



# TASK FORCE TRAILBLAZER NEWSLETTER



## Companies Training at Camp Buehring

Training at Camp Buehring is coming to a close. 65<sup>th</sup> hit the ground running and began intense training like only the 65<sup>th</sup> can. Since August of this year, the battalion has jammed more training into each week than most battalions working into their quarterly training program. The Battalion Commander continually discovers new training events that neatly fit into the training plan and at Buehring, there was no difference. The battalion sent 544 soldiers through 93 separate training events over 12 days. Both Soldiers and leaders alike have benefited from the additional training over the past two weeks. Soldiers conducted IED-Defeat lanes, Crew Served weapons ranges, Combat Security Detachment training, con-  
TRAINING, continued on page 5

*Above: Soldiers learn how to use the equipment that they will be using in Iraq. Main body trained at Camp Buehring while some Soldiers with the Torch party were trained at COB Speicher in Iraq. Each group had the same goal: become familiar with the equipment and develop the tactics to make the job easier.*

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## Weather or not, believe me, its COLD

By 1LT Miguel Lima  
I'm from Florida and this is my first time deploying. I've always heard the stories about how hot it gets in Kuwait and Iraq. I never heard how cold it can get. As I received 5 varied sets of cold weather tops and bottoms, I couldn't help but think that this was going to be dead weight in the desert. It wasn't until maybe a month out from deployment I started to hear the murmurs that it will actually be cold when we get into Kuwait. For a Floridian that trained in both Fort Ben-

ning and Fort Leonard Wood in the winter, and Pohakuloa Training Area on the Big Island, I figured I was ready. Hawaii definitely has acclimated me to a different temperature than I would be used to as I soon realized when we arrived at Kuwait. Most of my good cold weather clothes were in my ruck sack which was stowed under the bus. Meaning, I had to suck it up while we stood outside in an accountability formation. It was cold and windy. I couldn't stop shivering if I tried. I noticed the bat-

talion commander didn't even seem to flinch in the cold. He was from Wisconsin, though, and this probably reminded him of home. I would have gladly worn a cheese-head hat if it meant I'd be warmer at that moment. It dawned on me that this was going to be a reality for the next month or two. As I grimaced in the cold, it made me comfortable that I wasn't the only one feeling the chill. Others were shaking at the position of attention as the wind blew through the ranks.  
WEATHER, continued on page 2

**"It is impossible to win the race unless you venture to run; impossible to win the victory unless you dare to battle." - Richard M DeVos**

## *Weather: Acclimating to a new environment*

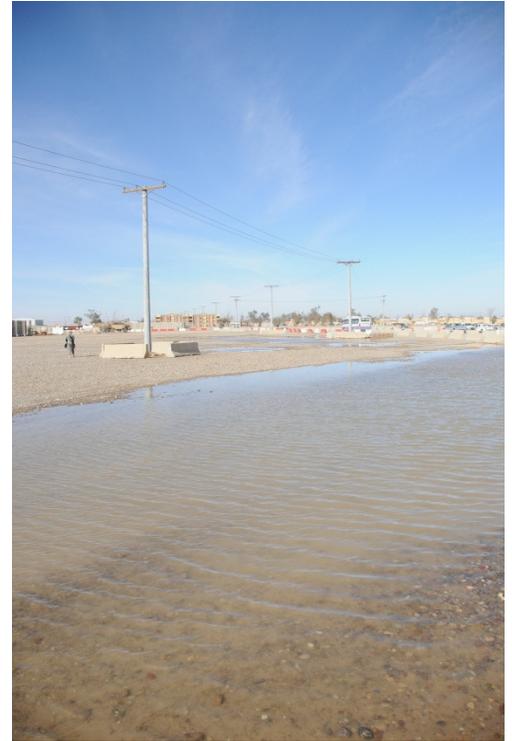
WEATHER from page 1

The next day, the PX was a hubbub of folks buying the cold weather accessories that they either forgot or didn't bother to carry with them. I was scooped up to travel with the Torch party which arrived in Iraq roughly ten days before the main body. On the third day, as I walked back from lunch, I felt a slight drop of water. Later that night and throughout the next day, it rained. It wasn't anything like a hurricane's rain, but it was constant. Throw in the fact it was cold and you've pretty much got a dreadful day for any red-blooded Floridian. Thankfully, I was writing TFTB Issue #1 in my room and didn't venture out too much. The next day was different. Some of the staff attended the first of many meetings with our Iraqi Army engineer unit brethren at their compound. We set out in armored vehicles with visibility worth 50 yards or less from the windows. A deep fog had set in that morning and as you can imagine, it was cold and breezy at the compound. The Iraqis' welcome was warm enough but the environment made me sulk in anticipation of our departure. We concluded business and rolled back to the base. Over five days passed and as I passed what affectionately has been deemed "The Lake" on the way to the dining facility, I had to take a picture.

Oh sure it slowly evaporates everyday but we're in the desert, aren't we? All that water would surely soak into the sands of a Floridian beach, why is this any different? Then I thought about the first day I stepped off the plane in Hawaii. As I marveled at the weird looking trees and the misting rain, I'm reminded of a movie about a displaced Midwestern girl. As she took in her surroundings, she shared her observation with her totable pooch, "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

*Right: "The Lake" remains fairly expansive at the time of this publication. It continues to keep "dry feet" trips to the D-FAC at night a risky task.*

*Below: A dismal day made so by the wind, cold and ensuing mud and puddles.*



The CST conducts an AAR (after action review) after training. Soldiers for the CST (combat security team) come from HHC. They are responsible for safely moving the command team and staff outside the wire.

## *HHC "Renegades"*

The last of Headquarters and Headquarters company finally made it to Kuwait and began training before our final push into Iraq. The company and battalion torch party flew out just a few days after the main body's arrival and has already begun coordinating for our arrival into Iraq. Soldiers have honed their Soldiers skills by conducting live fire exercises, medical training, and counter-insurgency training. The Rene-

gades are ready and impatiently waiting for the next phase of the mission to begin.

Two renegades reenlisted to stay on the team! SSG Prosper from the battalion construction cell and SPC Hall from our renegade supply room reenlisted for 6 years.

Renegade 6 out!

CPT Mark Kuhar

## 95th Engineer Company “Wolfpack”

Aloha from Kuwait. It's Thursday, the 15th of January, 2009, and I'm writing from one of the three wonderful tents housing all 185 of us of the 95th. The days have been fairly mild, but we've all endured some cold nights and mornings. Regardless of weather, the Sappers of the 95th Engineer Company have taken every opportunity to train here in Kuwait.

1st, 2nd and 3rd platoons returned last night from a three day field problem that focused on route clearance missions. Each platoon ran through a day of instructional scenarios and they had another day where they executed an entire route clearance mission in the Kuwaiti desert just five miles south of the Iraqi border. The scenario was extremely well executed—role-playing locals, multiple vehicles, towns and incidents that forced us all to learn the intricacies of the route clearance mission.

4th platoon worked on their heavy engineer equipment operating skills and the entire platoon, along with some of the maintenance crew, has been driving bulldozers, scrapers, bucket loaders and 20-ton dump trucks. Headquarters has been supporting the tactical training for everyone else while



95th Soldiers huddle to get motivated before continuing on with training.

attending the courses here on our base in Kuwait. We are sending as many Soldiers as possible to advanced medical training, IED-Defeat lanes, building search courses, advanced demolitions certification, and multiple other courses that prepare us that much more for our upcoming mission.

We will move up to Iraq in the near future to start the hand-off with the unit currently there. Everyone is ready to leave this transitional period and settle down at COB Speicher. It is time to start the mis-

sion we've been training for since July, 2007.

We all came together to share the sad news of the passing of Mrs. Deraps. We all send our thoughts and prayers to SGT Deraps' family for the loss of his amazing wife.

Thank you for your continued support, and 1SG and I will continue to do everything on our end to take great care of these amazing Sappers. WOLFPACK!

CPT Darren Moniot

## FSC “Workhorse”



FSC Soldiers re-zero their assigned weapon. This is essential to complete before leaving Kuwait.

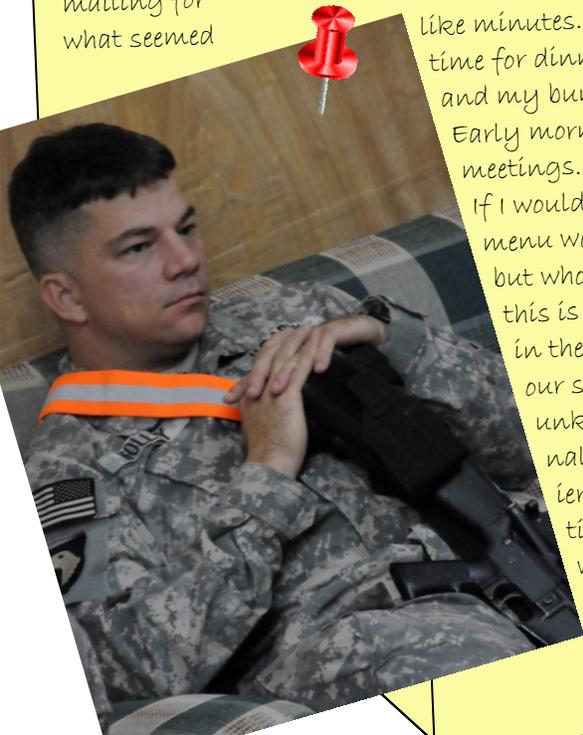
Well the Workhorses have finally settled into their temporary home in Kuwait just in time to move to their more permanent location in Iraq. While here in Kuwait, FSC has participated in numerous training opportunities to help themselves become accustomed to the climate they are in and to help build upon their tactical procedures to use while maneuvering in Iraq. Everything was topped off with a 3 day exercise that included close quarters marksmanship, crew served weapons training and a vehicle mounted counter IED training lane

where Soldiers and leaders got to interact with local nationals for a more realistic feel of what they may encounter. There were even camels involved in the scenario! All in all, everything was very successful and the soldiers got the chance to tighten up their shot group and build upon what we have been training on for a while in Hawaii. We are packing our bags and ready to move north when the time comes.

2LT Keith Douglas  
Maintenance Platoon Leader

### The First 72 Hours In IRAQ with the Torch Party

We all knew this day was coming, but our trip to Ali Al Saleem, Kuwait was what we had waited for all week. For this was the day the bottom of our boot would be introduced to the sands of Iraq. Our journey started just after the clock hit midnight. We loaded the gear, boarded the buses, and headed for the C-130 that would deliver us to COB Speicher. After a number of briefings and preparing our gear for flight, we all boarded the plane. The plane ride was very memorable and until I explain the seating arrangements, you may never understand. Passengers load first with weapons and carry-ons. Two carry-on's was the limit and I was foolish enough to push that limit. The seating consists of long bench style net like seats that run half-way down the length of the plane on each side. In the middle there are two rows sitting back-to-back facing the outer rows. As we sat in our seat we were so close to the person next to us that there was no way to avoid rubbing knees. Those two carry-on's would prove to be a real burden when it came time to lobby for space to put my feet. The 95 minute flight seemed like it took forever. After being in the air for awhile we finally approached our landing. When landing in places like COB Speicher pilots like to perform a series of acrobatic maneuvers to avoid the possibility of being targeted. If you've never experienced this, it takes everything you've got not to get sick or pass out. Finally, wheels on the ground and the first 72 hours begin. The back of the aircraft opens, the gear is unloaded. Two lines of Soldiers disembarked the aircraft headed for another pair of buses. As I looked in front of me I noticed that most Soldiers didn't even pause to look around. Being the first one on the aircraft I was the last one off. When I got far enough away from the plane I stopped and turned around. I looked back at that ole' C-130 that I had sang about so many times while calling cadence. My eyes then shifted to the horizon. Iraq was as I had remembered it. I turned back and followed my comrades to the bus. As I approached the buses I thought to myself, "They have forgotten a bus." There was no way all of us, with all of our gear were getting on those two buses. The buses we took to the airport in Kuwait were tour buses. The buses waiting to pick us up in were the size of your local shrimp truck. Never would this work. Well.....where there is a will, there is a way. Much to our disliking, we made it work. After a short van ride we were reunited with our gear. Once we recovered the gear the only thing on anyone's mind was food. We only had a few minutes to make it to the dining facility before it closed, so we had to hurry. The DFAC here at COB Speicher is an amazing thing. Whatever you want, as much of it as you want, and whenever you want it. To include 31 flavors of Baskins & Robins. After breakfast we got the keys to our rooms, also known as a CHU. We secured all of our personal belongings and waited for 1300 to come. This is when we would finally meet the counterpart that we had been e-mailing for what seemed like minutes. Most of us took the spare time to take a much needed nap. 1300 came and was gone in like minutes. Introductions were made, conversations took place, and before we knew it, it was time for dinner. Day 1 was complete and being up all night was taking it's toll. It was 1930 and my bunk never looked so good. Lights Out! Days two and three were very much alike. Early morning P.T., breakfast, meetings, lunch, tours of COB Speicher, dinner, and more meetings. I would say the only identifiable difference would be the dinner meal on Sunday. If I would have bought my dinner in Hawaii it would have easily been over \$100. On the menu was steak, lobster tail, fried shrimp, and baked trout. There were side items as well but who cares about sides when the items mentioned above are on buffet. As a Floridian, this is the best possible dinner ever. And I loved every bite of it. The first 72 hours expired in the blink of an eye. The weather stayed cool, the sand stayed afloat in the air, and our senses were being exposed to many new things. The days were filled with both the unknown and welcomed surprises. From the first class dining facility to the phenomenal PX/courtyard area. Life in Iraq for the next 12 months would be made a little easier with some of the amenities from home here with us. The fast pace of our daily activities will consume us. The hours will seem like only minutes. Before we know it we will be on mid-tour leave vacationing with loved ones. Soon after we will be showing our replacements the new standard of operations. The standard created by the best Engineer Battalion in the U.S. Army. 65<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, Trail Blazers!



- WO1 Raymond Holley Jr.

# Training: Different events for different companies

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ducted eight live fire ranges and fired over 60,000 bullets down range and set off [pounds and pounds] of demolitions. One such training event included the Route Clearance Range where 95<sup>th</sup>, 511<sup>th</sup> and 591<sup>st</sup> companies conducted day and night IED mitigation training events over nine days. Soldiers were cold, tired and

stretched to their limits, but as you can see in the photos they stayed highly motivated; as soon as they finished one lane, they were noted to say: "Let's do that again."

Even though the training has been great at Buehring we are eager to get to Iraq and begin our mission. We are trained and ready to perform our duty for our

country and relieve our brethren engineer battalion, the 326nd EN BN so they can return to their families.

Until next time, keep your eye on the horizon and your finger on the trigger.

MAJ Dale Snider

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Clockwise from left: SPC Mass uses fire to get warm; SFC Arceo and PFC Goodwin eat at the D-FAC; 95th trains on RC equipment; SPC Rule is good to go on C-130; the entire 95th poses for photo opp.



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### Editor's Notes

I realized that in the last issue, I had repeated Bridget's email under my own name. Whoops. I'm still getting used to this program. You'll also note that I've added MAJ Dorf. He's currently the person who is the quality control for the publication. I've been thinking of a Letters to the Editor section. If you have anything that you'd like to send out to everyone, I'd like to help pass the message along. Please also engage the FRSA, Bridget Shioshita, with anything that you'd like to include in the sister publication from all of you back home. I'd really like to know what you all think about the articles this week as we are starting to get some input from around the battalion. Once we all get settled in here, I'm hoping more and more Soldiers will want to write something for all of you back home. Salaam alay-kum (Peace be with you).

- 1LT Miguel Lima



## Commander's Corner

Aloha,

Task Force Trailblazer is doing great here and anxious to start our mission. Since the last newsletter, we have moved our "Torch Party" into Iraq, and they have been very busy getting to know our area of operations, sorting out our living areas, coordinating for receipt of our equipment, and preparing for the mission of providing route clearance and general construction. Here in Kuwait, the training has been exceptional and morale is very high. It's simply amazing to witness the determination

and focus in the eyes of our Soldiers and leaders--as well as many smiles and camaraderie. Despite sometimes bone-chilling cold and wind, I've yet to hear a Soldier complain.

As I write this, we are only a few days from moving the Renegades, Workhorse, Wolfpack and Reapers North to begin taking over the mission from the unit who has done so for the past 15 months. The "to do list" is quite extensive as you can imagine. Another unit, C Company, 84th Engineer Battalion (from Alaska) is already in Iraq and will join

our task force when we take over the mission. So, don't be alarmed if your Soldier is out of touch for a little while.

Thanks for all of your support and encouragement. We're all off to a solid start. Until next time (from Iraq).

Trailblazer 6, out.

LTC Scott Petersen

Commander, 65th Engineer Battalion and Task Force Trailblazer

"First In, Last Out"

