



Spcs. Edgar Estrada-Perez and Ana Flores take the oath to become U.S. citizens in a ceremony May 15 at Victory Chapel on Victory Base Complex. Estrada-Perez is a unit supply specialist with the 756th Transportation Company and Flores is a food-service specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, 4th Sustainment Brigade. **Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux**

Soldiers take final step in citizenship journey

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

VICTORY BASE COMPLEX, Iraq – Eighty-three service members from 40 different countries received their citizenship in a ceremony at the Victory Chapel on Camp Victory May 15.

This particular ceremony was the sixth held for service members deployed to Iraq.

They flew in from all over Iraq to participate in the event. Eight of the Soldiers wore the 'Wrangler' patch on their right shoulders, indicating that they were one of the subordinate units of the 4th

Sustainment Brigade.

One such Soldier was Spc. Edgar Estrada-Perez, a unit supply clerk with the California National Guard's 756th Transportation Company, based out of Van Nuys, Calif., now serving at Camp Taji. He was very happy that he was able to take care of his paperwork and receive his citizenship with the help of the Army.

Spectators and well-wishers crowded the room. Some even had to stand outside on the chapel stairs.

Getting his citizenship while deployed made the event very special for Estrada-Perez.

"The ceremony was great, especially being in Iraq. How many people can say that they got their citizenship in Iraq, serving their country?" Estrada-Perez asked with a broad smile. He only wished his mom and his best friend could have attended to see him take the oath.

Spc. Ana Flores felt the same way. "It is good to have the opportunity to get my citizenship faster because I am in the Army," she said. The brigade Soldier serves as a food service specialist from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion.

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A Chaplain's Prayer

Finish strong: *Important for Soldiers to remain focused as last few months no time to let down guard*

You've all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one wins. Run to win. (1Corinthians 9:24)

Too many athletic competitions have been lost in the last few minutes of the contest. Many of us have watched our team dominate the opponent throughout the game only to lose it in the last two minutes. It has been my observation that this usually happens because of two reasons. One, the team becomes over-confident. This causes them to lose their edge. They underestimate the hunger and desperation of their opponent and before they know it; they are in trouble—no longer playing their game, but reacting to their opponent's actions. The game that should have been an overwhelming victory ended in defeat.

Another way victory slips through one's hands is when a team becomes overly cautious. They value their success so much that they move into a defensive posture so as to not loose what they have achieved. Instead of attacking the opponent with motivation, aggressiveness and a can-do attitude, they fall back into a safe mode and the victory is snuffed out at the very end.

In order to finish the course victoriously, we must sharpen our focus in the last quarter. We concentrate on being more creative, more motivated, and push past the finish line with an endurance that will crush the will of our opponent. This takes discipline of mind and a team effort that plays the last quarter with the same hunger and intensity as the first. Whether we are deployed to Iraq or doing the tough job at the home front, in this last quarter let's join hands and finish strong.



Maj. Gary Bragg
BRIGADE CHAPLAIN

Too many athletic competitions have been lost in the last few minutes of the contest...In order to finish the course victoriously, we must sharpen our focus in the last quarter.

HOOAH!

I'M CHARGING DOWN TO THE REENLISTMENT OFFICE

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The WRANGLER

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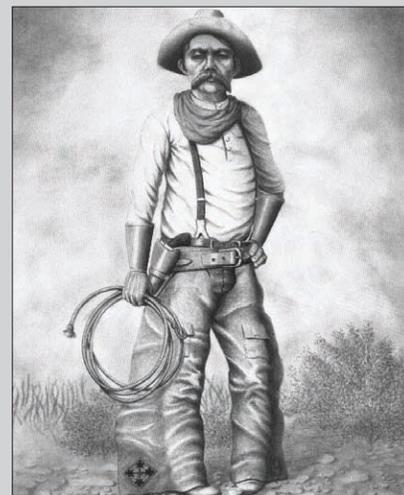
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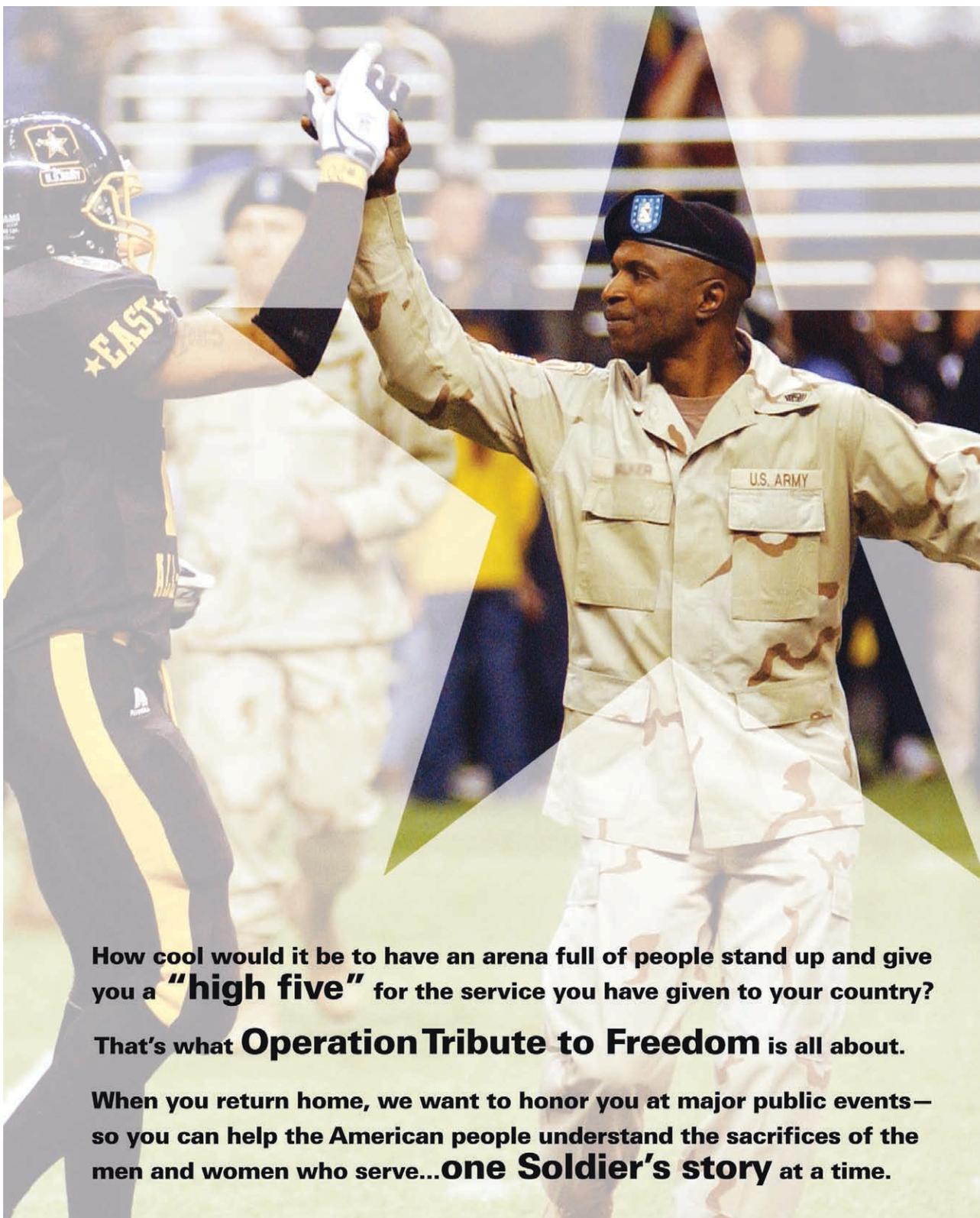
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Kings of battle

By Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux
207TH MPAD

Like many other field artillery batteries, Battery C, 6th Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery from Fort Sill, Okla.,

was in for a surprise as they were told in January 2005 that they will deploy as a Heavy Equipment Transporter (HET) company to Iraq.

Challenges increased as they went from around 100 to around 300 troops.

"It was a tough transition," said Capt. Ryan Zachry, battery commander. Entire firing batteries were transformed into platoons, and put under his command. Currently his battery consists of a total of five combat logistics patrol platoons, a maintenance platoon and a headquarters element. To throw an additional twist in the mix, two of his combat logistics patrol platoons work on other forward operating bases.

Also, as a result of the transformation, the battery was augmented with a truck master, who is an actual a motor transport operator. Master Sgt. Charlie Stokes said that he was received with open arms. "They were happy to see me."

Stokes brought a lot of experience with him. "There were a lot of questions that needed to be answered," Stokes said. "They trained a lot, but they didn't have the actual first-hand experience on the way things should be done in transportation. When I got there, a lot of questions were answered."

It is not easy to go from being a multiple launch rocket system (MLRS) crew member to driving HETs, "but you look at these guys versus the actual transportation guys we replaced, and they are on the same level," Stokes said proudly.

Like many field artillery Soldiers in Iraq, Battery C of the 6th Battalion of the 32nd Field Artillery Regiment have to make the sometimes painful switch to a new kind of royalty: 'Kings of the road'

They went from being the 'king of the battle' to the 'king of the road' in a very short time. They mostly transport vehicles that are damaged or need to be repositioned in theater. They often haul Iraqi army equipment. At one time,

they delivered farming equipment to an Iraqi village, said Sgt. Steven McBride, a MLRS crew member, now a HET driver.

But if it wasn't for the outstanding work of the maintenance platoon, the combat logistics patrol platoons could not perform so well, said Zachry. "They have been able to maintain an operational readiness rate of 96 percent, which is unusually high for a HET company," he said.

Two other transportation companies had problems maintaining the HET systems, and the FA mechanics helped out. "I was pretty proud of the artillery mechanics training transportation mechanics on how to maintain their equipment," Zachry said.

Thanks to the great work of the Soldiers in all sections, the battery has not dropped a single mission since they arrived in theater in November.

When they hit the road, they are gone for a couple of days at a time, spending the nights on the bunk beds inside the cab when they

pull into a forward operating base. It is more convenient than looking for someone to issue keys for the accommodations in the middle of the night, Stokes said.

Although like McBride, most Soldiers didn't like the idea of becoming truck drivers, by now they have adjusted well and enjoy getting out and being able to see parts of the country.

"The culture here is pretty awesome when you get around the everyday people," he said. "I wanted to do field artillery; I wanted to blow stuff up. At the same time I am supporting the nation," said McBride.



Spc. Norman Cowan saws off a damaged 'pogo-stick' which holds the glad hands that supply air to the trailer of a Heavy Equipment Transport in the Battery C 6-32 FA motor pool May 1. Cowan is a multiple launch rocket system crew member turned Heavy Equipment Transporter driver.
Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux

Personal Finance Planning

Vehicle purchases pose financial risks for young troops after redeployment

As we are planning our redeployment, have you been dreaming of driving home in a new convertible or maybe it's the Harley Davidson Motorcycle you have always wanted? Before you start mapping out a route for your first drive, you just might want to learn some valuable car-buying tips.

Whether it's a first-time purchase or not, it can seem like a daunting task. You probably have heard the phrases like "down payment" and "APR." Although the terms may seem confusing, once you understand them, buying a car will be pretty straightforward.

Here are some things you should know:

Don't trade your old car, sell it

To a dealer, your old car is worthless, although he/she will tell you otherwise. If your car isn't good enough for a new-dealer's used car lot it will go straight to auction. Another dealer will snap it up, mark the price up a thousand or two and make a nice profit that could have been part of your down payment.

Arrange financing before you go to a Dealer

This is to protect your choices.

Know your credit score and get approval from your bank or credit union first; that way, when the red light descends at the dealership, you won't feel compelled to take whatever the dealer offers.

You can negotiate harder if your credit passes muster. If the dealer does better than your bank, fine. But if your credit is marginal (a credit score below 620), stick with a bank. Auto dealers can work any number of tricks with financing—We have all seen the sign that reads "We finance anybody," but most of the

time that means "expensive."

If a bank or credit union won't make you a car loan, you really, really, really should not be buying a car.



Master Sgt. Robin Krieger
BRIGADE FINANCE NCOIC

If you know that your score is high, 620 and up, you should be offered the lowest rates. But finance officers may not always give customers the best rates that they qualify for. Car manufacturers often have their own finance departments, so they make more profit when selling customers loans at higher interest rates. So, keep your comfortable clothes on, and be prepared to walk out without

buying the car.

Talk to your insurance agent

Find out what your insurance payments are — your payments being larger than your car payment can be quite a shock. You can't leave with the car from the dealership without insurance. Insurance from the Dealership is usually very expensive.

means you have no equity in the car—and once the key is turned, the depreciation clock starts ticking and you're in over your head.

Say No to the Finance Guys

You'll have to visit, just to sign the paperwork. It's his/her job to sell you a few extras along the way. Say, "No, thank you, just the car, please."

No Scotchgard (you can buy a can for five dollars, no undercoating (you won't keep this baby long enough for it to rust), no credit life (unless you have a spouse and kids to protect). Say no to extended warranty. Standard warranties are usually three years (you have until the standard warranty runs out to get an extended warranty) and they are usually cheaper. You should know by then whether or not you'll need one.

Don't pay for window etching or dealer-added alarms (for security measures). You can get them cheaper elsewhere.

Don't pay for dealer prep. That should be free.

Only pay for sales tax, registration and licensing fees, a destination charge

Although the terms may seem confusing, once you understand them, buying a car will be pretty straightforward.

Have a real down payment

You need a cash down payment of at least 20 percent, excluding any rebates, or otherwise you're "upside down" from day one. Here's why:

Rebates are the manufactures' way of cutting the price without cutting the sticker price. A new car with an MSRP of \$17,000 and a rebate of \$2,000 is in fact worth \$15,000 on the open market. Using only your rebate,

and a small documentation fee, but don't pay administration, handling, flooring or promotion fees, even if they are already printed on the order form.

You are probably excited about driving your new vehicle, but make sure you take the time and read everything before you sign. If this is the first vehicle you have purchased, take someone that has experience with you.



Staff Sgt. Franzemil Baez looks at the contents of a damaged shipment with Sgt. Demetria Palmer in the Central Receiving and Shipping Point near Seitz Annex May 2. Baez is a transportation management coordinator with the 393rd Corps Support Battalion and Palmer a fuel handler with the 282nd Quartermaster Company. **Photo by Staff Sgt. Monika Comeaux**

393rd diverse, unified in Iraq mission

Companies from across nation brought together to serve on Victory Base Complex

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

SEITZ ANNEX, Iraq—The nearly 400 Soldiers under the 393rd Corps Support Battalion could not have come from a more diverse background.

The Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment of the 393rd Corps Support Battalion is a Reserve element from Bayamon, Puerto Rico, the 98th Maintenance Company (Direct Support) is an active-duty unit from Fort Richardson, Alaska, and the 282nd Quartermaster Company is also an Army Reserve unit from Montgomery, Ala.

They all hit the ground in theater around the same time just weeks ago and they are all in the process of adjusting to their mission: to provide logistical support to the Multi-National Division-Baghdad area, said Maj. Louis Feliciano, the Support Operations

Officer of the 393rd.

“We are like a quartermaster battalion... we hold the goods, the 18th [Corps Support Battalion, our sister battalion] pushes the goods out to the outlying customers to the forward operating bases,” Feliciano explained. The 393rd provides support to approximately 80,000 personnel in their area of responsibility.

One of the most important missions the 393rd has is running the Central Receiving and Shipping Point (CRSP) with the help of the 282nd Quartermaster Company. “In addition to the CRSP yard, we also have the Class I yard and the bulk fuel point,” said Chief Warrant Officer Ilicia Kirby, one of the officers in charge of the CRSP yard.

Generally a CRSP would be run by a cargo transfer company, but the 282nd, being a quartermaster company, has water purification specialists and fuel handlers who orchestrate

everything in the yard.

The other subordinate unit of the 393rd, the 98th, provides maintenance support not only to customers within the battalion, but to the entire MND-B area.

Although the units came from extreme latitudes and longitudes, they came together in the middle of Iraq just fine.

“I think that the battalion is coming along very well, the units are integrating,” said Lt. Col. Jaime Lugo, the battalion commander. “Soldiers are fantastic and I think our biggest strength is our diversity.”

“We had a lot of perceptions about falling under a Reserve unit,” said 1st Lt. Wyman Bey, the executive officer of the 98th. “We always had the old perception that Reservists and National Guardsmen are laid back... We found out that is not actually true. They did

Take around 32 containers, fill them with 4,000 sheets of plywood, 900 sleeping mats and blankets, 60 general purpose medium tents, and the same number of light sets, throw in some fuel and water cans, spice it up with some heaters and you have a portable forward operating base, or 'FOB in a box.'

This is the kind of equipment Soldiers from the 428th Quartermaster Company, an Army Reserve unit from Minnesota, were dealing with, as they assembled five 'FOB in a box' kits in the past eight months.

The kits are used when setting up a brand new forward operating base, or if the need for the immediate housing of troops occurs due to some unforeseeable circumstances. Each kit can support close to a 1,000 Soldiers.

"We started dealing with the 'FOB in

The first 'FOB in a box' set is loaded and shipped out just hours after U.S. Soldiers at another Baghdad-area FOB lost their accommodations due to an electrical fire. *Courtesy photo*

a box' concept in November of 2005," said Master Sgt. James Anderson, an automated logistical specialist with the 189th Corps Support Battalion. "We inherited it from the corps support battalion that we replaced."

Anderson works in the Support Operations' supply and service section and he is in charge of ordering all the items that go in the kits that the quartermaster company's Soldiers assemble.

Since the SSA (Supply Support Activity) is run by Kellogg, Brown and

Root, the 428th's warehouse platoon didn't have a mission. So they were tasked with running the 'FOB in a box' operation, said Capt. Scott Noyes, the 428th's commander. "They were all commended for a job well done. I know they all got battalion coins, a few of them got Army Achievement Medals for their work."

Assembling the kits is not as easy as it may sound. It takes a lot of coordination, different types of equipment like forklifts or cranes, and lots of physical labor, said Staff Sgt. Roger Tabula, a logistical specialist who was one of NCOs in charge of the project.

"A lot of it is waiting for the equipment to get in... It took about five and a half months to get the first three full sets ready to go," said Tabula. It also takes a lot of coordination to get the right equipment on site to assemble the kits, he added.

Loading the plywood in the containers can be a challenge.

"The length of the plywood doesn't allow us to load it in easily," said Sgt. Matt Hendrickson, also an automated logistical specialist with the 428th. "Each sheet of plywood weighs close to 100 pounds, because they are one inch thick. They are heavy. Try to lift 4,000 of them."

Because of the weight of the plywood, the team learned not to put more than 250 in each container. If plywood packed the containers, it makes the Palletized Load Systems transporting the containers top

Boxed in

QM company assembles, ships whole FOBs to Baghdad-area forces

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

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CITIZENS FROM Page 1

Flores said she joined the Army because she always wanted to be a Soldier. "I love the service," she said.

Flores moved to the United States with her family when she was 14, so she remembers life in El-Salvador, her country of origin very well.

"I feel so lucky to be able to get my citizenship," she said. "I am lucky to be living in the United States instead of back home. I remember when I was little, I remember what I saw. It was hard."

Better opportunities brought the family of Estrada-Perez to the United States as well. They are originally from Mexico. Estrada-Perez said he wanted to become a citizen to improve his life, open up new windows of opportunity and bring honor to his family.

"They did the first step to come to the United States, so it was only natural to take the next step and become a citizen," he said.

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heavy, making them more prone to flipping over, Hendrickson explained.

The team also faced the challenges of having to move the assembly site three times.

At first the location changed because land surveyors showed up, measuring out the foundations for new buildings. The next site flooded when the rainy season hit, said Noyes.

But it was during that rainy season when having a 'FOB in a box' really paid off.

A FOB had an electrical fire recently, and many Soldiers lost their personnel equipment and accommodations.

That is when the first kit was deployed and tested. "The first set that went out took us less than 18 hours to get it to the FOB once we got notified," said Anderson.

Generators are in such high demand in theater, that although the original packing list contained generators, none have come in yet, said Hendrickson.

The Soldiers involved in the process are

proud to have worked on such an important and useful project.

"The 'FOB in a box' isn't just about assembling miscellaneous plywood and all the items," said Hendrickson.

"It is about coming up with a set that is going to go to a camp that is going to support their living. It is to support their daily life, their operations.

"To realize that it is going to support Soldiers and help complete their mission is an important concept."

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a good job planning and also helping us out when we got here."

Staff Sgt. Darcella Gaston, an automated logistical specialist with the 98th, had similar misconceptions. "I have never worked with Army Reserves or National Guard before. I did not go in with an open mind... I was blown away from the knowledge they had. We help each other out."

Lugo and Feliciano agree that it took some time for the different components to adjust and learn to work with each other. Everybody brings something different to the table.

"...On the Reserve side of the house, we have to keep in mind the expertise that they bring from their civilian occupation, which has paid dividends for us already in the 30 days that we have been here," Lugo said.

Since the active-duty Soldiers do the same type of missions on a day-to-day basis back home, they have some of the transactions 'down to the T.' "We bring a lot of experience...in the way how we do things," said Bey.

Some things are exactly the same, whether you are an active-duty or Reserve Soldier. "Maintenance is the same all the way around," said Bey.

Although the road to the becoming a citizen was not the smoothest for all participants, they all were very happy to call themselves citizens of the United States.

"It was a mission trying to get a hold of everybody, trying to e-mail everybody and get everything settled," said Pfc. Nadia Miranda, a small-arms and artillery repairman from the 503rd Maintenance Company, currently deployed to Logistical Base Seitz.

She started her paperwork at their home station in Fort Bragg, N.C. back in November.

A proud citizen today, Miranda urges non-citizen Soldiers to take advantage of the opportunity of getting their citizenship at no cost with the help of the Army.

Flores has the same message: "Take advantage of what the military offers you. It is free, it is a good benefit. If you are serving the country, why not become a citizen?"

"The hard thing is dealing with the admin side of the house..."

Gaston hopes to make the most of working with the unit from Puerto Rico. One of her deployment goals was to learn Spanish. She said that despite the initial "bumps and bruises," the pains will go away and they will work on accomplishing the mission together, each unit pulling their fair share. "They do everything we do. There is no difference, just they are from Puerto Rico and we are from Alaska... We all wear the same uniform."

...We have to keep in mind the expertise that they bring from their civilian occupation, which has paid dividends for us already.

Lt. Col. Jaime Lugo
COMMANDER, 393RD CORPS SUPPORT BATTALION

The battalion commander is satisfied with how his units have come together.

"It is not always easy to integrate units from different parts of the country, or in this case, different parts of the world, but we have done very well," said Lugo.

A Few Legal Pointers

Impending PCS? Protect your household goods

Checking, double checking key to getting money owed for damaged property

Moving from one duty station to another can be a strain on Soldiers and their families. Soldiers who have gone through this ordeal at some point might have experienced missing or damaged household furniture or personal items. Although items becoming missing or damaged during a move may be unavoidable, there are many ways Soldiers can protect themselves in their next move.

The most sentimental, fragile, and expensive items are unfortunately the first things to be found broken or missing. Before the movers arrive at your doorstep, take pictures of your valuables. Keep those photos in a safe place and physically with you during the move. Photos can be saved on a CD-ROM or printed so you can take them with you. Keep all receipts and other evidence to show the value of the items that are irreplaceable. Expensive items such as jewelry or small ornaments, for example Swarovski crystal, should be packed in your vehicle and taken with you.

If you cannot fit all of your valuable in your car to take with you, then use extra care in packing these items yourself for the movers to transport. Spend the money to purchase bubble wrap and packing peanuts to protect these items. When the movers come to pack your home, be sure that these valuables are identified specifically on the inventory sheet. The inventory sheet is provided by the movers to list all of your household possessions.

Photograph and keep all forms of ownership and value (i.e. receipts, and owner's manuals) for furniture, appliances, electronics, and other personal items. Take several pictures of furniture items to show the condition of the furniture at the time of the packing in the event that the furniture is scratched or

damaged during the move. Movers will often indicate that the furniture is scratched on the inventory sheet before the move, so in order to protect yourself you must have pictures of the furniture before its move to prove its condition before the move.

Keeping track of all your belongings as they are being packed is a challenge so make sure you have a list of all the large and important items and make sure they are written on the inventory sheet. Be sure all electronic items, for example televisions and audio equipment, are recorded by brand, model and serial number on the inventory sheet. The inventory sheet is very important and should specify exactly what each item is that corresponds to its number. In case a piece of

furniture is damaged or missing upon delivery to your new duty station, the inventory sheet is proof that you owned the item at pick-up and that the movers actually packed and loaded the item.

The inventory sheet is more than just a list of boxes with line descriptions of "living room decorations," "dinner table," or "clothes." The inventory sheet also documents the condition of your appliances and furniture. Moving companies use special codes and abbreviations to annotate scratches, tears, and stains on every corner of your appliances, electronics, and furniture. These codes are printed in a legend at the top of each page and are a series of numbers and letters. After the movers finish annotating every box, appliance, and piece of furniture on the inventory sheet, go through the inventory sheet and read the codes and abbreviations next to your furniture and appliances. If the mover writes "gouge on table top" with the numeric and alphabet codes,

ask the mover to show you the damage. If you disagree with the mover's assessment of your furniture, there are about three lines at the bottom of each inventory sheet to write down any comments or disagreements with the mover's assessments. And make sure you have already taken pictures of the items!

On the day your household goods arrive at your new duty station, pay attention to the large pieces of furniture as they come off of the truck. Look for new damage to your appliances and furniture. If you notice that a dinner table leg has been broken, or a new stain on the sofa, write the damage in detail on the front side of DD Form 1840, also known as the "pink forms." The pink forms are given to you by the movers at the time of delivery. These forms are required to file a claim with the Army to compensate for any damage or loss to your household goods during the move. Also have a copy of your inventory sheet to make sure the same number of boxes and furniture are unloaded. If there is anything missing, annotate it on the front side of the pink forms at the time of delivery.

You have 70 days from the date of delivery to report all damaged and missing household goods on the pink forms and to return it to the Claims Office. If you submit your pink forms after the 70th day, your claim may not be compensable. Submitting your pink forms is the first step in filing your claim. There are additional forms, inventory sheets, evidence of ownership and value, and other documents that need to be submitted to complete your claim. You have two years from the date of delivery to submit these additional forms and documents to successfully file a claim.

Following the above mentioned precautions and steps will protect you in your next move. For further information on the claims process, visit the installation Claims office for details.



Capt. Eric Lee
JUDGE ADVOCATE