



NET CALL

Press visit spotlights 56 SBCT soldiers

By Sgt. DOUGLAS ROLES
Soldiers of the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team had opportunity this week to tell hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians about their train-up for deployment to Iraq by means of a two-day media visit to Camp Shelby, Miss.

Twenty reporters and videographers from the Keystone state participated in the media lift, held Tuesday and Wednesday, Oct. 28-29.

The event, organized by the Pennsylvania Joint Forces Public Affairs Office, Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., brought the firing ranges and convoy lanes of Camp Shelby into the living rooms of the folks back home and demonstrated the importance of soldier interaction with the media in the Information Age.

Media outlets sending representatives to Camp Shelby included: WITF TV and WITF Radio, Harrisburg; Harrisburg Patriot News; Harrisburg's ABC Channel 27; the Lebanon Daily News; WFMZ Channel 69, Allentown; Erie Times; Wilkes Barre Citizens' Voice; Meadville Tribune; Pennsylvania Cable Network; Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters; Waynesboro Record Herald; Chambersburg Public Opinion; and the Scranton Times.

WHTM TV reporter Amy Kehan and her videographer, Joe O'Neill, said the 56th Bri-

gade's story is one their viewers have been following. Kehan also said she has enjoyed a good working relationship with the Pennsylvania National Guard and has done several stories on the 56th.

"It's great to talk to the soldiers. I think the PA National Guard has been really gracious to us," she said. "When we do a story about the National Guard, it tends to get responses on our Web site."

"We definitely live in a 'pro-troop' area of PA," O'Neill said. "There's definitely a lot of support for what they do."

Both journalists characterized their outing with soldiers as "a lot of fun."

WHTM is seen in nearly 400,000 homes. Sgt. Michael O'Connor of HHC 1-111th was one of the soldiers to do an on-camera interview with WHTM.

"It was fine. It went well. I was able to answer about 99 percent of their questions," he said. "It was mostly questions about the Stryker. I told her that people back home should feel good about this, because the Stryker's a safe vehicle."

O'Connor, a recent graduate of Penn State University, was given the opportunity by Kehan and O'Neill to record a greeting to his family in York. PFC Eric Noss, a driver and round carrier for Battery B, 1-109th was interviewed by Bob Kalinowski, staff writer for The Citizens' Voice, Wilkes



Photo by Sgt. Douglas Roles

Scott Detrow of WITF FM Radio, Harrisburg, interviews 2nd Lt. Caleb Haslett, tactical intelligence officer for the 1-111th headquarters company. The Pottstown resident was interviewed Wednesday, Oct. 29, 2008 on the Camp Shelby mounted convoy range. His comments were to be included in reports Detrow produced for WITF's "Impact of War" series.

Barre. Noss, a Shickshinny, Luzerne County, resident, said his encounter with the press, at an artillery firing range, went well.

"It was fine. He was asking me about my job on the gun line," Noss said. "A fire mission came in the middle of our meeting, so we got interrupted."

Noss said his unit was told

by commanders Tuesday morning that there would be media representatives in their area. While soldiers may decline to be interviewed, Noss said he had "no problem" talking to the press.

Lt. Col. Chris Cleaver, Pennsylvania Joint Forces public affairs officer, spearheaded

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56 SBCT commanders meet the media

By Sgt. DOUGLAS ROLES

The combination of highly trained soldiers and cutting edge technology ranks the 56th Stryker Brigade Combat Team among the U.S. Army's strongest units, brigade commanders told news reporters during a Pennsylvania media visit (see related story, Page 1) to Camp Shelby, Miss., Oct. 28-29.

56th SBCT Commander Col. Marc Ferraro briefed media representatives following their arrival from the Gulfport airport Tuesday afternoon. The briefing informed reporters about the brigade's mission and how the brigade has unique capabilities because of the Stryker vehicle.

"It's a tremendous vehicle. It has tremendous capability," Ferraro said. "But it's still the soldiers who come out of the back

of that Stryker who make this brigade great."

Ferraro told the media Stryker units are the biggest fighting units in the Army with a nine-man infantry squad rolling out of the back of the vehicle, compared to seven-man teams in other vehicles. There are six active component Stryker brigades. The Pennsylvania Army National Guard boasts the only reserve component Stryker element.

Reporters received the brief in the tactical operations center briefing tent before moving out to Camp Shelby ranges with escorts from brigade units. Media representatives were also given an outline of the brigade's training timeline up to deployment to Iraq.

Ferraro told reporters every vehicle is

equipped with some type of weapons system. He also pointed out that some of the vehicles have the capability of remote firing, allowing the gunner to engage targets from inside the vehicle.

Though each of the 10 Stryker variants is designed for a specific task, there is 80 percent component commonality across the vehicles, Ferraro said.

The command vehicle is equipped with \$4 million worth of communications equipment. "Everything I can do inside the TOC I can do in that Stryker," Ferraro told reporters.

Following the formal briefing, Ferraro fielded questions from the media and granted interview requests. One reporter

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Press

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the media lift. He said media presence on the battlefield has grown steadily in recent decades.

"Commanders and soldiers need to be prepared to interact with media, in training environments and on deployment," Cleaver said.

Cleaver said soldiers need not be afraid to talk to the media but advised them to "stay in their lane and talk about what they know."

"The folks back home are greatly interested in what their soldiers are doing down here," Cleaver said.

Media representatives began their visit to Camp Shelby with a formal briefing by Col. Marc Ferraro (see story Page 2).

Following the briefing, unit public affairs representatives from battalions escorted reporters to ranges. Reporters were provided with helmets and protective vests.

Pete Regan participated in the media lift to gather news for his



Photo by Sgt. Douglas Roles

Sgt. Frederick Herrington (left) of Chambersburg; and Pfc. Sean Keefer and Sgt. Kenneth Wierman, both of Waynesboro, all serving with Battery B., 1-108th Field Artillery, talk with reporter Denise Bonura of the Waynesboro Record Herald, Wednesday, Oct. 29, 2008 outside the brigade orderly room. The three soldiers were interviewed for a Record story published by the newspaper immediately following Bonura's return to Pennsylvania.

television show Out & About In Harrisburg, Pete Regan Productions, LLC. Out & About has an audience of about 150,000 homes, Regan said.

"It's just been incredible," he said. "They're fantastic. They're passionate. I love that passion."

He said there is definitely an audience for the story of the brigade as it prepares to deploy to Iraq in January.

56 SBCT staff completes JRTC leadership training

Photo by 1st Lt. Robert Prah

Col. Marc Ferraro (right) presents a plaque to Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Edward Buckley Jr., the Joint Readiness Training Center Leadership Training Program (LTP) manager, in recognition of the assistance the LTP staff provided the 56th Brigade personnel during a week-long LTP at Fort Polk, La. The exercise trained brigade staff in the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) employing the latest lessons learned from Iraq. Planning for the brigade's upcoming JRTC exercise incorporates COIN (counterinsurgency) doctrine drafted by Gen. Raymond Odierno, U.S. Army commander.

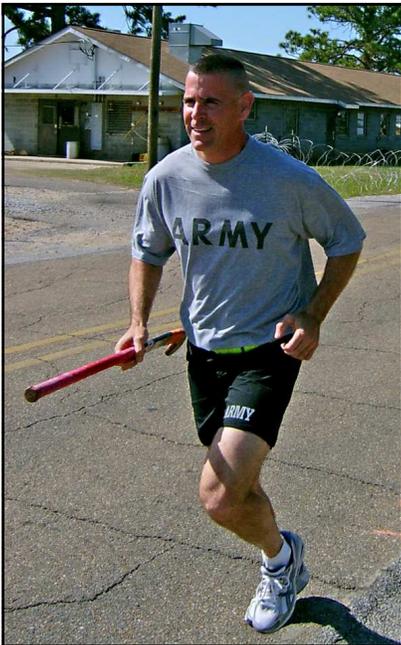


Photo by Sgt. Douglas Roles

1st. Sgt. Brian McDermott of Company A, 328th BSB, got in some run time Saturday, Nov. 1, on Camp Shelby's Lee Ave. A moderate amount of exercise yields great dividends over the long haul.

Outrun the Camp Shelby 'Crud'

By 2nd Lt. Jacqueline Cincotta
and Staff Sgt. Alex Takacs

56 SBCT Medical Operations

Close quarters, long hours, and tough training can wear a body down.

The "Camp Shelby Crud" which is identified as an upper or lower respiratory infection complete with cough, sinus infection and sore throat has made its way through the barracks making soldiers sick. There are many preventative measures that can help soldiers from becoming sick.

Having the air conditioning on circulates stagnant air in the buildings and barracks. Doing laundry, taking hot showers and keeping the barracks clean will stop virus's from infecting soldiers. If soldiers are experiencing the "Camp Shelby Crud", standing under a hot shower will provide a humidifying effect allowing the steam to open breathing passageways.

Sleep discipline gives your body the "recharge" it needs. Try to get at least 6

hours of sleep so your body has adequate time to recover from a long day's work.

Another way to help reduce chances of becoming sick is exercise. Physical training helps boost the body's immune system, helps fight off disease and helps a person be more resistive to becoming sick. Aerobic exercise increases air-lung capacity, enabling the body to pull in more oxygen with each breath.

Maintaining a healthy circulatory/respiratory system helps keep the body functioning at an optimum proficiency. The more you make your body work, the more work it can do for you to keep you healthy!

Editor's note: 2nd Lt. Cincotta holds a B.S. in exercise physiology from the University of Scranton. Staff Sgt. Takacs is a combat medic and 15 year civilian paramedic.

Check out the brigade's DVIDS site at dvidshub.net/units/56sbct-28id

Commander's Corner

Brigade earns praise

The training here has been tough, long, and demanding. You have all exceeded the standard and set high expectations for other brigade's that will follow us. Every visitor who has come here to visit the brigade has been totally impressed with the performance of the brigade. While there is still much to do as we prepare for deployment, I know you will continue to exceed all expectations. As we prepare to move to Ft. Polk and conduct specific pre-rotational training, LFX's, and the Mission Rehearsal Exercise (MRE), stay focused; maintain the positive mental attitudes and the high rate of morale that you have all displayed.

I encourage all of you to maintain contact with family members back home and keep them informed of what you are doing. It is important to maintain communications flow with loved ones. Each month I conduct a teleconference with all of the Family Support Group leaders and try to give them the most up to date information that I know. We have a very robust support network set up in Pennsylvania to support your families, and we are working on getting more. I encourage everyone to take advantage of these resources as well.

I want everyone to know that CSM Jones and I maintain an open door policy. All we ask is that you notify your chain of command that you would like to exercise it if you want to talk with us. Nobody should deny you the opportunity to use it. I encourage all of you to use it if there is an issue you want

brought to our attention. Of course I would hope that you give your chain of command the opportunity to work the issue at the lowest level first.

In closing, I want each and every one of you to know how proud I am of you. You are all great citizen soldiers who have answered the call and have gone above and beyond. There is no doubt in my mind that when we deploy in January, we will be the best trained, best equipped, and best prepared Brigade Combat Team in the Army. It is truly an honor and privilege to serve as your commander.

"Strength thru Honor"

Marc Ferraro
COL, IN
Commanding

"Independence 6"



Photo by Sgt. Douglas Roles

Field artillery captures spotlight

The 56th SBCT's big guns caught the attention of the media during the media lift from Pennsylvania to Camp Shelby, Miss. Oct. 28-29. Stories about the 1-108th Field Artillery can be found on the Web sites of WHTM and WFMZ television stations. "Google" each station then click on the archived link.

Commanders

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asked what happens if a Stryker tire blows out. The answer: the vehicle keeps on rolling.

Ferraro was also asked if the unit the 56th is replacing, 2/25 (2nd Brigade Combat Team/25th Infantry Division) has been keeping the brigade abreast of the situation in Iraq. Ferraro said the brigade is in ongoing communication with the unit in Iraq.

Reporters met battalion commanders as

they moved to training areas to interview soldiers and take photographs and video.

Lt. Col. Corey Lake, 1/108th Field Artillery commander, showed reporters the lone Stryker in his unit, the command vehicle. He explained that the vehicle is capable of digitally linking up with forward observers to direct artillery fire from the brigade's new M777 guns.

Asked by one reporter what is the most difficult thing about the Stryker system

for soldiers to learn, Lake responded that the communications system can be one of the most challenging aspects for soldiers to master.

Lake echoed Ferraro's comments on both equipment and soldiers.

"I am super confident of my unit's abilities when we get to Iraq," he said. "It's a great piece of equipment and we have great soldiers."

Net Call is a publication of the 56th Stryker Brigade Public Affairs Office.

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