

Crossed Sabers

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"Telling the First Team's Story"

Friday, Sept. 8, 2006

Troops Arrive in Iraq, Take Over Support Operations

TAJI, Iraq -- The 15th Sustainment Brigade's Special Troops Battalion uncased their battalion colors during an early morning ceremony on Sept. 3 at Camp Taji, a logistics hub located just north of Baghdad.

The uncasing ceremony marked the battalion formally assuming the mission responsibility from the 4th Sustainment Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division.

Exactly 28 days from the last main body departure from Fort Hood, but after many months of preparations, the battalion became the first unit from the 1st Cavalry Division to relieve members of the 4th



(Courtesy Photo)

Lt. Col. Victoriano Garcia, Jr., the 15th Sustainment Brigade's Special Troops Battalion commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Long, the battalion's top noncommissioned officer, uncased the battalion's colors during the ceremony at Camp Taji Sept. 3.

Infantry Division from their mission in Iraq.

"The 4th BSTB provided us tremendous support during

our transition," said Lt. Col. Victoriano Garcia, Jr., the battalion commander. "We will continue to maintain the excel-

lent reputation for support, customer service and mission accomplishment that the 4th BTB developed during their deployment."

The battalion now turns its sights to establishing operations, building key relationships and improving the quality of life and living conditions for all of the Soldiers while assisting Iraqi Security Forces and providing base defense at their base camp.

"We have a long year ahead of us, but our Soldiers are well trained to accomplish the mission," Garcia said. "Morale has been high since we left Fort Hood and our Soldiers are ready to get to work."



(Photo by Maj. Robert Cain, 3rd BCT)

Good-bye Grey Wolf!

Sgt. Michael Perez, Company F, 215th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, and other "Grey Wolf" Soldiers say good-bye to their loved ones Sept. 2, prior to deploying to Kuwait as part of the Port Support Activity group responsible for the movement, maintenance and security of the brigade's equipment in Kuwait. The group was the first 300 troops of Grey Wolf to depart.
(See story on Page 3)

Man on the Street

How do you feel about the progress the U.S. has made towards women's equality?



Capt. Dawn Williams
From Charlotte, Va.
Headquarters Co.,
Division Special
Troops Bn.

"I feel that women have truly evolved into their own self-proclaimed entity. Today's modern woman is not afraid to take on the tasks the modern world provides. Women are still continuing to climb the 'corporate' ladders while sustaining all the decisions they face."

"We've thrown many stereotypes out the door; we're no longer limited to becoming nurses or secretaries. Now we have woman doctors operating and females joining the military. Being in the Army myself, I can say we're definitely headed towards a better future."



Spc. Grace Sanchez
From Huntington
Beach, Calif.
Headquarters Co.,
Division Special
Troops Bn.

"I think that we've made a lot of progress. Today we're in an era where a woman can run for president. Women are in leadership positions and making things happen. Our progress has allowed us to send women to the moon, watch women run huge corporations and fight the fight on the battlefield."



**Sgt. 1st Class
Celetia Carroll**
From McGregor, Texas
Headquarters Co.,
Division Special
Troops Bn.

(Photos by Pfc. Jeffrey Ledesma, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Safety Stressed as the Cav Moves Out

The First Team is in Iraq now. While most of us go through our final preparations prior to deployment, Col. Aundre Piggee and Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Joseph unfurled the unit colors of the division's 15th Sustainment Brigade at Camp Taji, marking the first unit to complete its relief in place of our brothers from the 4th Infantry Division.

The 1st Air Cavalry Brigade and "Grey Wolf" troopers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team are the next Soldiers standing in the door.

Over the coming months, more and more cavalry troopers will say goodbye to their loved ones and leave central Texas behind. We're moving thousands of troops and mountains of material as we deploy. Let's do this safely.

The division's "Power Thought" has never held more importance, as we head into harm's way.

I can save my own life.

Leaders are responsible for making risk assessments for all activities, but that one short sentence brings it all home to each of us. We are responsible to each other to do the right thing, but most of all, we owe it to ourselves to make risk management our number one priority.

Think safety ... always. Many of us are heading into a final block leave period ... a last chance to enjoy everything that being home has to offer. Be smart about it.

I am responsible for my own safety, both on and off duty, on and off post.

Know the risk factors for everything you do, and mitigate the risk by taking the proper precautions. Many of you will drive great distances to see family and friends one last time. Plan

Pegasus 9 Sends:

Command Sgt. Maj.
Philip Johndrow



your trip wisely, and allow yourself ample time to get where you're going and get back safely. Fatigue can kill you. Falling asleep behind the wheel won't put you in the arms of your loved ones. It will put you in the hospital ... or worse.

Wear your seat belts, always, and everywhere you go. It's the law. If motorcycles are your passion, wear a helmet and the proper attire. It could save your life.

Slow down on the highways and byways. A speeding ticket can be the least of your worries if you're driving too fast for road conditions. We've actually seen some rain lately, and many of us might have forgotten how to drive on a slick surface. Give yourself safe following distances, and don't be in a rush to get to where you're going. It's better to get there a little late, than not get there at all.

Lastly, go easy on the alcohol. We all know that drugs are a no-go, already, but don't use your last days in the states to see how much you can imbibe. You want to remember the fun you had. Take it easy on the bottle.

Why is this important?

You are important. This division needs every trooper it has to meet the challenges ahead. Your nation is depending on you.

This division will case its colors on Cooper Field Sept. 28, officially marking the division's departure from central Texas. We won't unfurl it again until we're in Baghdad.

Your leaders are counting on you to do the right things and return to your unit re-energized, motivated and in one piece. You can save your own life, and it starts today.

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Grey Wolf Leads the Pack...

Troops Deploy to Prep for Brigade's Arrival

By Pfc. Ben Fox
3rd BCT Public Affairs

Approximately 300 Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division's "Grey Wolf" Brigade Combat Team deployed to Kuwait Sept. 2 to pave the way for the brigade's arrival there.

The Port Support Activity, or PSA, left from Fort Hood to support Grey Wolf's upcoming deployment, said Maj. Tim Karcher, the brigade's operations officer and native of Harker Heights, Texas.

The PSA's mission is to download all of the brigade's equipment in Kuwait and arrange for the movement and staging of equipment in Kuwait, Karcher said.

Of the Soldiers who deployed, approximately 120 Soldiers will remain in Kuwait until the brigade completes its deployment. Those Soldiers



(Photo by Spc. Charlie Maib, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

A Soldier from 3rd Brigade Combat Team consoles his wife before departing for his journey to Kuwait Sept. 2. The brigade sent about 300 Soldiers to pave the way for the rest of Grey Wolf.

will comprise the mission's sustainment and security element, and will be required to maintain and secure the brigade's equipment until the rest of the

Grey Wolf troops arrive in country.

After the Soldiers of the PSA remove the equipment and vehicles from the ships and

relocate them to the staging area, the S&S element will arrange the equipment in unit assembly areas, said Karcher. The Soldiers will conduct weekly maintenance checks on the vehicles and repair any disabled vehicles, ensuring the equipment is combat ready and combat efficient.

While in Kuwait, the leadership assigned to the S&S element will set conditions for the remainder of the brigade - easing the transition of deployment as the main body of the brigade arrives and prepares to accomplish its mission, Karcher said.

Besides helping to prepare equipment, Karcher said the leadership in Kuwait will be responsible for arranging living accommodations and scheduling necessary ranges to further advance the brigade's combat effectiveness.

Brigade First in Cav to Achieve Retention Mission

By Pfc. Ben Fox
3rd BCT Public Affairs

The 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division became the first brigade to finish its annual retention mission.

Command Sgt. Maj. Donald R. Felt, the brigade's senior non commissioned officer, said it is a significant achievement for the brigade to be the first to achieve its retention mission.

Felt said this achievement is a direct reflection of the command climate, and the motivation and professionalism of Greywolf Soldiers.

Felt said the focal point for the Army is to retain trained soldiers, which the brigade has attacked as any other critical mission.

Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Helmes, the

brigade's career counselor said the brigade had the largest retention mission in the entire division and was the first in the division to reach its annual retention goal.

"This shows me we have the best chain of command, career counselors and overall retention team in the division," said Helmes.

Without the chain of command's involvement, the brigade would have not been the first to finish, he said.

The success of the mission shows that the leadership from the squad leaders to the brigade commander, and especially the senior non commissioned officers showed a general concern for the Soldiers and their families, said Helmes.

Helmes said Soldiers who re-enlist strengthen the brigade's combat readiness.

"You have Soldiers dedicated to the cause and want to be here," said Helmes.

The Soldiers also bring valuable experience to the table, and the experienced leaders will be able to pass their skills to the younger Soldiers, making the brigade a more lethal force, he said.

The retention mission is important because it manages the Army's strength, and if the mission is not met, the Army's strength is weakened, he said.

"This is the best job in the world to have to take care of your family," he said, adding that the medical and dental benefits alone can't be beat by any corporation in the country.

No where else in the country can a person find a job that gives him 30 days of paid leave and 24 holidays a year, he said.

On top of that, Helmes said there is no better way to get cheap or free college tuition for a worker and his family members.

Retention Team Unveils New Poster Highlighting Division's Return to Iraq

By Master Sgt. Dave Larsen
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Nothing says "Stay Cav" quite like a "Stay Cav" poster. At least that's what the folks at the 1st Cavalry Division's retention office believe.

The new poster will soon grace brigade and battalion headquarter walls, focusing First Team troops on retention and the mission at hand, said Sgt. Maj. Derek Dahlke, the division's command career counselor.

"The new poster is targeting our next deployment - support of Operation Iraqi Freedom," Dahlke said. "When you look at the poster, it represents the modern Army, the Army of today. The cloud behind it represents our history ... our tradition. It's always with us."

The latest poster is actually the third in a series started



when the division was in Iraq the last time.

"Looking back over time, we've had great reenlistment posters," Dahlke said. "We wanted to continue that tradition."

The new design features a more modern look for the military vehicles, as they are drive ahead of

an electrical storm. The storm, Dahlke said, has a special meaning.

"What it signifies is the storm coming, the storm that will take place when the 1st Cav gets there (in Iraq)," the Houston native said. "What it doesn't reflect is that calm after the storm." "The Operation Iraqi

Freedom commemorative poster's design will find its way to more than unit day rooms. Dahlke said coffee mugs and other items will also feature the new logo.

"We create what we call 'reenlistment appreciation items,' which are given out at the time of reenlistment," he said. "These are also given to the museum as historical items for down the road, but for now, they're just appreciation items for Soldiers."

The main message the command's career counselor wants to leave with division troops is one of inspiration.

"The intent is, one, to promote reenlistment and, two, to maintain morale as we deploy," Dahlke said. "We're producing posters that will inspire and motivate Soldiers, making them know that they're part of a team."



(Photo by Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, the 1st Cavalry Division's deputy commanding general for support, escorts Sen. James M. Inhofe, R-Ok., into the division headquarters at Fort Hood Aug. 28. According to Brooks, the senator visited to get a realistic view of operations at the division level and get feedback from its leadership.

Cav Helps Senator Grasp the Division's Readiness

By Sgt. Nicole Kojetin
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Republican Sen. James Inhofe, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, made a brief stop at the 1st Cavalry Division headquarters Monday Aug. 28 to receive a readiness briefing from the command leadership.

"What he really wanted to get a feel for is what can be done and where are we, so that the Senate, for example, can focus several years ahead and try to help us

through the preparation for war in a different way than we had to go through this time," Brooks said following the visit.

The senator from Oklahoma spent approximately two hours at the division headquarters, gaining insight into the deployment process for the First Team.

"We tried to give him some candid feedback on where we think we really are, in terms of our readiness for war, what it is we are preparing for, and how we trained," Brooks said. "He is going to take it from there."

Special Delivery:**Surprise Birthday No Party for Proud Papa**

By Master Sgt. Dave Larsen
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Shania Jackson wasn't expected to arrive until Aug. 4. She not only came early. She came into this world in a rush.

Staff Sgt. Carla Williams, a supply sergeant with the 4th Infantry Division's 204th Support Battalion, started having contractions at 2:45 a.m. July 26.

She didn't want to wake her husband, Ray Jackson, asleep in the upstairs bedroom of their home in the Commanche IV housing area, until it was time.

Carla started walking around downstairs.

"After about an hour, I needed to use the bathroom," recalled the six-year Army veteran from Blytheville, Ark., who had been working for her unit's rear detachment during her pregnancy. "When I got there, my water broke



(Courtesy photos from Ray Jackson)

Carla Williams cradles her newborn daughter, Shania, at Darnell Hospital July 26. The baby arrived ten days early and in less than ten minutes of labor at the family home on Fort Hood. Carla's husband, Ray Jackson, assisted in the delivery in the family bathroom before paramedics could arrive.

and the baby's head popped out."

Her husband was already awake upstairs when he heard his wife's frantic cry for help from the downstairs bathroom.

Call it intuition, call it luck, but Ray was already wide awake and able to assist Carla in the rapid birth of their second daughter.

"When I saw the baby's head sticking out, I knew I had to lay Carla down," said the native of Pensacola, Fla. "I broke one telephone, dropping it, trying to call 9-1-1, but finally reached an ambulance using my cell phone."

As he juggled his cell phone, Baby Shania didn't want to wait until paramedics

got to the house. At 4:03 a.m., Carla and Ray had a healthy 6 lb., 10 oz., 19-inch baby girl.

"I grabbed a towel off the bathroom rack and caught the baby as she came out," Ray said. "Once the baby was born, my next concern was my wife ... keeping her warm and comfortable because she was cold and shaking."

The ordeal of bringing their child into the world themselves was over quickly, and when the ambulance arrived at their home ten minutes after the call, the paramedics let Ray do the honors of cutting the umbilical cord.

Surprisingly, Carla said Shania's birth was easier than that of her two-year-old sister,

Shakeyvia.

"For me, knowing that Ray was there made it all easier," Carla said, even though she delivered without the aid of any pain medication.

If Shania had come a few days later, Ray wouldn't have been there at all.

He had a temporary duty trip to make for his job, working as a contract employee for the 1st Cavalry Division headquarters' Command Maintenance Equipment and Evaluation Team (COMET). Shania's birth nixed the TDY trip.

The timing of his daughter's birth, and his own premo-



After a long morning, Shania Jackson (6 lbs., 10 oz., 19-inches) can rest on her birthday at the Darnell Medical Center at Fort Hood July 26.

Hundreds Watch as Captain 'Pops the Question'

FRISCO, Texas - Getting engaged is an emotional event. For some guys, getting it just right takes a little extra effort.

One officer with the 1st Cavalry Division's Special Troops Battalion found a unique way to pop the question

in front of hundreds of minor league baseball fans Aug. 19.

Capt. Brock Zimmerman, the assistant operations officer

division's DSTB, proposed to his girlfriend, Kym, at a Frisco Roughriders AA baseball game. The proposal came as a complete surprise to Kym.

She thought he was just at the game to throw out the first pitch.

"My girlfriend (thought) that all of this is in recognition of my service before I depart later on in the year," Zimmerman said.

Zimmerman was decked out in his dress blue uniform for his minor league pitching debut, adding a nice touch for the main event. After throwing out the first pitch, the captain took his seat and waited for the stadium's "Kiss Cam" to capture them during the game.

"They focus on couples, and they kiss when they see each other on the big screen," Zimmerman said. In Zimmerman's case, instead of just kissing, he dropped to one knee and popped the question.

Hundreds watched as Kym said, "Yes!" and the couple embraced.



(Courtesy Photo)

Capt. Brock Zimmerman proposes to his girlfriend, Kym, a Frisco Roughriders AA baseball game Aug. 19 in Frisco, Texas. The assistant operations officer for the 1st Cavalry Division's Special Troops Battalion said that Kym had no idea what he was planning until he dropped to his knee.

Stork Arrives Early for Delivery

Stork

From Page 5

...nition that something was wrong to wake him up from a deep sleep before his wife went into full labor convinced Ray that he had an angel on his shoulder that morning.

"I know that God was looking out for us that morning," he said.

When the family arrived at Fort Hood's Darnell Medical Center, Ray said he was praised by the medical staff for his quick reaction and congratulated for helping to bring his daughter into the world.

For himself, Ray was just

happy to be able to relax, knowing his wife and daughter were fine and receiving professional medical care.

As for him being some kind of hero, Ray said he looks up to his wife for all that she's been through.

"I think that she's my hero," Ray said. "She went through all that without any medication."

With the healthy delivery of their second daughter, both Ray and Carla said there won't be another chance for Ray to play doctor again.

"I think we'll quit at two," Ray said.

Phantom Express Extends Operation Hours for Cav

The Phantom Express Registration Center will be open on two Saturdays to accommodate family members who work during the week.

The center located in the 1st Cavalry Division Headquarters building 28000, room 1125, will be open Sept. 9 and 23 from 10 p.m. to 2 p.m.

In order to register, the family member needs to bring their military identification card, vehicle registration, drivers license, insurance card, and DoD decal number and expiration date written down.

All family member that will be registered need to be present so their photo can be taken.

More Than Just Information

FRG Aims to Create First Team Family

**By Sgt. Nicole Kojetin
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs**

Family is essential.

In the Army, deployment is unavoidable.

The two combined can be difficult to balance, but there is help out there at your Family Readiness Group.

"(The FRG) is a section of the population that assists families, especially during a deployment," said Carol Livengood, the site manager for the U.S. Army Forces Command Family Readiness Group Deployment Assistance Program for the 1st Cavalry Division.

The group creates an informational loop between family members and the command. The spouse can find out how to get in contact with their troop, how to mail things, how to get assistance with a financial problem, get good news stories about what their Soldier is doing, and get just about any other question they have answered.

"That is our sole purpose in life, to ensure that family members -- to include



Wendy Fil, the senior leader for 1st Cavalry Division Family Readiness Group and the wife of the division's commanding general, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr., talks about how FRGs help Soldiers and their families during deployment.

moms, dads, uncles, extended family members, not just spouses -- can get the information they need," said the Iuka, Miss. native.

Providing a Support Network

Families can also use their FRG as a support group during deployment. Wendy Fil, a senior FRG leader and the wife of the division's commanding general, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr., swears that FRGs truly help families in times of hardship.

This Tupelo, Miss. native will never forget her own experience with her family readiness group in Germany. She was pregnant with their first child, and her husband was deployed in support of Desert Storm.

"We were given the option to go home to be with our family members, but there was just no way that I was going to do that." Fil said. "I knew that as much as I loved my family, no one really understood me better than my Army family. The ladies that went through this deployment with me were my sisters. We helped each other through. "

Instead of finding just a packet of information, Fil found an Army family, and she said that is what supporters will find in their FRG, as well. Although, her experience was more than a decade ago, the Army family shares the same goals today, to get the information as quickly as possible to families.

"I knew I would receive the most pertinent information through my FRG," Fil said

Virtual Involvement

But this program isn't just for spouses and children of Soldiers any more. A new Virtual Family Readiness Group is on the Internet, allowing extended family members to get involved, as well. Livengood said the vFRG alleviates stress all around.

"In the past, such as OIF II, I received more phone calls from extended family members worried about their Soldier (than any other calls)," Livengood said. "Now we have the ability and capability to reach out to those family members who are distant geographically."

That means that moms, dads, uncles, aunts, siblings, cousins, any family member can all have access to this information through the website www.armyfrg.org.

If FRGs are tight-knit, the network also



(Photos by Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Carol Livengood is the site manager for the U.S. Army Forces Command Family Readiness Group Deployment Assistance Program for the 1st Cavalry Division. She helps families connect with their FRGs.

helps ease the mind of the troop deployed.

"It is also a force multiplier (increasing the ability for a troop to fight), because if a Soldier is worrying about what is going on in his or her home camp, it is impossible for them to focus on the mission," Livengood said.

Families can also visit the First Team's website to get additional unit information.

"The family members now have a (rumor control) button that is on the Cav website where they have an instant line to the command here at the First Team," Livengood said. "They can ask any questions that they like (via e-mail) and those recurring questions are placed on the website with answers."

This new virtual face of the FRG helps the information flow a little smoother, she said. It isn't the only change that has been implemented within the FRG system.

Go Team

During a notification of a death of a troop, there is now a new step between the

Troops Need to Update Records for Deployment

By Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim
2nd BCT Public Affairs

When Sgt. 1st Class Leo Davis, the Fire Support non-commissioned officer-in-charge, deployed to Iraq in 2004, he was then a staff sergeant, and among other things, he worried about making the list for his next rank.

"I had one of my first sergeants tell me once, 'It's your career; they're your records; you make sure it's straight; it's not on the Army.'"

He said he understood there might be all the services set up in place for Soldiers while in Iraq. So, before he deployed to Iraq, he made sure his Enlisted Records Brief, Official Military Personnel File and Department of the Army Official Photo were up to date.

According to Chief



Warrant Officer Jamie R. Alonso, 2nd BCT's Military Personnel Technician, during Soldier Readiness Process, Soldiers go through the Forward Support Team and their Personnel section's station updating their Servicemembers Group Life Insurance and Department of Defense Form 93

"Record of Emergency Data."

"SRPs are important because it ensures that Soldiers' family members are taken care of in case something happens to them," said Alonso.

Alonso added that although the SRP takes care of many Personnel-type issues, there are items that SRPs are not equipped to do such as updating Enlisted/Officer Records Briefs or OMPFs, making identification tags, DA photos and several others.

Although this might not affect most Soldiers, there are still those items such as enrolling family members in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System and identification cards that sometimes tend to get overlooked before a deployment, according to Sgt. Brandon Renfro, 2nd BCT's Forward Area Support Team

noncommissioned officer-in-charge.

"These might be some of the things you won't be able to do down range," Renfro said. "From what I understand, we will have full services [in Iraq], but Soldiers won't be able to update their OMPF."

Some other things Soldiers and family members should look out for is the changes of marital status and additions of new family members to be enrolled into DEERS. Documents needed for these updates will be marriage certificates, divorce decrees (signed by a judge) and child/children's birth certificates.

When it comes to the SRPs, Alonso said that the most important part of updating the SGLI and DD 93 is to bring accurate addresses for all beneficiaries and family members.

Taking Care of Cav Families is Top Priority for FRG

Family

From Page 7

notification and the arrival of a "Care Team." To help ensure that the family gets everything they need at this time of crisis, the FRG will send in a "Go Team" first.

"They go in with an initial assessment, to basically show that the 1st Cav. Div. cares and they look around the house and find out if they have kids, animals, anything they might need help with, Livengood."

After getting the assessment from the Go Team, a Care Team actually works on those needs, like getting meals, picking up family members from the airport or just answering the phone.

Maintaining the virtual information lines of communication and providing care during a crisis are two large missions of the FRG.

The leaders also take time to find people to help families reintegrate after the their



(Graphic by Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, 1st Cav. Public Affairs)

The Virtual Family Readiness Group allows extended family members to stay connected with their Soldier's unit during a deployment.

Soldier's return.

"As the redeployment occurs, it is important that they have the reunion training to talk about the differences in their Soldiers -- how you have changed and how your Soldier has changed -- and helpful hints to work through (being together again)

and resources available to assist them if there are issues," Livengood said.

Overall, Fil thinks that all the FRG pieces have come together and that they are prepared for the upcoming deployment.

"I think that our family readiness groups are extremely prepared," she said. "They have gone through countless hours of training and I think that we have a wonderful program on Fort Hood that we have passed along from deployment to deployment. We have a lot of things we have learned from previous deployments with 4th ID and 1st Cav. Div."

Fil said the FRG is great for all ranks and encourages family members to come out and join the First Team family.

To contact your FRG leader, visit the 1st Cavalry Division website at <http://www.hood.army.mil/1stcavdiv/> and click on FRG on the menu bar. FRG information can also be obtained at <http://www.armyfrg.org> or from the unit's commander.



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB Public Affairs)

Pvt. Jerrica Maikranz, a unit supply clerk for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, fired at "enemy" pop-up targets during a live-fire convoy training exercise recently.

"First Attack" Completes Final Major Training Event

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB Public Affairs

With a 30-millimeter chain gun, 2.75-inch high-explosive rockets and plenty of Hellfire missiles, the AH-64D Apache attack helicopter is an insurgent's worst nightmare.

Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division know this better than anyone - they train with them day in and day out.

"First Attack," as they are more commonly called, recently ended major training events with a convoy live fire exercise also known as Table XXII.

Table XXII is an advanced gunnery that involves Apaches giving convoy security, while troops in the convoy learn how to communicate and control the air support, said 1st Lt. Michael Hutson, a pilot and acting executive officer of Company B, 1-227th Aviation.

"This tactical exercise will exercise

both our air-to-ground and ground-to-air integration skills ensuring that when we face any insurgent in Iraq, our combat skills will be instinctive and our judgment rapid for executing lethal force ...," said Lt. Col. Christopher Walach, First Attack's commander.

"Generally, the convoy commanders and convoy personnel benefit from it as well [as the pilots] because very few convoys that we escort have had any dealings with aircraft, never talked to the aircraft or controlled aircraft before," Hutson said.

Pfc. Ashley Transue, a logistical supply specialist for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-227th, was the truck commander for the lead vehicle in one exercise.

She had to employ skills learned at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., while First Attack was there in May.

Transue had to call in enemy locations and activity to the convoy commander to ensure the entire convoy was aware of their

environment, she said.

While some touched up on their battlefield communication skills, others honed their driving skills.

Pfc. Edward Alamenas, an aviation operations specialist also with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, drove a Light Medium Tactical Vehicle during the training and learned how to keep distance while maintaining situational awareness of the convoy, he said.

Fifty-caliber machine gunners also had an opportunity to sharpen their skills with pop-up targets. Some targets had white sashes on them to signify them as innocent bystanders, said Pfc. Jerrica Maikranz, a supply clerk with the battalion.

The Apache pilots had their way with targets also, engaging them with their 30-mm chain guns and rockets, said Hutson.

"This was a good refresher course for the pilots who had been to Operation Iraqi Freedom I and OIF II," Hutson said. "It was also very beneficial for the pilots right out of flight school who haven't deployed."

Pre-Deployment Brief... For Kids?

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB Public Affairs

The lights were dimmed in a room at the Phantom Warrior Center and the children were impatiently shuffling around in their seats waiting for the guest speaker to appear.

Then it happened: Elmo, the famous, furry, red Sesame Street character, popped into view on a wide-screen monitor. This was the opening for "Talk, Listen, Connect: Helping Families During Military Deployment," a video focused on children before, during and after deployment.

This was the beginning of the pre-deployment briefing for the children of Soldiers from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division Aug. 24.

Heather Howse, a child and safety trainer with Family Advocacy, in conjunction with the brigade's Family Readiness Group leader, Jenny O'Rourke, put together three nights of briefings for the children while their parents were in another room sitting through a pre-deployment briefing of their own.

"It's a different and fun way for kids to learn about deployment and everything to expect," said Howse.

O'Rourke, an Army spouse with three kids of her own explained that there have been a lot of studies showing that deployments affect kids more than most assume and that the kids have a tendency to hold their feelings in.

"It's a good chance for them to talk to other kids that are going through the same thing and get some good coping skills for the next year," she said.

The briefing consists of a video of Elmo going through what most kids go through when their mother or father go away on a deployment, said Sgt. Martin Ibarra, a volunteer with the program from the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 720th Military Police Battalion of the 89th Military Police Brigade.

After the video, the children got to indulge themselves with snacks and drinks provided by the United Service



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB Public Affairs)

McGruff the Crime Dog asks the children of the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Air Cavalry Brigade their ages as they hang on to his every word ... and paws. He made an appearance at the pre-deployment meeting set aside especially for kids while their parents were in a separate room for their own briefing Aug. 24 at Fort Hood's Phantom Warrior Center.

Organization.

While enjoying her snacks, Imani, daughter of Staff Sgt. Miguel Gonzales, a flight engineer from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, talked about missing her father. She said she feels "a little bit sad and mad" about her father having to leave.

But while Imani's father is away, she said she plans to send him candy, letters

and her report cards.

Gonzales said he was happy to hear about this briefing for his kids.

"It is really nice," said the Oxnard, Calif. native. "I've deployed before - I've gone to Afghanistan and Korea - and the kids never really had a chance to under-

Port Operations

Air Cav Shipping Equipment to Iraq

By Sgt. Robert Strain
1st ACB Public Affairs

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas - It's 3 a.m. on Aug. 17, and everything is quiet at Hood Army Airfield on Fort Hood. However, things don't stay that way for long as pilots and crews from the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Air Cavalry Brigade prepare their helicopters for takeoff.

By 5 a.m., a number of the brigade's AH-64 Apache Longbow helicopters have left Fort Hood, headed to Corpus Christi, Texas.

Once they arrive at the Port of Corpus Christi, the helicopters' rotor blades and antennae are removed in a matter of minutes, the first of many steps preparing the birds for shipment

overseas according to Capt. Josh Baker, an Apache Longbow pilot and the commander of Company C, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment.

After being disassembled, the helicopters will wait at the port to be loaded onto a large container ship, and the pilots and crew head back home to Fort Hood.

Although the process sounds quick, the preparations to get the helicopters ready to go to the port started several weeks ago, Baker said.

"The maintenance, to get prepared to actually fly to the port, is pretty intensive, [the helicopters] have to be [fully mission capable]," he said.

Baker explained that many



Contractors at the Port of Corpus Christi remove rotor blades from an AH-64 Apache Longbow helicopter Aug. 19.

of the helicopters needed modifications and maintenance before it was rated as fully mission capable, including preventative maintenance for the time they would spend aboard the ship.

He said the crew chiefs and maintenance crews were the driving force behind the needed

maintenance and modifications to get the helicopters ready. He said the equipment would not have been ready without the "serious hours" put in by the Soldiers.

Helicopters aren't the only equipment being sent to the port, said Col. Daniel Shanahan, the commander of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade.

He explained that the brigade is sending only about one-third of its helicopters and vehicles, as the brigade will be taking over equipment in use by the 4th Infantry Division already in Iraq.

The equipment left behind by the brigade will be inventoried and redistributed as needed across the Army, with the majority of it going to the 4th Infantry Division when they return from Iraq, Shanahan said. The helicopters heading for Iraq will take about a month to reach its first destination, in Kuwait.

Once the helicopters are taken off the ship in Kuwait, they are reassembled and maintenance checks that became overdue while aboard the ship are completed by the pilots and crews before they can be flown north to their final destination, Baker said.



(Photos by Lt. Col. Greg Thompson, 1st ACB)

Sgt. Glen Morgan, a crew chief with Company C, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, prepares the rotor blades for removal on an AH-64 Apache Longbow helicopter Aug. 19 at the Port of Corpus Christi, Texas.

Guitar Giveaway Raises \$1,400 for FRG

By Sgt. Robert Strain
1st ACB Public Affairs

The 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment's Family Readiness Group sponsored a

fundraiser in which a custom-made acoustic guitar was given away Aug. 26 at the Clear Creek Post Exchange.

Altogether the event raised more than \$1,400 for the battal-

ion's FRG, according to 2nd Lt. Karra Perkins, a San Jose, Calif., native who ran the fundraiser.

The winner of the guitar was Capt. Paul Daigle, the

assistant operations officer for the 1-227th. He bought \$50 worth of tickets.

"I have played for about 12 years now and have never owned one quite this nice," said the four-year Army veteran and native of Fort Pierce, Fla. "It was great that I was able to support the FRG as well."

He built the instrument for me, and I donated it to the FRG," the Fayetteville, Ga., native said.

It has a sunburst finish and custom inlay, is crafted of flamed maple with a spruce top. The guitar has been autographed by Maj. Gen. Joseph Fil, Jr., the 1st Cavalry Division's commanding general. It also includes a custom 1st Cavalry Division pick guard and bridge constructed with Brazilian rosewood, he said.

"I started playing it the day that I won it, and haven't really put it down," Daigle said. "The action is perfect for my playing style and sounds beautiful. It blows my other acoustic guitar out of the water!"



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Strain, 1st ACB Public Affairs)

Capt. Josh Baker, the commander of Company C, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, plays a custom-made acoustic guitar at Fort Hood's Clear Creek Post Exchange before choosing the guitar's new owner in fundraiser drawing Aug. 26.

Deployment Brief Helps Kids Cope With Emotions

Kids

From Page 10

stand. All they know is that I'm here and then I'm gone. I can sit there and talk with them as much as I can, but then I'm gone all of a sudden."

Once the snacks were eaten, the kids participated in games set up by Ibarra and Howse.

"What I do is I combine the actual learning into the form of games," she said. "Whenever we get to the

games, there are opportunities for the kids to learn how to express their feelings."

The kids divide up into teams and take on each other in a game of 'Child Safety Jeopardy' that touches on subjects like trust, internet safety and more, Howse said.

With the briefing coming to a close, there was one final guest to make an appearance - McGruff the Crime Dog.

With the children swarming him, McGruff politely let them pet him while he teased and played with the kids.

O'Rourke has been an FRG leader since June 2004.

She said she has pushed for more programs that focus on the children of deployed parents because the Army hadn't focused on that area of concern. She said the Sesame Street video helps start that process of focusing on the children.

The video is available through the Military OneSource website, www.militaryonesource.com or through the Sesame Street Workshop's website, [www.sesamework-](http://www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc)

[shop.org/tlc](http://www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc), O'Rourke added.

Gonzalez said most deploying parents look at the year-long separation the same way.

"I just want to go over there, do my job and then come back to my family - for myself and for all my Soldiers ... hopefully [with] all ten fingers, all ten toes and we're good to go," he said.

His oldest daughter, Imani, understands the importance of having her father around and will miss him because "He helps us a lot ... a lot," she said.

Training Preps Volunteers for Crisis Situations

By Sgt. Jon Cupp
1st BCT Public Affairs

More than 100 family members with the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team took part in care team training sponsored by the brigade's Family Readiness Group (FRG) Aug. 1 and 4 at the Ironhorse Brigade chapel.

Care teams are designed to provide immediate short-term support for the families of deceased or severely injured Soldiers through the handling of day to day tasks such as childcare, preparing meals, grocery shopping and cleaning.

These teams are made up of family members within the deceased or severely injured Soldier's unit and may be two to three volunteers who assist the family with immediate physical needs. The type of support care teams provide are the things families may not feel up to doing while trying to cope with the grieving process, said Wendy Edwards, the Ironhorse Brigade's FRG Deployment Assistant.

"We make sure that we show the families that we care," said Edwards to the care team trainees. "We give these families the critical support



(Photo by Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

Chap. (Maj.) Kevin Doll, 1st Brigade Combat Team chaplain, speaks Aug. 4 to future care team members for the Ironhorse Brigade during care team training at the Ironhorse Chapel on Fort Hood.

they need and give them someone to lean on."

Not long after families have been notified of a loss, care teams go into action, but only if the family has requested care team support.

Teams stay with families for up to 72 hours or until the families' support system such as family members from out of town or friends arrive.

"For some of these folks, they don't have outside families, and you're it," said Cherie Cain, a Fort Hood Army Community Service rear detachment liaison, to the future care team members.

"This is one of the hardest jobs you'll ever do, and it's definitely the most important," said Lori Carpenter, who has served as an activated care team member and served as a speaker during the sessions. "You have to remember that as you go out and do this, it's not what you want or need, it's all about what the family wants and needs."

Carpenter also explained that care teams are not just activated during deployments but are also there, for example, when Soldiers are killed in automobile accidents stateside

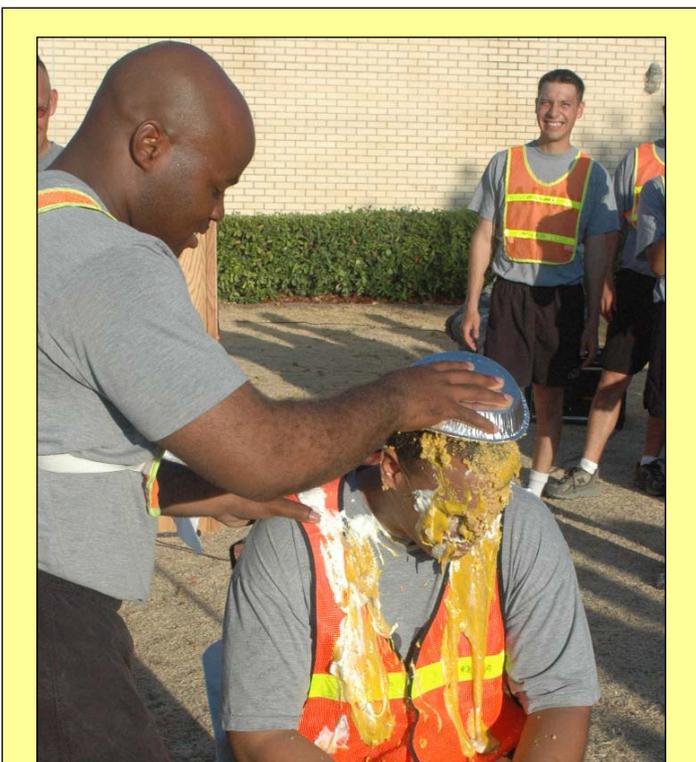
or when family members die.

"It's important knowing that you guys have this all year round," she added. "And we've been contacted not just for Soldiers but for the deaths of family members as well."

Edwards stressed to those attending the training that it is not the job of care team members to offer advice on survivor benefits or things such as funeral arrangements, but they can refer families to the Casualty Assistance Office on these matters. They may also be referred to other services for guidance such as the types provided by Army Community Services (ACS), the chaplain's office or through the Army 1 Source website or hotline.

The five-hours of training for the care team members consisted of presentations from an Army Community Service representative, a Casualty Assistance Office representative, a former care team member sharing experiences and answering questions and a session with a chaplain on the grieving process.

Chaplain (Maj.) Kevin



(Photo by Sgt. Cheryl Cox, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

In Your Face!!

Sgt. Michael Bell, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, smashes a pie on the head of 1st Sgt. Robert Spinks, the battery's first sergeant during a Family Readiness Group fundraising event Aug. 25.

Field Artillerymen Don New Duds

By Sgt. Jon Cupp
1st BCT Public Affairs

When Soldiers from Battery A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment picked up their new Army Combat Uniforms Aug. 23 from the Fort Hood Central Issue Facility, it was just another sign that their deployment to Iraq is looming closer.

Although their task was fitting the uniforms and head gear and selecting various patches for the ACUs, they said their minds were focused on the upcoming deployment.

"I'm a little anxious about it, but I wouldn't want to go to war with any other battery or any other brigade," said Pfc. Michael Easter, an armored vehicle crew member with Battery A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment. "For my first time, I don't feel like I'd be comfortable going out there with anyone else.

"We've trained so much that I know it's only going to help me," added the Ararat, Va., native. "We've had so many physical aspects to our training and so much discipline, that we'll be using our natural instincts in Iraq. So, I'll know what I have to do when I have to do it."

Over the past few months, Easter's unit, part of the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, has been working with the rest of their battalion to learn the new and ever-changing roles of artillerymen on the battlefield.

"I know our Soldiers are ready for the deployment and are ready to roll," said Capt. Marvin Ross, Battery A's commander and a native of Channelview, Texas. "We've done a lot of training that transitions us from being artillerymen to taking



(Photo by Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

Pfc. David Christian (left) and Pfc. Justin Burke, both with Battery A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, try on new head gear as part of their new Army Combat Uniform issue Aug. 25 at Fort Hood's Central Issue Facility.

on roles traditionally reserved for infantrymen."

Along with the regular paperwork and preparation for deployment such as maintenance on vehicles, medical readiness and other pre-deployment checks, the unit has been engulfed in combat life saver training, convoy training, mounted patrols, quick reaction force training, Paladin training and anti-terrorism courses.

Spc. Robert Rawlings, who holds the position as number one crewmember on Battery A's Paladin, loading and firing rounds, said the training has been the best he's ever had.

"When I was in Korea, we went to the

Korean Training Center with Paladins on a little patrol, but it wasn't nearly as realistic as the training we've received here," said the Woodlands, Texas native, who is facing his third deployment. "The more realistic the training, the more combat effective you're going to be."

Easter echoed Rawlings' sentiments.

"We've been doing a lot of cross training, learning to process and properly clear buildings," said Easter. "It's really gotten us proficient at these necessary skills. It's always a great opportunity when you can do good, realistic cross-training because as Soldiers you need to know how to tackle almost any situation."

"Care Teams" Provide Support for Soldiers' Families

Care

From Page 13

Doll, Ironhorse Brigade chaplain, also imparted advice to the care team members.

"Don't preach, don't judge and know your own limits,"

said Doll. "Know when to refer them (to outside sources), be a good listener and know that being quiet is OK. Be yourself, don't tell your own story and don't just send anyone to be with the families."

Some of the attributes that care team members should dis-

play, according to Edwards are: maturity, emotional stability, an ability to draw on a wealth of life experiences and a willingness or ability to respond on short notice.

He said just being available to another Army family in time of crisis is critical.

"The two main things a care team can do is say 'I'm sorry for your loss and I'm here to help,' and that's really their main purpose," added Doll. "What matters more than anything else (to them) is that you're there and that you're caring about them."

Fire Support Troops Complete Six-Day Certification

By Spc. Sheena Reyes
1st BCT Public Affairs

It takes six days to certify a fire support team. On Aug. 21, fire support specialists for 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment's Headquarters Company got their annual "exam."

Soldiers were broken down into four-man teams and are given points, either individually or as a team, depending on the exercise. The first day consisted of a written test where Soldiers displayed their individual knowledge of the fire support field. The test was broken down into three skill levels and is given to Soldiers based on their rank.

"The certification is based on a point system where Soldiers are graded on their ability and aggressiveness in approaching each task," said Capt. Derek Baird the fire support officer for HHC, 2-5 Cavalry. "The course is designed to be very intense and stressful for Soldiers so that when they're called upon to do their job in Iraq it should not be as difficult for them."

The next scenario required teams to set up their ground vehicle laser locator designator to observe a spot on Clear Creek Road where the "enemy" was supposedly positioning an improvised explosive device.

"What made this task kind of difficult was that it was around four o'clock in the



A fire support officer for 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment's Headquarters Company, 2nd Lt. James Young, breaks down his weapon Aug. 24 while being timed by Sgt. 1st Class Ronald Williams.



(Photos by Spc. Sheena Reyes, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

Spc. Coty Calviera, a fire support specialist for 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment's Headquarters Company, completes preventive maintenance checks and service on a radio Aug. 24 while being timed by 1st Lt. Randolph Fleming. Calviera was given two minutes to complete the task during the company's annual fire support team qualification.

afternoon and about 100 degrees outside when we were given the scenario," said Spc. Chris Hall, a fire support team specialist preparing for his second deployment to Iraq. "The equipment used to create the dismounted observation post weighs almost 85 pounds which made this task the most physically challenging."

Next, Soldiers were given a physical fitness test, the standard Army timed two-mile run, two minutes of push-ups and two minutes of sit-ups. This was followed by a vehicle identification test which graded Soldiers on their individual ability to name random military vehicles. The following day, teams were given five mapped points to start on their dismounted land navigation course. The boundaries that teams were given spanned miles, making points more strenuous to reach while placing the course's locale on the streets of West Fort Hood.

Soldiers were then required to pass pre-combat inspections by following the layout criteria for all of their gear. Points are deducted from Soldiers who are missing or had misplaced equipment. After this

inspection, Soldiers made their own "call for fire" on an observer fire training simulator.

"The virtual call for fire tested me mentally because there is a lot that you have to do in a small amount of time," said Hall, a Trinidad, Texas native. "You're given 45 seconds to get everything set up and then actually call for fire. After practicing a couple of times, 45 seconds is plenty of time. I noticed, at times, things seemed to be getting more and more stressful, but I learned that just taking a minute to breathe makes everything a little better."

The event culminated with Soldiers being recognized for their efforts during certification, but Hall said he's not at all worried about winning, because he gained something more important during his qualification.

"The success that I've had over these past couple of days during qualification I owe to my team," he said. "I couldn't have been able to do it without them and if I could entrust three people with my life, especially during this deployment, it would definitely be my teammates."

Soldiers Enjoy New Dining Facility

By Sgt. Jon Cupp
1st BCT Public Affairs

Soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team (1st BCT) now have another option of where to eat on post.

Since opening its doors July 17, Ironhorse Soldiers have experienced some of the unique features inherent in the facility, said Chief Warrant Officer Tiffany Alexander, a 1st BCT food technician.

"We have a 'grab it and go' kiosk which is separate from the main facility, where there are walk-in, fast food type items," said Alexander. "This is very convenient because sometimes you may have Soldiers who have just come from physical training and they're sweaty or they don't have a lot of time and they want to pick up something quickly. The kiosk allows them the chance to still get something to eat, but they don't have to go into the main facility."

The facility also boasts a pizza oven, similar to the type found in major restau-

rant chains, where pizza that has been prepared by the dining facility with fresh dough and toppings is then cooked.

"A lot of it has to do with the quality of the food and ideas for different items to feature," said Alexander, explaining the uniqueness of the Ironhorse Dining Facility.

Along with pizza and other items, the facility will feature specialty sandwiches and carved meats every day. "Most facilities aren't doing that," added Alexander.

Another unique aspect of the new dining facility involves its being a test bed for vendors to try out their wares.

"Because we're new, we've been tagged as one that will test out new products to see how Soldiers like them," said Alexander.

One of the examples cited by Alexander is a cappuccino vendor who will soon be offering the dining facility 12 different flavors of cappuccino, lattes and other types of coffee-type drinks similar to what chain coffee houses offer.

"We're doing a lot of different things that you just won't see other dining facilities doing because we're trying to be in competition with the other places where Soldiers eat on post," said Alexander. "We want Soldiers who don't get separate rations to come here and eat."

The Ironhorse Dining Facility offers two soup and salad bars, two main lines which feature regular hot meals with a choice of vegetables and various meat dishes, two grab and go lines which offer hamburgers, hotdogs, French fries and other fare; a wide-variety of deserts to include soft serve ice cream and two large dining rooms.

"Having a new facility with new equipment helps you serve the Soldiers better," said Alexander. "When you're in a state of the art facility, it makes you feel good and you can do the best job possible and we have some very dedicated food service specialists and senior staff here."

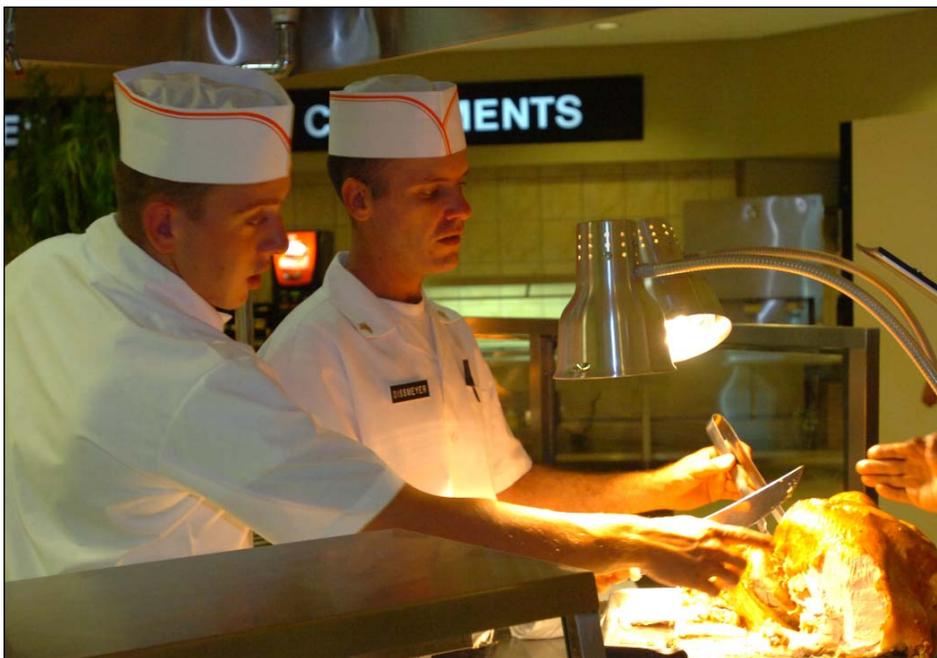
"When you see how they work to do their best, and we've already received good comments about what we're doing, it reflects well on them," she added. "That's important, because we can make or break a Soldier's day. When Soldiers feel they've gotten a good meal and good service, they'll leave with a smile on their face. But if something's missing, like you run out of milk, it can ruin a Soldier's day."

Ironhorse Soldiers said they were quite pleased with the new facility.

"Thank God we have one that's a lot closer than the old one, we used to have to walk halfway across post to get to the other one," said Pvt. Ryan Roberts, a field artillery automated tactical data systems specialist for Company A, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment. "This is definitely better than anything I've ever had before."

The hours for the facility are Mon.-Fri. for breakfast 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. with lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and dinner from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Weekend hours are: brunch from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and dinner from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

For non-meal card holders, meals cost \$1.95 for breakfast and \$3.55 for lunch and dinner.



(Photos by Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

Pfc. Jason Schilling (left), a food service specialist for the 1st Cavalry Division's, 1st Brigade Combat Team, takes lessons from Sgt. Michael Dissmeyer, also a 1st BCT food service specialist, July 28 on the fine art of carving a turkey at the carving station in the newly opened Ironhorse Brigade Dining Facility.

Would-be Movie Maker Gains Experience

By Spc. Sheena Reyes
1st BCT Public Affairs

Spc. Kanga Ndeto might not sound like a familiar name now, but one day it may be gracing the credits of the big screen. Ndeto, an infantry mortarman from 1st Brigade's Headquarters Troop and a former film student, has lived a life that may be worthy of its own major motion picture epic.

Born in Nairobi, Kenya, Ndeto spent many of his early years reading adventure stories that took him as far as his imagination would allow.

It would be many years, however, before he would decide to make his own adven-



(Photo by Spc. Sheena Reyes, 1st BCT)

Spc. Kanga Ndeto joined the Army to travel, see the world and gain experience before attempting to become a filmmaker.

ture by joining and then traveling the world with the U.S.

Army, he said.

"As a child I remember reading about different countries and I would take my mind to those places through literature," said Ndeto, who eventually wants to create his own stories through the medium of film.

Though his thirst for travel continued to be his first passion in life, his main focus was on studying which he was forced to do in some of Kenya's strict boarding schools.

"I came to live in America when I was 13-years-old to further my education," said Ndeto. "Philadelphia is very different from Nairobi. In Nairobi a child can be physically reprimanded which was hard to handle at

such a young age. This was not the case in Philadelphia, but what was equally challenging was the fact that I have always known English, even as a child, but no one could understand me," he said with a smile.

Ndeto had finished high school and started college before he decided to join the Army.

"I did not have enough money to finish my degree, so I decided to join the Army to repay my debts and travel like I've always wanted," said Ndeto. "I was very lucky because my first assignment

See Ndeto Page 19

Families Keep Cool, FRG Style

By Spc. Sheena Reyes
1st BCT Public Affairs

KILLEEN, Texas - The Texas sun didn't stop eight-month-old Dalton Barrett from keeping cool and splashing in the water at the Killeen YMCA "Spray and Play Park" Aug. 9 during a function held for Soldiers and family members of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment.

He spent his afternoon with mom and dad, who were equally appreciative of the Family Readiness Group-sponsored event.

"I think events like this are great because they allow family members to meet each other before a deployment," said Spc. Nick Barrett a fuel handler from Company F, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment. "That way, if they may need help or want to get together after the deployment it won't seem so awkward."

The Killeen YMCA has adopted the unit and has been active in their functions for quite a while. They've been involved in events such as the battalion's military ball, their Christmas party and have also lent the battalion their facility for couple's counseling.

"We try to do anything and everything

that we can to help Soldiers," said Paul Britton the senior program director for the YMCA. "There are some Americans who don't support the war, but they don't realize the Soldiers and family members who are trying their best to protect our freedom."

Andrew Bayer, an 18-year-old staff member at the park, said he also realizes the value of helping Soldiers.

"Knowing that, through this event, I can reach out and help someone that has been protecting me and my rights feels good," he said.

"Soldiers should always have support especially from the people they are helping," he added.

Karol Pinkerton, an FRG leader with the battalion, explained the importance of families getting to know each other before a unit's deployment.

"It's hard for families to be separated from their Soldier," she said. "It is never easy and sometimes family members feel like they are alone but that's not the case because we're all in this together. So, the best way to help each other is through contact either in events like this or just a friendly 'Hello' over the phone."



(Photo by Spc. Sheena Reyes, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

Eight-month-old, Dalton, enjoys playing in the water with his father, Spc. Nick Barrett, a fuel handler with Company F, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, during an afternoon of fun Aug. 9 at the YMCA "Spray and Play Park" in Killeen.

Tankers Fire New Canister Round

By Sgt. Jon Cupp
1st BCT Public Affairs

Soldiers with the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team will soon be adding a new tool to their arsenal of weapons - a tool which they may have to use in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In preparation for deployment to Iraq later this year, tankers of the Ironhorse Brigade's 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment test fired the new M1028 canister round during gunnery Aug. 4 on Fort Hood.

The round is a 120-millimeter shell, fired from the turret of an M1A2 Abrams tank, which causes a shotgun buckshot effect by dispersing approximately 1,100 three-eighth inch tungsten steel balls, very similar to the effect of a claymore mine.

The shell can create a lethal barrage of pellets at close range, traveling at nearly 1,400 meters per second.

Ironhorse Brigade Soldiers said they can definitely see the advantage of having a shell in



(Photos by Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

An M1A2 Abrams Tank from the 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment gets enshrouded in a cloud of dust after firing a round from its 105-millimeter turret Aug. 4 on Fort Hood.

Iraq which can be used to break up enemy dismounted troop formations, ambush sites, clear defiles, stop infantry attacks and counter-attacks as well as providing fire in support of friendly infantry assaults.

"This really is an excellent opportunity for the Soldiers to shoot the round and become

familiarized with it before we ever get over there," said Capt. Robert Nevins, commander of 2-5 Cav's Company D. "These will be very effective on the battlefield. We can use these to clear any enemy formations and then follow up with .50 caliber (machine gun) fire."

"This is pretty exciting," said Sgt. Sergio Estrella, an assistant tank commander for 2-5's Headquarters Company. "I had heard about the new round and read a little about it, but finally getting to shoot it will be a great opportunity. I wish I had had something like this the last time I was in Iraq. It's going to make a big difference in winning battles and saving the lives of our troops."

Estrella added that another advantage with the shell is that it doesn't have a high-explosive charge, which will cut down on collateral damage.

Yet even if they did not have access to the new round,

the Ironhorse troopers said they just enjoy doing their jobs as tankers and look forward to deploying with their fellow Soldiers.

"I really feel confident that our unit knows what it's doing, and I have a lot of faith in the guys here," said Cpl. Kenneth Vetch, a gunner with Co, D, who will be going to Iraq for the first time. "There's a lot of experience in this battalion so I'm not scared at all about going over there with them. To shoot these live rounds and to do what a tanker does, gives us a sense of pride. I could never see myself doing anything else."

"This is a great unit which has already proven itself in battle," said Spc. Adam Bunkhorst, a loader in Headquarters Co., who will also be serving for the first time in Iraq later this year. "We've trained enough and I fully trust this unit."



Sgt. Sergio Estrella (left), an assistant M1A2 Abrams tank commander for Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, assists his loader, Spc. Adam Bunkhorst, as they set up their M240 machine gun mount during a gunnery exercise Aug. 4 on Fort Hood.

CLS: Learning to Stick It to You

By Sgt Cheryl Cox
1st BCT Public Affairs

Beginning with a written test and progressing to basic combat medic tasks, Soldiers sit in a classroom absorbing even the smallest details knowing that one thing missed could cost them their buddy's life on the battlefield.

As far back as basic training in every Soldier's career, basic first aid techniques have been taught. But what happens if a fallen Soldier needs more than basic first aid before a combat medic can arrive on the scene? That is where Combat Life Saver training comes in.

As 1st Brigade Combat Team of 1st Cavalry Division prepares for their upcoming deployment to Iraq, more and more Soldiers are receiving CLS training.

Every week, several battalions within the brigade are training Soldiers not only from their battalions, but any Soldier in the brigade that needs the training. With between 20 and 40 Soldiers trained each week.

"The purpose of the CLS class is to train non-medical personnel to provide emergency first aid to Soldiers injured in combat until medical assets arrive," said Spc. Jason Lincoln, a medic with Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment. "More likely than not, a CLS-qualified Soldier will be closer to the injured Soldier than the medic, giving them a better reaction time."

CLS is a bridge between basic first aid taught to Soldiers during basic training and the training given to combat medics. Being able to provide immediate medical care to



(Photo by Sgt. Cheryl Cox, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

Pfc. Jeremy Sewell, Battery B, 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, grimaces while he gets stuck in the arm by Pfc. Jeremy McGinzie, also of Battery B, during a Combat Life Saver Course practice session Aug. 23. Pfc. Keith Spiker, a medic with Headquarters Battery, 1-82, assists McGinzie with holding pressure on the IV catheter until the fluid line is attached.

a wounded Soldier could be the difference between living and dying on the battlefield.

During the 40-hour course, Soldiers are taught everything from basic casualty evaluation to how to clear or create an airway to how to properly initiate an IV.

While many can say, "That's what medics are for," or "That's their job, not mine," there is only so much a medic can do.

"Generally speaking there won't be a medic in every vehicle during a patrol, and sometimes there won't be a medic at all,"

said Lincoln, a Monroe, Mo. native. "It can take several minutes for a combat medic to arrive, especially if there is a situation that involves many injured Soldiers or the medic is in a different location."

"Medics can only do so much. They can't treat everyone at once," said Spc. Darren Joiner, Battery A, 1-82, a native of Rutherfordton, N.C. "If more than one Soldier is injured and in need of immediate care, a CLS trained Soldier can assist the medics in caring for them until they are evacuated to a hospital."

Soldier Has Ambitions for the Big Screen

Ndeto

From Page 17

was to Germany and then to Iraq."

Ndeto was content with his job selection as an infantry mortarman because of his own dreams about infantry Soldiers of the past and their wartime missions.

"When I was just a kid I would read books about World War II and it fascinated me," said Ndeto. "I wished that I could've experienced it for myself instead of just reading the accounts on paper."

Ndeto plans on furthering his studies in film while serving out his time in the Army. He hopes to leave the military to pursue his dreams further and, hopefully, create some

box office hits. But until then, he will continue to explore the world.

"Every three-day weekend I drive to a new city," Ndeto said. "The smell, the people, the food and customs is what I enjoy about traveling. I'm going to see as much of the world as I can so I can tell my grandchildren that there are things to experience beyond the horizon."

Troops Know the Meaning of Brotherhood

By Spc. Sheena Reyes
1st BCT Public Affairs

Remembering home is not going to be hard for 1st Sgt. Allen Mouton, the top noncommissioned officer in Company A, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment.

While he is deployed with the Ironhorse Brigade, he'll still be able to enjoy the company of his two brothers who are deploying along with him.

The three Mouton brothers grew up in Houston.

1st Sgt. Michael Mouton, the eldest, is the first sergeant for Company D, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment.

The youngest, Sgt. Reginald Mouton works as a medic with 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment's Headquarters Company.

"When you look at it, being the youngest has its advantages," said Reginald. "When I was little they used to out perform me, but I guess it's fair to say that the tables have turned a little. Besides that they've always been there for me and have offered me great advice."

This is not the first deployment to Iraq for any of the brothers, but all agree that having family along for the ride will certainly make the process easier.

"We're all very close that's why there's nothing like having your family with you. These are my two best friends," said Allen.

"These guys will have you laughing the whole time," said Michael, with a grin.

Allen's company will be focused on creating traffic control points and conducting searches for the mission in Iraq, while Michael's company will

be supporting missions by supplying ammunition, fuel and water for the battalion.

Reginald will be working at his battalion aid station taking care of casualties that are sent to the forward operating base.

Though things may get a little busy while they are deployed, all three plan on spending as much time together as they can.

"We're going to try to eat lunch together or at least work out at the gym together," said Reginald.

Those workouts can bring out some sibling rivalry.

The latest controversy is the question of who can do the most push-ups.

Reginald has the title, or so

he thought.

"I'll give him that. If anything, I'll let him have that, for now," said Allen with a laugh.

Their fire for competition extends far beyond any sibling rivalry.

They all share a love for their jobs as well.

"I wanted to be in the medical field because I had already been going to nursing school," said Reginald. "I enjoy helping people because nothing feels better than having one of your patients come back and thank you for all your hard work."

Allen, who recruited Reginald into the Army, is a tanker who enjoys the spontaneity of his field.

"There are always challenges, which is something that

I like about my job and also the fact that there's always something new happening everyday," said Allen. "I love my job because I love taking care of Soldiers. It all comes down to camaraderie and the Army is the only place that can really give you that."

Michael's passion for automobiles is what made him choose to be a mechanic.

"Fixing up and racing cars is one of my passions," said Michael. "I was really into cars when I was younger, but now I'm leaning more to motorcycles."

With 53 years of military service between them, all three Moutons plan on continuing their careers in the Army until retirement.



(Photo by Spc. Sheena Reyes, 1st BCT Public Affairs)

[Left to right] 1st Sgt. Michael Mouton, Company D, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, Sgt. Reginald Mouton, a medic with 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment's Headquarters Company and 1st Sgt. Allen Mouton, Company A, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment all serve together on Fort Hood in the same brigade—the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team. The Houston natives said they look forward to the opportunity of seeing each other while they are deployed later this year.

Cav Receives Upgrades for FOX Vehicles

By Sgt. Jon Cupp and
Sgt. Cheryl Cox
1st BCT Public Affairs

In preparation for their deployment to Iraq later this year, Soldiers with the 1st Cavalry Division received new upgrades for their M93A1P1 FOX vehicles changing the vehicles from ground and amphibious to strictly ground vehicles.

Personnel from the Joint Program Manager for NBC Contamination Avoidance at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Md. and Anniston Army Depot, Ala. provided the upgrades along with FOX driver training last week at Fort Hood to Soldiers from each of 1st Cav. Division's four Brigade Special Troops Battalions.

The FOX vehicle is used for nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) reconnais-

sance missions in which Soldiers use it to detect and warn of chemical and nuclear dangers in theaters of operation.

The vehicle comes with various NBC systems to include biological sampling equipment, and is a high-mobility armored carrier.

Some upgrades for the vehicles include Slat armor to increase rocket propelled grenade (RPG) and improvised explosive device (IED) protection, and ballistic glass in front of the drivers to increase fragmentation protection.

Within the next two weeks, the FOXs will also receive more fire power in the form of the Common Remote Operations Weapon System (CROWS) which will replace the FOX's M240 machine gun that fires 7.62mm rounds with a remote controlled .50 caliber

machine gun. The CROWS will be mounted to the top of the FOX and can allow a gunner to remain seated inside the vehicle, using a joy-stick to operate the aiming mechanism for the weapon, instead of getting out to aim and fire - possibly put his life at risk.

"We actually saw the need for this a couple of years ago, and now we can provide Soldiers who work with the FOXs more survivability and fire power," said Maj. Rodney Faust, assistant product manager, NBC Reconnaissance Systems with Joint Project Manager NBC Contamination Avoidance. "The first of these fielded are going to the 1st Cavalry Division, and this week we're training Soldiers how to put the cage armor on the vehicle and giving Soldiers FOX drivers training.

"After putting on the Slat

armor, the vehicle drives a lot different than other FOXs out there, because the 12-foot wide cage adds about 6 to 7,000 pounds more armor so the vehicle sits (about four inches) higher and handles differently, so it may take a while for drivers to get used to it," he continued. "This is the first time Soldiers have actually placed armor on the vehicles themselves. Prior to this, it was all done by Anniston Army Depot personnel."

Cav Soldiers said they looked forward to the upgrades.

"Anything that gives the Soldiers more protection in Iraq, we definitely support that," said Sgt. 1st Class Watson Fluellen, a chemical operations non-commissioned officer for Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, whose FOX vehicles received the re-fit. "The training and upgrades this week give our Soldiers a chance to get hands on with the vehicles and become more comfortable on the new equipment that everyone will be working with in Iraq."

"This is great stuff and great training," said Pfc. Ronald Riva, a chemical operations specialist for the 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion. "We really need to learn how to put the armor on by ourselves, so this is a great opportunity to learn how to do that. Now that we have the added weight too, it will be good to take them out for a spin and see what kinds of differences there are in the way they handle. I'm really looking forward to that."

"The FOX is a tough vehicle, and (the upgrades) just make it tougher," said Faust.



(Courtesy photo from 1st BCT)

Sgt. David Minter (left) a chemical operations specialist for the 1st Cavalry Division's Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion and Sgt. Baltazar Lopez, also a chemical operations specialist with HHC, 1st BSTB, place slat armor on the M93A1P1 NBC reconnaissance vehicle July 25 at Fort Hood.

Leadership Stressed at Cav Training Event

By Spc. Robert Yde
2nd BCT Public Affairs

"One day I'm going to go on R & R and you'll have to do this," Spc. Aaron Gonzalez told his team members during a break in training at Fort Hood's St. Elijah Military Operations in Urban Terrain site Aug. 10.

Gonzalez, a team leader with 3rd Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, was using this last-minute training opportunity to get his junior Soldiers some time honing their leadership skills.

"Today, we are working on maneuvers and building new leaders," Mantz said.

After arriving at the MOUT site, the Soldiers broke into their teams and spread out around the city. Each of Gonzalez's Soldiers rotated out of the team leader role, while Gonzalez provided the scenario and observed their actions.



(Photos by Spc. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

Pfc. Jesse Sanchez, an infantryman with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, leads his team up a flight of stairs at Fort Hood's St. Elijah Military Operations in Urban Terrain site Aug. 10.

They practiced room clearing procedures, providing first aid and calling for a medical evacuation and street patrols.

"I want to get them ready for what they are going to

experience over there," Gonzalez said.

While he has already spent one year in Iraq, Gonzalez said the next deployment to Iraq will not only be a new one for his Soldiers, but for himself, as well.

"The last time I was just a 'Joe,' and was only responsible for myself," he said. "Now, I'll be responsible for other Soldiers."

Part of that responsibility is to ensure that each one his team members knows how to perform each other's job, to include his own.

"I think we're ready," Spc. Joel Billeaud said of their upcoming deployment. "We all know everyone's position from the lowest up."

Billeaud said that he is growing more confident performing in a leadership position, and during his rotation as a team leader, he said he was

operating on "just adrenaline and instinct" as he calmly handled every curve ball that Gonzalez threw at him.

"It's getting to the point where I just know they've got it," Gonzalez said. "Even if I don't tell them what to do, they're doing it."

After watching several of Gonzalez's Soldiers go through their iteration as team leader, Mantz agreed with his assessment.

"There are two Soldiers in there ready to be team leaders, if not squad leaders right now," Mantz said.

That is exactly where he wants his Soldiers to be as they prepare to go into combat Gonzalez explained.

"The way I see it, these guys are just on loan from their families," Gonzalez said. "I want to them to return to their families the same way they left."



Spc. Jody Bernard, an infantryman with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, receives advice while administering first aid during a training event at Fort Hood's St. Elijah Military Operations in Urban Terrain site Aug. 10.

A Unique Fraternity**Cavalry Officers Recall Gridiron Glory**

By Spc. Robert Yde
2nd BCT Public Affairs

For an 18-year old fresh out of high school, transitioning to life as a cadet at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., is no easy task.

"It was a wake up call," 2nd Lt. Corey Sherk said of his arrival to West Point. "A lot of people struggle in their first year."

With stringent academic standards and little free time, life as a cadet is tough enough; however, life for a cadet-athlete can become the ultimate test in time management.

"It's tough, every night, coming back at 8:30, and you've got to study until midnight and get up at six for something else," Sherk said.

Sherk, the fire support officer for 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, played quarterback and tight end for West Point from 2001 to 2004.

During high school in Fork Union, Va., Sherk said that he never gave a career in the military much thought. However, after being recruited by West Point, he said he realized he was being offered the opportunity of a lifetime.

"If I had turned it down, I'd regret it the rest of my life," Sherk said.

By making the decision to play for the Black Knights, Sherk joined an exclusive fraternity, one that only two other officers from his brigade can claim membership.

Along with Sherk, Maj. Corey Mitchell and Capt. Gene



(Courtesy photo)

Corey Sherk drops back during passing drills at a West Point practice. Sherk played quarterback and tight end for the Black Knights from 2001-2004 and is now a 2nd Lieutenant and fire support officer for Company D, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment of the 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team.

Palka share the experience of being an Army football player.

Mitchell, the brigade's fire support officer, was a defensive tackle from 1988 to 1991, and during his first season the Black Knights were invited to the Sun Bowl in El Paso, Texas.

Although Army came into the game with an 8-3 record, Mitchell said their opponent, Alabama, was heavily favored.

Throughout the game, the Black Knights kept pace with the Crimson Tide, eventually losing by just one point.

"We surprised a lot of people during that game," Mitchell said.

After finishing his high school career in Cincinnati, Mitchell was recruited by several programs.

"A lot of Mid-American conference teams as well as some Big Ten teams like

Indiana and Ohio State (showed interest)," Mitchell said.

However, after visiting the West Point campus and seeing what it could offer him, not only as a football player, Mitchell said his decision was easy.

"They cared about you, not just because you played football, but as a person and a student," he recalled.

Mitchell said that while West Point does not attract top prospects, it does draw well-rounded athletes.

Palka agreed, saying it is the school's academic reputation that drew him to West Point.

"It's easily one of the top ten schools in the country," said Palka, a nose guard on the team from 1998 to 2002. "When you say, 'You went to West Point,' that's something that people all around the world will recog-

nize."

A self described "Amy brat," Palka, the fire support officer for 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, grew up at Fort Campbell, Ky. He said being around the Army all of his life, attending West Point and becoming a commissioned officer seemed like the natural choice.

While all three officers played for Army at different times and under different coaches, they can all agree that the experience of being a cadet-football player is a unique experience.

"Being a football player was extra special," Palka said. "It required something a little bit extra, that the average cadet maybe did not have to go through."

Along with the hours of practice during the season and off-season weight training and conditioning, players must maintain their grades and fulfill their duties as cadets. Being a cadet first required a lot of sacrifice, but according to Palka the benefits outweighed those sacrifices.

"It's the mental and physical toughness that you gain from that," Palka explained. "It's much more than the average blue-chip athlete has to go through."

Those shared sacrifices inevitably fosters a very close-knit group.

"It's a brotherhood, and it's a network," Palka said. "The past players will stay in touch, and then we also mentor the young ones as they come into

Exercise Validates Communication Equipment

By Spc. Robert Yde
2nd BCT Public Affairs

Exercising command and control in a combat zone requires good communication. A communication exercise gave the 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team one final chance to ensure that all of their equipment was in working order before packing it up for shipment to Iraq.

The brigade headquarters' staff and their battalion counterparts took part in the exercise, which was run out of the brigade headquarters' motor pool.

"We're attempting to test the electrical systems - computer to computer, satellite to satellite and LOS (line-of-sight) to LOS," explained Maj. Darell Robinson, the brigade's signal officer.

Just a couple of days into the exercise they were well on their way to accomplishing this goal.

"So far there haven't been any major problems," said Sgt. Jose Diaz, a data integrator with the Black Jack Brigade. The Columbia, S.C. native said that connectivity between the brigade and the battalions was established quickly.

Several Soldiers cited the brigade's recent rotation to the National Training Center as one of the reasons the exercise went so smoothly.

"We did all this at NTC and figured

out most of the problems there," explained Pfc. Tremayne Holloway, a signal support systems specialist with the 15th Brigade Support Battalion.

"We're just validating all of the equipment, so when we get to Iraq we won't have any problems," said the Atlantic City, N.J. native.

The exercise not only allowed Soldiers a final chance to test their equipment, it also provided some time to further familiarize themselves with newer equipment such as the Command Post Platform.

The CPP is a system that gives the commanders the ability to direct operations and control forces from one central location by consolidating communications equipment, explained Al Cotton, a digital system engineer.

Cotton was just one of several civilians contractors on-hand to provide assistance and troubleshooting expertise as needed.

Some of these civilians, like John Burgin, a field service representative from General Dynamics, will deploy with the brigade later this year.

Burgin, who provides assistance with the Joint Network Node, described it as a communication system that the division is now using to replace its mobile subscriber equipment.

"It's just moving along with technolo-

gy and this is the next step," Burgin said. "As technology improves, the Army improves with it."

With the new technology in place and all of their communication equipment functioning properly, Black Jack Soldiers should have no worries about keeping in touch on the battlefield, no matter where a mission might take them.



(Photo by Spc. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

Sgt. Jose Diaz, a data integrator with the 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, checks the command post platform during the brigade's communication exercise.

Black Knight Players Say Army Football Improving

Football

From Page 23

the Army."

Palka admits that over the past few years, keeping in touch and following the program has been more difficult.

However, all three Black Jack officers said from what they have seen and heard, they like the direction that Army football is headed. For this, they credit head coach Bobby Ross.

"Bobby Ross is the perfect guy for the job," Mitchell said.

"He understands the military. He's a VMI grad and served as a captain in the Army. He definitely understands the challenges of not just a military academy, but of the careers of his players afterward."

Ross not only brings his familiarity with the military to the Army football team, but also a stellar coaching career, having won a national championship with Georgia Tech in 1990 and leading the San Diego Chargers to their first and only Super Bowl appearance in 1995.

Sherk, had the opportunity

to play for Ross during his senior season and considers it the highlight of his career.

"From the first day he introduced himself to us, the attitude just changed instantly," Sherk said of Ross. "He's probably the best leader that I've ever worked with - military, sports, anything."

Soldiers from Fort Hood and fans of Army football will have two chances in September to see Ross lead the Black Knights into Texas. Army will play Texas A & M Sept. 16 in San Antonio and the following

week, Sept. 23, Army will find itself in Waco taking on Baylor University.

Having recently left Conference USA, Army is now an independent with no conference obligations.

According to Sherk this will free up Army's ability to schedule different opponents who they may not have normally played in the past.

Sherk added that this also allows Army to schedule games near Army installations, something he expects to see more of in future season.

Troops Pitch In to Help Killeen Family

By Spc. Alexis Harrison,
2nd BCT Public Affairs

KILLEEN, Texas - A handful of ambitious troops from Company C, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, helped out Habitat for Humanity at one of the organization's construction sites here Aug. 26.

The all-volunteer force met up early to go to the site where Barbara Bennett and her family will soon live.

Habitat for Humanity is a Christian-based housing ministry that builds homes for low-income families.

While the family still pays the mortgage for the house, it's done with no interest on the principal loan.

Families like the Bennett's must put in 300 hours on someone else's home before they can begin their own.

Pfc. James McDonald, an armor crewman from Neenah, Wis., said the housing project is



(Photos by Pfc. Kate Huff, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

Barbara Bennett, the future homeowner, smiles at the worksite of her Habitat for Humanity home in Killeen, Texas Aug. 26. Bennett said with the help of Soldiers, she'll enjoy her new home when it's finished in late September.

a great way to help.

"Soldiers should be more aware of [projects]," he said. "You can either sit in the barracks or come help out."

1st Lt. Xeon Simpson added that it's almost second

nature for Soldiers to volunteer, being as it is an all-volunteer Army.

"Everybody has free time," the New York city native said. "Use that time to get out and help."

That help didn't go unappreciated.

"I thank God for all the volunteers that come out to help," Bennett said.

With most of the initial framework up, there was no shortage of work to be done.

Black Jack Soldiers shared time with the other volunteers on site putting up new siding and scaling the roof to put down tar paper and shingles.

Gene Bauer, the executive director of the Fort Hood Habitat for Humanity chapter, said some military units are a perfect fit for the program.

"We have engineer units come out sometimes for sergeant's time training," Bauer

said. He added that while not everyone has experience in construction, it can be a great opportunity to learn a new skill.

To help offset the organization's cost on the home projects, Habitat for Humanity not only purchases materials but receives many donations toward on-going projects from local businesses and private donors.

Bauer said volunteers like the troops from 1-5 Cavalry make the biggest difference when trying to save as much money as possible.

"The most expensive part of building a house is the labor," he said.

Bauer said that they've had several units out to help on projects. He said good people are what you find at work sites like the Bennett's. With help from Soldiers, Bennett expects to be settled into her new home by the end of September.



Staff Sgt. D.J. Saxton hammers in a nail at a Habitat for Humanity home construction work site in Killeen, Texas Aug. 26. Saxton and other members of the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment volunteered to assist with the program.

Austin City Managers Provide Training For Troops

By Spc. Robert Yde
2nd BCT Public Affairs

AUSTIN - In 2004, as the Army's mission in Iraq began to focus more on humanitarian and reconstruction efforts, the leadership at Fort Hood approached city officials here with one request: show us what right looks like.

Two years later as one of Fort Hood's divisions, the 4th Infantry Division, is currently in Iraq, and the other, the 1st Cavalry Division, is preparing to return, the city of Austin is continuing to offer guidance in city management to deploying units.

"It is a labor of love," Austin city manager Toby Hammett Futrell, said of the collaboration between the Army's largest post and Texas' capital city.

Selected Soldiers attend seminars conducted by city officials which examine the various aspects of local government.

Futrell estimates that the city has conducted 10 such seminars with the most recent taking place Aug. 8 at Austin's Palmer Events Center.

The idea behind the seminars, which are always evolving to meet the current concerns of deploying units, is to provide a look at local government when it is functioning properly, according to Futrell.

"The training overall is just hugely beneficial," said Maj. James Adams, the executive officer with the 1st Cav. Div.'s, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, "just from the prospective of looking at civilian communities from a wholly different prospective on how things operate, what are some of the dynamics that occur in a city government and how people communicate on a political level."

Adams was one of 45 division and III Corps Soldiers who attended the Aug. 8 seminar, which focused on public administration, policing in conflicted communities and information operations.

Futrell explained the basic concepts such as the forms of local government and how to finance a local government through tax revenue and fee-based services. The importance of building the citizens' trust in government was stressed throughout seminar.

Implementing an open government will encourage public involvement,

explained Futrell, adding that if the people can engage in their government, they will then have a chance to support and believe in their government.

"Local government is so close to the people that you have to create access to it," added Laura Huffman, an assistant city manager.

Futrell also warned against making assumptions about what the top priorities are for residents. Performing surveys and just simply talking to average citizens are crucial in providing the public with what it expects, she explained.

While Futrell and other city officials were able to provide a framework for local government and how they operate in the United States, she was quick to acknowledge that some of these theories and procedures may not work in Iraq.

"The challenge is to try to see what will translate," she said. "Evolution of politics in Iraq is obviously very different than where we are today."

After the seminar, the Soldiers visited the Green Water Treatment Plant and the city's Materials Recovery Facility Landfill

for a first-hand look at how two different city municipal services operate.

"We've taken away not only concepts overall that we can use to help guide us and the Iraqi government, but also specific things that we can use on a day-to-day basis on a Soldier level," said Capt. Evans Hanson, the fire support officer for 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team.

This unique partnership between the city and the Soldiers of Fort Hood continues even after a unit has deployed.

"With the 4th ID, we've been doing monthly VTCs - video conferences from Baghdad," explained Futrell. "We pick a topic, something that's happening there they want more information on. For example, we recently did fire service."

Futrell calls this reach-back technology, and said that this or something similar will continue with the 1st Cav. Div. once it reaches Iraq. By continuing to provide guidance from city officials, Futrell said she hopes to help bring stabilization in Iraq which will, hopefully, allow troops to come home.



(Photo by Spc. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

A city official escorts Soldiers from Fort Hood around the Green Water Treatment Plant in Austin Aug. 8 as part of a city management seminar conducted for deploying units.

Close Quarters

Troopers Develop 'Muscle Memory' in Training

By Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim
2nd BCT Public Affairs

Even as their time left in central Texas is running out, the Soldiers of Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, took their time with training they said is very important for their upcoming mission to Iraq.

In SWAT fashion, different teams would enter a "shoot house," moving from room-to-room identifying and eliminating any hostile targets during close-quarter combat training at North Fort Hood Aug. 4.

"This training is very important for a combination of factors," said Capt. Jeff Morris, Company B's commander. "This will be more for our mission [in Iraq], so the more practice we can get down here with live ammunition, the better."

"You gotta face it; it's what's going on in Iraq right now," added Sgt. Kimble Patterson, a Bradley gunner.

In a common theme throughout the brigade, for many of its members new to the unit, this training is also important for team building, added Sgt. Ryan Green, a team leader. As an added bonus, the Soldiers also received an opportunity and a lot of ammunition to practice reflexive fire: something they say causes "muscle memory."

According to 2nd Lt. Joshua Mantz, 3rd Platoon's platoon leader, it takes a lot of practice to get to the point where your muscles and eye know how to take a weapon in a safe, downward position and



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

A team of Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment prepares to enter a "shoot house" during close-quarter combat training Aug. 4 at North Fort Hood.

to then very quickly bring it up to a position where they have their scope on their target, shoot, and bring it back down again and repeat if necessary.

For Pvt. Adam Henderson, one of the newest members of the company, the training was the most "crucial" training event he's experienced thus far.

The teams practiced entering the building in stacks within "glass" houses which was nothing more than three-foot walls. In the heat and with all their gear on, the practice seemed slow to Henderson and his team. Yet, that deliberate approach was by design according to Mantz.

"Initially, you have to trade speed for accuracy, and you keep doing it, you'll get better," Mantz said.

According to Henderson,

his team started off like a "snail" while they were in the glass house practicing. One of his teammates, Spc. Pedro Garcia, said the old saying that slow is smooth and smooth is fast makes a lot of sense in during training like this.

"You don't want to speed through there because you might miss something," Garcia said.

When they were confident enough to enter the shoot house, which has rubber-padded walls, they locked and loaded. The team would slowly approach the building's door and send its number three man to kick open the door.

After that, the lead man quickly stormed in the building as the rest of the team followed closely. The team members entered room-to-room taking

out the hostile target and yelled a report. All in all, the teams cleared the three rooms in less than three minutes.

"I feel confident with my guys right now," Mantz said. "They are getting to the point where they are really good. They are pretty much there. They just have to fine tune it now."

Mantz added that the unit members have been back in their company area practicing reflexive fire drills and entering buildings and that actually going out to a range and shooting live rounds is something they've been "begging" to do for a long time.

"I can do this everyday and be content," said Spc. Gabriel Matt, a team leader. "It's fun, and I think it's incredibly important for safety."

Brigade Support Soldiers Ready for Iraq

By Spc. Robert Yde
2nd BCT Public Affairs

"When I was combat arms, I never honestly respected support vehicles because I never saw what they did," Staff Sgt. Courtney Crawford said, explaining a perspective that he acknowledged is common among combat arms Soldiers.

However, after reclassifying from a fire support specialist to become a truck driver in 2003, the Rolling Fork, Miss.

native said his opinion quickly changed.

"Now I've got so much respect for these guys because they're the ones pushing convoys, they're the ones bringing me my beans and my bullets every night," said Crawford, now a transportation platoon sergeant with the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. "When I was combat arms, I didn't see that. I didn't care about that. That was not my

mission. Now I see what they do and I respect what they do."

As Crawford prepares to return to Iraq with the Black Jack Brigade, he will be responsible for a platoon of 34, mostly brand new troops. These young Soldiers will spend the majority of their time on the road performing the crucial mission of keeping the brigade supplied.

"One of the unique differences that our battalion faces over a lot of the other battalions with in the brigade is that we are versatile - we support the brigade and logistics, and yet, in order to do that we have to be trained on the road to make sure we know how to maneuver and defend ourselves," explained Capt. Erin Gilliam the battalion's plans and operations officer.

Along with delivering supplies in a timely manner, Gilliam, a native of Eaton Town, N.J., said that the task of providing security for the supplies also falls upon the support Soldiers.

"We don't have any scouts and we don't have any 11Bs (infantrymen)," explained Gilliam, "We take what we have and form them into what we call a gun-truck platoon, and that platoon secures the clips that we go on."

Training in all the various aspects of combat logistics patrols has been a priority for the battalion over the course of the past year, Gilliam said, and Aug. 22 marked what she described as "the culminating exercise for the battalion."

The exercise, a two-hour convoy lane training event that took place at night, and it tied in nearly every situation that these Soldiers have trained for.

"We've set up different events throughout the lanes so that Soldiers will be forced to think about everything that they've learned," Gilliam explained. "They're going to get hit with just about every event and every scenario that we've really focused on."

During the lane, Soldiers encountered improvised explosive devices, small-arms fire, suspicious vehicles on the road and a group of protestors. The Soldiers successfully navigated every obstacle they came upon without taking any casualties.

"I think these guys did a great job," said platoon leader and convoy commander, 1st Lt. Bradley Page. "I couldn't ask for a more responsive team."

Page, originally from Purcell, Okla., said she was especially impressed with how well her new Soldiers, like Pfc. Joseph Davis, handled themselves during the exercise. A fueler from Madison County, Fla., Davis said that this was his first experience riding on a combat logistics patrol.

Just three months removed from advanced individual training, Davis said with the training he has received, he has no worries about deploying.

"I think this training that we did tonight is going prepare us for what's over there," Davis said. "I think my team will perform very nicely out there."

This level of confidence is something Crawford says he wants his Soldiers to take with them as they head into combat, most of them for the first time.

"I know that were prepared to do the job," Crawford said. "If we do the job the way that we train, we'll leave together and we'll all come home together."



(Photo by Spc. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

Soldiers from 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, use their vehicles for cover as they scan the side of the road during a training exercise at Fort Hood Aug. 22.



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

A Bradley crew rolls off the firing line to execute a gunnery iteration at the Sugarloaf Multi-Use Range on Fort Hood Aug. 17. This was the company's final gunnery before they deploy to Iraq.

"Black Jack" Engineers Conduct Final Gunnery

By Spc. Alexis Harrison,
2nd BCT Public Affairs

Though it was hot, dusty and dry, troops from the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, mounted their Bradley Fighting Vehicles and went to Fort Hood's Sugarloaf Multi-Use Range to perform their final gunnery Aug 17, part of the brigade's final push in training for deployment.

"We're going to Iraq very soon," said Sgt. Christopher Place, a combat engineer with Company E, 1-8 Cav. "This was our last opportunity to come out here and make sure we're ready."

The Bradley crews took their places to get ready for the gunnery. There was a multitude of tasks that they had to accomplish throughout the day like zeroing the weapon

systems, identifying targets and of course, annihilating their "enemies."

After getting through the initial safety briefs, crews rolled out to practice maneuvering, firing and many other skills essential to the fighting vehicles they rode.

The engineer's first bore-sighted their 25-mm cannons, and the M-240 "Charlies" before zeroing the weapons. Bore-sighting is a way of pre-zeroing a weapon to ensure even further accuracy. After zeroing, the crews waited until their turn to show their stuff.

Finally, Place and his crew got the order and began tactfully moving through the range.

"Once we got done zeroing, we got into a scenario-based exercise," Pfc. Richard Chacon said. "This was where we learned how to fight defensively and offen-

sively."

Chacon added that while it was his fourth gunnery, he and his crew are constantly learning and improving techniques to become better fighters.

"These exercises are good for building crew coordination, target identification and sometimes bragging rights," Place said.

Place's team successfully completed the course and returned to the staging area to hold an after-action review and start dismantling the cannon for cleaning.

Place said for the relatively new crew he's working with, they did well but there's always room for improvement.

"Even though it's hot and you have to wait, it's all worthwhile," Place said. "For a lot of the Soldiers who've never done this before, it can be a big rush to feel the turret shake for the first time."

Troops Get Familiarized with Foreign Weapons

By Spc. Robert Yde
2nd BCT Public Affairs

A mobile training team from the National Ground Intelligence Center was at Fort Hood Aug. 16 to brief Soldiers from the 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division on some of the weapon systems they may encounter in Iraq.

"This is a great training activity for the Soldiers," said Capt. Jason Thomas, the assistant intelligence officer for the brigade. "It gives them an idea of the weapons they will be facing and the tactics, techniques and procedures of the enemy forces."

The NGIC, which is located in Charlottesville, Va., is the Army's intelligence analysis organization, and provides continuous intelligence on foreign ground forces to both war fighters and decision and policy makers.

Since the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism, the NGIC has been sending these mobile training teams around the country to meet with units that are scheduled to deploy.

According to Michael Knapp, a Department of the Army civilian with the NGIC, each of these briefings is tailored specifically to the unit. He said an online catalogue explains the various briefings that



(Photo by Spc. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

Two Black Jack officers examine rifles that are commonly used by Iraqi insurgents during a pre-deployment briefing by representatives from the National Ground Intelligence Center Aug. 16.

the NGIC can provide, and units choose their own briefings based upon their needs.

The Black Jack briefing included both an unclassified and classified portion. During the unclassified briefing, representatives from NGIC discussed small arms fire and the various types of rocket propelled grenades that the Soldiers may see.

Soldiers were also given the opportunity to handle some of the more common foreign weapons, such as the AK-47, which are being used by insurgents in Iraq.

"Having the weapons here to actually

look at really helps," said Pfc Charles Schuknecht, an intelligence analyst with Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment "It's stuff you don't see every day."

Like many of the Soldiers, Schuknecht said that he has not had much experience with foreign weapon systems, however, during his presentation on small arms, Daniel Dobrowolski said that this lack of experience should not be a problem for a typical Soldier.

Dobrowolski, a retired Army major and scientific and technical analyst with NGIC, suggested that if a Soldier must handle an unfamiliar weapon, he should take two minutes to calm down and examine the weapon.

"The ergonomics of the weapon will tell you how to safe that weapon," explained Dobrowolski.

Soldiers were also shown photos of recently recovered modified weapons, and Dobrowolski stressed the importance of Soldiers reporting such things to their chain-of-command.

Thomas said he knows the information provided by the NGIC will help the Soldiers in their preparations for their upcoming deployment, and recommends that other units take advantage of what NGIC can offer.

Rear Det. Puts Out Fires ... Among Other Things

By Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim
2nd BCT Public Affairs

Ever leave the house before a trip and think the stove was left on? Or the door was left unlocked? It happens, luckily for deploying commanders, they have someone on the left behind to take care of some of those things left undone.

As more and more Fort Hood units begin to deploy to Iraq, something referred to as the "rear detachment" is beginning to form up to take care of many different issues on the home front.

The rear detachment is a

small portion of a unit, usually hand-picked, that does not deploy with the bulk of the unit. It remains at home station to perform key functions in support of the deployed unit.

According to Maj. Gregory Davidson, the rear detachment commander for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, on the average a battalion of 900 Soldiers can expect to leave back a cadre of about six troops and another 30, or so, who are non-deployable for various reasons.

"It's not glamorous, it's not pretty and it's not necessarily what we are trained to do," the

Lompoc, Calif. native admitted. "I'm an Infantryman. I was trained to fight. Now, I'll be fighting legal and medical issues."

Davidson, who has had the experience of running a rear detachment before, said the task of running the remaining brigade element will be somewhat of a "challenge" due to many different reasons.

First, the rear detachment supervises the Soldiers who cannot deploy due to medical, legal, personal, or other issues. The rear detachment gets these Soldiers the proper care they need to remedy their issues. In

some cases, that means putting the Soldiers out of the Army while others may require medical care for a certain length of time before they deploy and link up with their unit in Iraq. Still others require medical care that may result in reclassification or reassignment.

Second, the rear detachment will receive new Soldiers into the unit, train them on required pre-deployment tasks, and then deploy them to join their unit.

Third, the rear detachment



(Photo by Spc. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

Hungry yet?

Soldiers of the 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team make their way down Fort Hood's Battalion Avenue, led by their commander Col. Bryan Roberts, right past an eating establishment during a brigade run Aug. 18.



(Photo by Spc. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

One Step Closer

Spc. Alexander Woodard, a cargo specialist from Canandaigue, N.Y., moves a container Aug. 28 with help from his ground guide, Sgt. Sabino Cano of San Antonio, outside of 4th Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment's headquarters at Fort Hood. The unit is preparing for deployment to Iraq.

Taking Care of The Home Front

Rear

From Page 30

may receive injured Soldiers from Iraq whose medical care precludes them from remaining in the combat zone. These Soldiers usually come from one of the major Army medical facilities for outpatient care. Once again the unit ensure they receive the necessary care.

Fourth, in conjunction with the Family Readiness Groups, the rear detachment takes care of the families that remain behind, providing them information on what is happening to their family members in theater and coordinating family events.

It also serves as a key part in the casualty notification and assistance process when Soldiers are injured or killed while deployed. The rear detachment works closely with the FRGs to provide families with support during these times.

According to Capt. Marc E. Weber, the rear detachment commander for 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery, the rear detachment is "serious business" when it comes to taking care of the families left behind.

"First and foremost, it's about taking care of families," the Hopatcong, N.J. native said. "If we can't help them, then we'll point them in the right direction."

He added that the bottom line is that the families have to be taken care of so the deployed Soldiers can focus on their mission and not have to worry any more than they already do about what's happening on the home front. Finally, the rear detachment takes care of the equipment that the deployed element does not take with them when they go.

There is a certain amount of equipment that will be provided once the unit arrives in theater; therefore, the unit does not need to take all of its own. The rear detachment maintains that equipment and keeps it ready for the unit's return.

Weber said the rear detachment maintains constant contact with the forward deployed unit through a variety of communications, including mail, e-mail and telephone.

According to Davidson, due to the nine-hour time difference between Iraq and Fort Hood, e-mail will be the normal means of communication, and just in case the stove was left on, both the deployed unit and the rear detachment maintain 24-hour operations to put out those possible fires.

Brigade Troopers Sprout Wings

By Pfc. Ben Fox
3rd BCT Public Affairs

After a tedious morning filled with safety briefs and patient waiting, Soldiers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team finally boarded three CH-47 Chinook helicopters and strapped themselves in.

A few of the Soldiers

looked nervous in the first helicopter, maybe due to their first sergeant yelling, "Make 'em puke!" to the pilots and crew, hoping for some crazy mid-air stunts.

Other Soldiers were excited because it was their first time flying in a helicopter. This began helicopter familiarization training for the "Charger" troops Aug. 10.

When the company is

deployed, they will need to be flexible with how they get to the battlefield, said Capt. Pete Chapman, the company commander.

The training helped the Soldiers become familiar with how to load and unload a Chinook helicopter, as well as become familiar with the safety and emergency procedures, he added.

The engine started after everyone took their seats. It seemed to take forever for the enormous blades on top to finally start moving. Another eternity passed for the troops before the Chinook finally took off from the tarmac.

In the air, a hole in the floor, a door on the front right side and the back ramp of the helicopter were the only portals provided to observe the outside world.

Some of the Soldiers' expressions changed. Some were now nauseous, others still excited, and some had even fallen asleep, having ridden in a Chinook before.

The Chinooks landed in a

field of dry grass and the Soldiers exited at combat speed. Before the helicopter could take off, the Soldiers had already created a 360-degree defensive perimeter.

The helicopters took off, leaving the three teams on the desolate plain. The leaders quickly discussed with their Soldiers how they were going to reload the helicopters once they landed.

The helicopters returned a few minutes later and the blades created a gust of wind that hit the Soldiers with a blast of air, dirt and grass.

The Soldiers formed a single-file line and entered the Chinooks the same way they exited -- at combat speed.

"I think every Soldier should have to go through that," said Pvt. Ted Birdsall. He also said the training will help when he has to go up in a helicopter again.

"You know what to do right then," he said. Birdsall added that the training also helped him conquer his fear of heights.



(Photos by Pfc. Ben Fox, 3rd BCT Public Affairs)

A CH-47 Chinook helicopter flies overhead as Soldiers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment form a 360-degree defensive perimeter during helicopter familiarization training Aug. 10. The Soldiers trained on the safety and emergency procedures of the aircraft.



Troops from Company B, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment enter a CH-47 Chinook helicopter after creating a defensive perimeter during helicopter familiarization training Aug. 10.

Cav Soldier Gives Life-Saving Donation

By Pfc. Ryan Stroud
3rd BCT Public Affairs

A 3rd "Grey Wolf" Brigade Combat Team Soldier left central Texas Aug. 31 for Baltimore, Md., to save another person's life.

Pfc. Gary Champion, a Soldier with Company F, 215th Brigade Support Battalion, and a native Champlin, Minn., began his adventure with a trip to a blood drive sponsored by the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers and his brigade.

"I went in to give blood at a blood drive here on post," said Champion. "While I was sitting in the waiting room, filling out paperwork, a guy came around and said he was with the Department of Defense Blood Marrow program. He was looking for volunteers to donate an extra vial of blood to be tested for a possible stem cell match."

Champion agreed to donate the extra vial and went about his business. About four days later, he received a call to come in for a second blood test and



(Photo by Pfc. Ryan Stroud, 3rd BCT)

Pfc. Gary Champion, Company F, 215th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Made two donations at the Department of Defense Blood Marrow Clinic.

evaluation.

Champion learned he was a perfect match for a 25-year-old woman with leukemia. He was flown out to Baltimore for his first of two donations.

When Champion got to Baltimore, he was taken to the Department of Defense Bone Marrow Clinic, where he was injected with a drug to make

his stem cell count double.

"It's kind of like donating plasma," he said. "The doctors run your blood through a machine that separates your plasma, your platelets, and your stem cells from one another. The machine takes the stem cells and put everything else back into your arm. The whole process takes about five hours to complete."

If Champion had a reaction to the process, then the doctors would have taken bone marrow from his hip, a much more painful process, he said.

"The best part is, with the new procedure, I won't have to go to sick call or miss any days at work and I will still be deployable," he said

The Aug. 31 trip to Baltimore, was the second and last trip Champion had to make, but he said he will be willing to go back if any other stem cell donations are needed from him.

Though Champion will go through yearly check-ups to make sure he will not have any reactions to the treatment and he will receive information

about the progress of the woman he is helping, he will not be able to have any contact with her or her family for at least a year.

She will also not know who made the donation to help save her life.

"The people at the clinic will give me monthly updates on the woman and how she is progressing through her treatment, but I would actually like to talk to her, ask her questions about what it was like to have cancer and how long she had been waiting for a blood transfer," Champion said.

The process of doubling his stem cell count for the donation and the actual donation process took a toll for Champion.

It leaves Champion weak and tired, but this process is something he is willing to go through to help another.

"It feels good to help, everyone should do it," he said. "All you have to do is give a little more blood to be tested to see if you are a match for someone."

DFAC Tops in Army's Southwest Region

By Pfc. Ben Fox
3rd BCT Public Affairs

The 3rd "Grey Wolf" Brigade Combat Team's Operation Iraqi Freedom Dining Facility here won the Southwest Regional Phillip A. Connelly Award July 13.

Sgt. 1st Class Jesus Seary, the DFAC's noncommissioned officer in charge, said his facility won, not by his work, but the work of his Soldiers.

"They did it all," he said. "I just gave them guidance."

Seary said he sets the standards high for his facility, because the higher he sets the standards, the higher the NCOs under him

set theirs.

Winning this competition shows the cooks at the DFAC perform at their highest level daily, Seary said, from the lowest private to the leadership, because there is no need for a change of standards when the competition rolls around.

In the next level of competition, Army-wide, the OIF DFAC will be competing against at least seven other dining facilities from all over the world.

Seary said he is confident his DFAC will perform well in the upcoming Army-wide competition due to the cooks who run it and he said he is proud of every Soldier who works in the building.



(Photo by Pfc. Ryan Stroud, 3rd BCT Public Affairs)

Sgt. 1st Class Jesus Seary receives the trophy for the Southwest Regional Phillip A. Connelly Award Aug. 23 at Fort Hood from Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, the 1st Cavalry Division's deputy commanding general for support.

FRG Prepares Families for Deployment

By Pfc. Ben Fox
3rd BCT Public Affairs

A Soldier never goes into battle alone. A Soldier operates as part of a unit and has friends around him ready to watch his back. While a Soldier is deployed, his family doesn't have to go through the deployment alone, either.

The Family Readiness Group helps to prepare Soldiers' families for deployment by getting them in touch with other families who are going through the same experiences, said Col. David Sutherland, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

The FRG is meant to "...provide information and assist family members to be self-sustaining," said Sutherland, a native of Aledo, Ohio.

"It is good to know there are other



(Photo by Pfc. Ben Fox, 3rd BCT Public Affairs)

Soldiers and their families from Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, load up their plates with food during one of the company's Family Readiness Group meetings.

people going through what we are going through," said Tamatha Chainey, a native of Payette, Idaho, and spouse of a 3rd Brigade Soldier. "Everyone in the FRG is

there to help support you."

Families who have been through previous deployments can help newer families deal with the situation through their experience, said Lori Carpenter, the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division FRG Deployment Assistant, and a native of Bennington, Vt.

Families can gather information through meetings, newsletters and training sessions the FRG has, Carpenter said. She noted that training sessions can include care team training, operational security training and Iraqi cultural awareness training.

Command Sgt. Maj. Donald Felt, the brigade's senior noncommissioned officer and said the FRG has become more important now than in the past, because units are being deployed for longer periods of time.

Felt, a native of Monroeville, Pa., also said the bond between families during a deployment is similar to the bond Soldiers have in combat as far as taking care of others they don't know well.

Sutherland said it is important for families to try not to leave the immediate area for extended periods of time so the FRG can keep in contact with them. Chainey said the FRG has helped her in the past by keeping her busy with social events. She was also involved in the program, often helping with the information flow between families. She said she was excited about the new website for the FRG, www.armyfrg.org, and was going to enroll in it soon.

The website will include pictures and current updates so the families will be able to know what is going on with the Soldiers during the deployment, Carpenter said. She added that it is important for the Soldiers down range to know their families will pull together while they are gone.

"We want our families to know we are here for them," Carpenter said. The Brigade FRG will have an open house in early September so families can become familiar with their new location, she said. The 3rd BCT's FRG is co-located with the brigade's rear detachment in Building 43018.



(Photo by Pfc. Ryan Stroud, 3rd BCT Public Affairs)

Congressman Visits OIF DFAC

Staff Sgt. James Davis, a native of Kokomo, Ind., talks with Congressman David Morrison of the House Appropriations Committee about issues within the Army Aug. 28 at the 3rd Brigade Combat Team's Operation Iraqi Freedom Dining Facility at Fort Hood. Morrison talked with Soldiers about training, readiness, morale and social issues.

Complications Won't Kill Troop Confidence

By Pfc. Ryan Stroud
3rd BCT Public Affairs

Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd "Greywolf" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, showed up to Sugarloaf Multi-Use Range Aug. 8, prepared to take their Bradley's down a course of different targets and obstacles in hopes to qualify on their equipment before their deployment later in the year.

This challenge was important to the Soldiers and their leadership. It would be the first time to qualify for a few of them.

Though the Soldiers were pumped, excited and ready to go, their day at the range just wasn't meant to be.

Heat and the dryness of the ground and surrounding plants has been a major factor in starting fires on the ranges, said Greg Simpson, Operations Officer for Ranger Control.

"We haven't had that much rain in two months, thus making the grass and brush dry," he said. "When a Bradley comes to fire at a range, they fire one tracer round every five rounds. I feel it is the tracer rounds that are starting the fires in the ranges."

Simpson said fires are being fought everyday, putting the brakes on some live-fire training events.

The troops from 3-8 Cav came out to qualify on the Bradley Table VII and VIII, said Sgt. First Class David Therrell, a platoon sergeant with Company A.

"We wanted to bring out the crews who have had recent changes to their team and give them a chance to qualify

together," he said. "We have 28 crews here to qualify; we expect all 28 to do just that."

The range can be a challenging one, Therrell said. The Soldiers never know what they might face.

The crews have to face targets of all kinds. While going through the course, the Soldiers will fire upon moving targets, pop-up targets, stationary targets and many others.

"At times, the qualification can be strenuous because you have no idea what you might be facing," Therrell said.

He said different scenarios add to the excitement. For example, Therrell said while a crew is out on the range, they could get hit by any scenario like a chemical attack or a rocket propelled grenade attack.

"You never know what you might be up against," he said.

Though there are obstacles the Soldiers must overcome, this live fire range is strictly crew qualification only, he added. There will be no dismounted attacks for the Soldiers.

But complications with the range kept this confident group of mechanized infantry Soldiers on the side lines, unable to fire.

With their chances of firing fading away, their attitudes stayed strong and confident.

"We are training pretty regularly and our training is really good," said Sgt David Holda, Headquarters and Headquarters Company. "The training keeps us up to date and helps improve us even more."

Holda said because of the training he and his crew have received, he was sure they would have no problems with



(Photo by Pfc. Ben Fox, 3rd BCT Public Affairs)

A Soldier with, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division guides a Bradley Fighting Vehicle through the town of "Takira" during a cordon and search operation at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, La.

the range.

"I'm confident about being out here," he added. "The course is a challenge, but it's nothing that I don't think we can't handle. Our guys are good."

Though the wait can be a frustrating situation for the Soldiers, Therrell said having a qualified crew is important out there in the battlefield. It means they're dependable and know their job to its fullest.

Trooper Stands Alone at the Top

By Pfc. Ryan Stroud
3rd BCT Public Affairs

When the 3rd "Grey Wolf" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, returned from conducting a Mission Readiness Exercise at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., in May, the last thing on Spc. Corey Lehman's mind was to head right back there for more training.

Lehman, a Soldier with the brigade's Headquarters and Headquarters Company and a native of Stevens, Pa., did just that. He left Fort Hood for Fort Polk to participate in the 30-day Warrior Leaders Course, training to become a noncommissioned officer.

"I went to WLC at Fort Polk to train to become the best NCO I could be," Lehman said, "and I finished first in the class out of 90 Soldiers from all [military occupation specialty] fields."

Lehman, who attended the course with other First Team troops and Soldiers from other units and posts, said he didn't know what to expect when heading out on his journey. All he knew was he had to give his all and push himself to the max, he added.

"The first three weeks of the course was spent in garrison," Lehman said. "We spent time in a classroom, going over Army regulations, drill and ceremony, and learning the NCO Creed. They were teaching us how to be NCOs and how to handle ourselves in a proper military fashion."

WLC teaches up and coming NCOs how to be leaders, and to guide them in the right direction, Lehman said.

"Everyone who attended



(Photo by Pfc. Ryan Stroud, 3rd BCT Public Affairs)

Spc. Corey Lehman, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, was named the honor graduate of his Warrior Leaders Course class at Fort Polk, La. Lehman placed first out of 90 other Soldiers in attendance.

WLC had to be a leader, act as a leader, and lead those around them," he noted. "We were placed in squads where someone was the squad leader, another was a team leader, and we all, at one time, had to lead [physical training]."

"The squad leaders had 11 other Soldiers to look after," he continued. "The team leaders were under the squad leader and they had to work as a group to achieve the mission we were facing. That was one of the ways that we were graded: by how well we lead those around

us."

But leading was not the only task that was being graded by the staff. The Soldiers were graded on everything they did, said Lehman.

"We were graded on PT, graded on how we gave presentations, we were graded on everything," said Lehman.

"We then went out to the field for 10 days where we applied what we had learned the previous days in garrison," he said. "It was especially a good situation for Soldiers like me, who are typically in garrison,

because it gave us a chance to get out there and lead in the battlefield."

The Soldiers attending WLC were faced with another challenge while heading to the field. Already tired, the Soldiers packed their equipment and road marched out to their simulated forward operating base, where they would spend the next 10 days, Lehman said. What they didn't know was there were opposing forces waiting for them, providing some sticky situations.

"When we were in the field, we had civilians in the battlefield that challenged us and provided a better obstacle to face," said Lehman. "They were out there to provide reality to us while we were clearing rooms and executing maneuvers on the battlefield."

"There were even OPFOR that challenged us while we were maneuvering through our lanes and drills," he added.

The 30-day Fort Polk WLC provided troops with more realistic, in-depth training, Lehman said.

"When I was a squad leader, I had to receive orders, design a plan of attack, report to my Soldiers and lead them through Squad movements and maneuvers," he said. "It really taught me to be a leader."

When all was said and done, this paralegal specialist, who also finished first in his advanced individual training, received an Army Commendation Medal for being the WLC distinguished honor graduate.

Through all of his achievements in the Army as a specialist, Lehman said he is ready to become an NCO for the Grey Wolf Brigade.

Family is Key to Cav's Top Lawyer

By Pfc. Jeffrey Ledesma
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

The Army life isn't for everyone. For those who take on the call of military service, there is often a driving force behind their decision to serve.

For Lt. Col. Holly O'Grady-Cook, the staff judge advocate for 1st Cavalry Division, it's a sense of family, both in and out of the division's staff judge advocate office, which keeps her in uniform.

O'Grady-Cook, a Deer Park, N.Y. native, grew up in an Irish-Catholic household with her father, mother, two older brothers and a younger sister.

"We didn't have a lot growing up," she said. "My traditions, my work ethic, my beliefs, and my sense of helping others are all things I grew up with."

She said she owes a great deal of that to her family.

"My dad was the type of person that would give you the shirt off his back, if he thought you needed it more than he did," she said. "And my mother was always standing right behind him making sure it wasn't his very last shirt."

The division's top legal officer said if she was to choose one woman who she admired growing up it would be her mother for being a strong, conservative, smart, hard-working woman.

"(She is) the type of woman who knew how to save for a rainy day," she said. "So, when the rainy days came, she was always fine."

The strength she gained during her upbringing and from watching her mom helped in making her decision to go to law school. However, because they were such a close-knit family it was hard for her father to watch her leave for college.

She walked into her freshman orientation and met her future husband, Col. Alan Cook, then a third year law student with a Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarship. They grew closer that first year at Union University's Albany Law School and ended up engaged. About a year later she became Mrs. Holly O'Grady Cook. They have been married for 20 years now.

After she graduated in 1987, the hus-



(Photo by Pfc. Jeffrey Ledesma, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Lt. Col. Holly O'Grady-Cook, is the 1st Cavalry Division's staff judge advocate and only female Soldier on the division's primary staff. She credits her strong family ties and upbringing for a successful 17-year Army career.

band and wife team relocated to Maryland. For the next two years, she worked as a judicial law clerk representing big businesses in Baltimore.

Suddenly, her husband was reassigned to Fort Huachuca, Ariz., to teach at the military intelligence school.

She had a choice to make: take the bar exam at every new state they might be stationed, or join the Army.

"My mom said if that's what I wanted to do, that's what I had to do," she said. "When it comes down to it, I joined because I didn't want to take the Arizona Bar Exam, thinking I'd do my two years. I ended up staying in because of all the people I've come across, the people I worked with and the clients we worked for.

"It feels good to be able to help," she said. "Whether we're helping a young Soldier who has a lease issue or telling a

young Soldier, 17 or 18 years old, that he has 900 dollars from his tax return, having them look at you and say 'Thank you' is the silver lining at the end of the day."

And the Soldiers' hard work in the SJA section makes this possible.

"There are about 20 captains that have been in less than two and a half years who are so enthusiastic about the journey they have just begun to embark on, and the enlisted Soldiers in my section are dedicated, they work hard, and they keep this place running," she said. "They all make my job easier."

Although she never really thought of herself as a high-ranking female in the Army, O'Grady-Cook is, in fact, the highest ranking woman on the division's primary staff.

But she said over her 17-year military career, she didn't get to her current position alone.

"In the military, there is no one that comes up through the ranks alone," she said. "I was very lucky to have gotten a lot of help from my senior officers and their wives throughout my career."

When she first came in, O'Grady-Cook remembers in-processing and coming across a sign that said "colonel."

"Although I knew very little about the Army, I knew that a colonel outranked a lieutenant, so I saluted," Cook said. "It was indoors, and the Soldiers there were nice enough to salute back and they took me under their wings."

Her husband has also been there for her from the start of this journey in the Army.

While still a very green military lawyer, one night the phone rang and someone asked her a legal question that she wasn't sure about. She replied "Can you hold on a second? I have to look it up in my manual."

Then she turned to her husband and said, "I have no idea what he's talking about. What do I do?"

Alan came through for her that night, just as he's been there for her over the past

Motivation Spurs Troop's Drive to be a Soldier

By Sgt. Nicole Kojetin
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

In the Army, units work to ensure that tactical teams work well together, that everyone has a comfortable work environment and that Soldiers know that their leadership will always be prepared to help.

Seldom do troops think about a person's gender, before knowing that a Soldier is just that... a Soldier.

If it was once thought that the Army is a man's world, one troop would stand up and shout otherwise.

Spc. Maria Harrell, has been striving to get into the Army for the past two years. She battled medical problems -



(Photo by Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, 1st Cav. Div.)

Spc. Maria Harrell, a French horn player with the 1st Cavalry Division Band, plays a few notes Aug. 21.

broken hips and nearly losing a finger. Nothing would stop her.

She originally planned on

joining the Army Reserve as a French horn player as she finished degree in musical performance, but when Harrell heard that she could go active, she jumped at the chance.

Even after only being at her first duty station for five days, the Columbus, Ohio native cannot imagine being anywhere else.

"I love it," Harrell said. "I love every minute of it because I get to play for a living. Plus, while I am doing it, I get to represent and defend our country. I can't see a better way to be a musician."

Music has been on her plate since high school, and she plans on sticking with it for her

next 30 years in the military. Eventually, she will put in a warrant officer candidate packet, so she can be a band commander.

Harrell does not think that her gender will stop her plans.

"I haven't really run into any discrimination, in regards to me being a female," Harrell said. "There was a little bit at AIT (advanced individual training) for physical fitness, because they thought that the males would be better or they expected the slowest runner to be female. If anything, it made me work harder."

But as far as she was concerned, it didn't matter.

"We all do the same jobs," she said. "We are all Soldiers."

Cav's Top Female Lawyer Loves Army Life, Family

Cook

From Page 12

two decades.

"He gives me balance," O-Grady-Cook said. "Where I am organized, making lists of things to be done, he is spontaneous, fun, smart."

Although being a dual-military family can be tough, she doesn't regret a second of it.

"The military given us opportunities to travel to places I didn't think I would ever go," she said. "When we were stationed in Korea, I got to see Hong Kong, Thailand and Hawaii. When (we were) in Germany, I traveled to Belgium, Austria, Australia, Prague, and Switzerland."

With her family firmly settled in central Texas with their three-year-old son, Andrei, O-Grady-Cook said she couldn't be happier. Going at 100 miles per hour all day, Andrei son is Holly and Alan's pride and joy.

"He's a quick smile, a very happy little boy with boundless energy, and we couldn't be any luckier," she said. "The highlight of my day is watching 'Justice League,' a car-

toon show, or reading a book with my son."

What started off as a two-year plan in 1989, transformed into a 17-year career.

"I don't think my family could be any prouder," she said. "I have been lucky, they know I am happy and I couldn't pick a better family."

O'Grady-Cook said having her family

behind her every step of the way during her Army career had made all the difference, even as she prepares for her second deployment later this year.

"(Deploying's) part of my job," she said. "I am looking forward to leaving, so I can start looking forward to coming home."



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40-Year Marriage Continues

25-Year Love Affair with Army Ends

**Pvt. Tiffany Mercer
14th Public Affairs Det.**

Retirement is an accomplishment and a milestone

many Soldiers strive for. It signifies a devotion to the Army and a desire to make the military not just a job, but a way of life. But not only

Soldiers retire from the military; many dedicated civilians do the same.

In a ceremony held on the 1st Cavalry Division's parade field, Suzanna Wood bid farewell to the Army after 25 years of service.

Wood, the senior budget analyst for the division for the past six years, was honored in the Distinguished Service and Welcome Ceremony Aug. 29.

The Morganfield, Kentucky native grew up an Army brat and later became a military spouse.

"I have been around Soldiers all of my life," the small-statured woman said in her quiet tone. "I could have done my job outside of the military and made the same amount of money with less work.

Working in the Army was a way to support the war fighter and support the troops."

At the end of a 25-year career, she said she feels a greater sense of accomplishment.

She began her career in 1981 at Fort Sheridan, Ill. Relocation happened a few times throughout her career, due to the Army moving her husband from place to place.

In 1987, Wood arrived at Fort Hood where she served as a secretary in the III Corps Directorate of Resource Management's Budget Office. Three years later, she transferred to III Corps' Budget Office in the Operations Division. She stayed there for 10 years.

In 2000, she made her

final move, joining the First Team.

She was responsible for all matters concerning the division's budget, which included advising commanders and staff members on all matters concerning resource management.

The division's deputy commanding general for support, Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, spoke of Wood's service to the Army at the ceremony.

He said Wood reminds us, once again, that the Army is made up of not only Soldiers, but civilians, too.

"These civilians answer the call of duty in a unique and special way," he added.

Wood made a significant contribution; saving many Soldiers from money problems, Brooks said with a smile.

Wood thought it was fitting that the final six years of her career had been spent with 1st Cav. Div.

When her husband was in Vietnam, some division troops pulled his unit out of trouble, possibly saving his life, she said.

"He might not be here today if not for them," Wood said, holding back tears.

The Woods have been married for 40 years.

So what does a woman who's been so busy her whole life plan on doing in retirement?

"Anything I want to do," Wood said with a gentle laugh. She plans on resettling with her husband, Ken, in Kentucky.



(Photo by Pvt. Tiffany Mercer, 14th Public Affairs Detachment)

Suzanna Wood laughs with Col. Daniel Shanahan, commander of the 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, after her retirement ceremony on the division's parade field Aug. 29. Wood, who served as the division's senior budget analyst for six years, completed 25 years of federal service.

Long-Lost Sports Columnist Returns to Cav Country

The last time I wrote a column for a 1st Cavalry Division publication was Feb. 5, 2005, the last field newspaper produced in Baghdad by the First Team and about a month before I set foot on American soil again.

I gave my prediction for the Super Bowl - erroneously taking the Philadelphia Eagles by a field goal over the New England Patriots (who I didn't even predict would make the play-offs, but that was another column) - in that final column. Since then, the public affairs office established a bigger and better website and created this new, electronic publication "Crossed Sabers."

Still, "Trigger Pull" was silent. But no more!

Later this year, I'll be headed back to Iraq with the rest of the division, so I decided to write a column before I left - sort of a tryout for the new public affairs team and the future editors of the next division field newspaper, which will also be called "Crossed Sabers."

If it doesn't thoroughly reek in the eyes (and nostrils) of my editors, I may get to talk smack over in Iraq, again.

For those readers who remember me from the last rotation, you'll recall that I'm a born-and-bred Wisconsinite from Milwaukee. A Brewers fan since 1970 (yeah, I know, I'm old!) and a Green Bay Packers fan from birth. I have lots of opinions about sports, and I still work in public affairs, making me uniquely qualified to write a sports column.

At least, that's what I'm hoping.

As I write this column, the National Football League is

Trigger Pull:

Master Sgt.
Dave Larsen



preparing to begin its regular season schedule, after more than a month of watching garbage-time players and hangers-on get their last shot to make a ball club. The NFL, ever the intelligent industrial icon, even charges fans full price to see watered-down talent in the pre-season. Brilliant!

But like hundreds of other football publications, this is my shot at picking the division winners in the NFL and prognosticate into the playoffs ... and beyond.

Here goes:

NFC East: 1. Dallas. 2. N.Y. Giants. 3. Washington. 4. Philadelphia. Getting Terrell Owens into the fold, as long as he's not trying to imitate Lance Armstrong on a stationary bike, puts the Dallas Cowboys as the favorite in this division.

The New York Giants will finish a close second and probably make the playoffs, as long as Tiki Barber has anything left in the tank.

The Washington Redskins, a playoff team from 2005, finishes above .500, but out of the post-season. So do the Philadelphia Eagles. This is the toughest division in professional football.

NFC North: 1. Chicago. 2. Green Bay. 3. Minnesota. 4. Detroit. How the mighty have fallen! The Packers went from first to worst last year, while the Chicago Bears walked away with the division title (and choked at home in the playoffs). The Bears will win again, even with a mediocre offense featuring only one

good wideout and so-so quarterbacking.

The Detroit Lions, Minnesota Vikings and the Packers all have new head coaches this year. None of them will crack the .500-mark this season, though the Pack and Vikes will get close (8-8) and tie for runner-up honors in a weak division. And the Lions? Last place.

NFC South: 1. Tampa Bay. 2. Carolina. 3. New Orleans. 4. Atlanta. The Carolina Panthers rode Steve Smith's small frame all the way to the Super Bowl last year. The Panthers will be good again, and in the playoffs, but will fall to second place to Jon Gruden's Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Chris Simms doesn't need to look over his shoulder this season, and should be in for a breakout year. The Saints will be improved, but not play-off bound. The Atlanta Falcons won't make the playoffs (again), and will cost their coach his job.

NFC West: 1. Seattle. 2. Arizona. 3. St. Louis. 4. San Francisco. In probably the weakest division in football, the Seahawks will again reign supreme. Nobody else gets in the post-season dance, though the Cardinals (Why didn't they chance their mascot when they moved to the desert?) will get close. San Francisco battles the Lions for the worst record in the conference.

AFC East: 1. Miami. 2. New England. 3. Buffalo. 4. N.Y. Jets. The addition of Daunte Culpepper puts Chris Chambers in the Pro Bowl and the Dolphins in the playoffs. New England falls short this year. The Bills and Jets vie for the worst record in the confer-

ence.

AFC North: 1. Cincinnati. 2. Baltimore. 3. Pittsburgh. 4. Cleveland. Carson Palmer has made a miraculous (and speedy) recovery from knee surgery. He'll lead the Bengals into the play-offs and, possibly, to a conference title. The Ravens, with Steve McNair at the helm, will take a wild card spot in the post-season while the Steelers try to eek into a play-off slot. Cleveland?

Forget about it (though they'll score more points this year!)

AFC South: 1. Indianapolis. 2. Jacksonville. 3. Houston. 4. Tennessee. It'll be close at the top two spots, and close at the bottom. This is still a division of have's and have not's. The Jaguars have a shot at a wild card berth.

AFC West: 1. Oakland. 2. Kansas City. 3. Denver. 4. San Diego. This is my "upset special." Art Shell is back and he'll bring back old-school Raider football, too.

I expect Oakland to win the division in a tight race, and lead the league in penalties, too. The Chiefs and the Broncos fall short, while the Chargers learn that Phillip Rivers is not their quarterback of the future.

That's it - a Cheesehead's look into the football future. After listening for weeks to the "experts" pick their way through the upcoming season, I just had to take a shot. If you agree ... great. If not, e-mail your predictions to david.j.larsen@us.army.mil and they might just be highlighted in our first edition of "Crossed Sabers" in Iraq.

Stay tuned, sports fans ... and GO PACKERS!