



With close to 3,000 Soldiers, the 81st HBCT ran as one team the morning of their departure ceremony (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)

81st HBCT honors tradition

By Sgt. Emily Suhr
81st HBCT Public Affairs

More than 3,000 Soldiers from the 81st Heavy Brigade Combat Team took part in a departure ceremony to case their colors Oct. 1, 2008 at Fort McCoy, Wis.

Message from 81st HBCT Command



81st HBCT Commander
Col. Ronald Kapral and
Command Sgt. Maj.
Robert Sweeney

Our stay at Fort McCoy is coming to an end and we can now confidently move on to the next phase of our mission. We are very proud of how well the brigade has performed and our current state of readiness is evidence of how hard you have all trained. We will all walk away from this training as better Soldiers and leaders.

We were proud to lead the brigade run and see close to 3,000 Soldiers in one

formation running down the road! The run was not about distance or speed, but all of us coming together as a team and continuing to build our 'esprit de corps' within the brigade.

As we close this chapter of our deployment, we want everyone to take the time to thank families, friends and employers for their persistent support. We know that our families are making a greater sacrifice than those of us who are moving forward. We want all of you to know that you are the true heroes of this deployment!

We are certain that our team will not falter in fulfilling its duty to protect our nation and freedom! God bless all of you, and we'll see you all safely in Kuwait. 

"When a unit goes from the United States into an overseas theater, it's tradition to case the colors," said Col. Christopher Fowler, the deputy commanding officer for 81st HBCT. "When you get into the other country you go through a ceremony to uncase them to say you have arrived."

During the traditional ceremony, the brigade colors were placed inside a case by Col. Ronald Kapral, the 81st HBCT commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Sweeney, the 81st HBCT command sergeant major.

"The casing of the brigade colors this afternoon is significant in many ways. The history, traditions and accomplishments of the 81st HBCT are embodied in these colors. The 'casing' of the colors is done to protect them as they are moved to a new location," said Lt. Col. Bryan Grenon, the ceremony narrator.

Kapral and Sweeney then walked down the



The 81st HBCT color guard flies the American flag and brigade colors during the National Anthem (photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)

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row of Soldiers, allowing the battalion commanders and sergeants major from 1-161st Infantry (Combined Arms Battalion), 1-185th CAB, 1-303rd Cavalry, 2-146th Field Artillery Battalion, 181st Brigade Support Battalion, 81st Brigade Special Troops Battalion and the company commander and first sergeant from Headquarters Company, 81st HBCT to case their own colors and guidons.

The casing of the colors denotes the beginning of the 81st HBCT's deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. This is the second deployment for the brigade.

"[This ceremony] was an oppor-



Col. Ronald Kapral and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Sweeney case the 81st HBCT colors (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)

tunity to get the unit together as a whole and be recognized by the senior leaders. It was also where we rolled up and put away the guidons for overseas movement into a theater of war," said Fowler.

As part of the ceremony, Maj. Gen. Mark Graham, the commander of First Army Division West, Maj. Gen. Timothy Lowenberg, the adjutant general for Washington, and Kapral joined the commander of troops, Lt. Col. Paul Morgan in an inspection of the



Lt. Col. Paul Morgan, Col. Ronald Kapral, Maj. Gen. Timothy Lowenberg and Maj. Gen. Mark Graham return a salute during their inspection of the troops (Photo by Tom Michele - Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office)

troops. This is part of a long-standing tradition originated by commanders inspecting their formations before battle.

"Traditions are important. We understand the importance of family traditions and the Army is no different. Those are the type of things that bind us together culturally and the sort of events we rally around to make a statement about who we are in the military," said Fowler.

During the ceremony, Spc. Michael Thomas of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 181st

BSB sang the National Anthem and Pfc. Thomas A. Lizama from Bravo Company, 181st BSB recited the Soldier's Creed.

Washington Congressman Brian Baird, Lowenberg, Graham and Kapral gave speeches.

During his speech, Kapral shared fond memories and harsh realities from his last deployment. He warned Soldiers not to become complacent and to look out for each other while in Iraq.

"Together we have cased our colors, together I want to uncase our colors," said Kapral. 



The 81st HBCT during their departure ceremony (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



1-161st Infantry (CAB) (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



HQ, 81st HBCT (Photo by Tom Michele)



Mike Gregoire, the first gentleman of Washington, John Bohlinger, the lt. governor of Montana, and Congressman Brian Baird stand for the National Anthem (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



1-303rd Cavalry (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)



81st BSTB (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)



2-146th Field Artillery Bn. (Photo by Tom Michele)



185th CAB (Photo by Tom Michele)



181st BSB (Photo by Tom Michele)



Pfc. Thomas A. Lizama, B Co., 181st BSB, reciting the Soldier's Creed (Photo by Sgt. Emily Suhr)

Kuwait History and Culture

By Staff Sgt. Daniel Lostotter
HQ, 81st HBCT

Since the successful repulsion of Iraqi Forces from Kuwait in February 1991, the United States has maintained a military presence in Kuwait.

Foreign military on Kuwaiti soil is not new and has provided the Kuwaitis with protection without drawing heavy resources from its own people. Britain began supplying military defense to Kuwait in 1899 in order to stop the construction of a railroad through Iraq and secure the sea port that has become Kuwait City. Britain held control of Kuwait through WWI, WWII and up to 1961 when Kuwait gained its full independence.



Kuwait's sovereignty was unchallenged for almost thirty years until Saddam Hussein declared that Kuwait belonged to Iraq to justify its invasion in August 1990.

Kuwait has had a remarkable recovery from the Iraqi invasion of 1990. The oil well fires were put out in less than a year, when many people estimated it would take two years or more. Driving around Kuwait, there is very little visible evidence of the war which occurred, and life is, for the most part, back to normal.

Kuwait's population is just over two million. There is a large Palestinian population who has very few rights under Kuwaiti law. Over 96 percent of Kuwaitis are considered urban and over half live within the limits of Kuwait City. Kuwaiti's literacy rate is 83.3 percent (according to a 2005 census), which is above average for the Middle East.

The Sabah family holds the primary government positions and the country today is a constitutional monarchy. Oil was discovered there in the 1930s, and Kuwait proved to have 20% of the world's known oil resources. Since 1946 it has been the world's second-

largest oil exporter. The sheik, who receives half of the profits, devotes most of them to the education, welfare, and modernization of his kingdom. Emir Sheikh Jabir, who died in 2006, had held a friendly position toward the west and this attitude is shared by most Kuwaiti citizens.

The ruling family uses Kuwait's enormous oil revenues to provide essential goods and services to citizens free or for nominal cost. Citizens also have the right to own land. There are a number of prosperous merchant families, such as the al-Ghanim family, who sells retail cars, airline tickets, television sets, construction equipment, and virtually everything else in Kuwait.

The overwhelming wealth of Kuwait allows its citizens to hire out nearly all of the labor within the country. The promise to the non-Kuwaiti labor force is that their grandchildren, within certain conditions, can obtain Kuwaiti citizenship.



Kuwait Quick Facts

- **Capital:** Kuwait (city of Kuwait frequently used to distinguish it from country).
- **Size:** About 17,818 square kilometers, slightly smaller than New Jersey.
- **Topography:** Almost entirely flat desert.
- **Climate:** Hot, dry, desert climate; sandstorms in June and July; some rain, mainly in spring. The average high temperature in Kuwait, in October, is about 101 degrees with a low of 79 degrees. Annual rainfall averages only from 1 to 7 inches, chiefly between October and April, though cloudbursts can bring more than 2 inches of rain in a single day.
- **Religion:** Most Kuwaitis are Sunni Muslims. About 20 percent of citizens are Shia Muslims.
- **Agriculture:** Little farming—mostly vegetables and fruits. Most food imported. Some fishing.
- **Exports:** US\$11.5 billion in 1989; mostly crude oil and refined products. The main markets are Asia and Western Europe.
- **Currency and Exchange Rate:** Kuwaiti dinar, October 10, 2008, exchange rate US\$1 = KD \$0.26



Training gets real for 1-161st Inf. (CAB)

By Sgt. David Isaac
1-161st Inf. (CAB) Public Affairs

For the last month, Soldiers from the 1-161st Infantry (Combined Arms Battalion) have executed hundreds of training mounted combat and combat logistics patrols. They had almost become routine, even with injects of civilian encounters, improvised explosive devices, disabled vehicles and road blocks, but the mission Sept. 20 was very different.

That day, the scenario called for the battalion to secure several areas to facilitate elections, but insurgent attacks were heavy and one training incident would shape the battalion's focus for the day.

A patrol from Alpha Company, Abu, was attacked by insurgents severely 'injuring' Pfc. Jordan Lamborn. The patrol leader called for an air medical evacuation, but it would be hours before Lamborn would see medical treatment; the helicopter was 'shot down'. Only Lamborn 'survived' the crash and was 'taken captive' before the quick reaction force could secure the site. What happened next changed this training mission to a real world rescue in the minds of the 161st.



Capt. Daniel Bugbee, A Co. 1-161st Inf. (CAB) commander, greets Pfc. Jordan Lamborn, also from A Co., after his "rescue" as Capt. Brian Stech, the 1-161 Inf. (CAB) S-2, debriefs him during scenario training on COL Liberty Sept. 20 (Photo by Sgt. David Isaac)

An Iraqi civilian delivered a DVD to the battalion at COL Liberty showing Lamborn in the hands of insurgents. The video, reminiscent of Nicholas Berg, an American contractor beheaded by insurgents in Iraq, instantly changed the battalion's outlook. Capt. Dan Bugbee, Abu's commander, was shocked and thought the scenario had been taken too far. All who saw the video reacted similarly and planning for Lamborn's rescue began immediately.

Lt. Col. Greg Allen, the 1-161st Inf. (CAB) commander, formed a hasty plan with Bugbee, who quickly left to get his company moving.

"I gave about a 45-second [operation] order and we did FM [radio] rehearsals enroute," Bugbee said.

Allen then gathered his remaining commanders to develop the plan further.

With the other companies in blocking positions, Abu swept through the objective, rescued Lamborn and 'killed' the insurgents. It was a perfect example of a good plan well executed, said Bugbee.

For Lamborn, the day was much less exciting. He said it seemed like it took forever for the observer/controller to decide how to play the scenario.

But as his buddies hit the objective, "I could hear them clearing the buildings and getting closer. It was really cool!" Lamborn said and added he could tell they felt the mission was 'real.'

The rest of the battalion also did well, showing that warrior ethos isn't just words on a pretty card in an Army combat uniform pocket – it's real and alive in the 161st Inf. (CAB).

National Guardsman named NCO of the Year



Photo courtesy of www.Army.mil

A Montana National Guardsman became the first Army National Guardsman to be named the Army's Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Oct. 6 in Washington D.C.

Staff Sgt. Michael T. Noyce Merino, from Melrose, Mont., competed alongside 12 other NCO's from each of the major Army commands at Fort Lee, Va. The week-long event challenged their endurance, strength and knowledge.

Merino is an infantryman with Bravo Company, 1st of the 163rd Cavalry Regiment. He has served in the Army for seven years and deployed

three times, once to Afghanistan and twice to Iraq. He is currently pursuing a business degree at Montana Tech and works as a manager for UPS.

"This is a direct reflection of the goodness of what the National Guard and Army Reserve provides for the Army," said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston. "It's the civilian-acquired skills, the education, that our Soldiers, our Citizen-Soldiers bring to the fight every day that makes us who we are."

The Soldier of the Year was awarded to Spc. David R. Obray, a U.S. Army reservist.



Sgt. Tobais Suhr, Spc. Shane Zoellmer, Staff Sgt. Julaine McIntire, Staff Sgt. Francisco Velez, Staff Sgt. Derrick Grasty, Sgt. Bruce Nguyen and Sgt. Timothy Kettlewell finish 100 miles together Sept. 30 (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)

Seven Soldiers complete 100 miles

By Sgt. Emily Suhr
81st HBCT Public Affairs

With 50 pounds of gear weighing them down, seven Soldiers from Headquarters Company, 81st Heavy Brigade Combat Team, joked back and forth with each other as they walked their 100th mile together Sept. 30 on Fort McCoy.

The seven Soldiers, members of The Century Club, have averaged six to eight-mile hikes a night for the past month.

The Century Club began Sept. 1 as a challenge from HQ Co., 81st

HBCT to walk 100 miles while wearing body armor over the course of a month. Twenty-three Soldiers took on the challenge, seven of them finished.

“The team that was walking together worked really hard the whole month. Despite 12-hour shifts and 14-hour days, we still went out there. Once you started, you couldn’t stop,” said Staff Sgt. Julaine McIntire from 81st HBCT S-3, one of the finishers.

The Soldiers began the challenge for varying reasons; some desired the exercise and others just wanted

to see if they could do it. In the end though, the remaining Soldiers stayed with it for the camaraderie.

“It was our time to vent, to just unwind each evening,” said Sgt. Tobais Suhr from 81st HBCT S-6.

The seven Soldiers finished their last mile around 10 a.m. at the 81st HBCT headquarters building where they were greeted by the brigade deputy commanding officer, the brigade command sergeant major, the commanding officer for HQ Co. and a cluster of well-wishers standing by with water and congratulations. 

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

By Lt. Col. Carl Steele
81st HBCT Chaplain

For those of us who have never had the pleasure of being in Kuwait, one of the things you will see is camels. What does a camel have to do with the chaplain’s thought process? Well, the camel stores lots of water in its hump. Make sure you have stored up the word of God in your heart. The camel



can be made to stay in a wooden corral that it could easily walk over. Train yourself to spend time in prayer, and with scripture. Trust that the shepherd has your best intentions in mind. The other thing that happens in the desert is the growth of grass. You can look out one day and not see anything that a camel or goat could eat. Then after a little rain the desert sprouts fresh grass. As you spend time in scripture it will keep you fresh and bring out new growth. Accept and embrace the growth that God has for you in the desert. 

Don't Forget to vote!
The General Election is
November 4



While military ballots will be accepted until Nov. 25, your ballot must be signed and sealed by Nov. 4
Don't wait until the last minute!

If you have any questions or issues, contact your unit voting assistance officer or e-mail the 81st HBCT VAO at Frank.a.selden@us.army.mil



State Troopers connect on Fort McCoy

By Sgt. Amanda Gauthier
81st HBCT Public Affairs

Two Washington State Patrol troopers, who are also members of the 81st Heavy Brigade Combat Team, visited the Wisconsin State Patrol Academy on Fort McCoy, Wis. Wednesday for a state-to-state handshake.

Lt. Col. Kenneth Garrison, the 81st Brigade Special Troops Battalion commander and Staff Sgt. Robert Moore from Headquarters 81st HBCT, visited the academy and are among six Washington state troopers deploying to Iraq with the 81st HBCT this fall.

During their pre-deployment training at Fort McCoy Wis. the two Washington National Guardsmen took



Wisconsin State Patrol Inspector and Assistant Training Officer Daniel Gruebele, Staff Sgt. Robert Moore from HQ, 81st HBCT and Lt. Col. Kenneth Garrison from 81st BSTB stand outside the Wisconsin State Patrol Academy on Fort McCoy, Wis. Wednesday (Photo by Sgt. Amanda Gauthier)

some time out to meet some of their fellow state troopers

Garrison and Moore were able to visit with two of the 23 cadets currently attending the academy. Both cadets will be mobilized shortly after their graduation this winter. Army reservist Sgt. Steven Wojcik from 2-411th Logistics Support Battalion, 181st Infantry Brigade on Fort McCoy is scheduled to be mobilized two days after his graduation. Army Sgt. Craig Larsen from Charlie Company, 1-128th Infantry Battalion, 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Wisconsin National Guard is slated for mobilization in February.

"It's very militaristic," said Wisconsin State Patrol Inspector and Assistant Training Officer Daniel Gruebele regarding the atmosphere of the academy. "They march around. They sing cadence. It's 'sir, yes sir; yes ma'am, no ma'am.' On top of that, they generally have 40 hours of classroom every week. Sometimes we keep them up until one or two in the morning."

The dorm rooms are kept very clean and orderly. There are two bunks to a room and every room is exactly the same.

"It just looks uncannily familiar, the smell and everything. Cleaner, gun oil, everything," said Moore.

During the tour, Garrison, Moore and Gruebele reminisced about their time at the different state patrol academies and their differences and similarities.

"It feels the same. You go from Washington to Wisconsin and go to the State Patrol Academy and the people are the same," said Garrison.

"It's always a pleasure meeting officers from other states and other districts," stated Gruebel. "There is a certain connection. I've been to nationwide training with guys from Kansas, Oklahoma, Minnesota, and there's always that level of camaraderie."

The other Washington State Troopers deploying with the 81st HBCT are Sgt. 1st Class Lex Lindquist from Bravo Troop, 1-303rd Cavalry, Sgt. Guy Rosser also from B Trp, 1-303rd Cav., Capt. Jeffrey Heath from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2-146th Field Artillery, and Staff Sgt. Sergio Cervantes from Alpha Trp, 1-303rd Cav.

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