SILVER STAR • 420TH RETURNS • RETIREMENT RESPONSIBILITY • 704TH STAYS FLEXIBLE

THE BRIDGE

Volume 2, Issue 3 Produced for the 416th Theater Engineer Command Summer 2009

Engineers Take aim at Pacific Warrior!

Command Notes

Maj. Gen. Paul E. Crandall

Moving Forward

Summer is finally here and at the top of my list of information to share with you all is my gratitude to all our men and women who are sacrificing time this summer that could have been spent with their families to volunteer in our forces by protecting our country on their deployment mission. As we honor our Soldiers and families, it's also important for us to remember our family members who've lost loved ones and paid prices that can never be repaid. Enjoy your free time, but never forget we are all in the Army family.

Summer and fall bring memories to all of us of exploration, adventure and anticipation. It has become a great American tradition to celebrate and vacation during these warmer times of year. It's also unfortunate that many Soldiers caught up in their summer fun lose their situational awareness and become injured or worse--killed. While we're spending time doing many of the recreational activities that summer and fall bring, we can't forget that it only takes a moment of carelessness to change our lives forever. Too many Soldiers in our Army have lost their lives from avoidable accidents that took place during the summer months. Remember, safety for yourselves and your loved ones. Let's enjoy many years of service together.

Too many Soldiers in our Army have lost their lives from avoidable accidents that took place during the summer months. Remember, safety for yourselves and your loved ones.

This upcoming year will bring many changes. New ways of executing our mission better, new exercises to participate in, as well as new ways of doing business, like consequence management (CCMRF) missions. The Army Reserve and the 416th Theater Engineer Command are constantly adapting to an ever changing world. I personally want to thank all of you for wearing this uniform and for your courage and commitment that goes along with it. I've received nothing but the greatest support from all of you since I've taken command. Thank you.

Sappers Forward!

THE BRIDGE

Produced for the 416th Theater Engineer Command

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The Bridge is an official publication of the 416th Theater Engineer Command produced to provide command information to service members. The Bridge is produced by the 364th Public Affairs Operations Center, Army Reserve. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the command's Public Affairs Office, under the provisions of AR 360-1. Contents of the Bridge are not necessarily official views, nor endorsed by the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army or the 416th TEC. The Bridge is published quarterly using offset press by the 416th TEC, ATTN: Public Affairs Office, 10 S 100 South Frontage Road, Darien, Illinois 60561.

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SUMMER 2009

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TOP: Pfc. Laura Raehsler, 704th Chemical Company, drives an MRAP while deployed to Iraq. The 704th returned from Iraq in March. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class David Wiehr

RIGHT: Sgt. Jose Perez, 420th Engineer Brigade and Pfc. Kevin Macallister, 68th Combat Support Equipment Company, assemble the tripod for their survey system base station. Photo: 1st Lt. Tomas Rofkahr

COVER: Pv2 Damen L. Lorentzen and his team, 389th Engineer Battalion, move carefully through the shoot-house at Fort Hunter-Ligget during Operation Pacific Warrior. Photo by Pfc. Joshua A. Horneck

BACK COVER: A Task Force Castle survey team prepares to move out on the first leg of their mission to survey a proposed observation post site. Photo by 1st Lt. Tomas Rofkahr

CSM Notes

Command Sgt. Maj. Larry E. Reever

Your Retirement; Your Responsibility

Taking care of your career now can have a big impact on your retirement later

Use tools like the Retirement Pay Calculator at the Human Resources Command website to help plan your retirement. Go to www.hrc.army.mil for more information.

SCREEN CAPTURED FROM THE HRC WEBSITE

When I visit Soldiers in the various units in the 416th Theater Engineer Command I question the junior Soldiers about the Army Reserve Retirement System. Most are not aware of how the system works or what you can do to ensure that you benefit from it. Most everything that we do in the Army Reserve is tied to the Retirement system in some fashion. Your attendance at battle assembly, your promotions and pay and years of service all contribute to what you will receive once you retire at age 60; in some cases it will be age 60 minus time spent in support of the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

With our current economic situation and the results of what can happen to private retirements accounts it is an additional income that will be very helpful later on in life. As a young Soldier it may be difficult at times to imagine drawing a retirement at age 60 when you are in your twenties, but time will pass faster than you can imagine.

As a Soldier you have to manage your career and do the things that enhance your promotion possibilities. You must attend the level of NCOES that is required for your grade, maintain your attendance at Battle Assembly, pass height and weight, pass your APFT, and qualify with your assigned weapon. If you have the ability to acquire education above a high school diploma then take advantage of it, as it will only increase your chances for advancement, which again is tied to retirement.

Your performance in the Army Reserve at any grade will reflect on your success as a Soldier. When you are eligible for promotion and you have performed well then your first line leader will help you get to the next level; however they cannot do it for you. You have to meet the pre-requisites for promotion, submit a promotion packet and ensure that it is done correctly. This is the responsibility of the individual Soldier. We have people to assist you but you have to take time to take care of you. Once again this is tied to retirement as the higher rank you are once you retire, the more your monthly retirement income will be.

With rising costs on almost everything we are asking our Soldiers to do more that we have ever asked of them before. We have streamlined processes to assist in reducing costs to the command which allows us to direct funding towards the individual Soldier, training and readiness. We also have costs to the command that are preventable, to include school no-shows, non participants, missed medical appointments, and school cancellations. All of these cost money that would and could be used to purchase equipment, support training exercises, and family readiness.

Lastly, every leader wants his or her Soldier to be successful. We want you to have a rewarding career and we want you to retire at the highest grade you can. We want to help you to be successful, but you in turn have to take charge of your career. If you have questions, see your first line leader and get the answers that will help you to manage your career. For further information please find the Army Reserve Retirement Guide at http://www.armyg1.army.mil/rso/.

Chaplain (Col.) Timothy M. Samorajski

Living Army Values: Personal Courage

Living the Army Values, including Personal Courage, is not always easy to do. Look to Christ for help.

Chaplain (Col.) Timothy M. Samorajski speaks at a Memorial Day ceremony.

US ARMY PHOTO

In the mid- to late 1990s, the Army came out with seven core values to articulate what defines the force as an institution. The seven Army Values are: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless-service, honor, integrity and personal courage. These values only matter if each of us looks in the mirror and determines to live them out every day, all the time, when it's easy and when it's not, when someone's watching and when they aren't. I sometimes find myself asking how much better off my little piece of the Army would be if I did a better job living the seven Army Values. It's interesting to note that each value has a biblical basis. Let's take a brief look at personal courage.

What do we mean by the term personal courage? We might think of dramatic examples such as a Soldier in combat rushing an enemy position or rescuing wounded buddies while under fire as someone who possesses personal courage. But how is this value lived out during the more normal routine of our lives? The Army has it right when it says personal courage is defined by a willingness to face fear, danger or adversity, be it physical or moral.

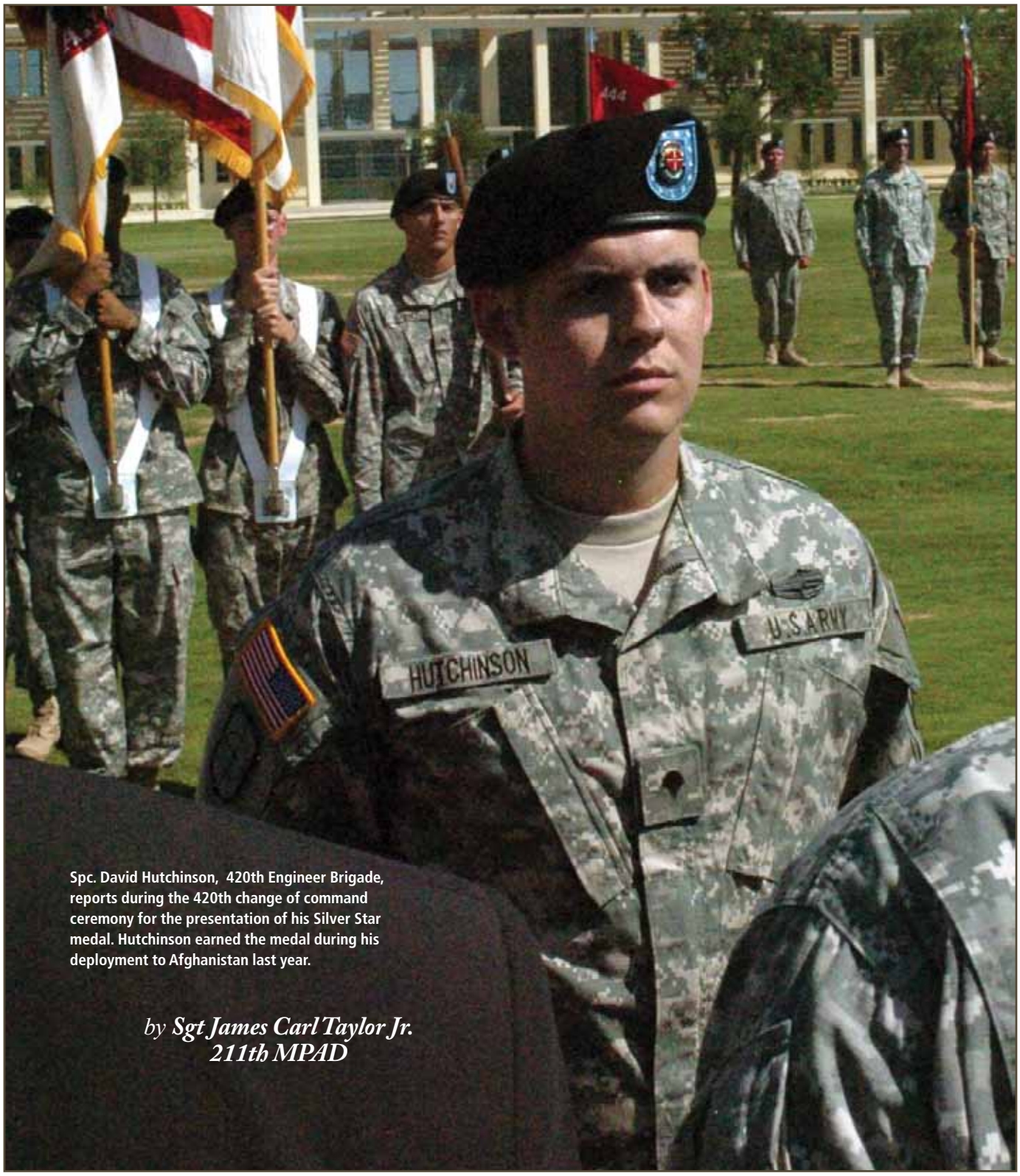
In the new testament we find a good example of what personal courage is not! In John 12: 42-43 we read, "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." If we're honest with ourselves, we must admit that we to covet the approval of others, to be a part of the group and are often all to willing to pay almost any price to get it. Personal courage resists that temptation, refusing to pay any price for acceptance and remaining true to what we know to be right.

Without question, the greatest example of personal courage comes from the Lord Himself when he willingly faced the adversity of going to the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. In Luke 22: 42-44 we read, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done…." And being is agony he was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground."

To be brave in the same manner as Christ requires Divine assistance. We can't do it on our own. We can't get from here to there without help. What to do? In Revelations 3:20, we find the answer. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

To share Christ's attribute of personal courage requires us to invite Christ Himself into our lives. Today, won't you accept our Lord's gracious invitation to dinner!

Engineer Soldier earns Silver Star



Spc. David Hutchinson, 420th Engineer Brigade, reports during the 420th change of command ceremony for the presentation of his Silver Star medal. Hutchinson earned the medal during his deployment to Afghanistan last year.

by ***Sgt James Carl Taylor Jr.***
211th MPAD

Spc. David Hutchinson gets congratulated by his father and mother after he is presented the Silver Star medal. The 420th Engineer Brigade Soldier received the medal during his deployment to Afghanistan last year.

It was day four of Pfc. David Hutchinson's deployment to Afghanistan. The engineer for the 420th Engineer Brigade was attached to the Personal Security Detail (PSD), and out on a mission.

"You train for everything you can think of, and you're expecting to come into contact, but not the first time you roll out the gate," Hutchinson said.

Hutchinson recalls that the mission was to be a simple right seat/left seat ride to get acquainted with their unit's sector around Forward Operating Base (FOB) Sharana, their new home. "Based on the intel we were given, there hadn't been any activity in that area in the last 13 months," said Hutchinson

The PSD rolled out at 0900 hours, and began what was to be around a two-hour trek to FOB Orgun-E. "It was a clear day with flat open country for the first hour," said Hutchinson.

"After that we started getting into more rocky and mountainous terrain," he explained, "the road curved left and headed up an incline with rocky terrain going up at about a 45 degree incline on both sides for about 300 feet at the top of the hill.

"Once at the top, the road curved hard to the left again and there was about an eighth of a mile stretch of straight away." Once all four trucks of the convoy were on this straight away Hutchinson, an MK-19 automatic grenade launcher gunner on the third truck, heard the first truck begin firing his .50 caliber machine gun.

"I couldn't see what the first truck was firing at but instantly remembered my training and chambered the 'ghost round' (a necessary step in firing the MK-19) in my MK-19," he said. "I looked up afterwards to scan my sector." He was in charge of the 3'oclock, or the right side of the convoy.

He immediately saw five insurgents from their waist up firing down on them with rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire. In addition, there was a PKM machine gun nested just below the five insurgents hidden among the rocks.

He continued firing at the enemy destroying the machine gun nest and killing the five insurgents in a hail of grenades. Hutchinson stopped firing after destroying the machine gun nest because the debris kicked up from the MK-19 rounds made it almost impossible to see where the insurgents were.

Once Hutchinson had ceased firing, he realized that there were only two rounds left in his ammo can of 48 rounds. At that moment two RPG's struck his up-armored HUMVEE. He woke up lying on his back in the crew compartment with the smell of smoke and the vehicle's expended HALON system (a fire extinguisher) in his nose, and the taste of both in his mouth.

Hutchinson remembered trying to get up but his body was numb from the abdomen down. That's when he rolled over and saw 1st Sgt. David Gussberry with blood all over the front of his vest and Kevlar helmet from the injuries to his face and head.

"So I took my compression bandage out of my first aid pouch and tried to stop the bleeding as I instructed the Soldier from the 36th Engineer Brigade, out of Fort Hood, to man the gun," recalled Hutchinson. "The two Soldiers right seat riding with us from the 36th Engineers had never seen contact on their entire 12-month deployment, and the first time we go out with them we came under fire."

All the while the convoy was heading out of the danger area, moving about two miles down the road to where the PSD was to link up with the medical evacuation (MEDEVAC).

"When the MEDEVAC arrived the medics opened the first sergeant's door and began administering first aid while I helped as much as I could from inside the truck," said Hutchinson. "I then noticed a sharp pain and burning in my right leg." That was when the medics working on Gussberry noticed the burn marks on the leg of Hutchinson's uniform.

He had taken shrapnel to the back portion of his right leg in two places. Hutchinson refused the medics' request to be placed on the litter, telling them that Gussberry needed it more than him. With the help of the medics he hobbled to the MEDEVAC once the first sergeant was safely on-board.

"Without our training we would have taken a lot of casualties."

Hutchinson, along with Gussberry, was flown to FOB Orgun-E. Hutchinson was then flown on to Laundstul, Germany, and finally to Brooke Army Medical Center for six months for rehabilitation after multiple surgeries.

For Hutchinson's bravery under fire and unparalleled actions in a combat situation he was awarded the Silver Star Medal on June 6, 2009, the 65th anniversary of D-Day.

"Take training seriously; anytime training is offered, take it," Hutchinson expressed. "Without our training we would have taken a lot of casualties."

420th Engineers return from Afghanistan

By 1st Lt Tomas Rofkahr
364th PAOC

Soldiers from the 420th Engineer Brigade return to base after successfully surveying a new observation post in eastern Afghanistan.
PHOTO BY 1ST LT. TOMAS ROFKAHR.

The sun has set on the 420th Engineer Brigade's mission in Afghanistan. From March of 2008 until the early spring of 2009, the Bryan, Texas-based Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) of the 420th provided command and control of all engineer forces in Afghanistan's Regional Command-East (RC-East).

With engineer forces distributed throughout the 14 provinces that make up RC-East, and supporting the expansion of operations in RC-South, the 420th, known as Combined Task Force Castle, managed projects that ranged from the winterization of high altitude combat outposts to the building of new Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) in terrain that has historically been some of most rugged and vertical in the world.

Sharing a 450-mile border with Pakistan's turbulent Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), the 101st Airborne Division-led RC-East saw a 40% increase in violence over the previous year. Throughout the spike in violence against coalition troops and Afghan civilians, the 420th were hard at work doing what can best be described as laying a foundation for future success.

Faced with the planned expansion of operations in Afghanistan in 2009, the 420th and engineers from every branch of American services as well as International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) allies, were embroiled in full spectrum engineer operations focused on improving security, development and governance within Afghanistan.

With additional combat forces already moving into theater the 420th began orchestrating the building of new bases to house and protect the influx of troops. These bases were to be different than some of the impressive complexes seen in Iraq.

They would be "minimal not maximal bases", Navy Admiral Mike Mullen told the American Forces Press Service after visiting CTF Castle. These rugged and austere bases would provide comfort and security to future troops, but not in such a way that the Afghan people would start to see the additional ISAF forces as invaders and occupiers.

Enabling the Afghan people was a key element of the 420th's mission in Afghanistan. With a population of more than 7 million, RC-East boasts 400 Afghan Tribes and a wide array of ethnicities. Moving through this diverse environment, CTF Castle made concerted efforts to engage the Afghan people by using Afghan contractors and labor in their construction projects.

A centerpiece of CTF Castle's drive to empower and employ Afghans was the enhancement of a series of engineer skills workshops lead by the 62nd Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy) out of Fort Hood, Texas. Originally focused on teaching critical vertical and horizontal construction techniques to unskilled Afghan labor, the 420th, in coordination with universities in Afghanistan and the United States, began to increase the capabilities of the skills workshops. Not only were the CTF Castle engineers mentoring and training, they were teaching Afghan contractors how to develop and train unskilled labor in their own communities, as well as providing training and education for future Afghan business leaders and contractors. All of the work focused on the empowerment of the individual Afghan to make a difference in his community to build and perhaps even create new jobs, a vital necessity to the success of the Afghan nation.

While much of the 420th mission focused on the rebuilding of Afghan infrastructure, there were numerous instances

See ENGINEERS RETURN, page 19

Pacific Warrior '09

Stories and photos by Sgt. Troy P. Johnson 364th PAOC

Assorted units and hundreds of Soldiers from the 416th TEC took part in the Pacif ic Warrior '09 Exercise this year at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif. Here are some of their stories.

389th Engineer Battalion Soldiers got great training at the Pacif ic Warrior Exercise, and a reminder that... Every Soldier's a Rifleman

A small group of Soldiers huddle up against the wall with weapons facing in every direction. They stand at the ready when their shoot-house instructor tells them, "OK, now remember; slow is smooth and smooth is fast."

Nodding in response to his advice the Soldiers glide down the passage way. They stop just short of a door, search the edges then abruptly kick the door in. The Soldiers smoothly scatter about the room in what seems like a controlled chaos with each weapon scanning the room.

"Window to my left," screams one Soldier. "Door to my front," shouts another. After each Soldier shouts to the team members that their area of responsibility is clear, the team leader shouts back, "Room clear, move out!"

These are not infantry Soldiers. Soldiers of the 389th Engineer Battalion are receiving this high-speed training.

"We are going through basic procedures on how to clear a room," said Pfc. Joann D. Thomason, a maintenance Soldier with the 389th.

All Soldiers, combat and support, receive this training.

"This is great training," said Pfc. Kaleb M. Carroll, a maintenance Soldier for the 389th. "I had a friend, a maintenance Soldier in Iraq. He never picked up a wrench. He was always kicking down doors and going on patrols."

The shoot-house trainers make it clear to the Soldiers how important this training is for them.

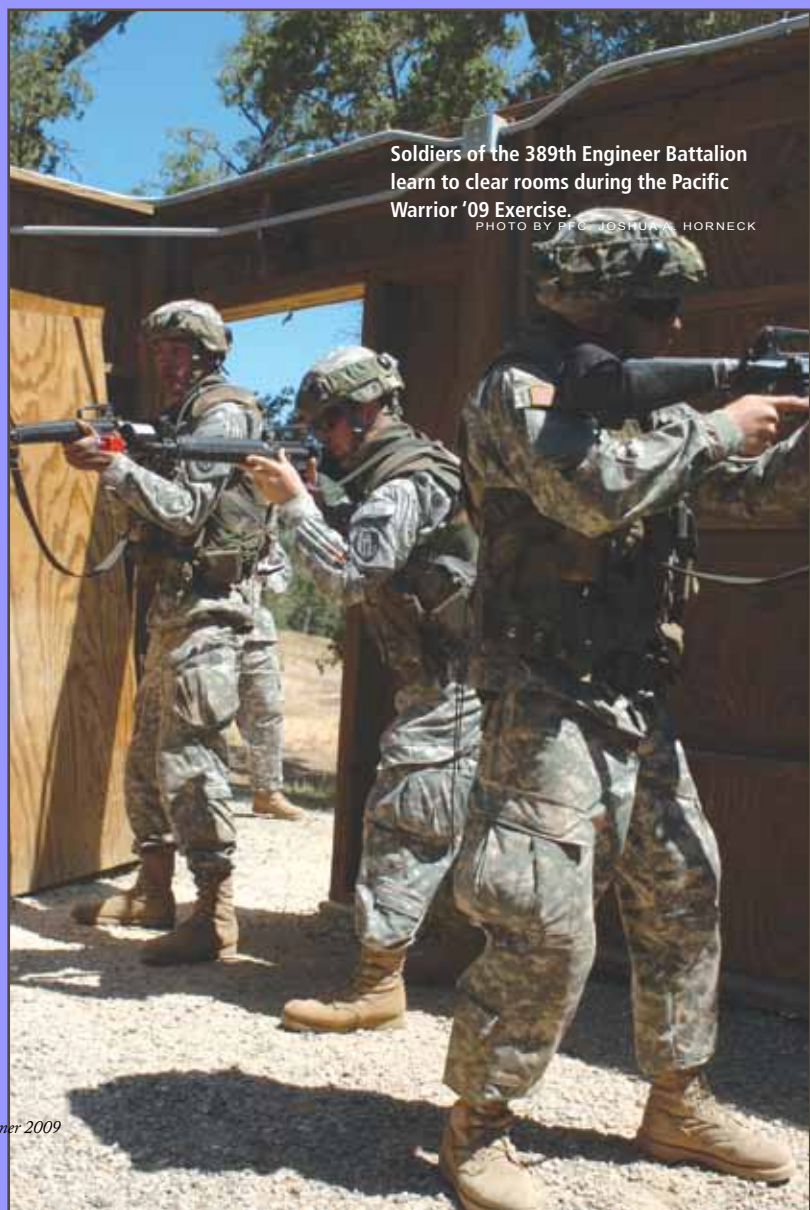
"When I was in Iraq, there were Soldiers from all jobs kicking down doors," said Staff Sgt. Rob L. Higginbotham, a shoot-house instructor. "When I went out, I'd always have an engineer with me."

The shoot-house environment is made real with noise from a loud urban apartment complex piped in through loud speakers. Soldiers stalk down narrow halls, and enemy combatants pop up at various locations

"This is very valuable training for people who have never actually done it before," said Spc. Shane J. Thomas, a combat engineer who has served two tours in Iraq. "It's one thing to just step though the basics, it's another thing to have doors and walls in a loud building."

Many of these engineers have never experienced this training, but there is little debate they may have to use the skills learned in the shoot-house.

"After all, we are all riflemen first," said Higginbotham. "Not to mention, this is the most casualty-producing type of combat."



Soldiers of the 389th Engineer Battalion learn to clear rooms during the Pacific Warrior '09 Exercise.
PHOTO BY PFC. JOSHUA A. HORNECK

Brewster's Basin Aids Readiness

Personal hygiene can be difficult in the field, but it is a key factor in combat readiness. When the innovative engineers of the 322nd Engineer Co. noticed the difficult and potentially unsanitary means their Soldiers were using to maintain good hygiene, they found a solution.

The Soldiers at the COB (Contingency Operating Base) WADE at Pacific Warrior were often seen shaving in random locations and using canteen cups as sinks. "You're not supposed to shave in the shower, so Soldiers were shaving on the road," said Spc. Alicia M. Johll, a carpentry masonry specialist for the 322nd.

The problem was immediately identified and the need for something better was requested. The 322nd delivered. The inventive engineers used left-over floors from the shower systems as the sink basin for a shaving point. "We're engineers, but were also scroungers," said Johll.

"The shower systems come in and never have provisions for shaving, so they made a sink from the existing shower system," said Maj. Jeremy L. Trought the 378th Combat Service Support Battalion site mayor. It was really very innovative."

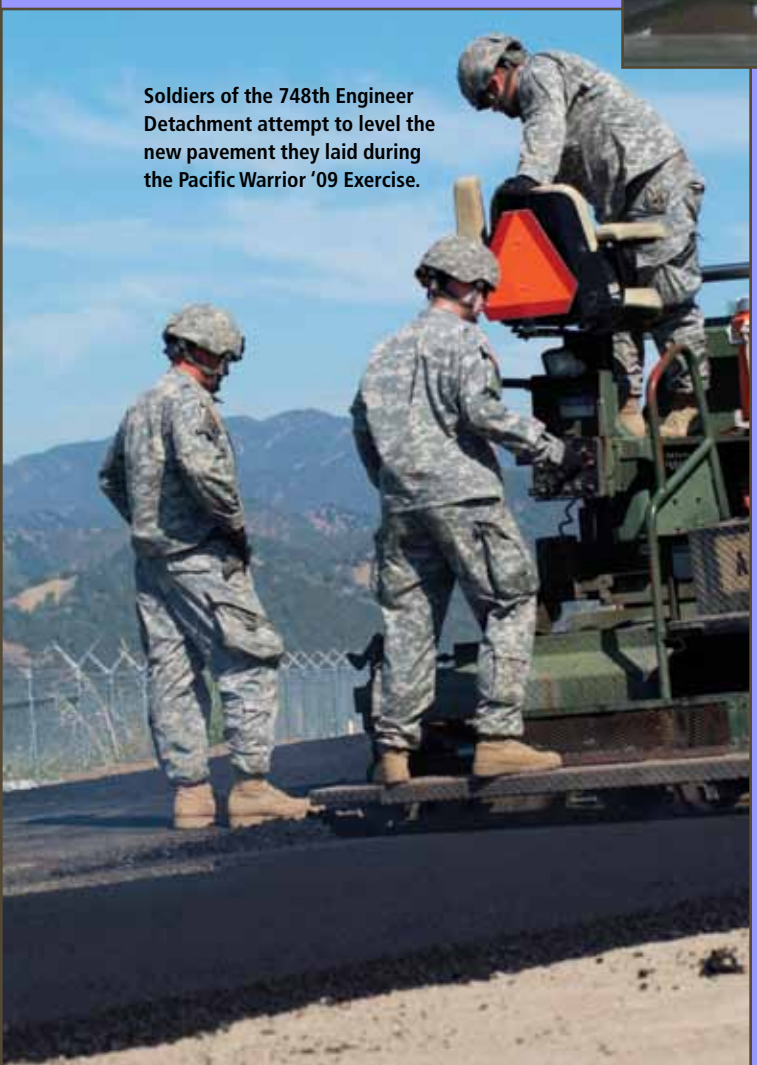
"We named it Brewster's Basin after our CO (commanding officer), 1st Lt. Sarah Brewster", said Johll.

"It really works well; it's field expedient and made out of left-over resources, so that reduced the cost," said Staff Sgt. Leon J. Roethler, the platoon sergeant for the 322nd.

Although, their commanding officer approved of the original design, there continues to be improvement as the proj-

See BREWSTER'S, page 18

Spc. Alicia M. Johll, 322nd Engineer Company, checks out the newly built shaving basin.



Soldiers of the 748th Engineer Detachment attempt to level the new pavement they laid during the Pacific Warrior '09 Exercise.

Paving the Pacific

At 9:30 a.m. it was already sweltering under the California sun. The Soldiers of the 748th Engineer Detachment, from Spokane, Washington, had already been at work for hours laying black pavement in for a new parking lot at Fort Hunter Ligget for the Pacific Warrior Exercise.

"We have 12 Soldiers working on this project. Only five Soldiers have actually been trained; the other seven are on OJT (on-the-job training)," said Sgt. John S. Newbill an engineer with the 748th.

"This may seem like a small lot, but it's really difficult because of the slope," said Sgt. Jennifer A. Trumbull a horizontal engineer, with the 748th.

The difficulties don't end there. These engineers are working with some pretty old equipment.

"A newer paver would have acoustics and lasers to level the pavement; we have to measure and adjust it by hand," said Newbill.

The Soldiers will be laying approximately 1,200 tons of black pavement. "Each truck holds 12 tons of pavement and we have 10 trucks," said Trumbull. With the difficult slopes and dated equipment the project will take longer than a job of similar size.

"Yeah, it will take more time. We have an old machine, so we're doing it medieval style," said Trumble. "but we hope to have it done by the end of the day."

When 704th Soldiers were told to change their yearly training briefing mid-brief, they knew it was best to...

Stay Flexible

by Staff Sgt. John Freese, 364th PAOC

The 704th Chemical Company's Reconnaissance Platoon returned home this past March to Arden Hills, Minn. following the completion of its year-long deployment to Iraq.

The 704th, stationed at the Victory Base Complex (VBC) on the outskirts of Baghdad, performed convoy and personal security, as well as quick reaction force (QRF) duties.

Security is not typically among a chemical unit's primary missions. But during their pre-mobilization meeting—known as the '180 Conference' (for the number of days prior to deployment the meeting is held) the unit received some important news. Its mission would be route, convoy and personal security, as well as any chemical missions that might arise. In other words, the unit now had to prepare for both roles. But this wasn't the first surprise they'd seen. Cautious not to "throw anybody under the bus," as he put it, the Platoon's commander, 1st Lt. Dominick Ronnenberg explained what occurred in the previous year during his yearly training brief for 2008.

"During the middle of my year-three brief, they stopped me and told me to brief year-four instead." Ronnenberg chuckled, shortly after the unit's return. By 'they' he means his higher headquarters, the 372nd Engineer Brigade, at Fort Snelling. This change in presentation meant more than Ronnenberg having to quickly redo his briefing slides for the next day.

"They basically bumped us up a year, (in the mobilization cycle) right in the middle of my briefing. That's when we got the first indication of 'hey, we're actually going some place,'" Ronnenberg said proudly. That meant the unit had a lot of work to do, in a relatively short time. A challenge they were ready to face.

"Plan to be flexible," said Sgt. 1st Class

David Wiehr, the unit's senior non-commissioned officer (NCO). Wiehr's 27 years of service speak volumes for that leadership advice. "You need to be very open minded—things are changing so fast over there," he said referring to Iraq. "If you're not flexible, you'll really have a tough time."

All in all, the 704th's focus was on effective performance of its security mandate, but they still had to train for any needed chemical missions. They operated on an eight-day mission cycle—two days at each of three security tasks, and two days on any assigned details.

Among the security tasks were Rhino Days. Basically a Rhino is an up-armored Winnebago-like bus. It has bullet-proof glass, armor plating, and can carry about 40 people. The 704th rotated with other units to provide security for that vehicle on its daily trips to the International Zone (IZ), or wherever else people needed to go, often along Route Irish.

Of course, acting as what amounted to an armed escort service in a war zone is dangerous business. To mitigate that danger, about four months into their tour, the 704th and its fellow rotating units received an allocation of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles, to replace their up-armored HUMVEES.

"Even if the HUMVEES could survive an [IED] impact, you'd probably end up with a busted vehicle that couldn't exit a kill zone," said Ronnenberg. So how dangerous was it?

"There were a few times during the mission where the heart really got pumping and you sensed things weren't quite right," summarized Wiehr. "The stress level was higher because the unit was tied up in traffic just like everyone else, and it was easy to feel your own vulnerability," he said. "You find yourself staring at each car that passes, suspicious of all, but suspicious of some more than others," he said.

Staff Sgt. Jeremy Malchow echoed that tension. "There was a traffic jam, and we knew there had been enemy contact ahead of us. We were in the middle of a three-lane highway, with a lot of civilian traffic around us. We were kind of waiting for contact to happen…we sat there for about 45 minutes before we got moving again."

In the end, the 704th never did have to respond directly to any assault during their security operations, but they never doubted their training, and never failed their readiness. To further mitigate the danger of their work, they analyzed daily intelligence reports, and conducted thorough sandtable and planning sessions for each and every trip because, according to Ronnenberg, each and every trip was a separate mission with distinct challenges and dangers. This was at least one reason for the unit's many successes.

"The platoon performed over 400 Rhino and personal security escort missions," Ronnenberg said. "We moved a total of 12,742 passengers, and that included a massive effort to move 1,200 MNFI military and civilian personnel permanently out of the IZ to VBC over a 2-month period. During that time, the US literally turned over the IZ to the Iraqis," he said.

"Even among active Army units that served with us, we led the way in vehicle maintenance. Every time we turned over the vehicles following the end of our rotations, we performed a thorough PMCS (Preventative Maintenance Checks and Services). We never handed over a vehicle to another unit that didn't have an accurate and complete status report," he said. Of course, that implies they didn't always receive vehicles from other units in the same way. "Let's just say we did things the way we felt they should be done," added Wiehr on that point.

To go along with earlier recommendations for flexibility, when asked if he had any advice for other reserve units deploying overseas, Ronnenberg offered the following:

1. Have a clear understanding of the mission. Having this knowledge allowed us to tailor our training to exactly what we did. Ft. McCoy let us borrow a school bus to simulate the Rhino, and you can bet we used it. We didn't know every detail of course, but we were well prepared for changes.

2. Make sure your chain of command is well set. It may change, but establish it as soon as possible.

3. Be proactive in your training! We had all our Army Warrior task training done before we even got to Fort McCoy

See STAY FLEXIBLE, page 18

BACKGROUND: Members of the 704th Chemical Company Recon Platoon queue at a gate in preparation for another day of escort duties along Route Irish, near Bagdahd, Iraq. The truck pictured here is one type of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle used for travel along potentially dangerous routes. RIGHT: 2nd Lt. Dominick Ronnenberg, 704th Chem. Co. commander, sits as "A-driver" during a security escort mission near Bagdahd. The 704th completed more than 400 security missions, and safely transported nearly 13,000 passengers along Route Irish.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS

Paige in Life of Deployed Soldier

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. John Freese, 364th PAOC

About two weeks after Staff Sgt. Jeremy Malchow left with his unit for a mobilization station en route to Iraq, his daughter Paige did something she will never do again—she was born.

Malchow was one of 27 Soldiers from the 704th Chemical Company Reconnaissance Platoon who were beginning a year-long deployment to Iraq, with a preparatory stop-over at Fort McCoy, Wis.

The 704th has since completed its convoy and personal security escort mission in Iraq and returned home (see related story, page 12), but as a staff sergeant, Malchow played a key role in the unit's duties there, to include his eventual reassignment from convoy and escort security to assistant headquarters commandant for the 18th Airborne Corps, located at the Al Faw Palace in Baghdad.

Meanwhile, back home in a suburb of Minneapolis, Malchow's wife Jessica took care of baby Paige, kept the household in order and stayed in regular contact with her husband via instant messaging and occasional video phone calls.

For family back home, having one's significant other so far away, and at so short a time after a new family member arrives can be rough. But in the process of working through this challenge, Jessica Malchow figured out something significant. "Use your resources and don't be afraid to ask for help," she said. With her parents and a sister nearby, she made sure to involve them in Paige's care. "They helped with new parenting questions, how to deal with missing my husband, and of course there were a few home repairs that were made a lot easier with their help."

"It is extremely important to come up with a strategy to cope with separations," says Laura Poppen of the Army Reserve Child, Youth and School Services' Fort Snelling office. "A parent becomes a single parent for the year of deployment and has to take on all of the family responsibilities [while] the deployed parent misses major life events in their child's life—be it crawling, first steps, first words, a big game, or graduation," said Poppen. What's more, according to Poppen, youth whose parents are, or have been, deployed can "build up emotional walls, as a coping technique, sensing that there will be another [future] deployment." Poppen explains how this added stress can sometimes manifest itself in problems ranging from peer conflicts, distractions from school work, or developmental regressions, such as in potty training, reading, etc.

While not every solution applies to every family's situation Poppen offers some tips for coping with prolonged absences of one or the other parent.

Spend individual time with each child. If possible, just you and one child at a time; go to the park together, the zoo, or to a ball game.

Develop a plan for staying in touch; be realistic with your children about any limits on your ability to communicate when first arriving to new locations. The home parent should let children draw pictures or write letters to send to their deployed parent as often as they would like.

Say goodbye to children, do not just slip away. Keep goodbyes brief, but do not leave in the middle of the night without saying goodbye.

Staff Sgt. Jeremy Malchow gets a hug from his daughter Paige. Prior to this, he had seen his daughter only two other times — when she was born, and just before his departure for Iraq.

Tell children about the deployment – children need time to digest the information and prepare for their parent's absence to the same degree that spouses do.

Use honest, age appropriate explanations. Even in families who have experienced repeated deployments, children react differently to the news at different stages of their development. As they grow, their understanding changes.

Do not make promises you cannot keep. Saying "I'll be home by Christmas" is not a promise that you can always keep.

Inform teachers and/or child care providers. These individuals will be spending a lot of time with your children, and should be aware of your absence, and any potential vacancies in your child's life.

But perhaps most importantly Malchow has a recommendation for Soldiers to plan for something else.

"Make sure to communicate with your spouse, family, or significant other," he said. "They need to talk to you as much as you need to talk to them. Make time for that communication to happen."

In Brief

Transferring Your GI Bill: Quirks and Process

Users of the Post-9/11 GI Bill will find a quirk in how Congress designed one of its most popular features: the option to transfer benefits to family members. For example, spouses of active duty members who hope to use transferred benefits to attend private colleges will be delighted at the value of the benefit for them. It will cover full tuition and fees, with no ceiling, and therefore will be worth far more than benefits transferable to college-bound children or even benefits available to veterans using the full plan themselves. On the other hand, active duty spouses who use transferred benefits to attend public colleges or universities will have a more modest education package than other GI Bill users including eligible children because active duty spouses will not qualify the GI Bill's monthly living allowance or the annual stipend for books and supplies. To read the full article by Tom Philpot go to: http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,193477,00.html?wh=news All applications to transfer benefits will be made through the Transferability of Educational Benefit (TEB) website. For more information on eligibility and application procedures, see the Department of Veterans' Affairs web site at http://www.gibill.va.gov/

New GI Benefits Vary Widely By State

An Associated Press review shows huge discrepancies in the state-by-state benefits veterans will receive under the new Post-9/11 GI Bill. Depending on where Servicemembers and veterans decide to attend college, they could receive a full ride, or very little. Congress made the amendments to the new GI Bill to provide Servicemembers the opportunity to attend private schools which often cost more. The new bill offers Servicemembers and veterans an amount equal to the tuition at the most expensive public college in the same state; however, that change penalizes veterans going to private colleges in states that have kept their public university tuition low. As a result, the new GI Bill offers a great assistance for vets in states such as New Hampshire, New York and Texas; and hardly any assistance at all in Massachusetts and especially California, where the state constitution prohibits public universities from charging tuition. To learn more and to read this article in its entirety, follow the link: http://www.theheraldbulletin.com/news_tab3/local_story_188000750.html

Referral Bonus Ends July 1

The Army has suspended the $2,000 referral bonus promised to Soldiers, retirees, cadets and Army civilians who referred new recruits. Effective July 1, 2009, Soldiers who submitted referrals prior to July 1 will still receive their bonus as long as their referrals enlist before September 1, 2009. Those who make successful referrals, after July 1, will receive a Sergeant Major of the Army coin and certificate. For more information regarding the referral bonus, please go to the following link: http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/07/army_bonus_070109w/

DoD Advised to Ban Tobacco Gradually

The counsel of the Institute of Medicine has issued a report advising the Department of Defense to phase-in a military-wide tobacco ban, beginning at the military academies. The report was requested by the Pentagon and the Department of Veterans' Affairs with the objective of identifying policies and practices that could lower smoking rates for help Soldiers and veterans. In 2005, 32 percent of active duty personnel and 22 percent of veterans were smokers. Rates among active duty personnel have recently increased. According to the report, tobacco use reduces Soldiers' physical fitness and endurance and is linked to higher rates of absenteeism and lost productivity. To read the article in full, click here: http://www.military.com/news/article/dod-advised-to-ban-tobacco-gradually.html?col=1186032310810 To read the recommendations by the Committee on Smoking Cessation in Military and Veteran Populations and to read this article in full, please go to: http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/06/military_smoking_063009w/

Poll: Troops' Kids Feel War Toll

Troubled children add to a growing list of war strain issues that military families, particularly in the Army, are currently struggling with. Six out of 10 U.S. military children have increased levels of fear and anxiety when a parent is sent to war, according to a survey of more than 13,000 military spouses of active duty Servicemembers. The Pentagon's survey results of the effects of war on children were tabulated early this year and released to USA Today. The survey had a margin of error of +/-4 percentage points. Army documents show that 600,000 active duty Soldiers have deployed once since 2001 and 110,000 have gone twice, and 38,000 have been deployed 3 times. The stress of deployment is a pressing issue for military families and will be addressed at this year's Association of the US Army's Family Programs Military Family Forums. To read the complete article, follow the link: http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/06/ap_military_kids_062509/

Salmonella Concerns Bring Dairy Shakes Warning

Department of Defense officials are warning all military personnel to temporarily avoid drinking dairy shakes found in Meals, Ready-to-Eat (MRE) and Unitized Group Rations-Express because they might contain Salmonella. There are potentially 12 million dairy shakes in MREs that could be affected. For further information, please go to: http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/07/army_dairyshakes_070109w/

News Briefs taken from AUSA Family Programs Newsletter

Engineer Soldiers support kids camp

Children of Army Reserve Soldiers experienced a day in the life of being a Soldier this June while attending a week-long Army Reserve Enrichment Camp (AREC) at Camp Ihduhapi, in Lorretto, Minn.

The first military task these campers were immersed in was learning how to apply make- up . . . the Army way.

These make-up compacts only have basic earth tones of black, green and brown and are not used to build a complementing facial foundation. Instead, it's used to blend in to the surrounding foliage during a field training exercise. Also, Soldiers reference it as camouflage paint not make-up.

"You kind of take it and rub it all over your face real quick," said Isabella Inveen, 15 of Woodbury, Minn., and an Army Reserve family member.

This is the third year Army Reserve Child Youth Services has hosted an AREC. Eighty Army Reserve youth aging from 7 to 18 were invited to this camp for a week of fun and to meet other kids that have experienced a family member that's deployed or will deploy soon.

Natalie Sims, 13 from Shakopee, Minn., and an Army Reserve family member, said she likes having the opportunity to talk to other Army Reserve youth that are enduring the same problems that she is going through. "I like talking to people that understand me because you get treated differently during school if you don't have friends that know what you are talking about."

"Since (children of Army Reserve Soldiers) are geographically dispersed we wanted to bring them together to know they aren't the only ones that are going through a deployment," said Laura Poppen, Army Reserve Child Youth Services Coordinator.

AREC is open to all Army Reserve youth and is free. CYS will host 16 camps across the United States and one in Saipan, part of the Northern Mariana Islands, with more than 1,000 Army Reserve youth in attendance at the camps.

This is the seventh year America's military has been engaged in war. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates said in a speech at a Joint Armed Forces Officers Wives' Luncheon at Boiling Air Force Base in Maryland, on June 26th, that the current war is the longest that an all-volunteer force has been involved in since the American Revolution.

Gates said 40 percent of the military is made up of parents, and more than 230,000 children have a parent at war. A recent Pentagon survey of more than 13,000 active-duty troops found that the children most affected by deployments are between 6 and 13 years old.

AREC isn't the cure all to replace the void of a deployed family member, nor can it calm all the anxiety or grief during a deployment or potential deployment. AREC can give Army Reserve Youth a diversion during this intense time and surround them with youth that have like issues with counseling if needed. The camps also give Army Reserve family members an opportunity to relax while their children are at camp.

"Counselors talk to them about support and who they can go to about support, said Poppen. She also said they teach them coping strategies on how to deal with a deployment.

The camps don't limit themselves to just talking about feelings…they also focus on having fun.

See KIDS CAMP, page 18

Campers at the Army Reserve Enrichment Camp, held in Lorretto, Minn. this June try the target practice activity put on by 372nd Engineer Brigade Soldiers.

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Chris Farley, 88th Regional Readiness Command PAO

Corey Hill, Army Reserve Representative, Army Teen Panel

416th Teen AR Representative on Army Teen Panel

Corey Hill, the son of a 416th Soldier, will serve two years representing teenagers of Army Reserve Soldiers on the Army Teen Panel

My name is Corey Hill and I am a 17-year-old junior, (almost senior) in high school in Williamson, New York. My father, Master Sgt. Scott Hill, 416th Theater Engineer Command, is a 25-year veteran.

This past January, I had the privilege of being selected as a member of the Army Teen Panel (ATP), which is comprised of a group of teens similar to that of the Army Reserve Teen Panel (ARTP), except this panel includes teens selected by each Army Region, National Guard, Army Reserve (AR), and Accessions Command.

I started my two-year term of representing the Army Reserve by traveling to Washington, D.C. for my first bi-annual congregation of the panel. As soon as we arrived, we immediately went to work on discussing "issues" that our regions brought forward. Our next project was creating a special video to be debuted at the closing ceremony of the AFAP Conference. Because 2009 is the 25th anniversary of AFAP, we dedicated our special video to highlighting U.S. Army Child, Youth & School Services' issues brought up to the Army Family Action Plan over the past 25 years.

We had a lot of ground to cover in a short amount of time. We decided to split ourselves into three groups in order to create skits about the 80's, 90's, and 2000 to the present. I was in the last group. Once we had all created the slides for our decade, we combined our final products and named the whole video the "AFAP Zone". However, that was only part of our task. On top of creating the video, we still had to finish discussing our own issues that were presented from our regions.

After deliberating for about a day, we decided on three issues- the maximum number we can submit to Army Leadership during the AFAP conference. These issues included: 1. education stabilization policies (for example, making sure Soldiers and Families aren't being moved if a teen is in their junior year of high school), 2. communication relations between teens of various commands (an issue submitted by AR youth and other regional representatives), and 3. improving installation facilities for teens that are outside the continental United States (OCONUS)- thereby decreasing the amount of trouble some teens get into.

However, the meeting wasn't all work and no play. We also had the pleasure of visiting Washington, D.C. and shopping at the National Mall. But even more important were the friendships made among teens with a common background. In fact, all of us still remain in touch outside of our ATP meetings in some form and we have been able to connect with teens from around the globe- a vital asset in today's society.

I am really looking forward to seeing my fellow panel members at our next meeting this June during the Army Birthday Week. It is an honor and pleasure to have been selected as the Army Reserve representative on the ATP. I proudly represent my father, the Army Reserve and my AR peers.

STAY FLEXIBLE *(Continued from page 13)*

When we arrived at Fort McCoy, we saw a lot of units who hadn't done that. Our approach gave us time to develop our own training—to refocus as needed. For instance, we used that time to get extra training on directing a chopper to a [landing zone], and because we were so well prepared, we were able to take four extra days of leave."

Of course, there were other successes. With the exception of one Soldier returned early due to illness, the entire unit returned from Iraq unscathed. A testament to good fortune? Perhaps. But this unit planned and worked for that luck.

(Below) Family members of 704th Chemical Company Soldiers wait patiently for their Soldiers return to the unit's Army Reserve Center in Arden Hills, Minn. in March. The 704th deployed to Iraq where in addition to chemical missions, the unit performed security missions.

KIDS CAMP *(Continued from Page 16)*

During camp, the youth have the opportunity to stay in cabins, go rock climbing, canoeing, swimming and more. On military day the youth got an opportunity to connect with and understand what their family members do on a daily basis.

"I really never knew what he did or what he does. I got to realize that he does a little more than I thought. I thought he just sits at a desk. Apparently he does more," said Inveen. She added, "I'm very proud of my dad. I love him so much."

Soldiers from the 372nd Engineer Brigade were tasked with providing activities. The campers got to throw balloons at targets, perform drill and ceremony, and sit and spin in the turret of an up-armored HUMVEE. Each camper got specially made identification tags with their names and had the opportunity to ask Soldiers questions relating to the military.

"This was really cool. This is probably one of the best things I've done in the military," said Spc. Scott Larson, 372nd Engineer Brigade human resources specialist. Larson also said he enjoyed seeing the reactions and excitement of the kids when they partook in the military activities.

Larson watched and helped the campers climb in and out of the up-armored HUMVEE and answered their questions regarding the vehicle.

"Why are the doors so heavy? What do you do with this? What does that do? It's kind of like watching a bunch of kids inquire about an automobile," said Larson.

"I hope they have a great time at camp and they realize they aren't the only ones going through a deployment or some tough times and that they have made a new friend that can be supportive," said Poppen.

To find out more information on the Army Reserve Enrichment Camps contact your family program assistant. If you have a child or teenager that is having problems with a family service member's deployment please contact Military One Source at (800) 342-9647 or check them out on the web at www.militaryonesource.com.

BREWSTER'S *(Continued from page 11)*

ect progresses. "It was something we all had fun with," said 1st Lt. Sarah Brewster, 322nd commander. "When we get the mirrors on it, it will be high-class."

Roethler came up with the original design, approved by Brewster, although he doesn't take credit for the final product. "The Soldiers really improved on my design, they made it more aesthetic, sturdy and safe," said Roethler.

The shaving basins' usefulness was noticed immediately and quickly replicated. The parts are prefabricated and it is easily built anywhere. "This one went over so well, we're building one for another site," said Johll. "I told them I was going to shave me legs in there, they didn't like that idea."

ENGINEERS RETURN *(Continued from page 9)*

where the enemy engaged the engineers. After only 8 days on the ground, members of the 420th's Personal Security Detail (PSD) were attacked while moving between FOB Sharana and FOB Orgun-E. The PSD team fought their way through a violent ambush. Twenty or more insurgents attacked from close range with heavy machine gun and rocket propelled grenade fire, several even breaking from cover to engage the team's small convoy from just meters away. Credited with suppressing an enemy machine gun nest and providing life saving buddy aid, Spc. David Hutchinson was awarded a Silver Star medal for his actions during the firefight. Injured in the attack, 1st Sgt. David Gussberry and Sgt. 1st Class Robert Parsons received Purple Heart medals.

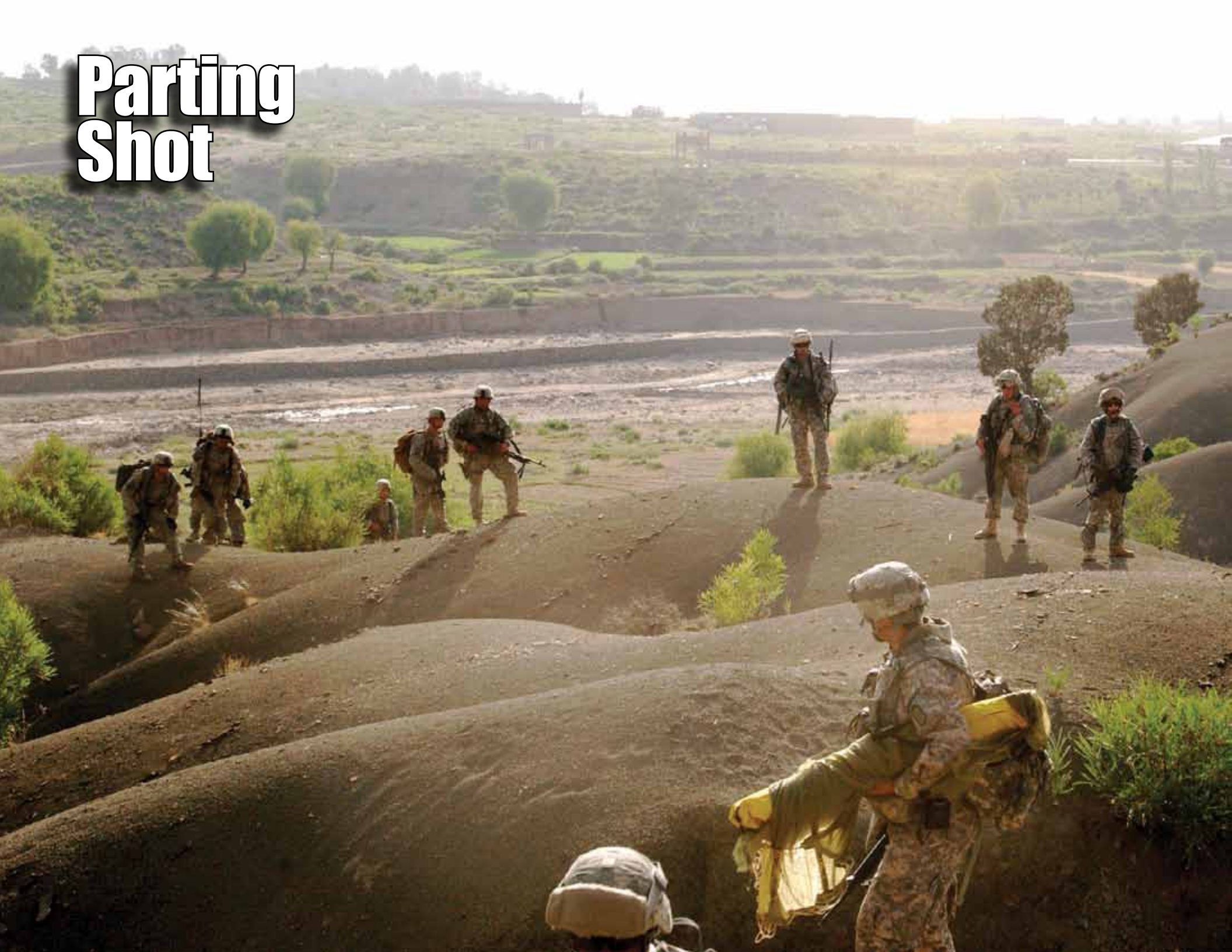
Weeks later, members of a CTF Castle survey team endured six days of rocket attacks while working out of Combat Outpost Zerok. In one attack, two American Sailors assigned to the Sharana Provincial Reconstruction Team were killed and several others severely wounded when a 107mm rocket struck the building outside the COP that they were taking cover in. The survey team left cover during the attack, and along with members of CTF Castle's Route Clearance Team provided emergency medical aid until MEDVAC arrived. The four Soldiers in the survey team received valor commendations for their actions. Master Sgt. Esley Gustafson, the CTF Castle Construction Management NCOIC, said that the attack was a sudden and brutal reminder that, "We were fighting a war." This held true as the team departed COP Zerok and fought their way through a three-kilometer long complex ambush. Over 70 insurgents were believed to be involved in the attack that left several Soldiers wounded and an armored vehicle destroyed by rocket fire.

Like Iraq, one of the greatest threats in Afghanistan is direct fire attack by IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and Vehicle Borne IEDs. These terror weapons strike unexpectedly and do not discern between combatants or noncombatants. They ignore rank as well. Both 420th Command Sgt. Maj. Calton Mitchell and one of the brigades newest NCOs, Sgt. Jose Perez, were awarded the Purple Heart medal for injuries sustained from these types of attacks.

In spite of the direct engagements, in spite of the long separation from family and friends, the 420th's mission in Afghanistan was marked by high morale and the knowledge that their efforts were making a difference in the lives of their fellow Soldiers and the Afghan people.

"This has been a pretty incredible mission," said Capt. James Reid, assistant S3 operations after completing a complex series of over bridging efforts along Afghanistan's Highway One. "I've been in the military for 20 years and the work we've done here has just been a win-win for everyone involved."

Sgt. 1st Class Robert N. Parsons checks on a simulated casualty during the 420th's mobilization training at Fort McCoy. When the unit arrived in country Parsons led the Soldiers of his Personal Security Detail through a vicious ambush that wounded him and two other members of his team.

PHOTO: SGT 1ST CLASS JEFF DURAN

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