit recently owned the equipment were told about the retrograde mission a month ago, said Maj. Michael Best, the S4 of the Combat Aviation Brigade of 4th Infantry Division.

"We started putting our plan together from there, and did our analysis on which vehicles we need to be able to sustain," said Best.

The vehicles that are sent back do not meet theater armor requirements; many are still canvas-tops with no armor at all, Longfield said. All of it is excess and non-mission essential. These vehicles will be put back into the Army system after being refurbished.

"We are turning in a multitude of vehicles from humvees to fuel trucks to Heavy Equipment Transporters, really a wide spectrum - almost every family of vehicle we have," Best added.

The vehicles were brought in grouped by type and by unit. All of the paperwork was

already prepared. Grouping them like that allowed the person operating the computers to process the information much faster. The sustainment brigade went as far as providing lunch and dinner in the CRSP yard, further expediting the process for all Soldiers involved in the operation.

Once a joint inspection was conducted by the RPAT team, the vehicles were signed over to AMC, relieving the unit commanders of all responsibility.

The next step was moving the vehicles to the shipping line. The CRSP is currently in the process of shipping out these vehicles on 40-foot trailers to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

"Depending on the frequency of the convoys, the vehicles should not sit on the ground for too long," Colsia said.

As the vehicles moved from the inspection lane to the shipping lane, they left some very satisfied customers behind.

"We got great support from the 4th Sustainment Brigade," Best said. "They were here from the get-go, setting this thing up for us. They have taken a tremendous amount of burden away from the unit, so we can sustain combat operations and do what we need to do within our area of responsibility. They will take care of the details; we can go back and do our mission after this."

The WRANGLER

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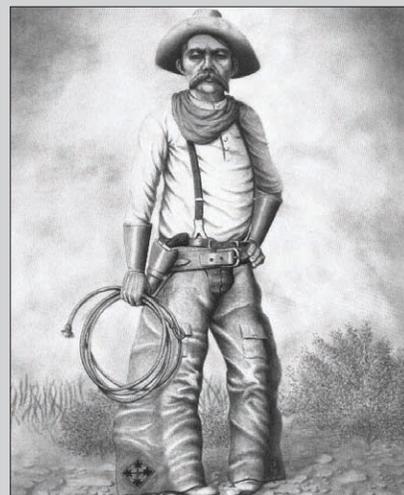
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Cpl. Jeremiah Wilson keeps watch over nearby civilian traffic during the morning hours of a patrol on main-supply route Tampa Mar. 24. Wilson is a gunner with the Company G Quick Reaction Force, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Sustainment Brigade. *Photo by Sgt. Joshua Salmons*

‘Vipers’ help Taji with good night sleep

By Sgt. Joshua Salmons
4TH SUSTAINMENT BRIGADE

Soldiers have always fought against the routine of patrols – the day-in, day-out repetition; but it is by these ‘every day’ efforts that keep camps and bases secure in war.

So too is the plight of the Camp Taji Quick-Reaction Force (QRF) Soldiers of Company G, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Sustainment Brigade. On the one hand, multiple daily patrols along the same series of roads can become very repetitive, but it is by the work of these Soldiers that keeps Taji safe.

“Sometimes it’s a lot of boring stuff,” said Sgt. Isaac Haugen, a Reserve Soldier with the 428th Quartermaster Company out of Warrensville Heights, Ohio; now a team leader with the Company G QRF. “It will get to you, but you eventually learn to find the ways to keep yourself occupied.”

“There are times when the Soldiers get complacent,” said Staff Sgt. Derrick Wiley, a Reserve Soldier originally with the 223rd Maintenance Company out of Dallas, Texas, now a team chief with the QRF. “But then you’ll find an [Improvised Explosive Device] and that wakes them up.”

The “Viper” QRF patrols the heavily used main-supply route that runs north to south along Taji. The team conducts civilian traffic control points, performs vehicle searches, is on call to respond to any incidents in the Taji area and, most importantly, keeps a look out for Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

“We’ll roll for two straight weeks with nothing,” Haugen said. “Then there will be a month straight of constantly finding things. It goes in phases.”

“We watch for IEDs along the MSR,” Wiley said. “Well also monitor new construction on the MSR for signs of IEDs.”

With several finds in recent weeks, the QRF feels that they have helped contribute to the security of convoys passing through the Taji area of operation, despite the quiet nature of operations going well.

“It makes me feel like I’m actually doing something out here instead of sitting in the motor pool or at a desk,” Haugen said. “I think about extending just to do this job.”

“It’s a great opportunity to know that you’re making sure people have a good night sleep on the camp,” said Wiley, who had volunteered to extend in Iraq for a back-to-back tour just so he could serve on the QRF. “We’re doing our part.”

Constantly being on the road does wear on the QRF troops, but they take it in stride.

“The enemy that you’re fighting is amongst the good people,” Haugen said. “It makes it really difficult. You have to be really strict and aggressive since you can’t trust anyone.”

“But when we go back on camp, we go back to the same people we were before – to the same life.”

“Every time you go out through the gate you don’t know what’s going to happen,” Wiley said. “It can be very stressful. Some days you go out and nothing happens; some times you get that first call and it’s on.”

Personal Finance Planning

What's ⁱⁿ your Budget?

Soldiers have time to rethink spending habits

As we are all thinking about redeployment, we are faced with many mixed feelings. We need to stop and take a new look at our finances. This is the time to sit down and figure out what your pay will be without the deployment entitlements. If you are one of the many who have been saving money that is great. But if you have been spending your money on all kinds of gadgets and making more bills, there is still hope.

Good news, we still have time left to rethink spending habits and still save some money. I suggest that after you compute what your pay will be once you return home, start living within that budget. Don't forget to add

in expenses for food, gas and rent.

For those of you who saved money and look forward to purchasing a vehicle when you return, I recommended that you don't run out and buy one as soon as you get off the plane. If you have never purchased a vehicle before, I would suggest that you take someone who has experience in purchasing a vehicle with you.

When shopping for a vehicle, Soldiers must consider what the insurance payments will be and add the cost into your budget.

Beware of Counterfeit Money

Once again Camp Taji has encountered more counterfeit money. Be aware when receiving money from vendors to look at it carefully and do not accept suspicious looking bills. If you think you have counterfeit money, do not use it; bring it to your local finance office who will test it.



Master Sgt. Robin Krieger
BRIGADE FINANCE NCOIC

Check Cashing

There has been a change to the policy on cashing checks. The Taji Finance office will now cash third party checks. There is a limit of \$300.00 per week.

Family Separation Allowance

While you are deployed and you pay court order child support, you may be entitled to Family Separation Allowance

(FSH). During your year of deployment, you may receive FSH for the period of time that you would have had physical custody of your child. It can't be for periods of visitation. For example: If you are divorced, share joint custody and during the summer months of May-August you would have physical custody of your child, you will be able to receive FSH for that time period.



Pump it up!

Staff Sgt. Lemont Crawford flexes his muscles after being award first place for the middle weight class in the decline (520 lbs.) and flatbench (470 lbs.) categories in the first ever Bench Press Competition at the Wrangler Gym on Camp Taji. Crawford is a food service sergeant with HHC, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Sustainment Brigade. **Photo by: 1st Lt. Shawanda Smith**

Suddenly Seitz!

By Spc. Cory Youngblood
18TH CORPS SUPPORT BATTALION

LOGISTICAL BASE SEITZ, Iraq--Sunday, March 19 was not an ordinary day for folks on Log Base Seitz. The Soldiers of the 18th Corps Support Battalion will remember it as the day Kathy Griffin brought two of her friends and a ton of laughs to our Battalion Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) area.

Griffin, along with Michael McDonald and Karri Turner, provided entertainment as part of their USO tour. The trio wowed the crowd with stand-up comedy and skits, and even pulled members of the audience onstage to help with the fun.

A small crowd slowly became a mob scene as Soldiers gathered around the MWR, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the stars. When they pulled up, cheers erupted as they moved inside to start the show. Screams of, "Stewie!" rang out as Soldiers caught their first glimpse of McDonald. While the performers got ready to come on-stage, Soldiers were shown a video montage highlighting memorable performances of each actor. This included hilarious clips of Griffin's stand-up and television shows, McDonald's skits from "MAD TV," and snippets of Turner's roles on various programs.

When the montage ended, the audience went wild as Karri Turner emerged on the stage to welcome everyone to the event. She thanked us all for the job we were doing and wished us the best of luck in our mission.

It was then that we learned the performance was being taped for Griffin's upcoming reality show on Bravo, "Kathy Griffin: My Life On The D-List". The crowd became even more excited knowing that we could be stars, too! Turner introduced Kathy, who ran on stage to start the show.

Kathy Griffin and crew brought forth a memorable performance for everyone at Log Base Seitz. Puddles formed on the floor from the tears rolling off of Soldier's faces.

Griffin knew exactly how to get the most laughs from her audience,

Laughs, tears, cheers fill MWR as performers entertain troops

making hilarious observations about current events. She didn't hesitate to poke fun at a certain former dictator of Iraq, either. Kathy made the most of her time on-stage, and left her audience ready for more laughs.

Michael McDonald joined Griffin on stage next. Fans of the show 'MAD TV' cheered the actor, begging him to perform his 'Stuart' act. McDonald gave the Soldiers what they wanted in a mock interview

with Griffin, as he brought his character to life on the stage. Karri Turner then joined the other two performers to provide more entertainment for the crowd.

The group used their improvisational skills to perform a few skits, and then began asking Soldiers in the audience to come up and assist with the show. I was one of the lucky few to be asked on stage, and I had a great time. It was great to see the show from a totally different perspective. After the show was over, the stars took the time to sign autographs and pose with Soldiers for photos.

The show was a real treat for the 18th CSB. "They acted like they really enjoyed entertaining us," said Spc. Adam Ridgway. "I had a great time seeing them today!"

Other Soldiers shared Ridgway's sentiment.

Sgt. Marnelle Big Crow said, "Kathy Griffin Always makes me laugh. I've loved her since she was on 'Suddenly Susan!'"

Griffin and Turner have both made several trips overseas to support our military. This is

McDonald's first time as part of the USO tour, but he hopes to continue doing performing for Soldiers.

The Soldiers of the 18th CSB thanks everyone involved in the show. We were all happy to be entertained by such a talented, caring group of performers. They provided everyone present that day with the chance to forget about what we do everyday and enjoy ourselves. If laughter is the best medicine, then Log Base Seitz should be alright for a long time!



Kathy Griffin, comedian, brings laughs to Soldiers of the 18th CSB during her USO tour to Iraq. Photo by Sgt. Marnelle Big Crow



Soldiers practice administering the IV during day two of the four-day long combat lifesaver course ran by the medical personnel of the 4th Sustainment Brigade. Some Soldiers got stuck four times before their buddy gave them an IV. Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux

Medics teach Soldiers new tricks of trade

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

Some of the medical personnel of the 4th Sustainment Brigade have conducted yet another Combat Lifesaver course March 20-24.

"We offer the classes during the last two weeks of each month," said Staff Sgt. Ryan Bollinger, a mental health specialist with Special Troops Battalion, 4th Sustainment Brigade.

It is a 40-hour class taught in four days. This particular class had 18 participants from different units on Camp Taji. This is the sixth class STB medical personnel have ran.

"The CLS is to bridge the training that you get in basic training and the training that medics receive, it is kind of half way point," Bollinger said.

Since the curriculum of the Combat Lifesaver course has significantly changed, Soldiers who already participated in the class cannot simply recertify – they need to take the new course.

"They cut out a lot of stuff you don't really use and implemented better techniques," said Spc. Mark Williams, a multiple launch rocket

system operator with Battery B, 1st Battalion, 117th Field Artillery.

"The whole thing has changed," said Sgt. Laqnda Harris, a light-wheel vehicle mechanic with the 155th Cargo Transfer Company. "For example, you don't give an IV to every single casualty."

Harris has been through two combat lifesaver courses before. She volunteered to attend this one, together with two other Soldiers from her company. Since she took some nursing courses before she joined the military, she correctly administered the IV on her battle buddy on the first try.

Others weren't so fortunate. Williams was stuck four times before the IV was administered properly.

"I feel good he finally got it in," Williams said. "He would have had it the first time, if I didn't start laughing and the needle didn't fall out."

The hardest and most exciting part of the course is, in fact, administering the IV, said Bollinger. Many are actually more afraid of hurting their buddies than being stuck.

The curriculum was changed based on lessons learned during recent operations from

Desert Storm to Operation Iraqi Freedom, Bollinger said.

Whereas under the old curriculum, combat lifesavers were taught to start administering fluids intravenously in all cases except for a head injury, now there are several instances, when they only put a catheter in with a saline block, instead of automatically starting to run saline solution.

Another difference is that instead of the J-tube or oropharyngeal tube to keep the unconscious casualty's airways open, combat lifesavers now use a nasopharyngeal tube, Bollinger explained.

Once a Soldier has been through the new course, the Soldier has to recertify once a year.

The CLS courses taught by the medical personnel of the 4th Sustainment Brigade are open to all units on Camp Taji. The books and training equipment are ordered and provided by the brigade. Combat lifesavers are issued their bags by their individual units upon graduation.

To get more information about the class or sign up for the class, units should contact Capt. Dawn Orta at dawn.orta@taji.sig54.army.mil.

A Few Legal Pointers

Soldiers may exclude up to \$500,000 in profits

Moving from one duty station to another may require Soldiers and their families to sell their home. If you sold your home in 2005, you may be able to exclude any gain (profit/income) up to a limit of \$250,000 (\$500,000 on a joint return) on your sale.

Service members must meet criteria of two test: the ownership and use test.

You must have owned (ownership test) and lived (use test) in your main home for at least two years, during a five-year period ending on the date of sale. Main home is defined as the home you lived in most of the time. During the two-year period ending on the date of the sale, you or your spouse can not exclude gain from the sale of another home. If you are married and filing jointly, you can exclude up to \$500,000. For married couples, either you or your spouse can meet the ownership test. However, both you and your spouse must meet the use test.

For example, Sgt. Janice Smith bought and moved into her main home in September 2002. She sold the home at a gain on Sept. 15, 2005. During the five-year period ending on the date of sale (Sept. 16, 2000 – Sept. 15, 2005), Smith owned and lived in the home for three years. Smith meets the ownership and use tests.

Service members can choose to have the five-year test period for ownership and use suspended during any 'qualified official extended duty.' You are on 'qualified official extended duty' if you serve on extended duty either: At a duty station at least 50 miles from your main home, or living in government quarters under government orders. You are also on extended duty when you are called or ordered to active duty for a period of more than 90 days or for an indefinite period. This



Capt. Eric Lee
JUDGE ADVOCATE

suspended time means that you can meet the two-year use test even if you have not lived in your home for at least two-years during the five-year period ending on the date of sale. The length of the suspension cannot last more than 10 years.

For example, Smith bought and lived in her home in 1997. She lived in it as her main home for two and a half years. For the next six years, she did not live in

it because she was on 'qualified official extended duty.' She sold the home for a gain in 2005. To meet the use test, she chooses to suspend the five-year test period for the six years she was on qualified official extended duty. This means she can disregard those six years. Therefore, her five-year test period consists of the five-years before she went on qualifying official extended duty. She met the ownership and use test because she owned and lived in the home for two and a half years during the test period.

Calculate my gains and losses... There are three things you need to know in figuring your gains and losses: selling price, the amount realized and the adjusted basis.

The selling price is the total amount you receive for the sale of your home. This includes money, all notes, mortgages, or other debts assumed by the buyer as part of the sale, and the fair market value of any other property or any services you receive.

The amount realized is the selling price minus selling expenses. Selling expenses include: commissions paid, advertising fees, legal fees, and loan charges paid by the seller, such as loan placement fees or "points."

To determine the adjusted basis, you need to establish your basis. Basis is the cost of your home when you bought it or built the home. It could also be the fair market value if you received the home as a gift or as an inheritance.

The adjusted basis is your basis increased or decreased by certain amounts. Your basis may increase due to additions and improvements that have a useful life of more than one year, for example adding: central air conditioning, flooring, insulation, or a new roof. Decreases in your basis may be due to insurance payments for casualty losses, the insurance deductible for casualty losses, or depreciation that was taken if you used your home for business or rental purposes.

Calculating gains and losses... First, subtract the selling expenses from the selling price. This gives you the amount realized. Second, subtract the adjusted basis from the amount realized. This gives you the total amount of your gain or loss on the sale of your home.

Reporting the sale...do not report the 2005 sale of your main home on your tax return unless: 1) you have a gain and you do not qualify to exclude all of it, or 2) You have a gain and you choose not to exclude it. If you have any taxable gain on the sale of your home, report the gain on Schedule D (Form 1040).

Don't shoot ...

call EOD.



STAY ALIVE

IEDs KILL

A Chaplain's Prayer

Discipline and determination are key

Many years and pounds ago I was a wrestler. I began wrestling when I was 7 and wrestled through college. I had many wrestling coaches through the years, all of whom taught me many things.

My college coach had the biggest influence on my life, both on and off the wrestling mat. He was a man of great character and talent. He wrestled on two Olympic teams, coached the USA World Team and was inducted into the Wrestler's Hall of Fame.

If you want to be a champion desire
isn't enough, it takes discipline and
determination to go all the way.

Maj. Gary Bragg
BRIGADE CHAPLAIN

He was known for his quotes, such as, "the only thing a basketball court is good for is to have a place to put the wrestling mats," or "YOU'RE TIRED? My grandma can wrestle until she's tired."

One quote from my coach that has given me inspiration throughout my life was, "If you want to be a champion desire isn't enough, it takes discipline and determination to go all the way." I have never forgotten his wisdom regarding discipline and determination. This principle impacts all areas of our life. No matter if we are talking about being a dad or mom, a husband or wife, a Soldier, a leader, or a man or woman of faith, to be successful takes discipline and determination—discipline to do the things that have to be done even when you don't feel like it—discipline to practice, practice, practice until you get it right.

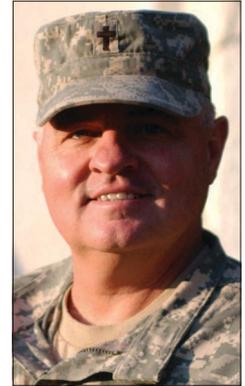
It takes determination to never quit when the circumstances seem impossible, when it is overwhelmingly difficult, and when

nobody is standing beside you. It takes determination to reach your potential in every area of your life, whether it be mental, physical, social, or spiritual. Success just doesn't happen by chance. Good dads/moms, Soldiers, leaders, people of faith are not born—THEY ARE MADE, by discipline and determination. And the wonderful thing about that is, WE control these elements in our lives.

There are many times when I have faltered in my Christian life. When I examined my life I found that a lack of discipline and determination often led to my downfall. If I want to be victorious in my Christian walk, desire will never be enough. I must discipline myself to read scripture, to develop my prayer life, and to love others. If I want to be a "champion" dad or mom, husband or wife, I must recognize that desire will never be enough. I must discipline myself to spend quality time with my children and spouse, to listen to them, to validate them, and to put their needs above my own. If I want to be successful at work, desire will never be enough. I must discipline myself to never settle for less than my best, to never take short cuts, and to share my successes with my co-workers.

We can be victorious in every area of our life. We are sure to suffer defeats along the way, but a true champion begins anew every day with discipline and determination and never considers throwing in the towel.

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your strength.
Ecclesiastes 9:10 NLV



Maj. Gary Bragg
BRIGADE CHAPLAIN

BIG GUNS FROM Page 1

"After they have finished the course, they were pretty much well-knowledged," said Sgt. Mark Vindiola, one of the original light-wheel mechanics of the battery. "They only needed a little mentorship after that."

He and his fellow mechanics had to hit the ground running as they arrived at Taji.

"We fell in on very old and outdated equipment, both 5-ton trucks and 1114s [up-armored humvees]," Cummings said. "The maintenance team built a fleet of 38 LMTV (Light Medium Tactical Vehicle) gun trucks - pretty much from scratch."

The additional armor was built in Kuwait and installed on the trucks at Logistical Support Area Anaconda in Iraq, but the mechanics had to rebuild a lot of the engine components and the electronics, Cummings explained.

"From the day that we started, it took us about one week to get our first truck on the road," Cummings said. "Within 60 days, we had all 38 trucks on the road."

Although the rush of getting the trucks up and running is long over, the mechanics still have plenty to do in the motor pool.

"The average day starts at nine and we usually have 10-15 trucks a day," said Vindiola.

"We work 12 to 14-hour days."

Troha enjoys his new job. He was going to try and change his military occupational specialty and become a mechanic anyhow, when the sudden opportunity for re-classing arose.

"I like the work, because you are actually doing your job all the time," Troha said. "As a 13B [cannon crewmember] the only time you are doing your job is when you are out in the field."

Upon redeployment, most Soldiers who changed their MOSs will remain mechanics. Some of them already re-enlisted in their current MOS as such.

Soldiers 'Two Step' with fire

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

While most people think of dancing when they hear the words 'Texas two-step,' the expression gains a new meaning when participating in the Combat Convoy Firefighting System training at Camp Taji.

"We have had fun watching the military getting accustomed to using the fire hose under high pressure," said Doug Terrill, a fireman with the Taji Fire Department. "It is a little awkward at first, and we expect and we know what is coming, they don't . . . We refer to it as the Texas two-step."

The one-day training begins with a two-hour block of classroom instructions. Soldiers learn about the different types of fire they can use the system on, said Maj. Monte Montes, 4th Sustainment Brigade S2. Montes has been the key figure in getting the systems and organizing the classes.

The idea of getting some sort of a firefighting system came from the site-recon conducted before the brigade deployed. The recon team saw a need for having more than fire extinguishers when Soldiers go off post.

Since Montes was the acting S3 at the time, he was tasked with getting the systems, and although he had changed positions since, the task remained with him.

The systems were purchased stateside. As



Soldiers participate in a training on the combat convoy firefighting system at Camp Taji. Taji is the only place the training is currently offered at in Iraq, many units fly their Soldiers in to participate.
Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux

soon as the brigade arrived at Taji in October of last year, they got in touch with the fire department and started working on how to implement training on the systems.

The systems were ordered by several 4th Infantry Division units, who often fly their Soldiers to Taji to participate in the training, since currently this is the only place in Iraq where the training is offered.

"The fire department has been great," Montes said. "From the moment we called them and explained the concept, they were totally behind it and wanted to train." "They are not allowed to go outside the wire because of their contract, and it really breaks their hearts that someone outside the wire needs fire help and they can't go do it."

That is why it is so vital to have some sort of powerful firefighting equipment on hand to extinguish fires that occur when Soldiers and equipment are off post.

Once Soldiers gain a basic understanding of fires, approach angles and the capabilities of the Combat Convoy Firefighting System, it is time for some hands-on.

Soldiers are given a class on how to do preventive maintenance checks and services, and are also taught how to operate the pump at the right pressure so they don't burn up the

pump. Once they get that down, the 'dancing' begins. Soldiers get the chance to put out a fire on a mock tanker at the training site.

"It is a lot harder than it looks," said Sgt. Eric C. Naylor, and infantryman with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-69th Armor Battalion, 4th Infantry Division. "Trying to maneuver around with your equipment can get really straining," Naylor flew in from Iskandariyah to train on the system.

"It looks easy, but from what I have heard from other people who already been through the training, it does not sound as easy as it looks," said Pfc. Jeanetta L. Davis, a food service specialist with Forward Support Company E, 204th Support Battalion.

Both will go back to their individual units and, with the help of the training material provided for them by the organizers, will train their unit members on how to properly operate the firefighting system.

"The Soldiers have a great attitude about the training," Terrill said. "They ask a lot of questions. Their enthusiasm builds as the class goes on."

"I think it is a very good idea," Naylor said. "It is good training, something that you can use not only here but also back at your home station."