2nd Brigade Combat Team Forward
Camp Buehring, Kuwait

Striker Torch

EDITION XVII

07MAY06

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Bottom Left: Gen. David McKiernan talks with Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment during his visit to Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Photo by Pfc. Jeremy Neece
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Bottom Left: A Bradley Fighting Vehicle maneuvers around a curve at Forward Operating Base Sword, a training area near Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Photo by Spc. Joshua Ramey
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Country Singer Entertains Troops at Camp Buehring

Story and Photo by Spc. Joshua Ramey

Chris Gray and his band perform Soldier's requests during a concert sponsored by the USO at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

Chris Gray started his career in the Louisiana / Mississippi Gulf Coast music scene in 1997. Since then, Gray has been playing at clubs, casinos, and dance halls. He has opened for many famous musicians such as George Strait, Tim McGraw, Kenny Chesney, and The Dixie Chicks. Chris Gray and his band visited Camp Buehring as part of a United Services Organization (USO) "Combat Boot-Scootin" tour, performing a variety of songs for Soldiers stationed at the camp. The band's play list included "Brown Eyed Girl," and "Sweet Home Alabama." One of the most memorable songs the band performed was an original entitled "Red, White, and Blue." It was written when Gray was an enlisted member of the Navy, serving on a ship during Operation Desert Storm. The lyrics told of the hardships Armed Forces members endure while on deployments away from family and home. Pfc. Bruce Pratt of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, said, "It's cool they take the time to come out here and perform for nothing, just to keep our morale up. It lets us know there are people out there that actually care."

The band played for nearly three hours, taking requests from Soldiers who ran up to the stage and talked to the singer as the band was still performing. The event allowed Soldiers to relax, and to have a good time. Chris Gray expressed his appreciation for the troops, saying "God bless you for everything you do. Us, and especially the people back home, really appreciate what you're doing here."

Military Spouse Appreciation Day and National Military Appreciation Month

From Gen. (Ret.) Richard B. Myers, USAF

In tribute to the great men and women who have served their country in uniform, May marks National Military Appreciation Month. We are very grateful to our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen for their commitment to preserving freedom and democracy in our Nation and throughout the world.

This year we celebrate Military Spouse Appreciation Day on May 10. As we salute service members past and present, it is only fitting to recognize those who support them and help make their service possible.

Across the country, loved ones have been separated as service members have been mobilized or deployed in support of the global War on Terrorism. This is a pivotal time in the history of our country and we draw strength by remembering what is at stake in this conflict makes these sacrifices necessary. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families that have lost a loved one who gave that last full measure of devotion to their country during this war.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff and I join all Americans in paying tribute to the veterans and current members of our Armed Forces -- American heroes past and present -- for all they have done and all they continue to do in patriotic service to our country. We also salute our military spouses for their vital, continuing support to our men and women in uniform.

Remember Operational Security!!!

Only *YOU* can prevent information leaks!

OPFOR Provides Realism to Counter-IED training

Story by 2nd Lt. Robert Varvel

40th Engineer Battalion is taking advantage of the excellent training facilities here at the Udairi Range Complex with a detailed route clearance training event. Each combat engineer company completed nine days of 24 hour route clearance operations. The Recon Platoon is serving as the Opposing Force (OPFOR) for all three companies, effectively a month-long job as "The Bad Guys." They built and placed training IED's, launched ambushes, and posed as civilians on the battlefield.

"The training is exactly what we needed, it's what [is happening] up north. We're getting the best training, and it's good because the OPFOR and the tactics we used are tailored to what's actually going on in combat," said Staff Sgt. Sean Reilly, a squad leader in Co. A, 40th En. Bn. after completing the nine-day event with his platoon.

Spc. Benjamin Hull (right) from Company A, 40th Engineer Battalion renders first aid to a "civilian on the battlefield," Pfc. James Corbit (left) from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 40th Engineer Battalion during Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) training exercise. Photo by Capt. Scott Snyder

Maj. Jason Kirk, the 40th Engineer Battalion Operations Officer, agreed that the OPFOR made a decisive difference in training quality, "To replicate the threat in Iraq, we needed a cunning, thinking enemy who would watch our every move and adjust his [tactics] to counter us at every turn with newer and deadlier IED's. 2nd Lt. Robert Varvel's Engineer Reconnaissance Platoon did a great job of replicating this enemy and the tools of their trade, IEDs, in all their various forms."

Soldiers from Co. A, 40th Engineer Battalion question a role player serving as Op-For at a recent counter IED training exercise near Camp Buehring , Kuwait. Photo by Spc. Joshua Ramey

The combat engineer companies of the 40th Engineer Battalion were grateful the unit leadership put an emphasis on providing them an able opponent for this event. OPFOR that is under-skilled, under-motivated, or uninformed will not be able to provide realistic, tough training. By designating a cohesive and capable unit as OPFOR, this training was something that really taught Soldiers how to fight the enemy. Many observers noticed the real correlation between the quality of the OPFOR and the quality of the overall training.

New Camp Buehring TMC Sick Call Hours

Effective Monday, 1 May 2006:

Monday – Friday afternoon sick call hours at the Camp Buehring TMC will change from 1500-1700 to 1300-1500.

Monday – Friday morning sick call hours will remain the same, 0800-1000.

Saturday and Sunday sick call hours will remain the same, 0800-1000 on both days.

There is no afternoon sick call on Saturdays and Sundays.

Note: All 2 BCT personnel must process through their battalion doctor or PA and receive a sick call slip prior to visiting the TMC.

Cavalry Scouts Earn Their Spurs

Story by Capt. Neil Chitwood

Pfc. Bradly Van Dyke (front) from Troop G, 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, and his team of spur candidates conduct a short halt before receiving an order at the individual movement technique station. Photo by Sgt. Justin Eminhizer

The 1st Cavalry Regiment has a long and proud history dating back to March 2nd, 1833. The Regiment has one hundred and one campaign streamers since the Mexican War in 1846 and thirty-two troopers have earned the Medal of Honor. Troop G, 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment honored their fellow troopers both past and present by carrying on the long standing tradition of the Spur Ride. Cavalrymen strive to earn their spurs, which symbolize the connection that they feel with their predecessors. Cavalrymen have always performed mounted reconnaissance missions for the Army, but rode horses to perform their mission for most of our nation's history. Today's Spur Ride tests the warrior skill set that is necessary for every Cavalryman to be successful in a combat environment. It forces the Soldier to dig deeper and push harder than they ever thought possible.

Cavalry Scouts and Soldiers from around the 2nd BCT were invited to test their physical and mental endurance during this three day event. On the first day, the candidates arrived at 0500 for an APFT. The minimum score of 250 had to be earned to be considered for spurs. The candidates then rushed to change uniforms, grab rucks, pack a portable radio, a global positioning system and were bused to a training area in the Udairi desert. From the time they left the start point, candidates conducted continuous operations for 56 hours by navigating to and completing each station. The tasks included land navigation, establish an observation post, build a field expedient antenna, call for indirect fire, first aid, individual movement techniques, maintenance, weapons rodeo, demolitions, vehicle identification, and unit history.

"To many it means tradition, honor, integrity, and esprit de corps."

The Spur Ride was designed to simulate a combat environment and force the candidates to perform common Soldier tasks under stress. "It was meant to simulate combat stresses such as sleep depravation and physical exhaustion while honing warrior skills. Although no bullets were flying overhead there were other obstacles such as tests of muscular endurance, technical knowledge, and the will to never quit," said spur holder Staff Sgt. Steven Bradford, from Ghost Troop. The spur holders were charged with increasing the level of stress upon the candidates, forcing them to rapidly make decisions. Candidates knew there would be only one attempt at each station so they had to focus and think clearly no matter what situation presented itself.

According to Cpl. Reggie Haag, of the Combat Observation Lasing Team platoon, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment, the most difficult part of the event was "navigating over 50 [kilometers] through the rock quarry in the desert heat." Others confessed that it was difficult keeping a positive attitude after walking away from a station in which they were not confident in their performance. The candidates charged forward because earning your spurs is important to every Cavalrymen. "To many it means tradition, honor, integrity, and esprit de corps," said Staff Sgt. Jacob Stover, a platoon sergeant in Ghost Troop. Spur holders know that they are part of something larger, a brotherhood dating back generations.

On the evening of the final day, the successful candidates were awarded their spurs. Of the 52 spur candidates who began the event, 31 demonstrated the endurance, knowledge, and intestinal fortitude that is required to earn their spurs. One Soldier that did not earn his spurs said, "I would do it over again. It means that much to me." Spurs or no spurs everyone trained on many valuable skills. The Spur Ride was a great opportunity for the Soldiers of the 2nd BCT to stay sharp and battle focused while paying homage to the rich traditions of the 1st U.S. Cavalry Regiment.

Pfc. Erik Butler (left) of Combat Observation Lasing Team (COLT) platoon, 4th Battalion 27th Field Artillery Regiment, and Staff Sgt. Scott Pickering of Company B, 141st Signal Battalion, identify vehicles from their observation post during the spur ride. Photo by Capt. Neil Chitwood

Spc. Tommy Ainsworth of Combat Observation Lasing Team platoon, 4th Battalion 27th Field Artillery Regiment observes vehicle picture cards during the vehicle identification lane. Photo by Capt. Neil Chitwood

2nd BCT Takes a Sharp Look at Safety

Story by Spc. Joshua Ramey

The 2nd Brigade Combat Team canceled all training for the day, and used Saturday, April 29, 2006, to place the highest priority on various safety issues facing the unit deployed to a desert environment. Safety Day was designed to let units analyze their internal safety procedures, and to raise awareness of common safety violations. Safety is essential for Soldiers who have trained tirelessly for over a year, and rely on each other to accomplish their missions. According to Jerrold Scharninghausen, the 2nd BCT safety officer, "Accidents will happen – we can't eliminate every possibility… but with a little forethought, we can prevent a majority of them." The rough desert terrain coupled with the characteristics of up-armored vehicles, presents a safety hazard that remains hidden to untrained or inexperienced drivers. The Safety Day classes refreshed Soldiers on procedures which help minimize accidents, help instill vigilance when working around military equipment, and stressed the need to keep watchful eyes on fellow Soldiers here at Camp Buehring.

Cpl. Eric McClanahan (left), Spc. Derek Conway (center), and Spc. Nathan Kovell, all of Company B, 141st Signal Battalion assemble an OE-254 Antenna at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.
Photo by Spc. Joshua Ramey

Sgt. Brian Peters of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment instructed a group of officers about the safety procedures associated with the M113 Armored Personnel Carrier. He explained that it takes two people to properly drop the ramp because the driver cannot visually see if the area is clear. The heavy ramp could cause serious injury if a person were in its path. The condition of the tracks also affects how the vehicle handles and brakes, and how the steering is affected while traveling on hard-packed desert sand. "These safety classes help refresh knowledge – people have a tendency to relax on safety, which is not good.

1st Lt. Justin Philippi of Btry. C, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment teaches a class on risk management during the 2BCT "Striker" safety stand-down day in Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Photo by 2nd Lt. Bryan Stephens

Spc. William Montgomery of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment repairs the brakes on a Humvee.
Photo by Sgt. Jason Spalding

Staff Sgt. Steven Bradford of Troop G, 1st Cavalry Regiment observes HEAT (Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer) rollover training at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Photo by Capt. Anthony Forshier

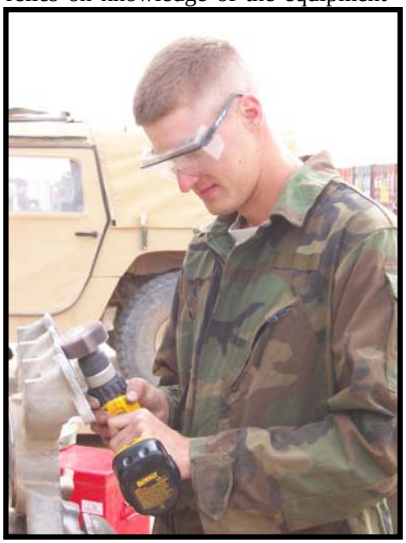
in use, but also knowledge of how a team of operators will react to an emergency.

Staff Sgt. Joseph Locklear of HHC, 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment reviewed Light Medium Tactical Vehicle (LMTV) evacuation procedures and facilitated a hands-on exercise. "These are drills you take back and practice over and over. You have to figure out what's best for your crew so everyone knows what they need to do in an emergency," he said. Armored crewmen must be especially vigilant explained Spc. Jose Merced of Company C, 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment. "Hands-on rollover drills are really good for us. Tank rollovers are different - depending on how the tank lands, you can't just go out the door."

Another vehicle demanding increased vigilance is the up-armored Humvee. This modified vehicle with its additional 2,000 lbs. of armor, including armor plates protecting the gunner's hatch at the top of the vehicle, has become more top-heavy than wheeled vehicles most Soldiers are used to driving. 1st Lt. Matthew Arabian instructed members of 1st Bn., 6th Inf. Regt. on many of the safety precautions Humvee crews must take to minimize injuries. "Everyone needs to attend a drivers training course, because it will be hotter, the ground will be harder, and these vehicles have a tendency to slide. These vehicles have a high potential to rollover, and that's why it is important to practice drills. In desert terrain, routes you've traveled numerous times can still reach up and grab you."

As the members of the 2nd BCT continue to push through their deployment in the Middle East, it is important to keep safety as the highest priority while training hard and playing competitive sports. "A lot of accidents Army-wide occur because Soldiers are taking short cuts. We've been lucky here, we've had no training fatalities, and leaders are doing a good job enforcing safety standards," said Mr. Scharninghausen. Safety Day ensured Soldiers will remain focused until the mission is complete, and will continue to watch out for each other.

You have to keep on your toes, so accidents don't happen," Sgt. Peters said. The emphasis on safety not only relies on knowledge of the equipment



Pfc. Dillon True of Service Battery, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment, cleans an exhaust manifold with a drilled power brush demonstrating the proper use of safety eyewear. Photo by Staff Sgt. Yann

Convoy Safety

HAZARDS –
- Convoy Interval (Dust)
- Vehicle speed
- Driver fatigue
- Uneven terrain / washed out trails
- Limited visibility
- Day / Night visibility
- Environmental conditions
- NVG Washout From Headlights

CONTROLS –
- Convoy Briefings
- Make sure drivers are licensed
- Senior Occupant must be in vehicle
- PMCS prior to movement
- PCCs and PCIs

What You Need to Know About The UCMJ?

"The Role of the Commander" by Capt. Joel Cummings

Last time you read about proceedings under Article 15 of the UCMJ. When the offense is too serious for disposition by an Article 15 proceeding, or if the Soldier demands a trial by court-martial, the Soldier's commander signs a charge sheet accusing him/her of breaking the law by violating a particular article of the UCMJ. Now the Soldier is called "the accused," which is the equivalent of the term "defendant" in the civilian criminal system. Charging a Soldier for a court-martial is called "preferring charges" or the "preferral process."

In cases where the accused probably will flee from prosecution or engage in serious criminal misconduct and lesser forms of restraint are inadequate, the accused's commander may place him/her in pre-trial confinement to await trial. All pre-trial confinement is reviewed by a neutral and detached magistrate within seven days who must find that continued confinement is warranted.

The accused's company commander then forwards the charge sheet to the summary court-martial convening authority (battalion commander). The battalion commander may choose to send the charges back to the accused's commander, resolve the case at that level or forward it to the next higher commander. Each commander has independent discretion on how to resolve a particular case. No commander may order a subordinate commander to dispose of a case in a certain way.

If the battalion commander believes the case warrants disposition greater than a summary court-martial, then he/she forwards the case to the special court-martial convening authority (brigade commander). The brigade commander may return the case below, resolve the case at this level or send the case higher. A brigade commander has all of the powers of subordinate commanders plus the power to convene a special court-martial. A special court-martial is presided over by a judge and can impose a conviction and up to a year in jail. If the brigade commander believes the case warrants a higher forum, the brigade commander may send the case to the general court-martial convening authority (commanding general).

The commanding general may convene two kinds of courts-martial; the general court-martial and the special court-martial empowered to adjudge a bad conduct discharge ("BCD Special"). If the brigade commander believes the case warrants a BCD Special, the brigade commander may forward the case with that recommendation to the commanding general.

Before the brigade commander may recommend a general court-martial, however, the brigade commander must conduct a pre-trial investigation under Article 32 of the UCMJ. Article 32 of the UCMJ says no charges can be sent to a general court-martial without an impartial investigation. An Article 32 investigation is like a grand jury proceeding in the civilian justice system. The Article 32 investigator should be a major or higher.

The Article 32 investigator will examine the charge sheet and call witnesses for sworn testimony. The accused and his/her lawyer have a right to be present when evidence is reviewed or witnesses testify, a right to cross-examine government witnesses and to call witnesses for the defense. The accused has a right to testify, but doesn't have to say anything.

Article 32 provides an important right to the accused because it forces the government to test its case in an informal mini-trial. At the end of the Article 32 investigation, the investigating officer gives an advisory recommendation to the appointing authority (brigade commander) on what's to be done with the case. Once the brigade commander receives the report of the Article 32 investigation, he/she may recommend the case be tried by a general court-martial or any lower disposition.

Now this potential general court-martial may be brought before the general court-martial convening authority (the commanding general) for a decision on disposition. If the commanding general believes the case warrants it, he/she refers it to a general court-martial. When the commanding general sends a case to court, he "refers" it and the process is called the "referral."

The referral may be to either a general court-martial or a "BCD Special." A general court-martial is the most serious kind of court-martial and is the equivalent of a felony prosecution in a federal or state court. The general court-martial is empowered to give a death penalty if warranted. A general court-martial may give any punitive discharge. Enlisted may receive a bad conduct discharge or a dishonorable discharge, the latter being worse. Officers may receive a dismissal which is the only punitive discharge for officers and is viewed as negatively as a dishonorable discharge. The BCD Special is empowered to give no more than a bad conduct discharge, up to one year in confinement, reduction to E-1 and total forfeiture of all pay and allowances.

Additionally, anytime after preferring charges, the accused can ask to be administratively discharged or allowed to resign instead of going to trial. Such requests are occasionally approved. When they are approved, they usually result in a reduction to E-1 and an Other Than Honorable Conditions Discharge.

Most Soldier misconduct will never make it to a court-martial because the UCMJ has so many ways to handle misconduct at a lower level. The title of this article is called Role of the Commander because the commander is the center of gravity for everything that happens up to this point. When the court-martial convening authority refers a case to court-martial, then the center of gravity changes to the military judge until the conclusion of the case. Ultimately, however, it is the commander who is responsible for good order and discipline. The UCMJ is the tool to maintain it. Next week, we will discuss what happens to a case after it is referred to a court-martial.

Next Week: Inside the Courts-Martial

Comanche Tank Gunnery

Story by 1st Lt. Dustin R. Gray

M1A1 Main Battle Tanks of Company C, 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment line up to fire at a range before preparing to fire Tank Tables.
Photo by Spc. Chadd Rozanski

The "Comanche's" of Company C, 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment, recently spent two weeks at the newly constructed Multi Purpose Range Complex (MPRC) firing their tanks to improve gunnery skills. This training marked the first time Comanche Company had a chance to qualify their tanks since the Grafenwoehr rotation in October 2005. This gunnery also gave the Comanches their first opportunity to train using the new Tank Gunnery Tables outlined in the revised Tank Gunnery Field Manual 3-20.12, dated August 2005.

The first few days at the MPRC were spent in preparation for qualification. The commander of Task Force Conqueror, Lt. Col. Tony Deane, led the way with his gunner, Sgt. Jesse Morales firing the first round down range. Spc. Mike Rumpl and Spc. Jacob Rainwater fill out the rest of the crew as loader and driver. Spc. Jacob Rainwater stated, "It was a new crew, shooting new tables on a new range. It turned out [to be] a really good training experience." In preparation for qualification, the crews first conducted Tank Tables V-VII which trains the crews on target acquisition skills and engagement techniques. Table VII is much like Table VIII as 3rd Platoon Leader, 1st Lt. Daniel Cross of North Little Rock, Arkansas, stated, "Table VII encompasses all the skills required for Table VIII qualification; however, Table VII presents a greater challenge due to shorter engagement times and the number of targets. This gives the crew an idea of what to expect on Table VIII." The Tank Table VIII qualification consists of 10 engagements worth 100 points each. To receive the full 100 points for an engagement the crew must use the proper fire commands, meet the time standards, and hit each target. Using the new tables for the first time provided the Comanches with new challenges. As Sgt. 1st Class Michael May, 3rd Platoon Sergeant said, "The new tables require the loader to be much more involved. One of the most difficult engagements involves the loader, the tank commander, and the gunner simultaneously engaging separate targets." Spc. Joseph Turturici, a loader for C11, explained "Using the old tables as a loader I didn't have much involvement, I just loaded rounds. But, using the new tables I can engage targets and get a lot more involved in the training. The training is more realistic and reflects what's currently going on in combat."

During the qualification, each crew competed to earn the honor of "Top Tank." For this gunnery, the award went to C65. The crew consisted of Tank Commander, 1st Lt. Terrence McCartney; Gunner Cpl. Joey Hancock; driver Spc. Dan Sikes; and loader Spc. Edward Thrasher. The crew earned a total of 902 points and qualified as distinguished. "I'm proud. These new tables are challenging, but we were able to qualify distinguished for the first time," exclaimed Cpl. Joey Hancock.

Comanche Company was the first unit to qualify at the new MPRC. 1st Lt. Daniel Cross remarked, "The new range worked out well for the qualification. The Task Force really came through providing this range from scratch." Spc. Jacob Rainwater said, "They did a good job with the range and its nice having it so close to us. I hope we get another opportunity to train out there."

Overall, the tank tables offered a chance for crews to get back in their tanks and refresh their skills. Spc. Jacob Rainwater stated, "Because of the Expert Infantryman Badge competition we'd been focusing on infantry tactics, but Gunnery was a good chance to get back on the tank and be a tanker for a couple weeks." Comanche Company's gunnery exercises will continue in the coming weeks with motorized qualifications and platoon live fire exercises.

Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment, leave a range after conducting training at the Udairi Range Complex outside Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Photo by Spc. Jonathan Parker

Upcoming MWR Events

Sunday, 7 May 2006
SPA DAY
1200: Grappling Tournament @ Aerobic Tent
1300: Teamed Halo Tournament @ Palms
1500: Darts Tourney 501 Double Out @ Rec. Ctr.

Tuesday, 9 May 2006
2000: Coffee House Social @ Oasis

Wednesday, 10 May 2006
1730: 7.5k Fun Run @ Green Beans
1930: NBA Live Tournament @ Palms

Thursday, 11 May 2006
1200: Brown Bag Po-Ke-No @ Oasis
1930: 9 Ball Pool Tournament @ Palms

Friday, 12 May 2006
1700: Steppers Competition @ Gym
2000: Karaoke Night @ MWR Stage

Saturday, 13 May 2006
BAZAAR (in front of Events Tent)
Movie Trivia @ Movie Tent

Sunday, 14 May 2006
MOTHER'S DAY
BAZAAR (in front of Events Tent)
1200: Scrabble Tournament @ Palms
1500: Dominoes Tournament @ Palms

Shout Out

Happy Birthday, Marc Inbody

Surround yourself with those who make you smile…don't waste time with those who want you to be as miserable as they are. Have fun, relax and take the rest of the day off!! Loves, Patty P. S. I'll write the excuse notes tomorrow!!

Top Right: Sgt. Ray Howerton (right) and Pfc. Christopher Graham (left) of Battery C, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment send a simulated nine-line medical evacuation during battery training at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Photo by 1st Lt. Charles Dayton
Bottom Right: Sgt. John Guin (left) is congratulated by 1st Lt. Scott Love (right) after taking his oath of reenlistment. Both are from Company B, 2nd Battalion 6th Infantry Regiment. Photo by 2nd Lt. Kellen Blythe
Left: Pfc. Billy Daffron Company C, 40th Engineer Battalion, pushes himself to get a last pull-up for the Sapper Stakes competition.
Photo by 1st Lt. Tobias Watson

Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain (Maj.) Anthony Horton

If you really want to learn about unconditional love don't go to the club, go back to kindergarten. Hi, I'm Chaplain Anthony Horton with today's "Chaplain's Corner."

On the day before Christmas, a 3-year- girl used up an entire roll of gold wrapping paper on a large box. Since money was tight her father was infuriated at his daughter's mindless waste of paper.

On Christmas morning the little girl lifted the large, gold box out from under the tree and brought it to him. "This is for you, Daddy," she said.

The father's anger flared up again when he found that the box was empty. "Don't you know that when you give someone a present, there's supposed to be something inside?" he scolded.

The little girl looked up at him, tears welling in her eyes, and said, "But Daddy it's not empty. I blew kisses into the box, all for you."

I read a poem the other day that reads:

A rose can say I love you,
Orchids can enthrall,
But a weed bouquet in a chubby fist,
Oh my, that says it all!

Children seem to be born with a God-given capacity to love without conditions or reservation. It's a shame that as we grow up we tend to grow out of that attribute.

Yet, that quality isn't just reserved for kids. In the Book of Lamentations, Jeremiah says, "The unfailing love of the Lord never ends! … Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each day." (Lam 3:22-23, NLT)

Believe it or not, every sunrise is a personal sign of the Lord's new love for same old you. Each day, God wraps a gold box for you, overflowing with compassion and mercy.

If you haven't already, take a moment to thank Him for His great gift this morning. And while you're at it, go ahead and open it.

What Do *YOU* Think?

"What do you do to keep your morale high?"

Questions and Photos By Pfc. Jeremey Neece

Pfc. Haiko Maier
Co. B, 2-6 IN

I watch movies and continue to train.

Spc. Lattoia Andrews
Co. B, 501st MI

I listen to my iPod.

Sgt. Ray Rodriguez
Co. A, 1-35 AR

Enjoy my time off of work.

Sgt. Thomas Davis
Co. B, 2-6 IN

I talk to my wife, keep busy, and go to the gym.

Pfc. Christopher Johnson
Co. C, 40th EN

I go to the gym, internet, and [use] the phones.

Next Week: "What message do you have for your loved ones?"

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We are looking for any type of submissions to include: letters, articles, comic strips or artwork, and photographs.

If you would like a copy of this issue please contact your Battalion UPAR

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1-35 AR: 1st Lt. Dustin Gray	**40th EN: 1st Lt. Patrick Turner**
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