21st Theater Sustainment Command
MILLRINDER
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2011 Issue 1

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE 21ST TSC

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2011 Issue 1

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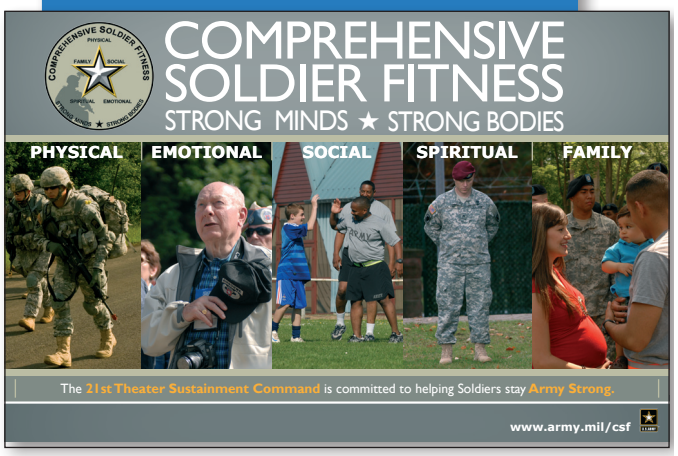
Pull-out Poster:

Each edition of the Millrinder features a pull-out poster. This edition the focus is CSF.



On the cover: Spc. Michael Freas, 21st TSC's Warrior of the Year, secures his headgear during the 2010 U.S. Army Europe Best Warrior Competition, July 27, Grafenwoehr, Germany. The competition is designed to test USAREUR Soldiers from across Europe in their military knowledge, warrior skills, and endurance. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Patricia Deal, USAREUR Public Affairs)

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21st Theater Sustainment Command
MILLRINDER

From the Editor: A Day in the Life of the 21st TSC

"A Day in the Life of 21st TSC" – it sounds almost like a reality TV show, but there is nothing more real than the missions the 21st Theater Sustainment Command executes on a daily basis, and we do not need a TV show to bring that reality to our readers.

If you've read some of our past issues, it would seem that they have been very logistics oriented, and you would be right in thinking this. With the last edition we began taking a different direction with our magazine because we decided as a team that the Army had enough logistics magazines and that it was time to make a change.

When planning this edition, we brainstormed and came up with many great ideas. After lengthy discussions among the Millrinder staff, we found the common thread among all of these ideas was that this edition needed to be all about the people who make the 21st TSC the best sustainment command in the Army. Based on input from 21st TSC Commanding General, Maj. Gen. Patricia McQuistion, we were able to refine our ideas to truly capture the many diverse missions of the command that make this unit so unique and on the forefront of providing direct support to the units across U.S. European Command, U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Central Command.

This edition of the Millrinder Magazine is dedicated to showcasing the missions our personnel perform on any given day throughout the year, hence the theme, "A Day in the Life of 21st TSC." We hope this will help readers understand the truly remarkable accomplishments of our Soldiers, Civilians and Families who play such vital roles in 21st TSC's successes and touch so many lives in the course of one day.

Our missions in the 21st TSC are many and widely varied. On any given day, our tasks could range from refueling operations in Germany to contracting support in Latvia to airborne operations in France or providing personnel to deploy downrange. So, some of the stories you'll see in this edition include contracting operations, building NCOs and leaders, how one family deals with deployment and many more very relevant and people oriented articles that capture the essence of those who make it happen.

In this edition you will also see several stories on Comprehensive Soldier Fitness. If you read our last edition, you will recall we were just introducing CSF. We are now deeply immersed in educating personnel on CSF and applying it. CSF is not just another Army program, it is a concept that when understood and applied, can help our Soldiers, Civilians and Families work through some of the stressors they experience daily. We are definitely seeing great results and want to share those with our readers. There is also a truly remarkable fold out poster at the center of the magazine as well that encapsulates what CSF is all about, people helping themselves and others.

Because of the great feedback we received from you our readers, we made this magazine available on line as well. Just go to the 21st TSC website at http://www.21tsc.army.mil/. So enjoy the magazine whether straight off the rack or online, and please - we encourage you to share your thoughts on this publication with us - good or bad, because it's YOUR magazine!

FIRST IN SUPPORT!
Lt. Col. Anna Friederich-Maggard
Editor-in-Chief

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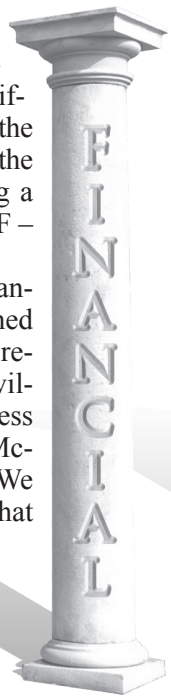
Financial Fitness—
Building a 21st TSC Pillar

By Jamie Riley, 266th FMC; Karen Grebener, Public Health Command Region-Europe; and Lt. Col. William McCoy, 21st TSC Chaplains' Office

We're including financial fitness as a defined element of our comprehensive Soldier, Civilian, and Family fitness efforts. We know that when our members have financial problems, they can cause severe stress on families and can lead to, or exacerbate, other problems that inhibit our performance and resilience. We're looking for good tools to help our teammates make sound decisions and to help plan for unexpected outcomes in all areas of their lives — including their financial fitness. We want this to be a routine aspect of how we build strength and resiliency for all our members.

—Maj. Gen. Patricia McQuistion

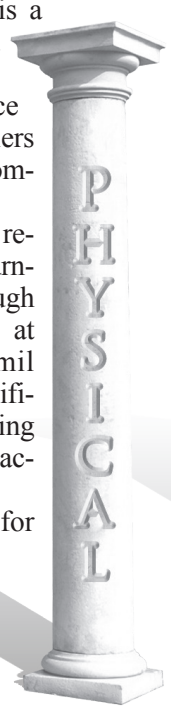
In the Millrinder earlier this year (2010 Issue 1), both Maj. Gen. Patricia E. McQuistion, commanding general of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command, and the command sergeant major of the 21st TSC, Command Sgt. Maj. James Spencer, dedicated significant attention to Comprehensive Soldier Fitness. This is a concept that has huge potential for the health, happiness and success of the U.S Forces, according to McQuistion. Spencer listed the five dimensions of strength falling under the umbrella of CSF – physical, emotional, social, family and spiritual.



To highlight an important element of fitness that can have significant impact on all of the other pillars of CSF, the command is instituting a sixth dimension to CSF – financial fitness.

"We're including financial fitness as a defined element of our comprehensive Soldier, Civilian, and Family fitness efforts," said McQuistion. "We know that when our members have financial problems, they can cause severe stress on Families and can lead to, or exacerbate, other problems that inhibit our performance and resilience. We're looking for good tools to help our teammates make sound decisions and to help plan for unexpected outcomes in all areas of their lives – including their financial fitness. We want this to be a routine aspect of how we build strength and resiliency for all our members."

The 266th Financial Management Center oversees the timely and accurate receipt of military pay entitlements to Soldiers assigned to U.S. Army Europe. This is a critical mission, and one whose success requires the assistance of individual Soldiers and their chain of command.



Soldiers monthly review of leave and earnings statements through the MyPay website at https://mypay.dfas.mil is often the first notification of something amiss with pay accuracy.

If, for example, the Soldier's Cost Of Living Allowance does not reflect the correct rate following the Soldier's marriage, birth of a child or other methods of acquiring additional dependents, there is risk of financial difficulties that can adversely affect the emotional and spiritual fitness of this Soldier and Family. Just as important, the Soldier is often the first to become aware of a potential overpayment that, if uncorrected, could result in a significant debt with the same potential for adverse impact on the emotional and spiritual fitness of the Soldier and his Family.

Similarly, Company commanders and unit first sergeants, through a review of the monthly unit commanders' finance reports, might recognize an inaccuracy in the Soldier's entitlements that requires correction. This effort – a three-way partnership between the Soldier, his or her finance customer support team and the Soldier's

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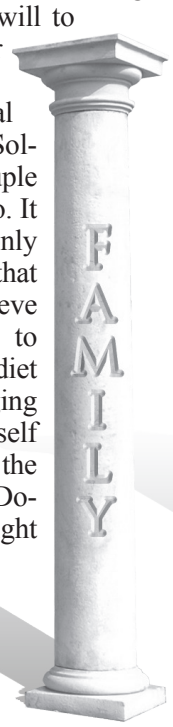
chain of command – is one of the components of financial management readiness. But , as the name implies, Comprehensive Soldier Fitness goes beyond this role – that is, beyond simply the timely and accurate receipt of entitlements.

The Army has implemented financial readiness training for first term Soldiers that is part of financial management readiness and a component of CSF. It is no secret that Soldiers can have difficulty focusing on their missions, if their families do not have enough money to pay for basic necessities like groceries. Sadly, there are many examples of financial difficulties that affect Soldiers, their Families and their units. The Army has resources available for the Soldier to avoid financial readiness difficulties in the first place through Army Community Services' financial readiness program managers and trained counselors familiar with challenges of military life.

The financial readiness program at ACS offers a wide range of services to individual Soldiers and their units. For the individual, ACS can assist in preparing detailed budgets for the future. This is especially helpful to people who are about to be married, have a child, or relocate. For those Soldiers and Families who are experiencing or anticipating financial difficulties, they offer counseling and several publications to help get their situations corrected. The ACS staff also oversees the Army Emergency Relief program in each military community. If a Soldier is thinking about making a major financial decision or purchase, ACS can offer some guidance. In addition, the representatives at ACS can advise Soldiers and Families on basic investments, and they can even investigate complaints against local businesses.

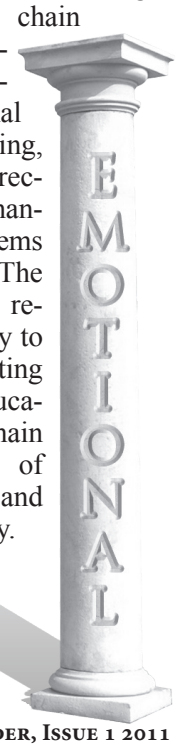
Soldiers and the Families have the opportunity through a variety of these helping agencies to set some realistic financial goals. This is good stewardship. Whereas we are often working on eating better and getting our vision checked on a regular basis, we rarely put the same scrutiny on our personal spending and savings habits. Chaplains often see counselees whose core relational problems stem from financial mismanagement, individual lack of discipline and the need for an "appearance of wealth" as opposed to "thrift" for the future. Good stewardship of finances may not allow us to have the latest in Bluetooth technology nor the widest flat-screen high definition TV for the football and basketball games this season, but it will however provide safety when the "hooptie" unexpectedly breaks down, or when a family member has a TriCare co-pay requiring a large sum of money. Use of credit cards to dodge fiscal responsibility at home often creates enormous debt ratios that a young couple with children cannot surmount. For couples, kids are expensive and for singles, so are car payments!

Responsible home finances begin with a plan and the will to do what is right rather than what is desired. Setting clear financial goals as a young Soldier or a young couple is the right thing to do. It may become clear only after financial ruin that the only way to achieve financial wellness is to go on a spending diet and begin managing what you allow yourself to purchase at the Exchange. Doing right requires that you identify what you must have to live on and that which you must save. Taking a lunch to work can save hundreds of dollars a month and can improve your physical health rather than eating high caloric food at a take-out business. But fundamentally, it is morally the right thing to do to manage your money wisely.



Comprehensive Soldier Fitness encompasses many aspects of military life and includes financial readiness. The Army has assigned oversight of the timely and accurate receipt of pay and allowances to its financial management units. In the 21st Theater Sustainment Command, those units are the 266th Financial Management Center and the 106th Financial Management Company. But CSF goes beyond simply receipt of pay and allowances. The Army has also dedicated significant resources to the education of first-term Soldiers and their Families when it comes to financial readiness. There are also free resources available through ACS in the form of trained counselors in such areas as debt liquidation assistance, consumer advocacy and complaint resolution services.

Like all components of CSF, the chain of command plays a key role in financial readiness. A knowledgeable and concerned chain of command, although not necessarily trained in personal financial counseling, could be the key to recognizing potential financial readiness problems with their Soldiers. The chain of command remains the best agency to assist Soldiers in getting the counseling or education necessary to remain a valuable part of their units and the Army.



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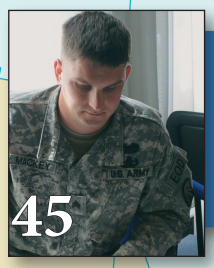
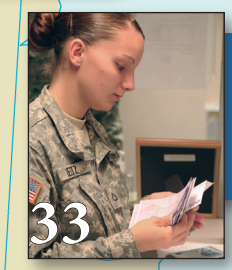
North

As the first few seconds of the day roll across the clock, most of the ***thousands of Soldiers, Civilians and Families*** *of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command are fast asleep, getting much needed rest for the* ***'day in the life'*** *to follow.*



KAISERSLAUTERN, GERMANY
From Concept to Execution
When a training or exercise event happens most people only see a small part of the amount of preparation it takes in order to successfully conduct that event.

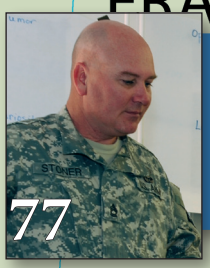
KAISERSLAUTERN, GERMANY
Samoan Fire
Togisala is as light as a feather when he performs as a Polynesian dancer.



KAISERSLAUTERN, GERMANY
Financial Warriors on Your Side
When Soldiers arrive in Europe, they receive many briefings... one of the more important is the finance brief.

KAISERSLAUTERN, GERMANY
Becoming an NCO
For many brand new Soldiers, their first experience with a noncommissioned officer can be a traumatic one.

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, GERMANY
Citizen Soldier Training
For major incidents throughout the European command, the call would go out to the 7th Civil Support Command's Incident Management Team.



MANNHEIM, GERMANY
SFC Stoner: Strength Resilience
Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Stoner not only helps Soldiers build resiliency, but at one point in his 25-year career he also had to ask for help.

STUTTGART, GERMANY
A Force Multiplier
The Military Police Soldiers who call themselves dog handlers are a unique group of individuals.

LEGHORN ARMY DEPOT, ITALY
Relief is on the way
The 3rd Battalion, 405th Army Field Support Brigade is critical to the humanitarian support mission.

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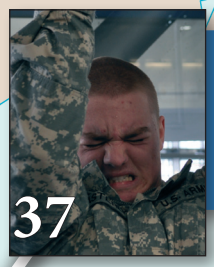
Sea

LATVIA

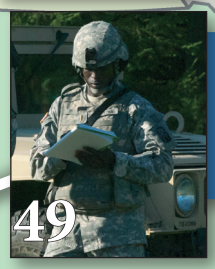


SCHWEINFURT, GERMANY
A Soldier's First Deployment
Behind the operating gears is a new Soldier training to deploy with his unit.

RIGA, LATVIA
A Handshake, a Contract, a Fair Deal Done
All of the hard work the contracting officers do on a daily basis is done to ensure that a customer unit that has a need gets that need fulfilled.

RUSS

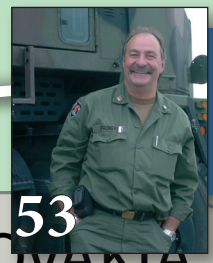
BAMBERG, GERMANY
Daddy, I miss you!
It has often been stated that the toughest job in the Army is being an Army spouse.



WEIDEN-IN-DER-OBERPFALZ, GERMANY
Foundation for Success
Platoon leaders and platoon sergeants maintain a balance between experience and technical expertise.

VILSECK, GERMANY
In German Hands
The facility is still known as the "Tankshop," but it's official name has changed five times since 1948.

POLAND



ON THE ROAD TO GRAFENWOEHR, GERMANY
The Call of the Road
They wear olive drab uniforms, but the definitely not-regulation length of their hair, often coupled with facial hair, reveals their civilian status.

CZECH REP.

UKRAI

SLOVAKIA

HOHENFELS, GERMANY
Seek & Destroy-A Sapper Squad's Story
Soldiers from the 541st Sapper Company interrogate suspected Improvised Explosive Devices.

AUST

GRAFENWOEHR, GERMANY
I Will Never Quit
The phrase "I will never quit" is a very essential part of every Soldier's daily life.

HUNGARY

GRAFENWOEHR, GERMANY
Never Have the Same Day Twice
The 702nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company functions as a highly specialized and diverse ordnance unit.

SLOVENIA

FRANKFURT, GERMANY & VENICE, ITALY
An Army's Welcoming Committee
The reception centers conduct this non-stop operation seven days a week and 365 days a year.

BOS. &

BALAD, IRAQ
Moving the Force
The 14th Transportation Battalion is moving anything and everything in support of a responsible drawdown.

ENROUTE TO BREMERHAVEN, GERMANY
8 Days, 8 Countries—Guarding the Rails
The mission was to protect the train's cargo from Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, to the port in Bremerhaven, Germany.

MONT.

KOSOVO

BULGARIA

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Tanya Thurn tucks in her 3-year-old son as he drifts off to sleep with his custom made doll of his dad, Spc. Joseph Thurn; which helps to comfort him while his dad is in Afghanistan supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. (Photo by Sgt. Frank Sanchez III)

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BAMBERG, GERMANY
0132 HRS

Daddy, I miss you!

By Sgt. Frank Sanchez III

It is **the middle of the night** *and baby Elijah is crying to let his mother know it is time for a late night feeding from inside his crib. Tanya Thurn gets out of bed and walks to the kitchen to get the baby's bottle. She gently picks him up from his bassinette and sits down to rock the baby back to sleep. She carries out this* **labor of love** *knowing she will have to do it all again in couple of hours. She is doing it by herself, for now. It's just another* **'day in the life'**...

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It has often been stated that the toughest job in the Army is being an Army spouse. Tanya lives out this motto everyday as she manages raising her two young children. This mother is handling this mission without her husband who is downrange on his first deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The walls inside the Thurn household are filled with family pictures and hand-made mementos for their daddy and husband, Spc. Joseph Thurn. Thurn, who is assigned to the 630th Military Police Company, 709th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade, based in Bamberg, Germany, is part of the continuing mission of training up the Afghan police force.

The apartment on Warner Barracks is filled with sounds of laughter as her son, Aiden, an energetic 3-year-old who also loves Tae Kwon Do and Spiderman, watches Timmy Turner, one of his favorite cartoons on "The Fairly Odd Parents."

Across the room, there is a 3-month-old bouncing away in his bouncer with a contagious smile named Elijah. He is the newest member of the Thurn household. When Elijah was born it was a happy time, but it also was a strenuous time for the Thurn family as the birth took place only weeks before dad was to deploy to Afghanistan.

"I don't even think I was even in the hospital 24 hours, because I told the doctor 'I need to be home with my family. I've got to make sure my husband gets time with the little ones, and I get time with all of them together,'" said Tanya, knowing time was of the essence.

"Daddy is going on a mission," Tayna told her son Aiden in order to make sense of why his dad is getting on a bus. The reality of the deployment did not truly hit the Thurn family until dad walked up to the bus that was en route to the airport.

"I was so concerned to make sure that Aiden knew daddy is going on a long mission. We were trying to explain that to him," Tanya said, knowing what the deployment would do to her family.

To help alleviate some of the anxieties and hardships, Tanya has taken on a significant role with the 630th MP Co. Family Readiness Group as the FRG treasurer and assists other spouses with everyday issues that arise.

1st Lt. Michael Robey, rear detachment commander for the 630th MP Co., said he believes the biggest challenge he faces is being able to meet the needs of family members especially for the families who are going through their first deployment. Robey said Thurn and the FRGs members who take a head-on approach towards dealing with some of the younger spouses' issues, help make a lasting positive impact on the unit and its mission.

This mother of two takes time out of her day to reach out to help others in the FRG and give helpful advice over the phone to just being someone to lean on when times get tough. Tanya said she believes taking an active role within the FRG is truly beneficial to her family and to others within the 630th MP Co.

"There is something constantly going on. We have a cookie club our FRG leader does every month, and she invites everybody to her house to bake cookies for the Soldiers. We have done events from going to the zoo to throwing a World Cup party," Thurn said about the wide array of activities the FRG puts on to help the spouses and families stay active in the community.

"It is very rewarding. When you actually see spouses and this first deployment, especially the younger spouses, they are not used to it. They are in a foreign country; they might even have small children. The Soldier deploys, and they are

all by themselves. It's all a big shock, but then they find groups. They find friends to rely on and they have Army Community Service," said Robey.

Mom rocks in her chair as she's feeding Elijah, when the phone rings. "Daddy's on the phone," she tells Aiden who is watching one of his favorite cartoons. Thurn calls home to keep some sort of daily routine with a call to check how everyone is doing. The Thurn household stays connected with telephone calls and video chat, making this deployment a little easier to bear.

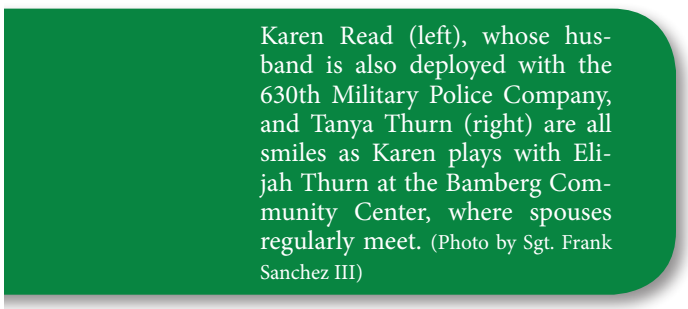
The little things mean a lot for Thurn when he thinks about some of the things he misses most.

"It's kind of weird, but one of the things I miss is every Monday and Tuesday is watching WWE wrestling with my oldest son. I saw it on the TV in the dining facility the other day, and this one of the biggest things I miss about being home right now," said Thurn.

It is Thursday and it is always a special day for mom and the boys. Every Thursday is 'package day' for the three as they head to the Bamberg post office for their weekly ritual in order make sure dad gets something special in the mail. It can be anything from a letter to a care package with goodies, pictures from home, handmade crafts and a few hygiene items due to lack of a post exchange at Thurn's forward operating base.

Mom tells Aiden it's time to play with his best friend Tegan at the Bamberg Community Activity Center. The CAC is a perfect place not only for her family to spend quality time, but it is also a place for anybody on post needing a place to unwind. The CAC offers a wide variety of things to do from a children's reading corner in the library, free use of computers with internet access and even a café serving more than 25 brands of coffee. The Bamberg Morale, Welfare, and Recreation office provides a 'Warrior Zone' for Soldiers to help unwind, which is filled with large flat screen televisions and video game consoles.

Aiden Thurn, three, watches cartoons as his mother, Tanya Thurn, plays with his little brother, Elijah, at their home on Warner Barracks, Bamberg, Germany. (Photo by Sgt. Frank Sanchez III)



Karen Read (left), whose husband is also deployed with the 630th Military Police Company, and Tanya Thurn (right) are all smiles as Karen plays with Elijah Thurn at the Bamberg Community Center, where spouses regularly meet. (Photo by Sgt. Frank Sanchez III)

It is the early afternoon and the Thurn family heads towards the CAC. Aiden is laughing it up with other children in the large indoor playground while Elijah gets a little extra attention from Karen Reed, mommy's best friend. She is also a wife with children of a deployed Soldier from the 630th MP Co. Tanya and Karen share a special comraderie as both go through the same trials and tribulations of managing children while keeping everything running smoothly on the home front with a deployed husband.

This friendship began through a chance meeting at an FRG meeting at the 630th MP Co. The support of another spouse of a deployed Soldier can prove to be an invaluable asset as Karen has become more than just a friend to the Tanya and the Thurn family.

"She is my rock here. She's the one who came when I had to take Elijah to the hospital and she got Aiden at 2 o'clock in the morning. She is just an amazing person," said Tanya about having a friend likeKaren in a time of need.

The day is not over yet as the Thurn and the Reed family move out to the Bamberg bowling center. The Bamberg bowling center offers free bowling on Thursdays and does not even charge for a shoe rental. A free night of bowling is truly appreciated for this mom with two kids as well as all the other families who reside in the Bamberg military community who are doing their best to provide family entertainment while still on a budget.

The Thurn family heads home to in order to wind down for the night and prepare for bedtime. Mom makes sure baths and dinner are out of the way and all is in order as the two little ones prepare to bed down for the night. Life on Warner Barracks grows quiet as the day comes to an end. It's now almost one day closer to daddy coming home.

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As the lonesome hour of 2 a.m. comes, a **Military Police Soldier** *struggles to fight the rocking, rhythmic rumble of the cargo train on which she rides as it tries to lull her to sleep. The job is neither glamorous nor exciting at moments like these, but the Soldier knows it's important to stay awake. Most of her comrades lie sleeping in the passenger car, and important equipment and supplies fill the cargo cars. The task is simple;* **guard the cargo.** *But it's two in the morning, and as the train rolls on through the night, the MP who would much rather be sleeping stands vigilant guard at this lonely hour of a* **'day in the life'** *…*

By Maj. Martyn Crighton
18th MP Bde. Public Affairs

8 DAYS, 8 COUNTRIES —GUARDING THE RAILS

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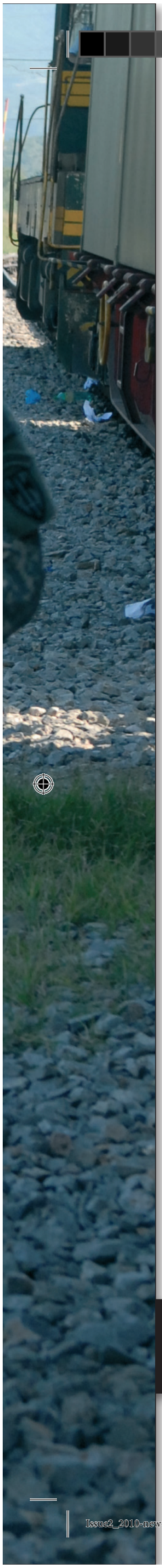

The mission was to protect the train's cargo from Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, to the port in Bremerhaven, Germany, a journey that took eight days, crossed eight countries, and covered more than 3,000 kilometers.

To most in the Army such a mission would be unusual and perhaps even a bit exotic, but not so for the Military Police Soldiers here in Europe. Rail missions such as this are routinely executed by the 18th Military Police Brigade. The U.S. Army in Europe is dispersed not only across Germany, but across the whole of the continent. From these dispersed locations, the Army often participates in partnership training exercises with its NATO allies and supports contingency operations around the world. Although most rarely think about it, the logistics infrastructure needed to support such an active, yet dispersed presence is immense.

In order to move equipment and supplies around Europe in the quantities necessary to meet such a demand, the Army relies on the host nations' rail systems. When the supplies or equipment are classified as sensitive, the MPs are tasked to provide an escort team to guard the train from its point of origin to its destination. On this mission the rail escort team came out of the 529th Military Police Company, 95th Military Police Battalion, 18th MP Bde., and the task was to guard the sensitive equipment of the 141st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, North Dakota National Guard, who had recently completed their Kosovo Force-12 rotation.

The mission began as they so often do in the military, very early in the morning. Sgt. Sabrina Curtis, the rail commander and a native of Rushville, Ill., gathered with her five team members at the company before dawn: Sgt. Kendell Corbie, the assistant rail commander from Fayetteville, N.C., Spc. Anthony Tewksbury from Laceyville, Pennsylvania, Pfc. Dennis Mailman from Keene, N.H., Pfc. Jason Wegleitner from Saint Paul, Minn., Pfc. Archie Boss from Ocala, Fla.

Curtis joined the Army seven years ago. She began her career in the Reserves, but after two years came on active duty. Her first active duty assignment was at Fort Knox, Ky., where she worked as a MP investigator, a job she loved and would like to someday get back to. Curtis is quiet, thoughtful, yet forceful. Whether acquired while working at MPI or an innate part of her personality, they are traits suited to investigators and to a rail commander responsible for getting a train through eight countries in eight days.

Although the flight to Pristina, Kosovo, did not depart until 8 a.m., as a veteran of multiple rail missions, Curtis knew she needed to be at the airport early to ensure all the equipment made it onto the flight. Her experience paid off in spades. Despite all their backwards planning and preparation, it still took the team over an hour to get all their bags and especially their weapons and ammunition processed for the flight. It took another hour to get processed and pay for each of the six team member's excess baggage; weapons, ammunition, outer tactical vest with ballistic plates, and the Army combat helmet are not light.

Given the early start to the day and the nature of the mission, no one on the team expected to do physical training that morning. However, by the time they were ready to go through security the line to get to the X-ray machine, the line of people extended more than 100 meters beyond where the barriers began. By the time the team got through and had their shoes and belts back on, the final boarding call had already been announced, and the gate was at the other end of the terminal. With carry-on luggage slung across their backs, the team ran the two kilometers to the gate. Out of breath and sweaty they boarded their flight.

At Camp Bondsteel the team was met by 1st Lt. Alejandro Guilbe, the transportation officer for the Puerto Rico National Guard and a native of Ponce, Puerto Rico. Guilbe spent the last three years at Fort Bragg, N.C., as a National Guard Soldier on active duty. The experiences he had while at Fort Bragg have been a great resource to him as a transportation officer.

Due to the efforts of Guilbe and Peter Gobee, the Kellogg Brown and Root contractor who works as the team chief for the Movement Control Team, the process of getting the escort team to the train, loading the train and signing it over to Curtis went very smoothly. Gobee, a native of Redondo Beach, Calif., is married to a Macedonian and lives with his wife and their two children in Skopje, Macedonia. As a member of the MCT at Camp Bondsteel for the past seven and a half years, he has seen many KFOR rotations; this train was just a part of that regular rotation of Soldiers and equipment.

According to Gobee, the train Curtis and her team were guarding was too long to be absorbed by another train and thus would have to have its own engine for the entire trip. Since the route passed through eight countries at least eight engines would be used to pull the train to its final destination at the port in Bremerhaven, Germany. Gobee explained that the Army paid each country to provide engine services through its territory, and that charges for journeys from Kosovo to Bremerhaven can exceed $100,000.

The guard car the team occupied

Pfc. Dennis Mailman from Keene, N.H., a member of the train escort team assigned to guard the train as it travels from Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, to the port at Bremerhaven, Germany, stands guard while the train is stopped in Kosovo. (Photo by Maj. Martyn Crighton, 18th MP Bde. Public Affairs)

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was comfortably fitted out to accommodate long missions like this one. On one end there were four berthing compartments with bunks for two people in each. The berths were separated by two showers; two rooms with a shared shower between them. In the middle there was a common area with a desk and a table that had six chairs around it. This became the living room of the train.

Once the cargo was loaded, serial numbers had been verified, and everything had been blocked and tackled, Curtis took her team on a tour of the train and explained the dangers of the mission and pointed out where the most sensitive cargo was stowed on the train. Curtis told the team that in the course of the trip the train would often pull off on a siding or into a rail yard and sit for hours. During those times the team would have to dismount and guard the train.

"Be careful," she said, "and stay close to our train; you'll be surprised how close passing trains come by us while we're waiting and they aren't going to stop to let you get out of the way."

At 3p.m. a Kosovo engine arrived and hooked up to the train and by 3:30 p.m. the train was sitting at the Kosovo/Macedonian border. However, at 8p.m. the train ground to a halt on a narrow siding in Skopje, Macedonia, and by the time the team had dismounted the engine had already unhooked and was disappearing down the track. This cycle was to be repeated numerous times. An engine would hook up, pull for a while then stop, and without so much as a goodbye the engineer would move on to his next assignment while the team and the train were left to wait for the next engine. Sometimes that wait would last 12 hours, but in the end an engine always showed up and with an equal lack of fanfare would pull the train its given distance down the track.

It took two days to get from Camp Bondsteel to the Greek border; a distance of less than 300 km. Many hours were spent sitting in rail yards waiting on an engine and on small rail sidings waiting for trains with a higher priority to pass. However, the team did get some help guarding the train while they were in Macedonia. From Skopje to the Greek border there were Macedonian MPs who accompanied the train. They helped pull security while the train was stopped. The stops the train made were often late at night, so Curtis and Corbie split the team into a day and night shift. Corbie took Boss and Wegleitner for the day shift, and Curtis took Tewksbury and Mailman on nights.

Corbie, a young sergeant, has known the Army all his life. His father is the command sergeant major of the 50th Signal Battalion, at Fort Bragg, N.C., and Corbie followed in the family tradition and joined up after high school. He has enjoyed his experiences as an MP Soldier.

"The Army has been good for me. It's helped me get on track," He said.

Corbie and Curtis both repeatedly demonstrated why the noncommissioned officer is considered the backbone of the Army. For eight days they were responsible for not only guarding a train of sensitive cargo, but of making sure that the train remained on schedule and smoothly crossed all eight international borders. Repeatedly, both these NCOs showed initiative and with minimal guidance made sound decisions that ensured both the escort team and the train successfully reached Bremerhaven.

Escorting a train on such a long trip across Europe is a unique experience. By train, one's impressions of a place are strictly visual. Impressions are formed from the architecture of the buildings, and the geography of the countryside; by the agricultural technology you see employed in the fields, the prevalence or the lack of vehicles on the roads, all without the personal perspective that comes through interacting with the local people. This unusual perspective made the Macedonian/Greek border crossing the most dramatic of the trip because the cultural demarcation is so visually evident. In Kosovo and Macedonia, the cities and towns were dominated by mosques not churches; a gleaming dome and minarets instead of flying buttress-

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es and steeples. Once in Greece the minarets were replaced by the large round domes and crosses of the Greek Orthodox Church, and the comparative affluence of a Euro Zone country.

The trip across Greece was not long, but it was a memorable few hours. For the transit across the country, the team had a train official on board. Castos spoke very little English, but was most generous. Just outside of Thessaloniki, the train stopped on a siding right next to a small restaurant. Castos insisted that everyone join him and the two train engineers for some dinner.

For Wegleitner it was the highlight of the trip. Wegleitner, or "Wiggy," is a native of Saint Paul, Minnesota, and is really into food. He enjoys food so much that after high school he earned a culinary arts degree and worked for two years as a sous-chef for a catering company before joining the Army.

When asked why he left a culinary career he so enjoyed he said, "as a kid I always played the Army guy. My dad did 20 years in the Army Reserves. I always knew it was something I wanted to do, and I knew if I didn't do it I would regret it later in life, so one day I signed up."

He thought he would be in the Infantry, but found that he was blue/green color blind and had to choose another job specialty.

"I was told MP was close to the Infantry so I chose that, " he said.

Sitting at that Greek restaurant sipping Greek coffee, eating kebabs, fresh Greek salad, olives and feta cheese drizzled with olive oil, Wiggy may have been a long way from a caterer's kitchen in Saint Paul, but he was right at home.

As it turned out, the meal in Greece was the only one the team was able to have off the train. For the rest of the trip it was Meals Ready to Eat supplemented by what the team was able to purchase at the Post Exchange at Camp Bondsteel. The train made many more stops, but always in rail yards or on sidings too far away from a town or village to allow team members to go foraging for food.

Through the mountains of eastern Bulgaria with their dramatic white cliffs, the vast fields of sunflowers of Rumania and Hungary that sometimes reached as far as the eye could see, the train steadily chugged its way towards the port.

When the train finally made it to Bremerhaven, everyone was looking forward to a good meal and getting back home. For Mailman it had been his first rail mission and his first experience in Europe outside Germany.

"It was a great trip," he said, but admitted he was looking forward to getting back to the road conducting community law enforcement. Ever since he was a kid living in Keene he has wanted to be a cop, he added.

"In our neighborhood there were always cops around trying to help people and ever since then I've wanted to do that," Mailman said.

Eventually he said he would like to return home to New Hampshire and get a job with the state police, but not before taking advantage of opportunities like riding a train across Europe.

"I haven't done much traveling since I got here, but really want to. This trip I got to see parts of Europe I never would have gone to and that's pretty cool," he said.

When most people think of the MPs, they think of Soldiers driving around in patrol vehicles stopping speeders and issuing travel citations. Keeping military communities safe here in Europe is a certainly an important and fundamental responsibility of the MPs, but it is not the only one. Behind the scenes MPs perform critical missions like escorting sensitive cargo by rail that help keep the U.S. Army in Europe trained and ready for whatever mission is required of it.

Pfc. Jason Wegleitner of Saint Paul, Minn., Spc. Anthony Tewksbury of Laceyville, Pa. and Pfc. Archie Boss from Ocala, Fla., inspect the train they are escorting at the Macedonian/Greek border. All three are part of the team responsible for escorting the sensitive cargo of the 141st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, North Dakota National Guard from Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, to the port at Bremerhaven, Germany. (Photo by Maj. Martyn Crighton, 18th MP Bde. Public Affairs)

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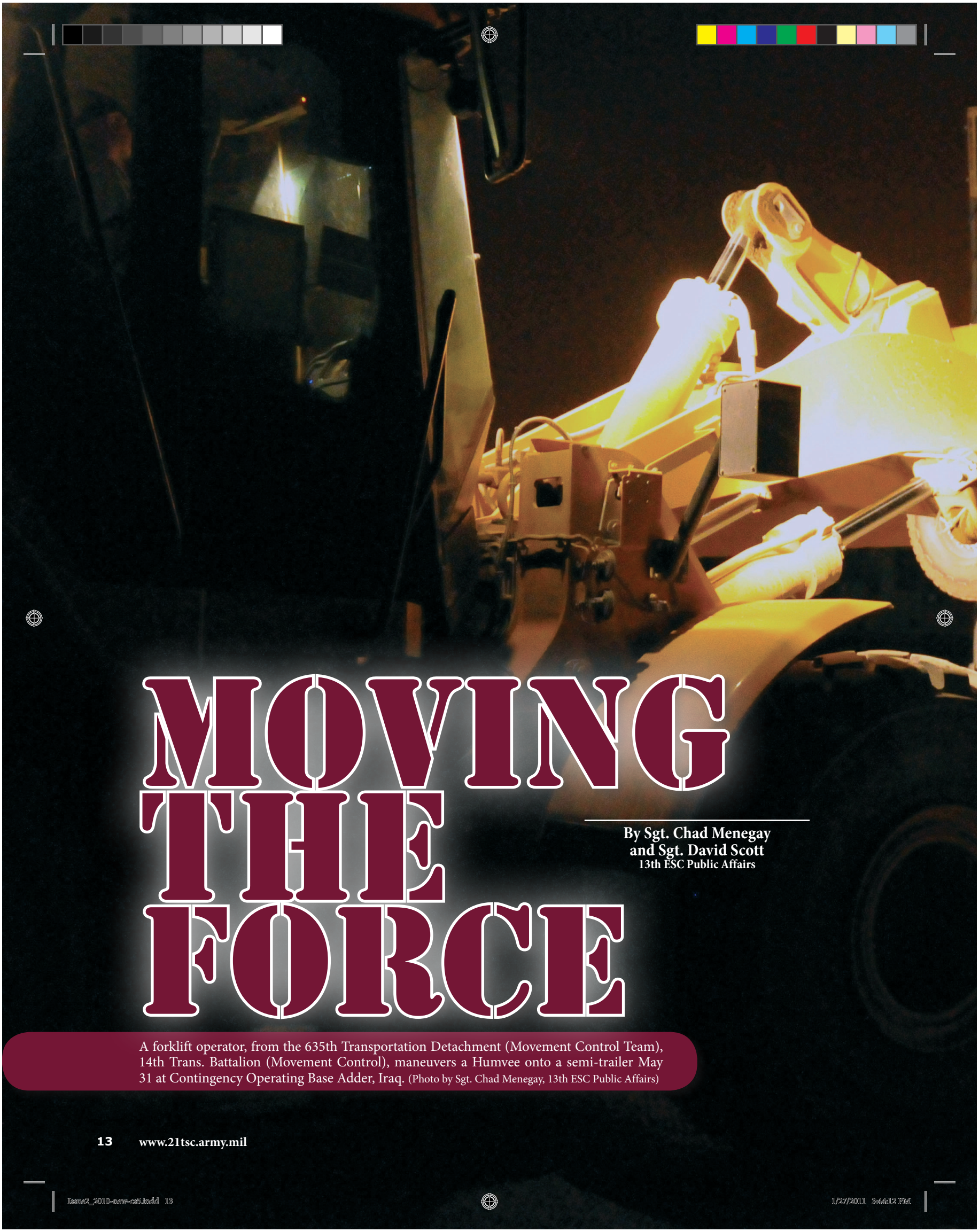

MOVING THE FORCE

By Sgt. Chad Menegay
and Sgt. David Scott
13th ESC Public Affairs

A forklift operator, from the 635th Transportation Detachment (Movement Control Team), 14th Trans. Battalion (Movement Control), maneuvers a Humvee onto a semi-trailer May 31 at Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Chad Menegay, 13th ESC Public Affairs)

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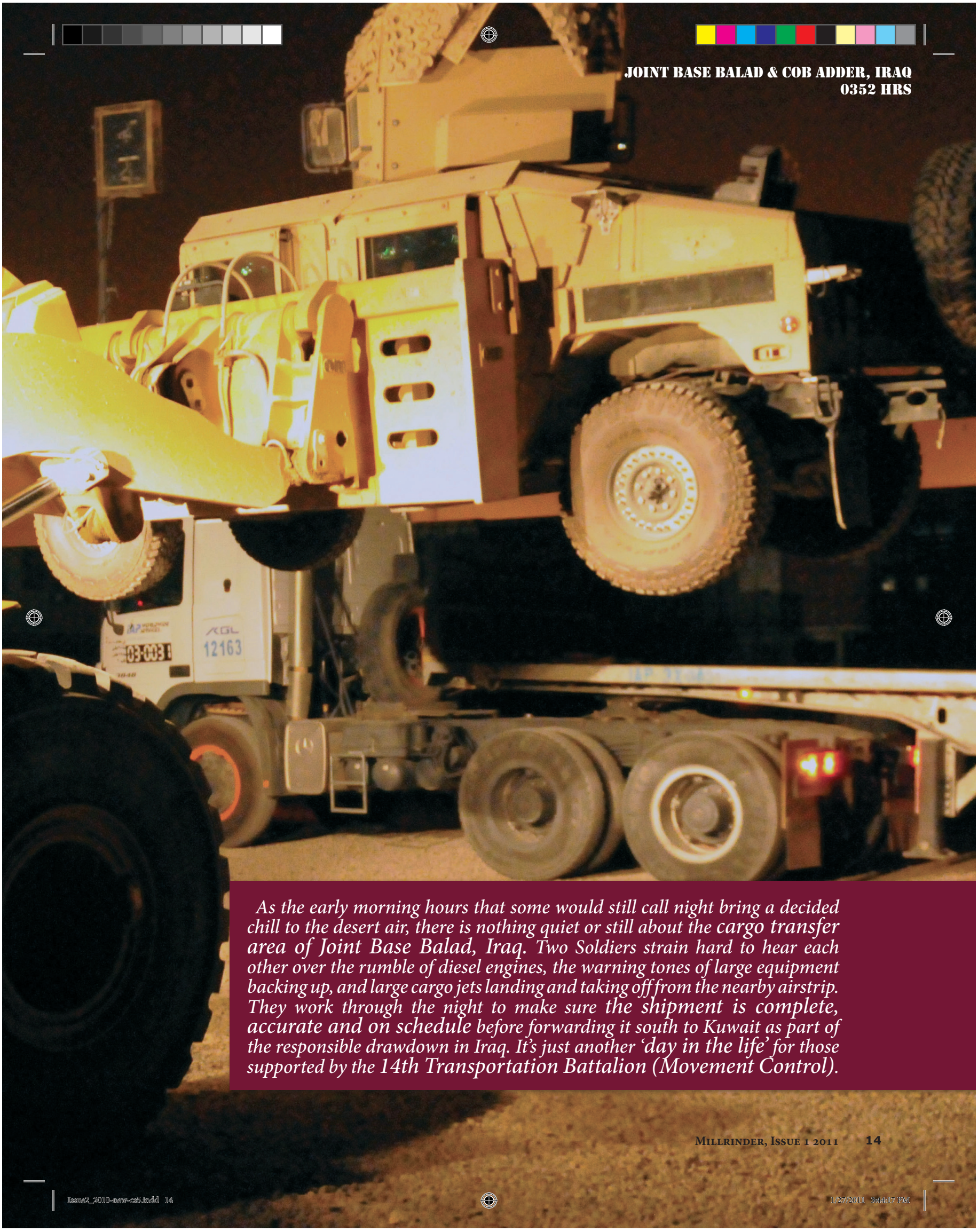

JOINT BASE BALAD & COB ADDER, IRAQ
0352 HRS

As the early morning hours that some would still call night bring a decided chill to the desert air, there is nothing quiet or still about the cargo transfer area of Joint Base Balad, Iraq. Two Soldiers strain hard to hear each other over the rumble of diesel engines, the warning tones of large equipment backing up, and large cargo jets landing and taking off from the nearby airstrip. They work through the night to make sure the shipment is complete, accurate and on schedule before forwarding it south to Kuwait as part of the responsible drawdown in Iraq. It's just another 'day in the life' for those supported by the 14th Transportation Battalion (Movement Control).

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The real payoff for the 14th Transportation Battalion (Movement Control) Soldiers' long hours and meticulous attention to detail will be that no one on the receiving end really knows they existed, because everything arrived intact and on time, just as expected. They are currently deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, with the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary).

Moving anything and everything in support of a responsible drawdown

As the 21st Theater Sustainment Command's 14th Trans. Bn., located on Joint Base Balad, manages the removal of millions of pieces of equipment from Iraq in support of responsible drawdown of U.S. troops and equipment from Iraq, its 14 movement control teams work 24 hours per day, seven days per week to track the cargo.

Lt. Col. James Rupkalvis, commander of the 14th Trans. Bn. and a Mitchell, Neb., native, said this is perhaps one of the largest movement of troops and equipment executed in such a short time period in military history.

To add to the battalion's challenge, increasingly fewer troops are available to carry it out.

The 14th Trans. Bn. will go from 14 MCTs to nine, but its concentration on the withdrawal of equipment and Soldiers won't change - and its workload won't decrease, said Command Sgt. Maj. Jason Runnels, command sergeant major of the 14th Trans. Bn. and a Baton Rouge, La., native.

"We've got to move all this equipment that's built up after eight years of war in a short amount of time," Runnels said. "We only have a few months left until we have to be down to 50,000 troops. With all those troops, trucks, containerized housing units, containers and all those things we've dragged into country with us, we've got to push that back out, get it back into the Army inventory and back into units for future operations."

Soldiers working in the 14th Trans. Bn. headquarters gather requirements through the process of transportation movement releases for the movement of equipment and request assets from the sustainment brigades.

"We maximize each piece as we go," Runnels said, "getting the right piece of equipment with the right cargo, with the right customer, at the right time."

Soldiers at headquarters then coordinate with their respective MCTs in an effort to optimize efficiency.

"They support us with anything that we need down here at [Contingency Operating Base] Adder to complete our mission," said Capt. Tasherra Marshall, commander of the 635th Transportation Detachment [Movement Control Team], and a Tacoma, Wash., native. "They provide in-transit visibility of convoys' cargo equipment moving throughout Kuwait and Iraq. They provide movement trackers and movement plans. They build convoys, allocate assets and provide command and control."

Rupkalvis referred to COB Adder as the lynchpin hub for moving equipment and troops out of Iraq.

About 75 percent of departing Soldiers and equipment are expected to move through COB Adder, as troops and equipment are pushed south into Kuwait, he said.

Camp Cedar closed recently, and its convoy support responsibilities were transferred to COB Adder. Marshall said the 14th Trans. Bn.'s 622nd MCT closed Camp Cedar.

The consolidation of bases will continue as Convoy Support Center Scania is expected to close next month and its operations transfer to COB Kalsu.

"Scania has been a truck stop for years," Runnels said. "It was established early on in the war as a stopping point for pushing farther north. Most Soldiers were there for less than 24 hours before they moved to another location."

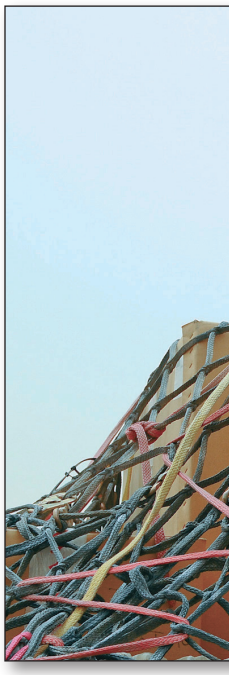
Runnels called the consolidation efforts significant events.

Leaders with the 14th Trans. Bn. recently travelled to COB Adder, CSC Scania and COB Kalsu "to make sure that the [movement control] teams were prepared and executing a solid system for receiving cargo, both theater and corps cargo and sustainment supplies," he said.

"The volume has definitely increased," Marshall said, "but there's enough space here to receive, stage and move cargo."

Marshall said units depend on the 21-person MCTs to track their cargo.

"We have a specific job to keep a firm grip and a good eye on where their equipment is at all times," she said.



It's a good day when the Movement Control Team goes unnoticed

A busy night of verifying containers and tracking personnel movements is routine at Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq. If all of the personnel and cargo make it to their intended destinations, the unit responsible for making it happen will retain its anonymity for yet another day.

Working throughout the day and well into the night at COB Adder, the 635th MCT, 14th Trans. Bn., 13th ESC is responsible for expediting, coordinating and monitoring cargo and passenger traffic moving through the transportation network in southern Iraq.

Teams like the 635th MCT are located near centralized, transportation hubs or in remote locations. The 635th MCT's most recent deployment began in April and represents the unit's fourth OIF deployment — serving initially in OIF I and on through the shift to Operation New Dawn.

The unit began preparation for its

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Pfc. Kyle Lemanski, a transportation management coordinator with the 635th Movement Control Team, 14th MCB, and a Maryville, Tenn., native, finishes an inspection of a cargo pallet manifest at Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq, May 25. The 635th MCT organizes and synchronizes the movement of personnel and equipment out of Iraq as part of the responsible drawdown of U.S. forces. (Photo by Sgt. David Scott, 13th ESC Public Affairs)

deployment to Iraq in Germany last year, practicing common Soldiering tasks in addition to tasks specific to the transportation corps.

"No matter where you go, you have to train on those skills to make sure that you are efficient and technically and tactically proficient," said 1st Lt. William Burke, a battle captain with the 635th MCT and a Corvallis, Mont., native.

Each one of the enlisted Soldiers with the 635th MCT is a transportation management coordinator. These logisticians organize and synchronize the movement of vehicles, personnel and cargo. They are also responsible for scheduling and selecting the appropriate modes of transportation for personnel and equipment, he said.

The latter determination is made by examining what transportation assets are available, most commonly resulting in ground movement, Burke said.

"It [the shipment] will go ground, unless there is an extreme need to have it go air," he said. "Because there are so many ground assets, it's easier to push things down there and haul more assets."

In order to meet the mission requirements of both surface and air demands out of COB Adder, the 635th MCT is divided into both a transportation movement section and an air movement section. The unit is further divided into both day and night shifts, providing a complete continuity of service to units in southern Iraq.

Burke, a graduate of the United States Military Academy and the U.S. Army Ranger School, said the most rewarding part of his job is how success in his mission is measured.

"There is a quantitative measurement of what you do," he said. "You can actually look back and say 'Hey, I moved 5 million pieces of equipment in a year. I moved x number of trucks.' You can see where your coordination actually influenced the entire mission. You can see what actually happened."

Pfc. Kyle Lemanski, a transportation management coordinator with the 635th MCT and a Maryville, Tenn., native said the first two months of the unit's deployment have been hectic.

"It's been pretty busy," he said. "With the [upcoming] responsible drawdown, it will get busier. I am looking forward to this."

Lemanski said the 635th MCT is actively engaged in the transition and redeployment of equipment out of theater.

"We're taking all of the equipment from Joint Base Balad and everywhere in southern Iraq and sending it to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait," he said. "From there it is going back to the States along with personnel, or it is going to Afghanistan."

Lemanski said his first deployment has proven to be a learning experience despite his efforts to learn about Iraqi culture and climate before deploying.

Even though he researched Iraq, he still wasn't quite sure what to expect. The whole experience has been surprising, taking part in this phase of OIF, he said.

Despite the importance of the unit to the transportation functions at COB Adder, the 635th MCT works in relative obscurity at COB Adder, Burke said.

"One of the most overlooked parts of the whole process is the MCT," he said. "No one really knows that much about us because we are spread out and in such remote locations. When there is a problem, however, everyone knows about us."

Capt. Tasherra Marshall, commander of the 635th MCT, and a Tacoma, Wash., native, said despite the relative lack of public recognition for her unit's deeds, she finds satisfaction in seeing cargo and personnel successfully arriving at their anticipated destinations.

"The biggest thrill is when movement goes right and you see everyone has everything they need, from food to shelter," she said. "Without transportation, none of it can happen."

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BECOMING AN NCO

By Sgt. Fay Conroy

For many brand new Soldiers their first experience with a noncommissioned officer can be a traumatic one. One minute they are relaxing at home, and the next minute they are staring into the cold, hard eyes of a person wearing a park ranger like hat. The drill sergeant is the first NCO to train and guide Soldiers in that transition period from civilians to Soldiers, but they are not the last NCO they will have contact with on their path to becoming an NCO themselves.

With an Army at war on two fronts for over seven years, noncommissioned officers are an essential part of the Army. Responsible for training, mentoring and carrying out the orders of the officers above them, they are the caretakers of the future of America's fighting force.

Before any Soldiers arrive at first formation, NCOs are already hard at work. The platoon sergeants are already comparing notes with the first sergeant on upcoming events for the day. At first formation they are responsible for accounting for every Soldier who should be in formation and they provide instructions for the physical training to be conducted for that morning.

"It's always on the go. It's very challenging and demanding," said Staff Sgt. Weldy Villalobos, a platoon sergeant with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 21st Special Troops Battalion, who has 325 Soldiers and officers in his platoon. "I couldn't do it without support from every section noncommissioned officer in charge and every NCO in the platoon, to include several officers in the platoon as well."

Challenging and demanding are two words that describe the role a noncommissioned officer is expected to fulfill, and it has always been that way from the beginning.

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It's just past four in the morning, and already the alarm is blaring its urgent call to start the day. **A young Soldier** *rises and shakes the dust of sleep off of his shoulders and trudges out the door after quickly dressing for Physical Training.* **Long before the day begins** *for most with a morning formation, this Soldier has to meet early with platoon sergeants and other noncommissioned officers because this soldier is no longer just a Soldier, but* **an NCO, a leader of Soldiers**, *part of the backbone of the Army. And for the backbone of the Army in the 21st Theater Sustainment Command,* **'a day in the life'** *starts early indeed.*

Good NCOs have the ability to adapt to the environment around them and set the example for their Soldiers, as well as safeguard the welfare of their Soldiers.

In order to lead and train Soldiers, NCOs have had to adapt to the continually changing environment that surrounds them, whether it is introducing new technology to the fight, new tactics or new uniforms.

"We live in an environment right now where there is a lot of moving parts. Especially over the last decade, it's a lot to ask of our young NCOs. The environment in which we operate has changed and we have to adapt to it and we are adapting to it," said Command Sgt. Maj. James Spencer, the command sergeant major of 21st Theater Sustainment Command. "What makes a NCO a good NCO isn't the way they look or how fast they run, it's the NCO with the ability to be competent in multiple areas in an ever-changing environment."

NCOs have to set the example for their Soldiers before they expect their Soldiers to follow them. Without an example to follow, Soldiers will not have the guidance they need.

A good NCO is leading from the front. How could I tell my Soldiers 'you're going to do this task' if I can't show them how to do the task, am not willing to do the same task or have never done that task, said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Parrish, a truck master with 66th Transportation Company, 39th Transportation Battalion.

Spc. Caryn McDonald-Gregory, a human resources specialist with 1st Human Resources Sustainment Center, sits before a promotion board consisting of senior level noncommissioned officers within the Special Troops Battalion, 21st Theater Sustainment Command, Aug. 4. (Photo by Sgt. Frank Sanchez III)

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"In order to lead you have to know how to follow. Following does not necessarily mean that you're not in a leadership role. It means that you're following the rules and regulations that make our Army what it is, which is a disciplined force and a professional organization," said Spencer. Uphold the standard yourself then you can and will be able to get someone to live by those same rules and regulations.

By being an example and following the standards, NCOs can guide Soldiers through mentoring and knowing their Soldiers.

"They find out what makes that Soldier tick. They are not just concerned with how I can work that Soldier, but they really get to know their families and their children if they have any. That's the total Soldier," said 1st Sgt. Kermit Joseph, the first sergeant of 66th Transportation Co., 39th Transportation Bn. "I think that a good noncommissioned officer who is an engaged noncommissioned officer can always get anything out of their Soldiers if they get to know them."

The mentoring aspect of being an NCO comes in once an NCO takes the time to get to know their Soldiers. Mentoring is one of the ways an NCO can inspire their Soldiers in their everyday lives and is also a way for Soldiers to learn how to be NCOs themselves.

Even Spencer, the senior noncommissioned officer in 21st TSC remembers his first mentor.

"Obviously everyone has their own person or persons who they remember, and I have several, but I will tell you that the person I remember the most is my first platoon sergeant," he said. "I still remember him and what he did every day. Consistency, predictability – he walked the walk that he talked. Bottom line up front, at some point you get to where you say to yourself, 'I cannot fail that leader because he's not failing me.'"

If NCOs are not mentoring Soldiers then they are not fulfilling part of their jobs as NCOs, said Staff Sgt. James Wade, a platoon sergeant with 66th Transportation Co., 39th Transportation Bn.

"A noncommissioned officer shares his or her knowledge with the Soldiers because that noncommissioned officer is not doing it by his or herself," he said. "If you are not mentoring those Soldiers then what are you doing?"

For Soldiers, the road to becoming an NCO can be a hard one. In order to achieve the rank of sergeant, Soldiers have to demonstrate to their leaders that they are competent enough to handle the duties of the rank.

"Some specialists come out there and they're real go getters; that's what you call someone who is ready to accept a challenge above and beyond," said Sgt. Beau Minor, the operations NCO for the 66th Transportation Co., 39th Transportation Bn. "A specialist will step up and help the NCO out and make the NCO's job a little easier."

One way Soldiers can show they are willing to take on extra responsibility is to attend the Warrior Leader Course.

WLC has recently been revamped from a 30-day course to 17 days to accommodate the changing environment of a continually deploying Army.

"With our current operational tempo, that was the major driving force for the reduction of the program. We had so many Soldiers who weren't able to go to the course because they were deployed and then coming back and maximizing the time they did have during the reset portion for a post deployment," said Spencer.

Because of the shortening of the course, the curriculum for the course has changed as well. Classes like land navigation have been dropped from the course while

Sgt. 1st Class Delvico Graham, a platoon sergeant with the STB, 21st TSC, gives instructions on how to follow the land navigation course at Landstuhl, Germany, Jan. 29. (Photo by Sgt. Frank Sanchez III)

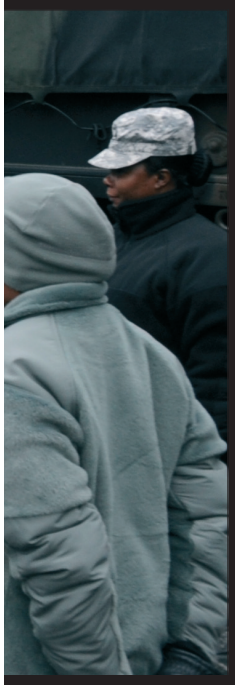
Sgt. Darell Eastern, the Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical noncommissioned officer in charge for the STB, 21st TSC, helps a Soldier properly fit his protective mask during sergeants' time training Jan. 29, Kleber Kaserne, Germany. (Photo by Sgt. Frank Sanchez III)

classes on effective Army writing are emphasized.

"Historically in the 30-day [class] there were events that were part of the warrior tasks and drills. They are a common part of those, and it was sort of a revalidation of those, so we replaced those with other things like effective Army writing, which is a pretty big part of that. We've done that, tweaked that a little bit and reduced the number of days that a Soldier has to be away from the organization," said Spencer.

Going to WLC is a way for Soldiers who are going to become NCOs to show their Soldiers that they are capable of performing their duties as NCOs, said Spc. Alan Graziano, a Soldier with Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 95th Military Police Bn. who attended WLC, Aug. 3.

"I would like it to improve my self-confidence as well as the confidence of my Soldiers so that there will be no question in anyone's mind of whether I can perform all my duties to perfection," he said.



In order to attend the promotion board, Soldiers have to have a valid physical fitness test, comply with the Army weight standards, and be qualified on their assigned weapon. The board members usually consist of senior NCOs in the rank of sergeant first class, master sergeant, or first sergeant. The board president is usually the battalion command sergeant major, the senior NCO in the battalion. Soldiers are judged on their appearance, their military bearing, the monthly counseling statements they have received from their NCOs, their knowledge on various military subjects such as drill and ceremony and first aid, and their ability to multi-task.

In HHC, 21st STB, the board requires attendees to disassemble and reassemble an M16 rifle, a squad automatic weapon, and an M9 pistol. All of these things are used to test how well a Soldier is prepared to become an NCO and is also a reflection on their NCO.

"At that particular point the training is validated then you can see how much effort the platoon sergeants and squad leaders put into those Soldiers, training those Soldiers on their warrior tasks, how well they took their time to show the Soldier how to multi-task, doing different weapon systems while at the same time answering general questions. Then I know at that particular point that I have a developed Soldier, and it just validates that training," said Joseph.

For Reservists, their commitment of one weekend a month, two weeks a year can present an extra challenge for the NCOs.

"These guys come in one weekend a month, so you only have two days to show them what it's like to be a Soldier if they haven't already been on active duty," said Staff Sgt. Michael Kelsen, the supply noncommissioned officer in charge and squad leader with HHC, 7th Civil Support Command.

The board process is different for Reservists. Instead of attending a board in person, they are required to send in a packet which is reviewed by a senior panel.

"On the reserve side we don't go to a physical board. I'm a firm believer that you need that," said Kelsen who requires his Soldiers to attend a mock board. "I don't like to sign off on anything or recommend them if they can't prove themselves because you have to uphold the standard."

That standard has been in effect since the NCO Corps began in 1775 with the birth of the Continental Army.

"The choice of noncommissioned officers is an object of greatest importance. The order and discipline of a Regiment depends so much upon their behavior that too much care cannot be taken in preferring none to that trust but those who by their merit and good conduct are entitled to it. Honesty, Sobriety, and a remarkable attention to every point of duty, with a neatness in their dress are indispensable requisites. A spirit to command respect and obedience from the men, to teach it, are also absolutely necessary." Written by Baron Von Steuben in his Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States, the requirements for an NCO remain very much the same. While the tactics, uniforms, and training may have changed, the responsibilities and duties of an NCO have remained the same- taking care of Soldiers, training them, and guiding them.

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Members of the 7th Civil Support Command's Incident Management Team set flooring for their operations tent at Coleman Army Airfield, Mannheim, for the Bavarian Lightning exercise, July 27th. IMTs help manage incidents and return affected country's back to a normal status. (Photo by Spc. Glenn M. Anderson, 7th CSC Public Affairs)

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RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, GERMANY
0525 HRS

Citizen Soldier Training

By Staff Sgt. John Gribble
and Spc. Glenn M. Anderson
7th CSC Public Affairs

In the pre-dawn dark, the airfield is actually awash with lights and four unlikely comrades work together loading duffle bags onto a pallet that will shortly be loaded onto the aircraft they will themselves be riding on. Just hours before one was a full-time Reservist, one was a limousine driver in Frankfurt, one was a producer for a German television station, and one was a civilian employee of the organization for which he now wears a uniform. As Reserve Soldiers for a unit standing up to provide a capability present nowhere else in the us armed forces, these four must remain flexible because there's just no such thing as a typical 'day in the life' of the citizen-Soldiers of the 7th Civil Support Command.

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Unlike television shows where a disaster breaks out and the plot is known within two hours, real world situations require more planning and contingency strategies. For major incidents throughout the European command, the call would go out to the 7th Civil Support Command's Incident Management Team.

Rapid Deployment

Lessons learned from Bavarian Lightning, a deployment exercise held July 26-29, it is exactly what would be needed to deploy and help a country in need. The exercise placed the IMT in a country after a simulated chemical disaster had occurred, resulting in several thousand casualties. The IMT was there to help with managing the incident and return the affected country to a normal status.

This was the first movement exercise for the young unit since the command was activated in September 2009.

"Bavarian Lightning is a learning experience to find out what you can do right," said James Otto, the Deputy training/plans officer for the 7th CSC. "This exercise helps us move one step closer and be more proficient in our skills in how to help other countries."

A Super Hercules aircraft was used to make the scenario more realistic. Members of the Advanced Echelon from the IMT flew to Coleman Army Airfield in Mannheim with vehicles and equipment for the exercise.

For the first time the headquarters has been able to alert, marshal and deploy with aircraft loading and moving to a location. It went very well, Otto said.

The main body followed 24 hours later in a bus and immediately after arrival both the main body and ADVON started setting up flooring, tents and equipment.

The 7th CSC was not alone in Mannheim. Members of the Army Management Staff College, Ft. Belvoir, Va. were on hand to evaluate and assist in the exercise which took place over the next 72 hours.

Richard Vasquez, an observer controller military analyst for Army Management Staff College spent three days evaluating the 7th CSC.

"The 7th Civil Support Command has been conducting exercises based on designs that we have put together to challenge them and to create situations that they have to respond to," said Vasquez. "I have no doubt that when the 7th Civil Support Command is deployed that they will respond in a professional manner and that they will meet the expectations of their senior command."

"The 7th CSC learned a great deal from this exercise and I believe they will apply that to the challenges they will and could face in the future," he said.

Along with the Army Management Staff College were members of the 1st Brigade, 75th Division from Texas were also on hand to evaluate the movements of the young IMT.

"I think the 7th CSC is making steps every day," said Col. Jeff Raglan, an observer and trainer with 1st Bde, 75th Division, an Army Reserve unit out of Ellington Field, Texas. "They seem to be growing and gaining and learning the lessons they need to learn and this is a very good rehearsal as the 7th goes into Guardian Shield."

After the exercise ended and after several meetings, planning sessions and conferences, the 7th CSC members packed their bags, rolled up the tents and gear, boarded transportation and headed back to Kaiserslautern, where this amazing event started only a few days earlier.

Consequence Management

A chemical plant in a foreign country accidently releases a plume of toxic fumes causing panic, sickness and numerous deaths within the city where the plant is located. Adding to all the chaos, the weather

makes the situation worse for the citizens who live in the area of direct impact. A call comes from the foreign country for U.S. assistance. Who will go?

Guardian Shield 10, a yearly exercise designed to train the 7th Civil Support Command in conducting consequence management operations in response to a crisis, was conducted Aug 17-20 here at Rhine Ordnance Barracks.

The 7th CSC was alerted and marshaled to Plock, Poland in the scenario. Guardian Shield 10 is one in a series of exercises to help the 7th CSC train for its mission in consequence management and civil affairs.

A relatively new unit having been activated in Sept. 2009, the 7th CSC is unique as it is the only consequence management and civil affairs Reserve unit in Europe. Their sole purpose is to respond to incidents and provide immediate assistance so the affected people or country can return back to normality.

The 7th CSC provides trained and ready, forward-stationed consequence management command and control, civil support teams, and civil affairs capabilities. They also provide immediate response capability as directed by United States Army Europe.

"The focus of this one was to conduct command and control," said Capt. Major Robinson, a 7th CSC training officer and the night shift battle captain for this exercise.

"It is almost like night and day in how much better we were this time around."

What I see is the 7th CSC moving into a real world direction, and

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Soldiers from the IMT's Advanced Echelon load pallets for the airlift. They later convoyed to the exercise to establish communications, set up a command post and assess the situation. (Photo by Spc. Glenn M. Anderson, 7th CSC Public Affairs)

it won't be long before we are ready to handle it. "We are headed in the right direction," Robinson added.

Mark Terry, a consequence management defense contractor supporting the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and a GS10 exercise planner / observer controller and After Action Review facilitator, said "The 7th has its own challenges, because of personnel rotations. The beauty of the 7th CSC is that there is a strong desire to do well and to learn and if you have that, you are golden."

These exercises are conducted so that the strengths and weaknesses can be pinpointed and built upon. And as long as there are dedicated people conducting the exercise, the unit will have a really good grasp on how things are done, said Terry.

He then added that from top to bottom, the 7th CSC has a great team that wants to work toward an attainable goal. And of course the DTRA is here to help with the foreign consequence management training.

"GS10 provided some of the most realistic training for the 7th CSC with members of the Polish fire services, the Polish police force, U.S. Air Force and Navy, to give the exercise the feel of a real world event," said James Otto, 7th CSC director of emergency services.

Mother Nature brings fires, tsunamis and earthquakes to different parts of the World. Disaster strikes through accidental chemical releases or explosions. The 7th CSC continuously trains and prepares to respond if called upon.

Just About Anything Else

In a training scenario, U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command officials announced they were working with Air Force investigators to review evidence related to an individual who had obtained castor beans with the intent of producing ricin, a poison found naturally in castor beans.

Raids on the quarters of the associates in the terrorist plot exposed detailed instructions for making the poison and directions to the makeshift lab.

This training scenario played out on a cold, cloudy morning, Sept. 16 as the 773rd Civil Support Team, 7th Civil Support Command arrived on scene at the hidden, yet notional, laboratory on Rhine Ordnance Barracks here.

The 773rd CST performed lane training conducted by U.S. Army North's Civil Support Training Activity. The pre-evaluation training event was held Sept. 16-21 to help prepare them for success in their upcoming certification.

"It's proving to be a great opportunity to really challenge our skill sets so we can refine our response practices," said Sgt. 1st Class Jay Drucas, the operations and training noncommissioned officer for the 773rd CST. "This is an excellent way to better prepare the unit for the unique challenges these missions present."

This exercise today is intended to help the 773rd CST to become certified through rigorous testing, said John D. Nonemaker, the lead observer and controller for U.S. Army North at the lane training.

"U.S. Army North is here specifically to help the 773rd CST streamline their individual and section tasks into a cohesive unit response in the event of a chemical, biological, radiological and/or nuclear incident," said Lt. Col. Timothy Pelfrey, the commander of the 773rd CST.

U.S. Army North, as the Joint Force Land Component Command and the Army Service Component Command to U.S. Northern Command, conducts homeland defense, civil support operations and theater security cooperation activities in order to protect the American people.

When the team arrived at a deserted building next to an old ammunitions site to investigate the suspected laboratory, the team had set up a temporary headquarters amid a collection of vans, trucks and large tents.

The survey recon team was the first to enter the suspected hazardous environment, suited in their personal protective equipment in preparation to discover what may be waiting behind the laboratory's closed doors.

After donning their suits, the team of three moved slowly toward the lab, wheeling a mobile stretcher loaded with detection devices, a radio and an air tank. Personal and buddy checks were complete.

With a last visual check, the team entered the building …

All clear.

IMT Soldiers board an Air Force C-130J aircraft on Ramstein Air Base to continue the Bavarian Lightning exercise. (Photo by Spc. Glenn M. Anderson, 7th CSC Public Affairs)

Staff Sgt. Moreno Thomas, a dog handler with the 554th Military Police Company, 709th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade, and his dog Brando work together as a team to apprehend a suspect who tried to run. Bite and control is one of the critical tasks a dog and its handler must complete successfully during team certification. (Photo by Maj. Martyn Crighton, 18th MP Bde. Public Affairs)

A FORCE

By Maj. Martyn Crighton
18th MP Bde. Public Affairs

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As the fog clears on this crisp, but warming German summer morning, **padded feet pace back and forth in their kennel.** *The dog looks up and sees the familiar face of her handler, a* **Military Police Soldier** *with the 18th Military Police Brigade. Although the morning has just started, it's already feeding time, and the dog, and her handler will need their energy today as they continue their annual certification as a Military Working Dog team. This* **'day in the life'** *will bring challenges that will test their unique bond.*

The Military Police Soldiers who call themselves dog handlers are a unique group of individuals. Here in Europe they are often assigned to kennels that are physically isolated from their parent company and battalion, spend hours training with their assigned dog, and conduct missions and deploy as a team of two; a handler with his or her dog.

The 18th Military Police Brigade is responsible for all of the U.S. Army Military Working Dog teams in Europe and is responsible for providing MWD teams for many different kinds of missions including community law enforcement for Army installations throughout U.S. Army Europe, training and deploying teams to both Iraq and Afghanistan, and supporting high ranking civilian and military personnel such as cabinet secretaries and Major Command commanders when they make visits to European countries.

The reason MWD teams fall under the MP brigade is because all dog handlers are MPs first. Military dog handlers do not have a Military Occupational Specialty. Instead they are chosen from the ranks of the MP Corps. MPs can either submit paperwork to be accepted as a dog handler or can reenlist to become one. Those lucky enough to be selected are sent to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. The course is a basic training of sorts for dog handlers where they learn how to care for and train the dogs so they can get the most out of their very useful skill set and spend most of their time paired with a fully trained dog to learn the basics of detection and patrolling.

Sgt. Patrick Floyd of the 554th Military Police Company, 709th Military Police Battalion, 18th MP Bde. and a native of Orlando, Fla., is a dog handler assigned to the kennels in Stuttgart, Germany. He is a dedicated dog handler who admits he hated the Army during his first enlistment "especially after doing two deployments seven months apart while stationed a t

MULTIPLIER

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Spc. Jonathan Wallace, a dog handler with the 554th Military Police Company, 709th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade, praises his dog Zidane after he correctly indicated where the drugs were hidden. (Photo by Maj. Martyn Crighton, 18th MP Bde. Public Affairs)

Fort Bragg, N.C." But Floyd found his niche in the MWD program.

"Becoming a dog handler turned me around. . . I consider myself lucky to be this young and have a job this good," he said.

Since becoming a dog handler he has worked narcotics at Fort Bragg, N.C., Baghdad, Iraq, and Stuttgart, Germany, and while on patrol has aided in the detection of narcotics at each assignment.

Floyd's narcotics dog in Stuttgart is named Tarzan, and he is capable of finding a wide variety of drugs to include marijuana, cocaine, heroin and methamphetamines. But Tarzan, like most Military Working Dogs is not a single purpose dog. He is also trained to conduct patrol duty.

The skills patrol training perfects are those associated with aggression control and are the ones most often associated with police or MWDs like chasing down a suspect and biting and controlling them. These skills take a long time to perfect and demand the utmost trust between the dog and the handler because to execute them the handler must be able to work with his or her dog off leash and must know that the dog will obey their commands regardless of the circumstances.

The discipline and trust between the dog and handler is most evident when they are seen executing the stand-off. The handler releases the dog to chase a fleeing suspect but because the suspect stops running, before the dog bites them, the handler gives the dog the command to stop. Immediately the dog diverts from the attack and assumes a guard status in front of the suspect until the handler can catch up and take the suspect into custody.

"With a fire arm once you pull the trigger you can't call that bullet back," said Staff Sgt. Robin Horen, brigade kennel master for the 18th MP Bde. "With a trained patrol dog you can call that bullet back."

The ability to call that bullet back is dependent on the strength of the bond between a dog and a handler. To ensure the safety of the public that bond is tested before any team is given the authority to conduct missions outside the kennels. The certification takes between three and five days and according to Heron most of the time if there is going to be a problem in a team certifying it occurs in the patrol phase because that is when the bond between the dog and handler is most severely tested. For the obedience and patrol portion of the certification process, the team is graded on a Go/No Go basis for either doing or not doing a given task. For the detection portion, the dog is tested on a percentage basis. A narcotics dog must find 90 percent of the planted scents and an explosives dog must find 95 percent of the planted scents. Each team must certify every year.

Sgt. Richard Rivera, 554th MP Co., 709th MP Bn., 18th MP Bde., is a young dog handler who returned from Iraq in March and will deploy to Afghanistan in October. His dog Bodie is a patrol and explosives dog. Like Tarzan she is capable of conducting two missions. First she is an explosives detection dog, but she is also capable of patrolling. During their last deployment, Rivera and Bodie worked a lot with the Iraqis.

"We spent a lot of time away from our [Forward Operating Base] at [the Baghdad International Airport]. We did a lot of missions with the Iraqi army and spent a lot of overnights off the FOB acting on intelligence about the presence of explosives or the whereabouts of high visibility targets," said Rivera. The deployment to Iraq was the first for Rivera as a dog handler, but for Bodie it was her sixth.

In her deployment career, Bodie has had multiple finds and at least one bite to her credit.

"She can definitely tell the difference between Soldiers and civilians; she can see pattern. She is a very playful and loving dog but if someone makes a sudden movement or she thinks someone is showing aggression she does what she's supposed to. You have to know your dog and know how they will react in a given situation." said Rivera.

With six deployments, Bodie isn't even the most experienced dog at the Stuttgart Kennel. Matsy is a 13-year-old patrol and explosives dog who has more deployment experience than even the most seasoned combat Soldier. She has done three rotations in Afghanistan and five in Iraq and has multiple finds to her credit. Outside the combat zones she has conducted missions in Israel and Pakistan as well as many countries in both Africa and Europe. Despite her age, she worked explosives detection until May. Her last mission was the Stra-

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tegic Arms Reduction Treaty signing ceremony between President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Prague, Czech Republic. In her long career, Matsy has had many handlers and has made every one of them look like a pro because she is so focused and willing to work.

Staff Sgt. Moreno Thomas, 554th MP Co., 709th MP Bn., 18th MP Bde. and his dog Brando have been together for almost five years, first while assigned to the Military District of Washington and now in Stuttgart. They returned from their last Afghan deployment in August of 2009. At first their mission was to clear vehicles, but it was not well suited for Brando.

"When we first got to Bagram our mission was to search vehicles coming on the FOB, but it wasn't a good mission for us. We searched about 300 vehicles a day but because of the numbers, couldn't do a good search on every vehicle. The day was long for Brando. We usually worked from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m," said Thomas.

Dogs are creatures of habit, but good habits can be changed into bad ones if the handler is not given the opportunity to do quality training or if a repetitive mission doesn't allow for the dog to do quality work.

After two months working at the Entry Control Point, Thomas and Brando were assigned to Task Force Duke and began working with the route clearance teams. After the engineers cleared the route with their vehicle mounted detection equipment, Thomas and Brando would follow behind to do a secondary sweep to make sure nothing was missed.

"It was a great mission. We didn't have any big finds, but we would find little stuff like fuses," He said.

While in Afghanistan they also worked with a provincial reconstruction team clearing walking paths between villages to make sure they were free of explosives.

Back in the U.S. while assigned to MDW, Thomas and Brando did many high profile missions for the secret service including work in Honduras, Russia, France and the United Nations in New York City.

The newest category of dog the Army is using is called a Specialized Search Dog. These dogs do not have the ability to patrol. Instead they are highly trained explosive detection dogs that can work off leash, which takes the handler out of the equation. That is especially helpful in searching houses or buildings where there are suspected explosives present. Without the need for the handler to go in with the dog, the safety to the Soldier is dramatically increased without losing the detection capability. These dogs are in high demand, and because of their unique skills and the amount of time needed to train with them, these SSD teams stay together from one duty station to the other.

Like people not all dogs are the same and the handler's job is to figure out how to motivate their dog to execute.

"Being a good dog handler is as much an art as it is a science," said Heron.

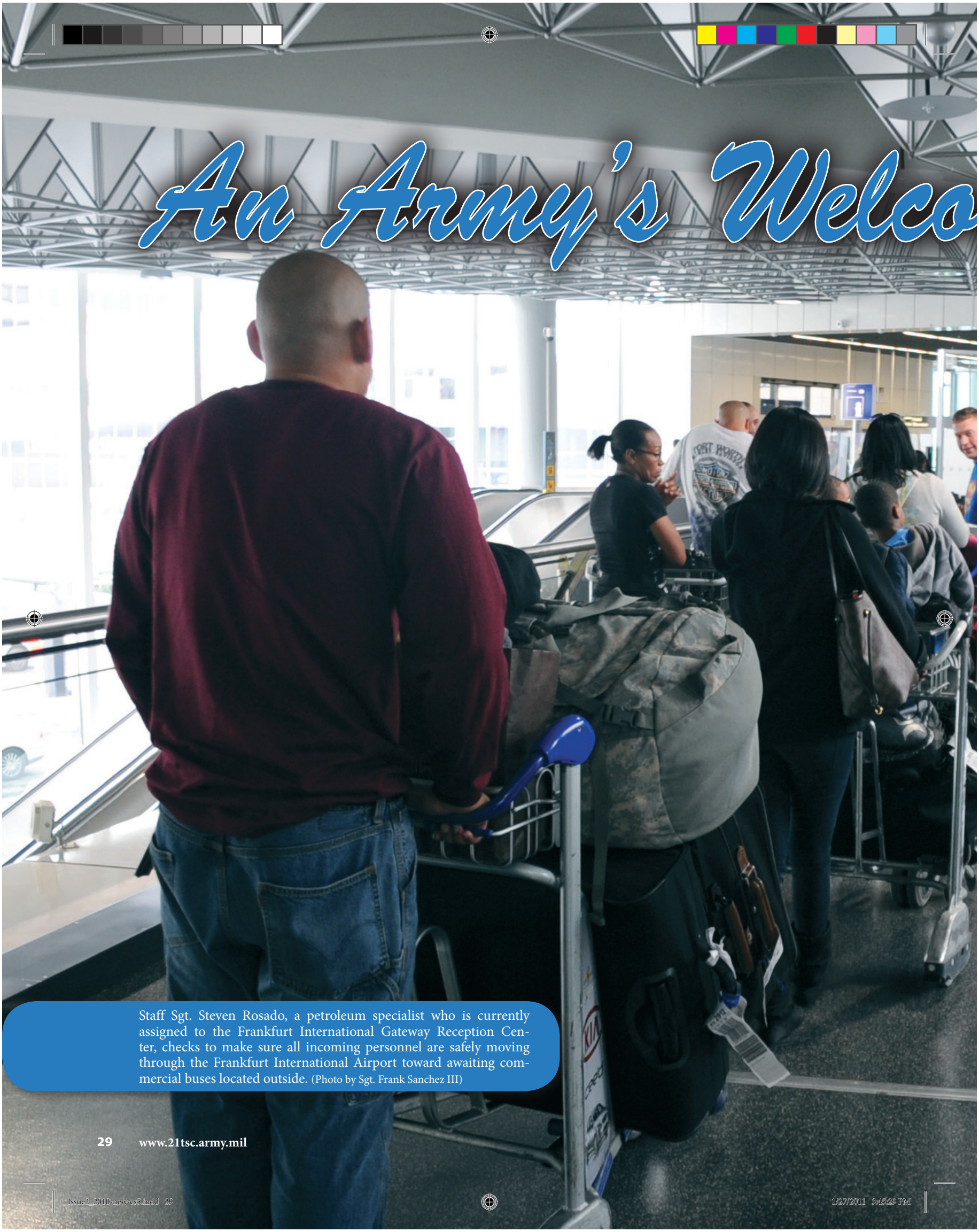
Good leaders don't just know what the book says about leading, they have the ability to take that knowledge and turn it into action. The same is true of good dog handlers. They have the ability to take the training they get at the school house, from their own experience, and from their kennel master, and put it into action with their dog. However, even the really good handlers get frustrated sometimes, Heron said.

Within the dog handler community, one way they ensure that frustration is never taken out on the dogs is by giving them a rank. The dogs are not officially given rank, but for the handler they are thought of as being a senior noncommissioned officer. For Floyd it's a tradition that helps keep things in perspective.

"The dog is important. They're more important than you. You can't be a dog handler without the dog, and the rank structure helps keep that in perspective," Floyd said.

Staff Sgt. Moreno Thomas, a dog handler with the 554th Military Police Company, 709th Military Police Battalion, 18th Militray Police Brigade, negotiates an obstacle during a training session with his 9- year-old dog, Brando, at their kennel training area in Stuttgart, Germany. Thomas and Brando have a strong bond and have worked together for almost five years. (Photo by Maj. Martyn Crighton, 18th MP Bde. Public Affairs)

An Army's Welco



Staff Sgt. Steven Rosado, a petroleum specialist who is currently assigned to the Frankfurt International Gateway Reception Center, checks to make sure all incoming personnel are safely moving through the Frankfurt International Airport toward awaiting commercial buses located outside. (Photo by Sgt. Frank Sanchez III)

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FRANKFURT, GERMANY & VENICE, ITALY
0735 HRS

lcoming Committee

By Sgt. Frank Sanchez III

"Is it 7:30 a.m.? It sure feels like the middle of the night! What time is it back in Georgia? How long have we been travelling? I wish I could just get this flight and trip done and get some sleep! I hate airports; they're always a hassle, especially when moving overseas with family in tow. Well, at least there's someone here to help us out a little as we arrive in Europe for the first time, jet-lagged, tired from travelling, and ready to get some rest …"

For those travelling, it is a long, tiring day. For the liaison officers receiving them, it's just another 'day in the life' of helping inbound Soldiers and families through the 21st TSC's gateway terminals at Frankfurt and Venice.

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At the time when most Soldiers are still fast asleep, groups of non-commissioned officers from the 21st Theater Sustainment Command's 1st Human Resources Sustainment Center have already started to hit the ground running at the Frankfurt and Venice international gateway reception centers.

The alarm clock rings at 3:30 a.m. for most of these Soldiers of the 21st TSC. This is a select group of NCOs who serve as airport liaison officers for the U.S. Army. These LNOs arrive in Wiesbaden, Germany, in order to meet up by 4:30 a.m. to carpool to the Frankfurt International airport to begin work by 5a.m. sharp.

These LNOs find out what flights are coming in and what halls they will be assigned for the day. There is no time to waste as they stand by to receive and begin inprocessing these Soldiers and their Families who make their way to the baggage claim areas.

The reception centers conduct this non-stop operation seven days a week and 365 days a year. The LNOs initiate the inprocessing then have the incoming personnel fill out data sheets and collect up copies of their orders to verify their assignments.

The Soldiers and family members move along to a waiting area inside the airport only accessable to U.S. personnel. In this area, a baggage guard is on standby for Soldiers and families to leave their luggage in a secure environment so they may visit the Frankfurt Airport USO or just grab a bite to eat.

These travelers are given a time to be back at the waiting area for a welcome and movement brief before boarding a bus to be taken to their communities.

During this time, reception and assignments technicians are busy checking in personnel electronically, using a theater-wide database that manifests and accounts for all the personnel. The orders are then verified, and a time is given to be back at the waiting area. Everyone receives a welcome and a movement brief before boarding buses to take them to their respective communities.

Making sure everything continues to run smoothly at the Frankfurt International airport's five main hallways belongs to Staff Sgt. Freda Randolph. Randolph, a mother and noncommissioned officer with more than 16 years in the Army, said she believes the most rewarding part of her job – providing the best customer service possible – definitely helps to ease the strain on everyone traveling through the gateway.

"Coming to a foreign country and when people see us – especially from the spouses – you hear 'I didn't think anyone was going to be there for us.' I say to them that we are always here for you. When you see the smile on their faces and you know that some of that tension has left," said Randolph about how her job directly affects the public.

If you head southwest 360 miles to Venice, Italy, you will also find Soldiers from the 21st TSC busy making their way through the Marco Polo International Airport. Although the Venice airport may be a bit smaller in size and operation, it provides a high level of customer service. Sgt. Joshua Davault, a married Soldier with a 3-year-old daughter, is currently living in Italy and said he has enjoyed being able to assist Soldiers and Families at Marco Polo for the past two years. This light-wheeled mechanic said one of the challenges he and other LNOs face is the ability to adapt to any situations that may arise during inprocessing.

"Each individual has a different story, and their family situations

Staff Sgt. Freda Randolph, the platoon sergeant and a liaison officer at the Frankfurt International Airport, assists family members with their baggage as they prepare to board a commercial bus, which will take them to several military communities across Germany. (Photo by Sgt. Frank Sanchez III)

Sgt. Armando Rodriguez, a liaison officer at the Frankfurt International Airport, leads incoming Soldiers and family members up the escalator to the second floor of the airport to the waiting area. (Photo by Sgt. Frank Sanchez III)

are different. You have to be really versed on what needs to be done on getting transitioned here, and you have to maintain flexibility to be able to have new ideas in case there is a new problem that you have never heard about," said Davault.

Sgt. 1st Class Luis Cosme is a human resource specialist with multiple deployments under his belt, who brings more than 20 years of experience to the team. Cosme is the noncommissioned officer in charge at the Marco Polo airport reception center. He said he feels the Soldiers have to possess a particular work ethic to be able to work at the airport.

"To do this job well, you have to be self disciplined. You have to have the initiative to do things on your own. The important piece is that you have to do physical training on your own because it is up to you to go to the gym and workout to pass the (physical training) test," said Cosme.

Transitioning Army Families from the second largest airport in Europe safely and efficiently into their communities is one of the main operational challenges that face U.S. Army Europe and the 21st TSC. Lt. Col. Terrence Williams, the chief for the Frankfurt International Gateway Reception Center, said things at the airport are never at a standstill.

"Things are very busy here. There is never a dull day when dealing with family members, Soldiers, the German government and internal personnel. It is very fast paced," said Williams.

Since Oct. 1, 2009, the reception centers have assisted more than 12,510 Soldiers and 6,263 family members.

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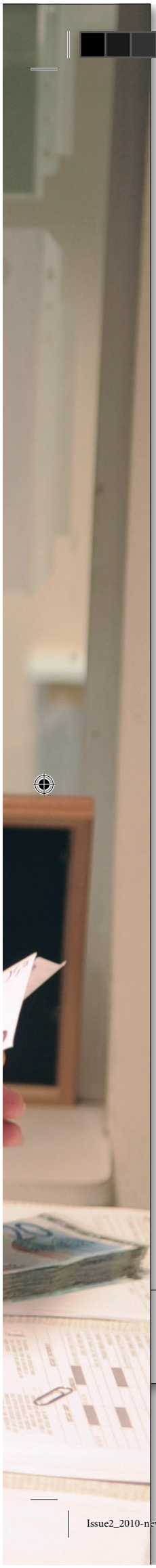

KAISERSLAUTERN, GERMANY
0814 HRS

Financial Warriors on Your Side

A day of in-processing has just begun, but the Soldier's jet lagged body is telling her it's still the middle of the night. She fights the jet lag and makes her way into yet another in-processing briefing. Taking a seat, her body threatens to drift off to sleep until her ears hone in on a phrase that makes clear the importance of this brief; "your money." For her, and most other Soldiers on a permanent change of station to Europe – this briefing – and the paperwork filed in conjunction with it, is critical to a smooth PCS. For the finance service personnel giving the brief, this is routine; important, but routine. For those personnel processing actions affecting someone else's income, even the routine is important, each and every 'day in the life' of any one of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command's finance offices.

By Staff Sgt. Michael J. Taylor

When Soldiers arrive in Europe from stateside, they receive an influx of briefings, some may be a little more important than others but all very necessary.

Among the briefings received, one of the more important ones is the finance brief, as it pertains to Soldiers' pay, travel vouchers, overseas housing allowance, cost of living allowance, rental deposits and first month's rent.

In the approximately 40-minute briefing, a lot of information is dispersed and many questions are asked and answered. Although in-depth and informative, the briefing is but a snapshot of the 16th Sustainment Brigade's, 106th Financial Management Company, Delta Detachment's everyday mission.

Pfc. April Reitz a 106th Financial Management Company, Delta Detachment cashier from Dallas, counts out money prior to dispersing a rental deposit at the Kleber finance office, Sept 2. On a day-to-day basis a couple of the detachments main jobs are dispersing rental deposits and first month's rent to incoming service members, civilians and their families. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael J. Taylor)

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"We are here to service the Soldiers, the family members and the retirees of the community," said 1st Lt. Tina D. Brevard, D Det.'s dispersing officer and rear detachment commander, from Tampa, Fla.

With most of the 106th FMC deployed to Afghanistan, the remaining personnel are depended on to provide financial support for the Soldiers of the entire 21st TSC's footprint, which includes Soldiers in Kaiserslautern, Heidelberg, Miesau, Stuttgart, Wiesbaden, Mannheim and Baumholder.

To cover this broad area the detachment has nine military personnel and five civilian personnel.

"A lot of people think that finance is all Soldier-run," said Brevard, a prior enlisted Soldier who became an officer and has been working in the finance field for approximately a year, "but we have a section of competent civilian personnel who also provide finance support for the area."

Between the Soldiers and civilians, the detachment provides support in areas such as Soldier readiness processing, pre-deployment preparation, deployment readiness, reintegration, dispersing agent activities, conducting training, processing travel vouchers and military pay inquiries and assistance.

According to Brevard, the detachment has a challenging job because of the small number of Soldiers and size of the 21st TSC's footprint.

Of the nine Soldiers, four are required to be available at all times during hours of operations, in order to provide customer service, run the dispersing cage and certify documents. That leaves only five Soldiers available to conduct missions that require travel.

When multiple missions happen in the same day, the finance Soldiers often find themselves operating with minimal personnel in order to provide full support to their customers and units.

Despite the obstacles that may arise due to manning, job scope or work load, the detachment still manages to get the job done with a smile, Brevard commented.

On a day-to-day basis, the detachment is responsible for dispersing rental deposits and first month's rent to incoming service members, civilians and their families, among many other duties.

When a Soldier arrives in theater, the cost of renting a house or an apartment can be substantial. Landlords may require the first month's rent and a deposit, which can be as much as double the first month's rent, all at the same time prior to move in, said Brevard.

Finance provides assistance with these costs by giving the soon to be renters the money up front and allowing them to pay it back over a period of time. Through these advances, the Soldier or civilian isn't required to pay out of pocket upfront, which could put them in a bad position financially, said Brevard

"One of my favorite parts of my job is being able to help Soldiers get their house or apartment," said Pfc. April Reitz, a cashier with the D Det., who is from Dallas. "I think I have the best job because I actually get to work with money and hand the money out to the people who come to the dispersing cage."

As a cashier, Reitz's job starts

Pfc. April Reitz watches as Staff Sgt. Benjamin C. Bower, an operations non-commissioned officer with the 230th Military Police Company counts out Euros that she advanced to him for his rental deposit Sept. 23., at the finance office on Kleber Kaserne. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael J. Taylor)

with her receiving paperwork, which is filled out and entered into the system prior to her receiving it. She then begins to check the paper work and makes sure the information matches with what is in the system. Next, she makes sure all the amounts match with all the paper work. She then counts out the money two or three times. She makes sure the receiving person verifies that all the information on the paperwork matches. Once the paper work is verified by the receiver, Reitz then counts out the money to the person receiving it and then finally she asks that they count it out again in front of her so there are no mistakes.

"Working with people every day is easy. The hardest part of my job is making sure all the numbers match," said Reitz.

When dispersing, the money could end up being counted more than 10 times by up to three different people, including the person receiving it, and the dispersing office can get as many as 15 people in a day who require deposits and first month's rent assistance.

Although dispersing is a key part of the finance mission, a bigger focus is units who are deploying and returning from deployments.

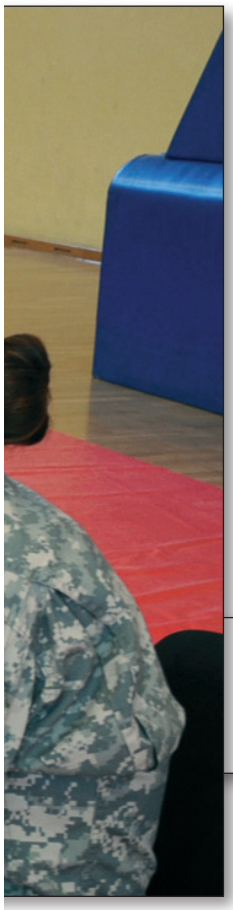
"Being the rear detachment, our main priority is Soldiers who are either getting ready to go downrange or Soldiers getting back from downrange," Brevard said.

The detachment can end up supporting as many as seven SRPs a month, servicing more than 4,000 Soldiers in a month.

During SRPs the detachment generally makes sure everything is correct in the system for the Soldiers and assists them in fixing any problems the Soldiers may have with their pay.

According to Brevard, units should conduct SRPs at least once a year. SRPs make it easy for finance personnel to take care of a large group of Soldiers together at one time instead of the Soldiers going into the finance office one by one over a period of time.

"We want to make the process as easy as possible for our customers. We are not in the business of making things harder on Soldiers or their family members," said Sgt. Shawn P. Crocker, the SRP non-commissioned officer in charge for detachment Det., and a 29 Palms, Calif. native.



Two Soldiers with the 106th Financial Management Company, Delta Detachment, listen as a Soldier explains a situation that he needs financial assistance with during a pre-deployment preparation Sept. 3, at the Miesau gym on Miesau Kaserne. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael J. Taylor)

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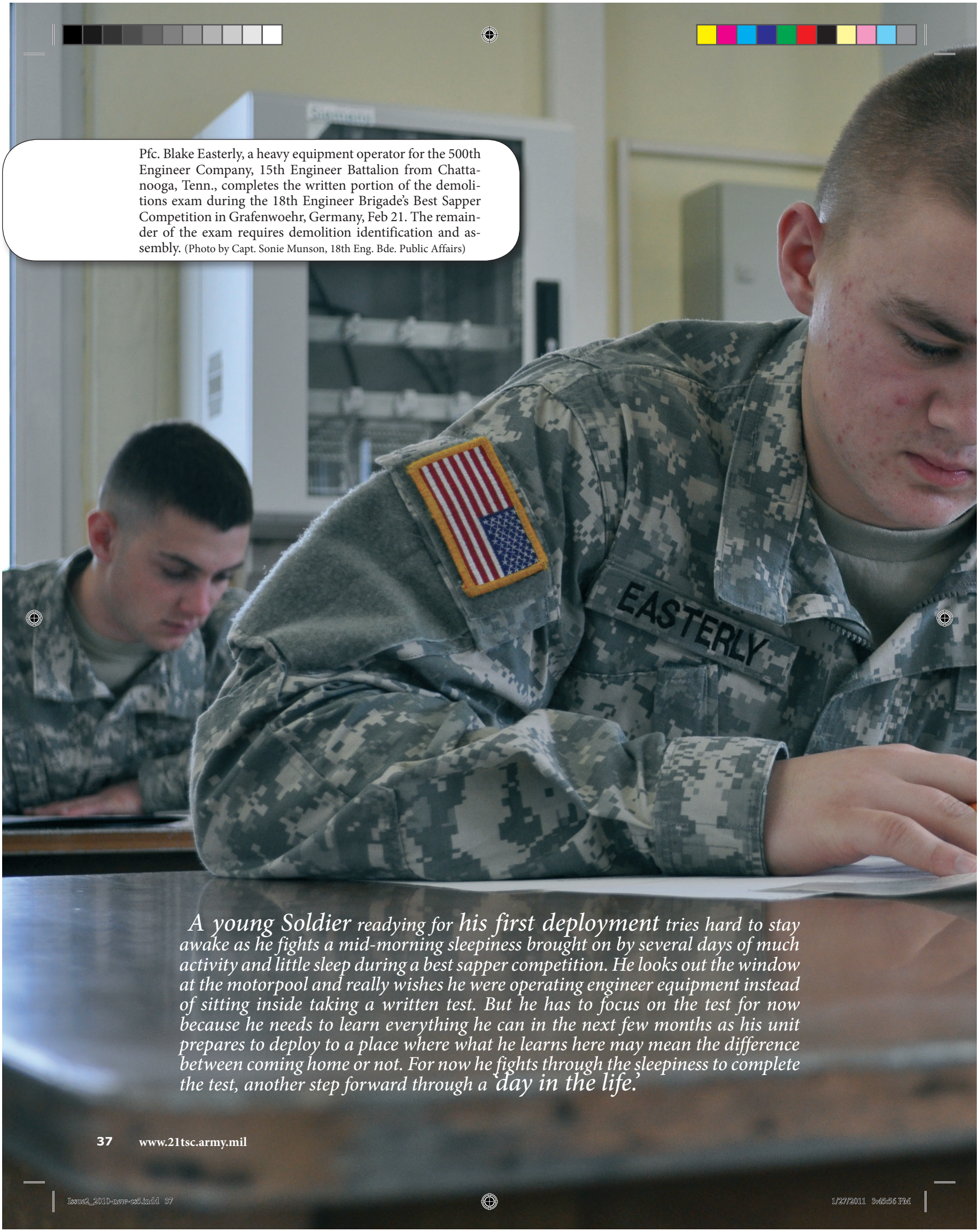

Pfc. Blake Easterly, a heavy equipment operator for the 500th Engineer Company, 15th Engineer Battalion from Chattanooga, Tenn., completes the written portion of the demolitions exam during the 18th Engineer Brigade's Best Sapper Competition in Grafenwoehr, Germany, Feb 21. The remainder of the exam requires demolition identification and assembly. (Photo by Capt. Sonie Munson, 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)

A young Soldier readying for his first deployment tries hard to stay awake as he fights a mid-morning sleepiness brought on by several days of much activity and little sleep during a best sapper competition. He looks out the window at the motorpool and really wishes he were operating engineer equipment instead of sitting inside taking a written test. But he has to focus on the test for now because he needs to learn everything he can in the next few months as his unit prepares to deploy to a place where what he learns here may mean the difference between coming home or not. For now he fights through the sleepiness to complete the test, another step forward through a 'day in the life.'

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SCHWEINFURT, GERMANY
0922 HRS

A Soldier's First Deployment

By Capt. Kathryn Werback
18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs

The clanging sound of metal on metal reverberates as bulldozers track across the construction zone. The hydraulic excavator scoops the dirt and drops it in dump trucks. Behind the operating gears is new Soldier Pfc. Blake Easterly from Chattanooga, Tenn., and he's training to deploy with his unit, the 500th Engineer Company, 15th Engineer Battalion out of Schweinfurt, Germany.

Raised around a construction company and a farm, Easterly grew up operating dump trucks and bulldozers. Following family tradition -- his great-grandfather served in the Battle of the Bulge as a combat medic and his uncle is currently serving -- Easterly enlisted after high school graduation. It took seven months of convincing, but his mother, Sheila Easterly, finally signed the consent form for her 17-year-old son, knowing he would have done so himself the day he turned 18.

"He's grown into a fine young man and as a mother, I'm blessed that he is marching proud and wearing an American flag instead of [being involved with] drugs or behind bars," she said.

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Now that her son is preparing to deploy, she'll stand by his decision to serve, but she is still anxious about him in combat.

Easterly enlisted in the Army as an engineer in June 2009 and attended Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training in Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., where he learned to operate scrapers, graders, backhoes and bucket loaders in addition to bulldozers and dump trucks. He was shocked at how many hours he actually got at the controls and counts it as invaluable training. By December, he had joined his unit in Germany as a heavy equipment operator.

To welcome him, the 15th Eng. Bn "Drive On!" quickly entered him in the 18th Eng. Bde.'s Best Sapper Competition qualifier held in Grafenwoher, Germany. After Easterly and his buddy, 1st Lt. Eric Sears, a platoon leader in the 500th Engineer Company from Mooresville, N.C., finished in the top three, they returned to Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., to participate in the Army-wide competition. The Hydraulic Excavator operator claims he originally didn't know what a Sapper was, but after training and competing, he said, "it definitely gave me every answer to my questions."

The three-day best sapper competition for Engineers pushes participants to their physical and mental limits. Contestants conduct land navigation, weapons assembly and disassembly, a non standard physical training test with pushups, pull ups, sit-ups and running, a medical test, urban warfare operations, and a road march. Additionally, these engineers are required to jump from a Chinook helicopter into water and swim their poncho raft to shore, called the "Helocast." Furthermore, there is testing on knots and rope systems, an extreme run with tree sawing, picket pounding, carrying a bangalore torpedo, constructing a wood frame, and conducting medical evacuation. Of course, no engineer test is complete without demolitions testing where the final piece is explosive charge assembly. He was one of the few participating without having earned the Sapper tab, as he must first be promoted to specialist. Easterly and his partner had to dedicate themselves to individual studying and learning many engineer tasks.

As the only junior enlisted and youngest Soldier ever to compete, Easterly and his partner represented the 15th Eng. Bn. and the 18th Eng. Bde. strongly by finishing 9th of 30 teams who were vetted from across the engineer branch.

Pfc. Blake Easterly struggles to complete one of his final pull-ups during the nonstandard physical fitness test (NSPFT) at the Grafenwoehr Gym on Feb 21 as part of the 18th Engineer Brigade's Best Sapper Competition. The NSPFT was the first event during the competition hosted by the 18th Engineer Brigade and consisted of pushups, sit-ups, pull-ups and a run. (Photo by Capt. Sonie Munson, 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)

Pfc. Blake Easterly and Best Sapper Competition battle buddy, 1st Lt. Eric Sears, a Platoon Leader in the 500th Eng. Co. from Mooresville, NC, consider their location during the night land navigation exercise at Grafenwoehr, Germany on Feb. 22. This event tests Soldiers' navigation abilities with limited or no visibility, enabling Sappers to successfully maneuver throughout the battlefield. (Photo by Capt. Sonie Munson, 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)

Upon finishing all the tasks, he said, "I pulled off my rank and threw it in the air, yelling to the AIT privates that I was one of them. I was an equipment operator, not a combat engineer." When asked if he would go through the preparation and competition pain again, he responded, "I'd do it again, any day."

After returning to his unit, he said best sapper "taught me a lot about explosives; we definitely had to learn about leadership. I had to act like a [staff sergeant] and had to learn to take control. [The competition] definitely made me more confident in my ability to lead, and I'll be able to use that when I'm deployed."

Now with his focus on the quickly approaching deployment, Easterly has stepped up to be instructed on the finer details of his occupation. The 15th Eng. Bn. has trained a lot for the quickly approaching deployment, especially on Improvised Explosive Devices and preparing for the battalion's Mission Readiness Exercise. Having already been a part of road construction in Grafenwoehr as a dump truck operator, he is looking forward to more unit projects that will allow the squad to bond and enable everyone to become more efficient with their equipment. Having trained together, he said "the squad is already acting like a family, and we take care of each other."

Deployment-oriented, he and his squad give each other goals to make it through training and deployment. "My buddy and I are going to get [college] degrees [downrange] and our whole squad is going to train up to put in selection packets to Special Forces." Although the Army might be a career, going to college opens up possibilities of starting his own construction company.

As Easterly prepares to go downrange, his mother prepares herself for the long year of her son being in harm's way. When questioned about her feelings concerning her son's up-coming deployment, Easterly's mother said she has to deal with it as a mother, but she supports his decision, "but of course I don't want him to go."

When asked if he was ready to deploy, Easterly said "I'm kind of excited and we're [his squad] ready to go. It's a good feeling to know that because I'm going, somebody else will get to return home."

Easterly keeps a positive attitude when talking to his family about the deployment. "I've told them that I'm going to be completely safe. I told my family that we will be safe and we get good training here and I know what I'm doing."

Still, his mother worries. "He's got to come back," she said.

By the end of the year, Easterly will be operating bulldozers and scrapers in the sand of the Middle East. His family will be 5,000 miles away. For his first deployment, the closest friends he'll have are his battle buddies to his left and right.

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NEVER HAVE THE SAME DAY TWICE

A group of seasoned Explosive Ordnance Disposal sergeants observe as an EOD hopeful dons the famous 'bomb suit' and attempts the daunting task of completing several task-oriented tests, followed by the crucible of lifting and carrying a 90-pound artillery round. There is certainly a bit of humor in their faces as they observe him struggle with the heavy suit, and the even heavier artillery round, but it is humor mixed with empathy. They've all been there and gone through it. It's one of the main things that separate those who make it into EOD from those who don't, and it's another 'day in the life' of an EOD unit…

A prospective EOD candidate in the EOD-8 bomb suit attempts to pick up the 155 millimeter round and walk with it one hundred meters during the EOD candidate test in Grafenwoehr, Germany, 12 Aug. (Photo by Capt. Jennifer Dyrcz, 18th CSSB Public Affairs)

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By Capt. Jennifer Dyrcz
18th CSSB Public Affairs

The 702nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company under the 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion functions as a highly specialized and diverse ordnance unit.

The life in an EOD unit is never the same each day, and for most Soldiers it is the diversity of their mission that is the most appealing benefit for working on these specialized teams.

"The greatest thing about this job is each day there is something different for me to do. In garrison or deployed, I love that I always get to do the job I was trained for," said Sgt. Jeremy Rininger, a native of Canal Fulton, Ohio, who works as a senior team member for the 702nd EOD Co.

Their mission is to provide routine and emergency explosive ordnance disposal support to the U.S. and its allied forces within U.S. European Command for unexploded ordnance, improvised explosive devices and chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, explosive (CBRNE) incidents. They also provide EOD support to the U.S. Secret Service and the Department of State as well as EOD support to humanitarian de-mining operations.

"I got to go to Kiev, Ukraine, to support the State Department while working with the U.S. Air Force and the Ukrainian military to do bomb sweeps for the vehicles, motorcade routes and the hotel to clear the areas the very important persons would be occupying," said Spc. Chris Porth, a native of Woodstock, Ill., who works as an EOD technical team member.

The Bomb Suit Test

Part of the day-to-day garrison support comes in the form of preliminary testing for EOD Soldier hopefuls. An enlisted Soldier or officer who decides to make the switch to an EOD unit must first petition to and prove they are physically capable of the rigors of EOD life.

Because the 702nd EOD Co. is one of two EOD units in Germany, they administer many of what is known as "the bomb suit test".

In August the 702nd EOD Co. conducted such a test, which was in three phases; the Army Physical Fitness Test, the bomb suit phase and the chemical suit phase.

This Soldier performed very well on the APFT, however the true physical challenge was still to come. Soon he found himself being dressed by 702nd EOD Co. Soldiers in the 80-pound EOD-8 bomb suit.

For the most part, this test figuratively separates the wheat from the chaff. It is a rite of passage for all EOD Soldiers from lowest to highest rank, as work in this suit is one of the most recognized aspects of the job and is worn to give the Soldier the highest level of safety possible.

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702nd EOD Co. team members smooth out small arms rounds in preparation for demolition at their Grafenwoehr, Germany, range on 13 Aug. (Photo by Capt. Jennifer Dyrcz, 18th CSSB Public Affairs)

Because the suit is generally worn in high stress conditions like disarming a bomb, the tester attempts to disorient the Soldier through a series of tasks in rapid succession. The suit must be worn for 30 minutes and no longer than 45 minutes to qualify.

The Soldier participating in the bomb suit test begins by doing a few laps around the 702nd EOC Co. building to get his heart rate up. Due to the nature of the test it picked up its fair share of 702nd EOD Co. spectators. It was with a sense of comaraderie the company Soldiers cheered on the candidate as he attempted to pick up scattered change from the ground while he sorted and stacked the coins. There was some trouble as he reported back the money count. He realized he had to yell quite loud to be heard outside of his heavy suit.

By this time he was almost completed with his EOD-8 test, with only the 90-pound 155 millimeter artillery round to go. He failed to heft the round up and carry it the required 100 meters and had to quit the test without passing.

"Unfortunately it is usually the EOD-8 portion of the test that weeds out many of the EOD hopefuls. During the training process, there is a 70-percent wash out rate from application to graduation," said 1st Sgt. Alfred Rebara, a native of Stillecom, Wash., who works as the 702nd EOD Co. first sergeant.

If the Soldier had passed, the 702nd EOD Co. tester would have continued on with the chemical suit portion, which is identical to the EOD-8 suit test except the chemical suit is significantly lighter.

Sgt. 1st Class Shawn Daniels (left), the 702nd EOD Co. operations sergeant, gives a range safety brief to Pvt. 1st Class Warren Deehring, a fellow team member (left) and Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) candidate Mike Verdon (right), 13 Aug., Grafenwoehr, Germany. (Photo by Capt. Jennifer Dyrcz, 18th CSSB Public Affairs)

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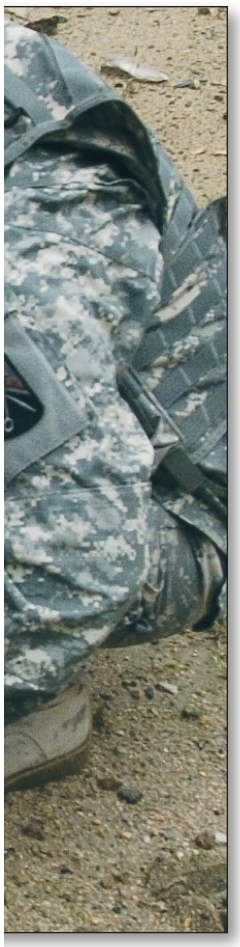

Ordnance Disposal

Due to the nature of the European environment, and specifically because Grafenwoehr has been a training base for more than 100 years between the German and American militaries old unexploded ordnance continually turns up.

Up until the 1970s it was standard practice to bury unexploded ordnance. The 702nd EOD Co. has traveled throughout Germany to support the disposal of such finds, but it was in their own backyard of Grafenwoehr where they recently found such unexploded ordnance. The Grafenwoehr airstrip is currently expanding to build de-icing pits for helicopters. During the construction, small and large arms from as late as World War II were found.

The 702nd EOD Co. did five controlled detonations on a Grafenwoehr range Aug. 12. The company used these detonations as training for several of their newly arrived EOD Soldiers. The interesting part was they also used the controlled environment to train their non-EOD trained supply and communication sergeants, two Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadets and a Soldier for the 18th CSSB's Headquarters and Headquarters Company. The 702nd EOD Co. team is proud of what they do and like to share it with others, much of the time in hopes to get them to cross over into the EOD field.

"Even working as the supply specialist, I get to go out with the teams and blow stuff up," said Spc. Marquita Thomas, a native of Columbus, Ga., who works as the 702nd EOD Co. supply specialist.

At all times during the controlled explosion, safety was paramount. Soldiers who were trained specifically to execute controlled detonations for a living still took part in the safety brief.

The range began with a division of the small and large arms; there is a 45- pound surface limit on what can be detonated each time. Each team consisted of three to five Soldiers who meticulously laid the munitions evenly across the ground before they placed plastic explosives and added the timed detonation wire. Before the wires were lit, the Soldiers quickly left the area and moved to the bunker for accountability.

The detonation wire was rolled out for a five minute fuse and within seconds of the five minute mark the unexploded ordnance had textbook detonations.

Not Just a Company—a Family

"Because our unit is so small it is more like a family; we know each other's strengths and weaknesses and work accordingly to help each other out. I love the responsibility of this job from training up our newest members to going out and representing my battalion and country. Personally, I have nothing negative I could possibly say about it," said Rininger.

The 702nd EOD Co. area looked like most with the standard offices and a classroom spilling over with training aids. But it was the dayroom that seemed to be the heart of the company. It was here the Soldiers and leaders met to discuss upcoming events but also fitted out with a kitchen, ping-pong table and entertainment center for the unit to bond more closely.

With smiles and a few protests, the newest EOD members tied brightly colored bow ties around their necks and donned heavy duty ear protection. While it may just seem like good hearted teasing for a few laughs, it also served a greater purpose. Given the dangerous reality of their job, all the Soldiers need to know they have the support of their buddy next to them. This is one of the methods employed to foster such deep ties of trust and respect, according to Sgt. 1st Class Shawn Daniels, a native of Fairfax, Va., who works as the 702nd EOD Co. operations noncommissioned officer in charge.

"We are small and specialized so with that comes a different atmosphere, more like a family, albeit a highly-trained one. We work hard and we play hard," said Daniels."I love it," said Thomas.

Dedication

This article is dedicated to the memory of Staff Sgt. Derek Farley. The 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion 'Warhammer' family mourns the loss of a great leader and comrade. Farley, 24, was killed in action Aug. 17 in Farah, Afghanistan, while disarming an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the 702nd EOD Co. in January 2008 and deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan Sept. 15, 2009,as an EOD team leader.

Farley was born May 21, 1986, in Nassau, N.Y. He had been previously deployed to Iraq from July 22, 2006 to May 24, 2007. His current deployment was set to end in September.

Farley is survived by his parents, Kenneth Farley and Carrie Farley, and his brother, Dylan M. Farley, 17, all from Nassau, N.Y. Our thoughts are with them at this difficult time.

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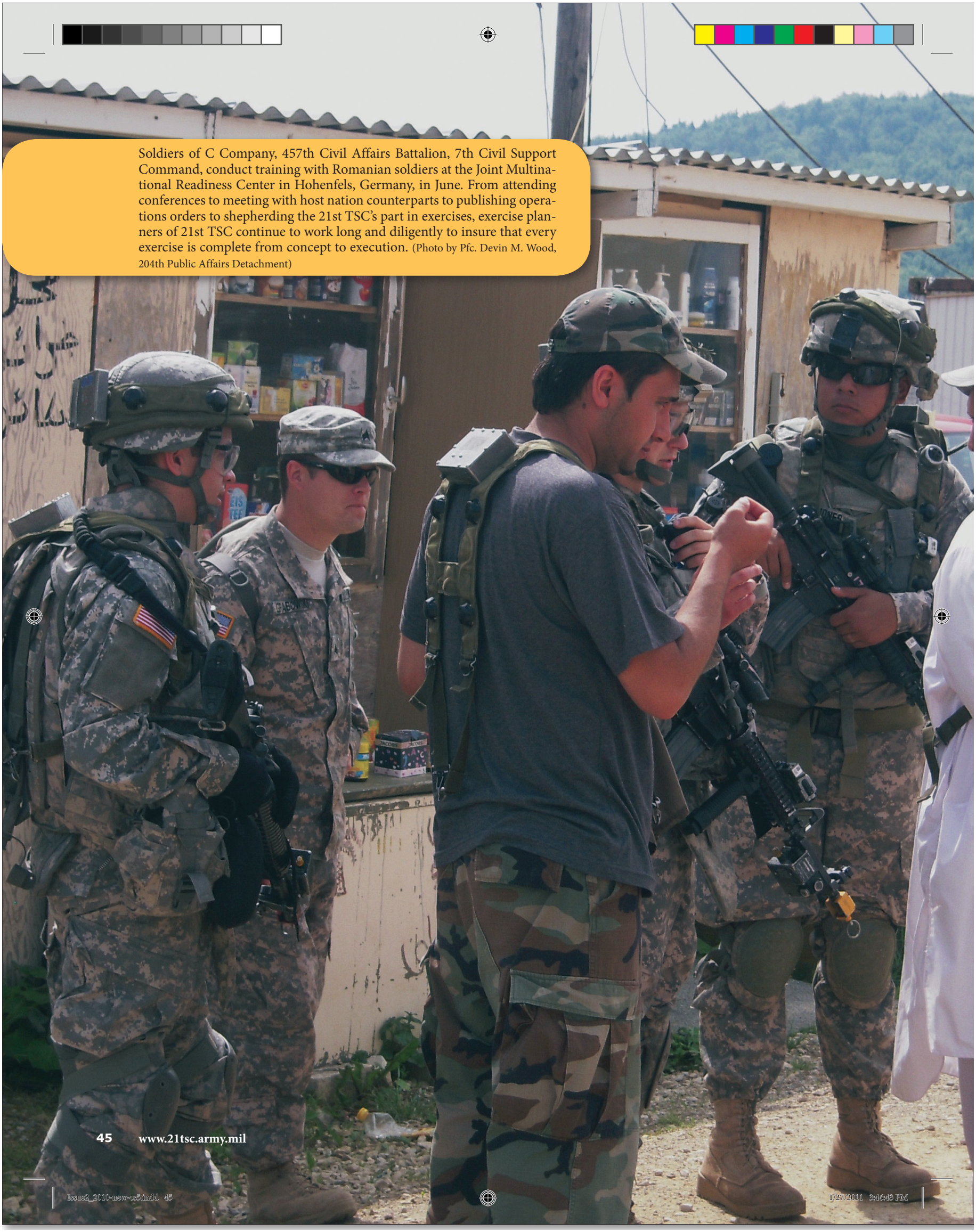

Soldiers of C Company, 457th Civil Affairs Battalion, 7th Civil Support Command, conduct training with Romanian soldiers at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, in June. From attending conferences to meeting with host nation counterparts to publishing operations orders to shepherding the 21st TSC's part in exercises, exercise planners of 21st TSC continue to work long and diligently to insure that every exercise is complete from concept to execution. (Photo by Pfc. Devin M. Wood, 204th Public Affairs Detachment)

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KAISERSLAUTERN, GERMANY
1148 HRS

FROM CONCEPT TO EXECUTION

By Staff Sgt. Michael J. Taylor

Working through lunch is nothing new to ***the planner,*** *and she plans to do it again today. She carefully pours over the operations order one last time. After hours of reviewing, she finally feels comfortable that it properly covers all of the details, and* ***it's the details that are important to the exercise planner****. These details can mean the difference between the* ***success and failure*** *of a whole exercise, and it's the exercise planner who has to make sure each detail is addressed, each and every exercise she plans, each and every* ***'day in the life'*** *of a 21st Theater Sustainment Command exercise planner.*

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When a training or exercise occurs within the 21st Theater Sustainment Command, most people only see a small part of the amount of preparation it takes to successfully conduct that event.

Soldiers receive orders, conduct or attend the event, maybe have a certificate or award ceremony and then pack up and head back to base station. But where did the orders come from? Who decided that those Soldiers would attend? Whose idea was it to have the training? Who coordinated with the host nation or participating nation's officials? Who put the entire event together?

The 21st TSC employs dedicated and professional exercise planners who work to ensure that each individual training event within the command is carefully planned from concept to execution. These individuals work long and diligently in order to make sure every exercise within the 21st TSC goes off without a hitch.

"Our job involves shepherding the 21st's part of a bigger exercise; we're responsible for making sure the 21st TSC's part of a bigger event is executed properly," said Kathy Gerenda, an exercise planner with the 21st TSC and a native of Port Charlotte, Fla. "We make sure that we have everybody we need to make the exercise function properly."

With the 21st TSC conducting more than 50 exercises in a year, in more than 10 different countries, each exercise planner must be very thorough and organized when planning an exercise.

Each exercise is assigned an individual event planner, in order to ensure no confusion is caused and consistency is maintained for that event.

Planners are responsible for ensuring the exercise is planned, coordinated and executed and for making sure personnel, equipment and any other resources needed are ready and available to get the mission done.

"I can describe our job in a few parts," said Margo Peel, an exercise planner with the 21st TSC and a native of Manhattan, Kan. "You have to be able to read operational orders, you have to be able to research doctrine, you have to be able to utilize the military decision making process, and finally you have to do after action reviews."

"Think of us as event planners (in the civilian realm)," said Gerenda. "Think of an exercise as an event and that gives you a little idea of the job that we do here."

An exercise starts out first as a concept. Someone has an idea or realizes the need for an exercise. That idea is then discussed during a conference that the U.S. Army Europe sponsors annually. During the conference it is determined whether or not the idea is relevant to USAREUR's overall mission. It is also determined who will lead the exercise. If the idea passes and it is determined that the 21st TSC will lead the exercise, it is then handed off to a planner.

From there the planner can look forward to attending at least four different conferences throughout the course of planning the mission, and one exercise can take as long as a year and a half to plan from concept to execution.

The first conference the planners attend is a concept development conference. This is where they get the requirements needed for the exercise. They then determine which, if any, 21st TSC assets should be involved.

The next and perhaps the most important part of planning is the writing of the operations order or OPORD. The planners are required to write the OPORDs for every exercise they plan, which contains all the details of the exercise, who is attending, what equipment is needed, the size of the element and more.

Throughout the next few months the initial, main and final conferences are attended and the OPORD is constantly tweaked until the planner is confident that every area is covered.

Thomas Lasch, the simulations director from the Joint Multi-National Simulations Center Grafenwoehr, explains the Unmanned Aerial Simulator operated by Sgt. 1st Class John J. Walker, 18th Engineer Brigade, to Polish armed forces leaders Mar. 5 during Bagram VII at Bukowka Barracks in Kielce, Poland. With the 21st TSC conducting more than 50 exercises in a year, in over 10 different countries, each exercise is assigned an individual event planner, in order to insure no confusion is caused and consistency is maintained for that event. (Photo courtesy of 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)

"We attend planning conferences on behalf of the 21st TSC and the command, to get the requirements for the exercises," said Peel. "We then determine if 21st TSC assets are required or not and how we are going to utilize those assets."

With four conferences to attend for each exercise and planning as many as three or four exercises at a time, the planners are required to have very good organizational and attention to detail skills.

"This is not big car stuff. It's moving each little nut and bolt of that car," Gerenda stated. "It's building that engine piece by piece. That's the level of detail we are talking about. There are a lot of moving pieces involved in our planning process."

Although attention to detail and organizational skills are crucial in order to be a planner, there are other skills the planners must possess such as people skills. Going on temporary duty around five times a month and meeting with many different people from U.S. military personnel to foreign nationals of the countries involved in the exercises, the planners must be able to work well with others in order to get their jobs done.

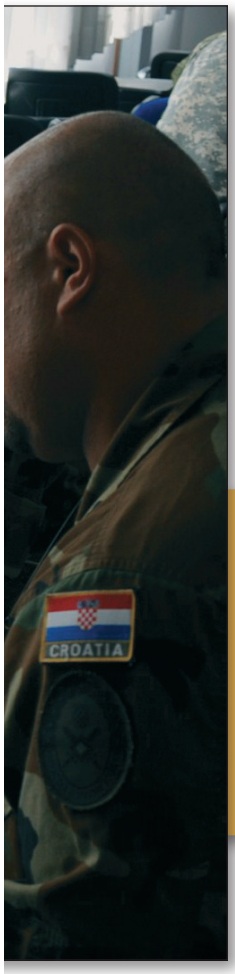
21st TSC planners work with people from other countries such as Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Poland, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and more.

"We go to other countries to meet with a host nation counterpart," said Peel. "That's probably the most critical piece of our planning."

"The whole exercise wouldn't happen without a lead planner," said Gerenda. "You have to have a lead person, a point of contact to pull all the resources together."

"From the concept development conference to the execution of that mission, we have to be that element that meshes the whole exercise together," Peel stated.

From attending conferences to meeting with host nation counterparts to publishing OPORDs, to shepherding the 21st TSC's part in exercises, the exercise planners of 21st TSC continue to work long and diligently to insure that every exercise is complete from concept to execution.



Sgt. Jeremy Mackey and two other Soldiers from the 720th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, 391st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion from Mannheim, Germany, analyze a map with Croatian army 1st Lt. Predrag Svaga, an officer with the military cooperation section, Croatian army headquarters in Karlovac, Croatia, Aug 24. The 720th EOD Soldiers conducted a site survey at the Croatian Army training site in Eugen Kvaternik near the town of Slunj, looking for any hazards. The 21st Theater Sustainment Command employs dedicated and professional exercise planners who work to ensure that each individual training event, such as this one, within the command is carefully planned from concept to execution. (Photos by Sgt. Frank Sanchez III)

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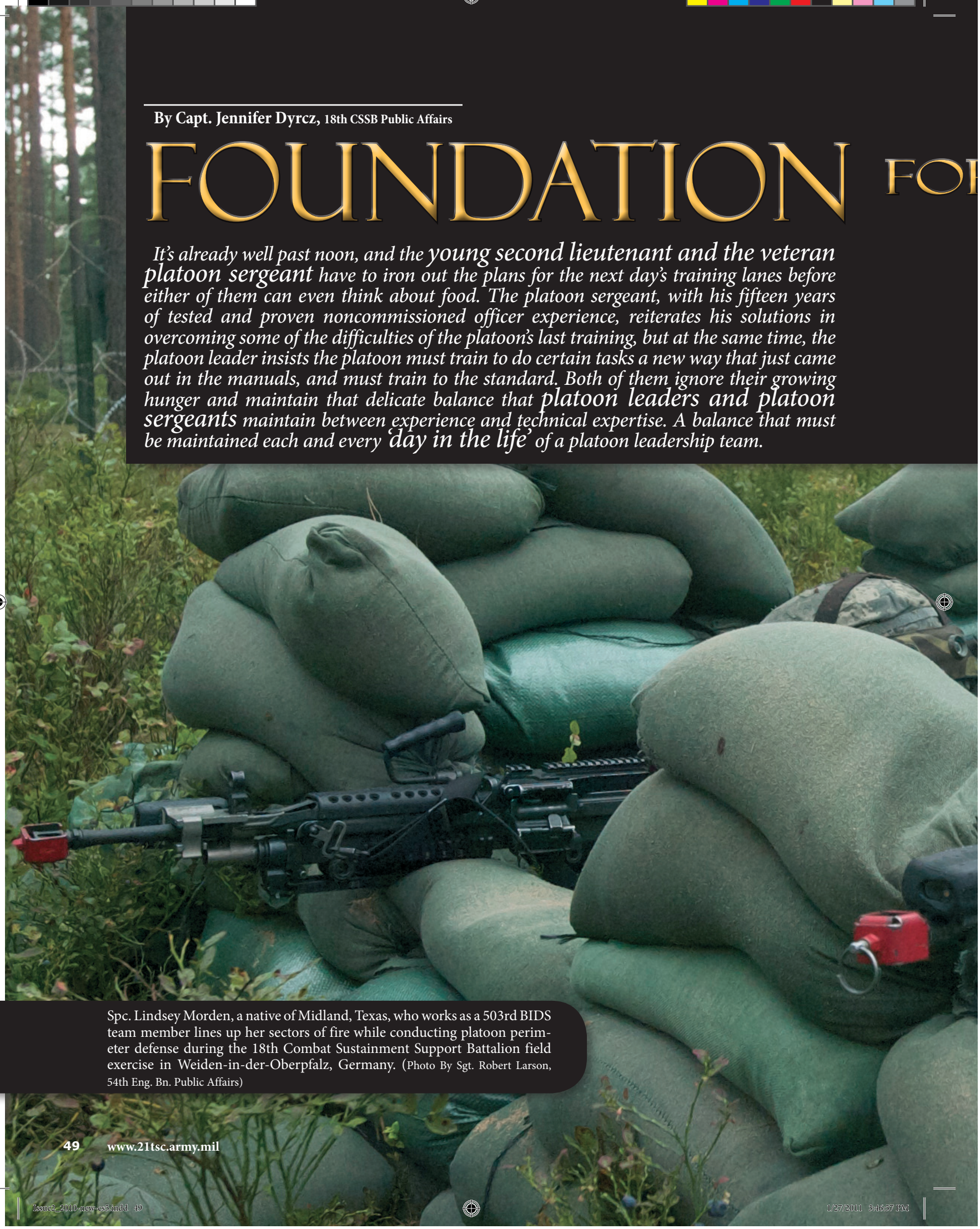
By Capt. Jennifer Dyrcz, 18th CSSB Public Affairs

FOUNDATION FOR

It's already well past noon, and the **young second lieutenant and the veteran platoon sergeant** *have to iron out the plans for the next day's training lanes before either of them can even think about food. The platoon sergeant, with his fifteen years of tested and proven noncommissioned officer experience, reiterates his solutions in overcoming some of the difficulties of the platoon's last training, but at the same time, the platoon leader insists the platoon must train to do certain tasks a new way that just came out in the manuals, and must train to the standard. Both of them ignore their growing hunger and maintain that delicate balance that* **platoon leaders and platoon sergeants** *maintain between experience and technical expertise. A balance that must be maintained each and every* **'day in the life'** *of a platoon leadership team.*



Spc. Lindsey Morden, a native of Midland, Texas, who works as a 503rd BIDS team member lines up her sectors of fire while conducting platoon perimeter defense during the 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion field exercise in Weiden-in-der-Oberpfalz, Germany. (Photo By Sgt. Robert Larson, 54th Eng. Bn. Public Affairs)

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FOR SUCCESS

Second Lt. Micheal Awoyomi and Sgt. 1st Class William Westerman demonstrate a partnership of excellence as they lead the 503rd Biological Integrated Detection System platoon during the 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion field training exercise. The platoon is attached to the 12th Chemical Company out of Schweinfurt, Germany.

Awoyomi, 27, a native of Tacoma, Wash., initially enlisted in the Army at the age of 18 as a generator mechanic. He is originally from Nigeria and received his U.S. citizenship while enlisted. Awoyomi deployed to Iraq in 2003 and Afghanistan in 2005. He commissioned through the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Wash., with a degree in psychology.

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Westerman, 40, a native of Auxvasse, Mo., initially enlisted in the Army in 1988. He served in Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield as a cannon crewman and Operation Iraqi Freedom I in the 1st Armored Division with as a decontamination platoon sergeant. He holds a bachelors degree in business administration.

The respect between Awoyomi and Westerman is easy to spot. Due to the nature of chemical detection, standard procedures and training are constantly changing. It is this training in the latest way of doing things that second lieutenants often bring with them to a new platoon. Awoyomi completed the Chemical Basic Officer Leadership Course in 2009 and brought with him new information from the Army schoolhouse.

"As a former training development noncommissioned officer at the chemical school, I am aware there have been major changes at CBOLC. Many of these changes are technical and lessons learned from Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. It takes a long time to get these changes into a field environment. However, because they are getting to their unit right out of the schoolhouse young lieutenants come with more knowledge then those who have many years in service," said Westerman.

It is clear Westerman, as a seasoned senior leader, appreciates this "shot in the arm" of new information. He then filters the updated methods from Awoyomi through his experience as a noncommissioned officer down to their Soldiers.

The mentorship goes both ways.

"When I was enlisted my first sergeant used to say 'as a leader there comes a time when you don't come to work anymore because you want to, but because you have to; not because the Army says you have to, but because you have Soldiers looking up to you as leader and they think everything you do is the standard.'"

"As a platoon leader with Soldiers, you see the wisdom in this statement. What drives it home for me is I have a platoon sergeant who makes it to work before our Soldiers wake up, puts in a full day and works into the night. That level of dedication to lead Soldiers is very easy to emulate. He shows me if you are a leader you have no excuse not to get what you need done, done," said Awoyomi.

Awoyomi and Westerman believe mentorship and respect is not something just for command teams; they intentionally push down and cultivate this mindset in their Soldiers.

When the BIDS platoon deploys, the four-man teams operate on their own for several weeks at a time. They stop their work only to come back to their platoon base station to resupply. They use their example of working as a team to lead and inspire their Soldiers.

Awoyomi and Westerman understand that Soldiers need to know how to work with outside elements like lab agencies, coalition forces and technical escort units.

"A BIDS platoon is noncommissioned officer heavy; it's important to have them confident and self reliant. Sgt. 1st Class Westerman fosters that environment for all those around him, no matter what their rank. His professionalism is evident, and he applies the right amount of force in the right situations," said Awoyomi.

Westerman credits his seven years in a staff position to learning how to work with different people in various situations.

"I definitely try to learn from his people skills," said Awoyomi.

"I like working with the lieutenant because once we are tasked from higher, we will find a way and make it work," said Westerman.

Awoyomi and Westerman have seen the fruits of their labor blossom; however, others outside their platoon see the positive environment as well.

"As the former 503rd (BIDS) platoon leader, I am happy to see my old platoon with a command team that works together to develop Soldiers. They actively mentor each other and lead by example. Thus

Sgt. 1st Class William Westerman (left), 503rd BIDS platoon sergeant, and 2nd Lt. Micheal Awoyomi (right), 503rd BIDS platoon leader, discuss initial set up for the 18th CSSB field exercise with a 503rd BIDS Soldier in Weiden-in-der-Oberpfalz, Germany. (Photo By Sgt. Robert Larson, 54th Eng. Bn. Public Affairs)

Spc. Andy Torres, a 503rd BIDS platoon team member, conducts platoon perimeter defense during the 18th CSSB field exercise in Weiden-in-der-Oberpfalz, Germany. (Photo By Sgt. Robert Larson, 54th Eng. Bn. Public Affairs)

creating an environment where the Soldiers do the same with each other," said 1st Lt. Julie Strecker, a native of Niwot, Colo., who works as the 12th Chemical Company executive officer.

A BIDS platoon is set up to detect environmental biological agents, which have been weaponized and are larger than 2 microns, with a deoxyribonucleic acid or ribonucleic acid structure.

It is the BIDS platoon's job to provide early detection for medical personnel to treat any potential exposure to biological agents and to determine which biological agents have been used; the information is used only as an aid for treatment.

The medical personnel receiving the information from the BIDS platoon use the data and pre-analysis of the samples taken to aid them in deciding which biological agents have been deployed. This helps the medical specialists decide on methods of treatment. The samples the BIDS platoon helps to analyze give the medical teams more time to treat any biological hazard, which may have occurred, as early detection significantly decreases potential harm.

The 503rd BIDS platoon is comprised of seven teams. Each team has two vehicles; a BIDS van and a support vehicle, with a total of four people per team. The BIDS team leaders are usually staff sergeants and each have a sergeant and two enlisted Soldiers.

Leading these Soldiers to accomplish their mission takes the delicate balance, and mutual respect of a two-way mentorship and leadership team like the one found in Awoyomi and Westerman.

2nd Lt. Micheal Awoyomi, 503rd BIDS platoon leader, helps setup tents for the 18th CSSB field exercise in Weiden-in-der-Oberpfalz,Germany. (Photo By Sgt. Robert Larson, 54th Eng. Bn. Public Affairs)

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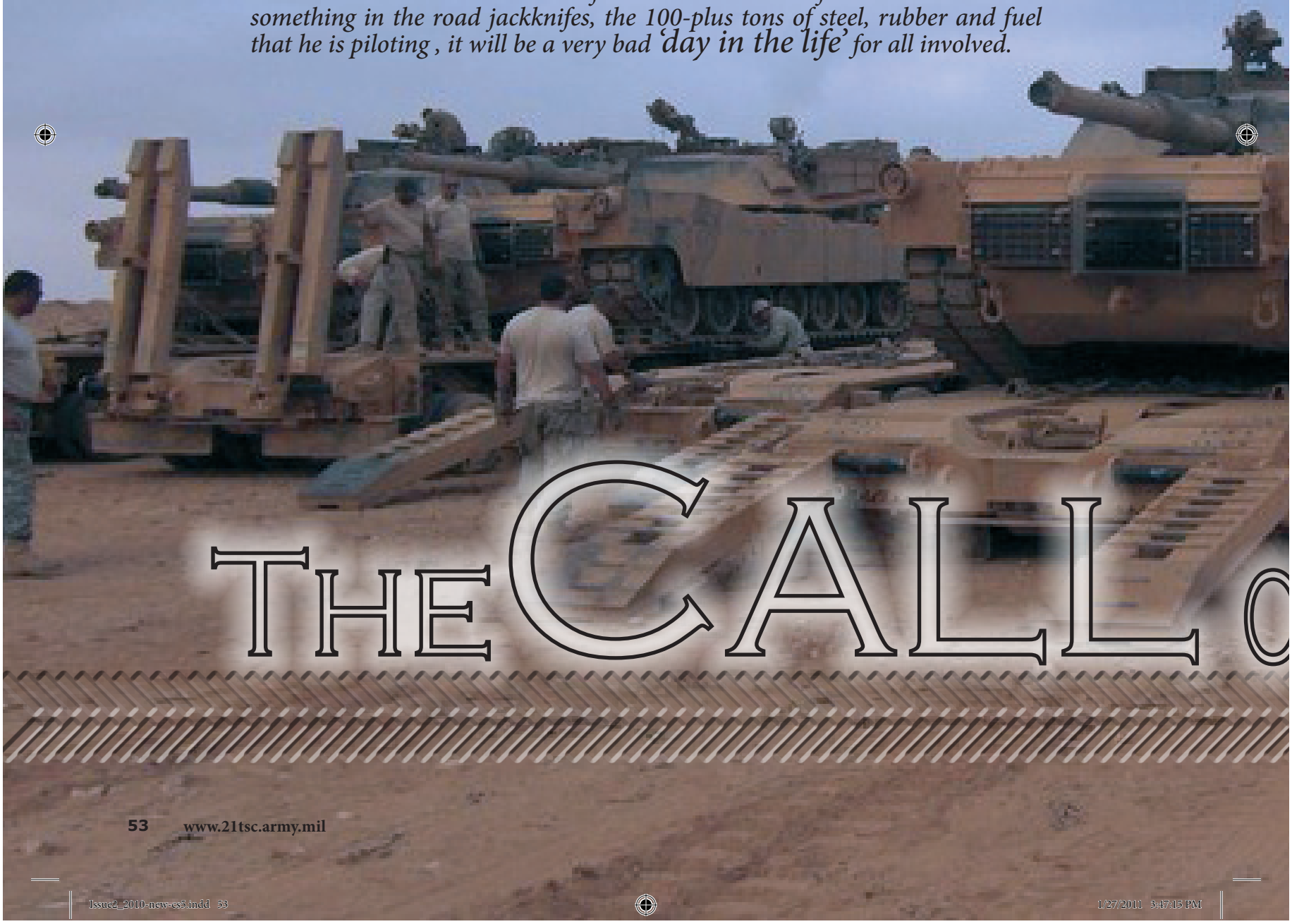
Heavy Equipment Transport Systems, consisting of the M1070 truck tractor and the M1000 Heavy Equipment Transporter semi-trailer loaded with tanks are lined-up for unloading during African Lion 2009. (Photo by Franz-Josef Tonn, 6966th TTT)

Squinting in the mid afternoon sunlight, the tank commander rides in the back of the ***M1070 Heavy Equipment Transport Truck*** *with his crew and looks over the seat backs to the dash in the front compartment. 180 kilometers to go. This TC is groggy from a night of tank gunnery followed by a morning of tank cleaning and has been in and out of catnaps the entire ride while the 2.5-million dollar, 70-ton M1A1 Abrams Main Battle tank for which he is responsible rests on the HET trailer behind him. Squinting into that same brilliant sunshine and focused intently on the road before him is* ***the HET's driver, a multi-decade veteran driver with the 6966th Transportation Truck Terminal****. He feels and perceives every minor rattle, ping and bump both on the road and on his truck. His attention never falters, and the HET he's driving demands complete focus all the time. He understands this, and understands the immense responsibility he actually has as a truck driver. He knows that if his attention wavers for even a second and something in the road jackknifes, the 100-plus tons of steel, rubber and fuel that he is piloting , it will be a very bad* ***'day in the life'*** *for all involved.*



THE CALL O

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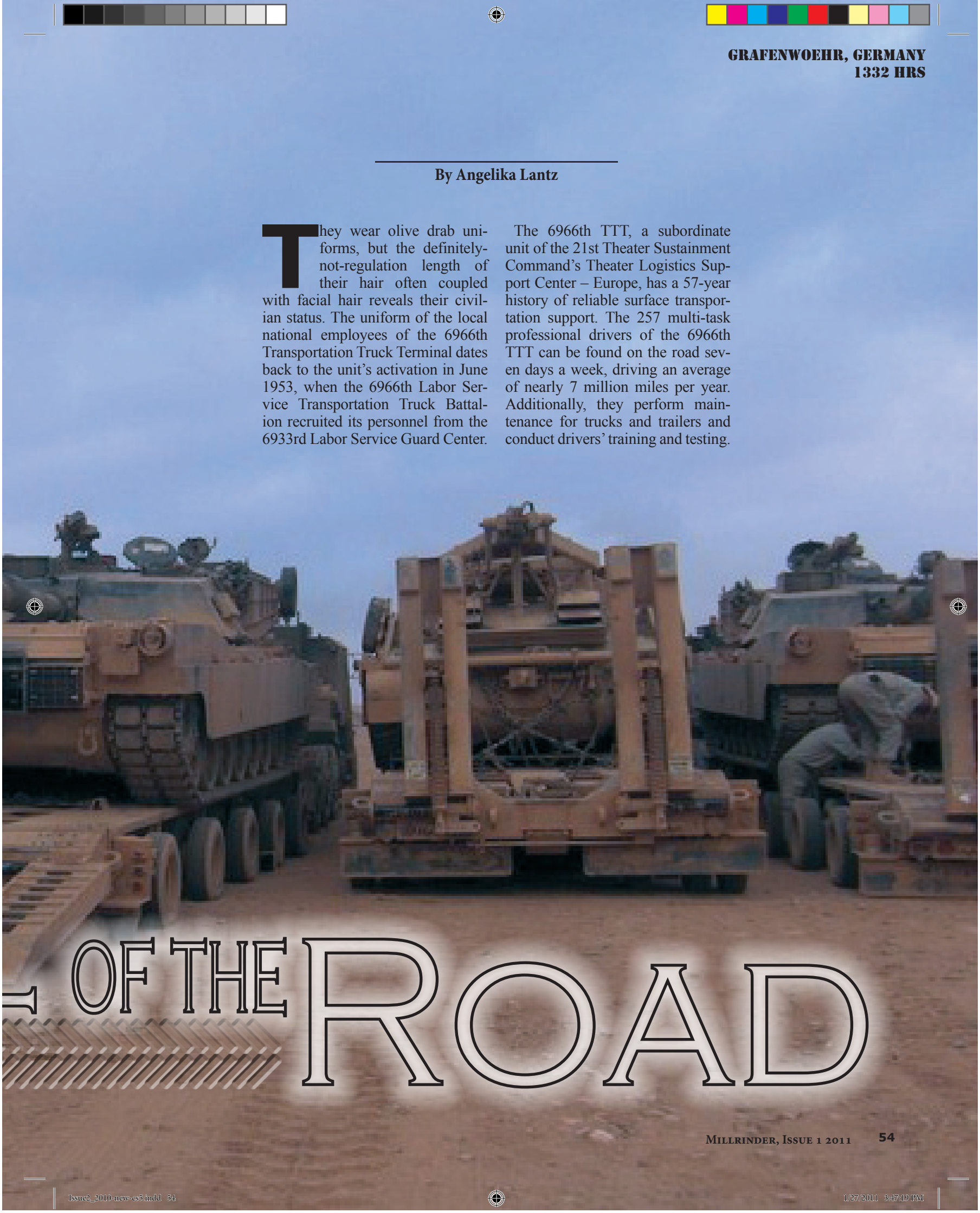
By Angelika Lantz



L OF THE ROAD

They wear olive drab uniforms, but the definitely-not-regulation length of their hair often coupled with facial hair reveals their civilian status. The uniform of the local national employees of the 6966th Transportation Truck Terminal dates back to the unit's activation in June 1953, when the 6966th Labor Service Transportation Truck Battalion recruited its personnel from the 6933rd Labor Service Guard Center.

The 6966th TTT, a subordinate unit of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command's Theater Logistics Support Center – Europe, has a 57-year history of reliable surface transportation support. The 257 multi-task professional drivers of the 6966th TTT can be found on the road seven days a week, driving an average of nearly 7 million miles per year. Additionally, they perform maintenance for trucks and trailers and conduct drivers' training and testing.

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The 6966th TTT provides the full range of common land user transportation, generally referred to as line-haul transportation, ranging from speedily moving small packages in a Sprinter van to hauling bulky tanks on Heavy Equipment Transporters. Additionally, the 6966th TTT supports the warfighters with ammunition and weapons transports and on special missions and exercises, as is the case with the upcoming Rapid Trident 2010 in the Ukraine and the ongoing support of Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo.

"Being on the road is a calling; it gets in your blood. Of course, some longing for adventure doesn't hurt either," said Franz-Josef Tonn, who is not only a professional driver, but has earned the senior master driver status, thus bridging driving and management qualifications.

Tonn, a 31-year veteran of the unit, has been a HET operator since 1996. On most missions he teams up with Bernhard Fronert, another high-miler who is looking at his 40th year with the 6966th TTT. Fronert explains that while most drivers share the love of driving, not all are ready to drive the big guns – the HET.

"Not everyone can or wants to learn how to drive such a massive vehicle. You almost need to be a bit of an adrenalin junkie. Once you are behind the wheel, you have to concentrate fully at all times. It requires constant steering to keep the HET in its lane, constant adjustment," he said.

The 6966th TTT runs two shifts for its HETs with a core of 13 operators. While they assist with line-haul missions whenever there is a need, they prefer the challenges inherent to the operation of the HET. The HET business is different from any other transportation business. It already starts with the loading process, Tonn explained.

"How do we tackle it? How will it work? How do we best secure the load? Everything is a lot more challenging," he said.

The Heavy Equipment Transport System, which consists of the M1070 truck tractor and the M1000 Heavy Equipment Transporter semi-trailer, can transport payloads up to 70 tons. It is used primarily to transport Abrams tanks and other tracked vehicles.

"Especially once the trailer is attached, you have to think for the rest of the vehicle and steer accordingly. Every rut in the road affects the way the HET handles. You simply can't afford to be inattentive – you have to concentrate all the time," Fronert said.

Tonn added that the high-milers' professional experience facilitates operating the HETs as well.

"Most of us have been driving for decades and are so attuned to our vehicles we know how to interpret every rattle and ping they make. In the unlikely case we have to call in a towing service, it would be because nothing is working anymore," Tonn said. The vehicle's cab accommodates the two HETS operators as well as the M1A1 Abrams tank crew of four. The M1070 tractor has front- and rear-axle steering, and a central tire-inflation system. The M1000 semi-trailer has automatic steerable axles and a load-leveling hydraulic suspension.

"You have to ensure the hydraulics are fully adjusted before you leave the installation; you want everything just right before you hit the road," said Andreas Michel, another HET driver at the 6966th TTT. "Leaving the installation may not be a piece of cake either – sometimes the concrete barriers must be moved for us to be able to get through."

"Yes, but it's so exciting. I say the bigger (the vehicle) the better. It's what makes it so interesting," said Fronert, revealing his adventurous side he seems to share with his fellow HET drivers.

Case in point, even more than a year later, the 6966th TTT's HET drivers still excitedly speak of their adventures in Morocco. African Lion is an annual exercise between the U.S. Marines and Royal Moroccan Armed Forces, but in 2009

A smiling Bernhard Fronert poses outside "his" Heavy Equipment Transporter during a stop along A-6. Fronert has been a professional driver with the 6966th Transportation Truck Terminal for 40 years. (Photo by Angelika Lantz)

Local national employees with the 6966th assist with loading a tank onto the semi-trailer of a Heavy Equipment Transporter system. (Photo by Franz-Josef Tonn, 6966th TTT)

the 6966th TTT supported the Task Force with 15 drivers conducting a HET convoy mission to deliver five M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks and one M88 armored recovery vehicle to Agadir, Morocco.

When the Marines checked for a unit with lots of experience transporting tanks in Europe, the 6966th TTT was recommended by way of the U.S. Africa Command, explained Uwe Feldt, the 6966th TTT transportation operations officer, who has been with the organization for 30 years.

In addition to having driven the first HETs into Morocco, the drivers are particularly proud that they, as civilians, needed no special accommodations.

"When we arrived at the exercise grounds, there were no tents, nothing– although we had been told there would be," Tonn said.

"Actually, all there was was sand," said Guenther Kiefer, another HET operator who was part of the mission. "If we had known ahead of time, we'd have been better prepared. However, we have a great team and no one complained."

Tonn agreed.

"We slept on our trucks and prepared our own meals until everything was in place. And, then we slept in the same tents, ate the same meals and used the same shower facilities as the Marines," he said proudly.

They use this example to illustrate that the drivers of the 6966th TTT are skilled professionals with a lot of experience and open minds.

"Some of us came with preconceived notions of the Moroccan people and culture, but we would go back in a heartbeat. The poverty is unimaginable, but the people are the most generous and hospitable. They share what little food they have; it's unbelievable," said Kiefer.

Feldt emphasizes that the majority of the drivers have been with the 6966th TTT for quite a time and their experience enables them to take care of themselves and whatever obstacles they encounter during a mission. They are team players, yet able to think and act independently.

"Flexibility is absolutely crucial. Frequently, we have extremely short reaction times but must still meet requirements like obtaining travel documents, entry permits, road clearances or vaccinations," he said.

"It's all about flexibility and improvisation. You have to be able to act. And, at the end of each mission, you feel good, because you know you went above and beyond (the call of duty)," Kiefer said.

Feldt has an anecdote that exemplifies just how committed the drivers are. During a convoy mission to Georgia, the drivers arrived at the harbor to learn that the captain of their designated ferry had not received his fees yet, even though the money had been transferred. He refused to let any vehicles board. Knowing the importance of their mission and that a delay during one leg of the trip would easily snowball, the 14 drivers used their personal credit cards at bank tellers to pay the captain his 7,500 Euros in cash. Thus, they were able to avoid any delays and successfully complete the mission, Feldt recalled.

Fronert, however, mentioned one other variable for a high-milers' career success.

"Your family life has to be in order. You need a strong and supportive relationship to weather that kind of stress along with all the separations," he said, recalling the times of the Eagle Express in Bosnia-Herzegovina, when shifts involved being on the road for six days, before having one day off.

Yet, they love being on road.

"It is always fun to go on special missions; the more missions we get, the better I like it," said Michel.

The men feel their length of service is self-explanatory.

"If we didn't like it, we wouldn't have worked here all that time," said Tonn, who immediately received nods of agreement from the others. "Teaming up with the same person for years is very effective, too, since you get to know how your partner will act and react. You also know he'll have your back." The motto of the 6966th TTT is "Pride in professionalism," and the local national employees are living testimony to its veracity.

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(from left to right) Maris Bisnieks, a vendor providing services in support of Exercise Saber Strike 2011, Staff Sgt. Stephen Phillippi, a contracting officer with the 409th Contracting Support Brigade, and 1st Sgt. Michael Touchinski, contracting officer's representative for the Michigan Army National Guard, discuss the final details of a service contract outside a Latvian army base near Riga, Latvia. (Photo by Capt. Greg Jones)

By Capt. Greg Jones

A HANDSHAK A CONTRACT, A FAIR DEAL

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RIGA, LATVIA
1402 HRS

As the late afternoon sky casts rays of sunlight through the thick forest near the Latvian Army training base *outside Riga, the capital city of this Baltic nation, the* U.S. Army contracting officer *walks out to greet a vendor he's been working with for several months now. Much of the day has been spent reworking a contract several times to make sure that a fair deal is done between the U.S. Army and this vendor who now smiles and greets the contracting officer. Everything is right on the paperwork, and with a smile and a good old fashioned hand shake, two seconds of a* 'day in the life' *of the* 409th Contracting Support Brigade *mark the closure of a $170,000 contract.*

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In the morning they might be negotiating with a foreign department of defense representative to process a value added tax exemption. Lunch might find them coordinating the delivery and customs processing of an inbound shipment of picket pounders for an upcoming exercise. Afternoon might find them reworking a contract for the fifth time to ensure that both the U.S. Army and the vendors working with it get a fair deal. In the end, all of the hard work the 409th Contracting Support Brigade's contracting officers do on a daily basis is done to ensure that a customer unit that has a need gets that need fulfilled.

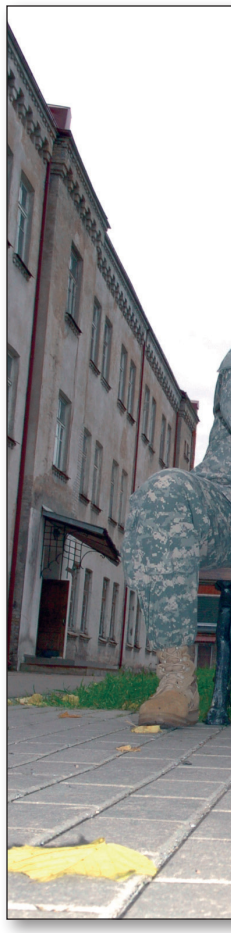
The process for an Army contract begins with a requirement. A unit that is being supported by the 409th CSB has some need that it cannot fulfill internally. This might be something as routine as feeding troops for an exercise or something much more complicated.

The unit then describes the very specific requirements to fulfill this need through what is known as a statement of requirements or SOR. This document spells out what is needed, and goes into significant details about what will fulfill the need.

This is where the 409th CSB's contracting officers come in. They take the SOR and begin what really becomes much like a detective case.

The very first thing they do is review the SOR with the supported unit and help make sure the unit has drafted an effective SOR. The SOR must be specific enough to meet the requirements, but not so specific that it eliminates all of the potential vendors.

"It's definitely a balance," said Staff Sgt. Stephen Phillippi, a contracting officer with the 409th CSB. "They've got to make sure the project is going to get done right, but sometimes you can get too restrictive. Like a contract for rental vehicles recently included that the vehicles had to be automatic transmission. That's not very easy to find here in Europe, so it would have eliminated a lot of the vendors. At this point we're really advisors to the unit."



Once the SOR has been refined by the contracting officers, the next step is to see if the requirement can be filled through some sort of capability within the military, usually starting with units closest to the supported unit.

"We have to look first if it's something we can do internally," said Phillippi. "It makes sense to have our own people do it if they can because it saves us a lot of money."

If the requirement can be filled internally within the Department of Defense, this will save the government money, but it's not always easy, according to Phillippi. Often there's a great amount of coordination that goes into fulfilling these requirements, even from one DOD organization to another. The contracting officers find themselves often involved in negotiating these arrangements even though they don't necessarily involve contracts.

If the requirement can't be filled internally, that's when the contracting officers' real detective work begins. They must then research firms who can provide the type of service or product required. There is a central DOD web resource for these firms, but it is not all-inclusive.

The contracting officers then provide the SORs to several firms. Those firms that are interested provide a bid, or an offer. The contracting officer then looks over the bids for several things.

First, they make sure the bid will meet the requirement. They have to verify that what the vendor is offering really will meet the needs of the unit.

Additionally, contracting officers have to ensure the offer and the resulting contract, if the offer is accepted, is in accordance with federal regulations. This is perhaps the most labor intensive part

Staff Sgt. Stephen Phillippi reviews and finalizes paperwork that will exempt transactions between the U.S. Army and local vendors from the Value Added Tax. (Photo by Capt. Greg Jones)

Staff Sgt. Stephen Phillippi and Maris Bisnieks refine a contract for services in support of the construction of a training forward operating base for Exercise Saber Strike 2011. (Photo by Capt. Greg Jones)

of a contracting officer's day. The regulations governing these contracts are contained in two books of about 800-1000 pages each. Sifting through this material is tedious and time consuming but absolutely critical.

"I carry these two huge books with me on all my missions," said Phillippi. "You might spend hours researching one legal question on a contract, but it's something you have to do. These are the rules that guide what we do, and we have to abide by them or the contract could be invalidated. Ultimately this hurts the unit that needs the service being provided."

While there are numerous regulations and policies guiding what they do, there's definitely a human element to it as well. It's important to the contracting officers to make sure the people they do business with not only have a positive impression of the U.S. Army, but they are genuinely treated right in the contracting process.

During a recent mission in Riga, Latvia, Phillippi and the assigned contracting officer's representative re-worked a contract at least four times to ensure that a vendor was properly reimbursed. The vendor was aware of the initial discrepancy between what was contracted and what was to be paid but had expressed that he was not worried about it. The discrepancy was not due to any error by either party but was caused by changing conditions while the construction work was being done. Leaving the discrepancy was not good enough for the contracting team, despite the vendor's insistence that it was no big deal. The team went to great lengths and ultimately made sure the vendor was paid what he was supposed to be paid. The amount – less than a thousand dollars on a contract of more than $170,000.

"(The vendor) did a great job," said the project's COR, 1st Sgt. Mike Touchinski of the Michigan Army National Guard, during discussions with Phillippi concerning the closeout of this contract. "He worked hard, and he should get the money he earned. He was honest with us, and it's just the right thing to do. We have to make sure we pay him exactly right."

What isn't in the two massive regulatory guidance books mentioned earlier is a manual on how to accomplish any number of tasks the contractors have to get done. They find themselves acting as postal agents, construction site inspectors, value added tax experts or any number of other odd jobs.

"Basically, we end up being whatever we need to get the contract complete and get the service to the unit that needs it," said Phillippi.

Ultimately, the greatest reward at the end of the contracting officer's day is seeing the completed product that was once just a requirement provided by a customer unit.

"When you see something like this, it makes it worth the effort," said Master Sgt. Eunice Hyanes, a contracting officer, indicating a 40-acre training Forward Operating Base built by the Army Michigan National Guard with equipment and materials contracted by Haynes and Phillippi. "You look out here at this FOB where there used to be just a field, and it makes you feel good to know you had a part in this – to see it through to completion."

Staff Sgt. Stephen Phillippi carries with him almost everywhere he goes, a briefcase on wheels with reams of paperwork and two massive books on the regulations that guide him as a U.S. Army contracting officer. (Photo by Capt. Greg Jones)

Levente Haller, a metal worker at the allied trades shop of the Maintenance Activity Vilseck, welds a target silhouette mount bracket for the Joint Multinational Readiness Center. (Photo by Angelika Lantz)

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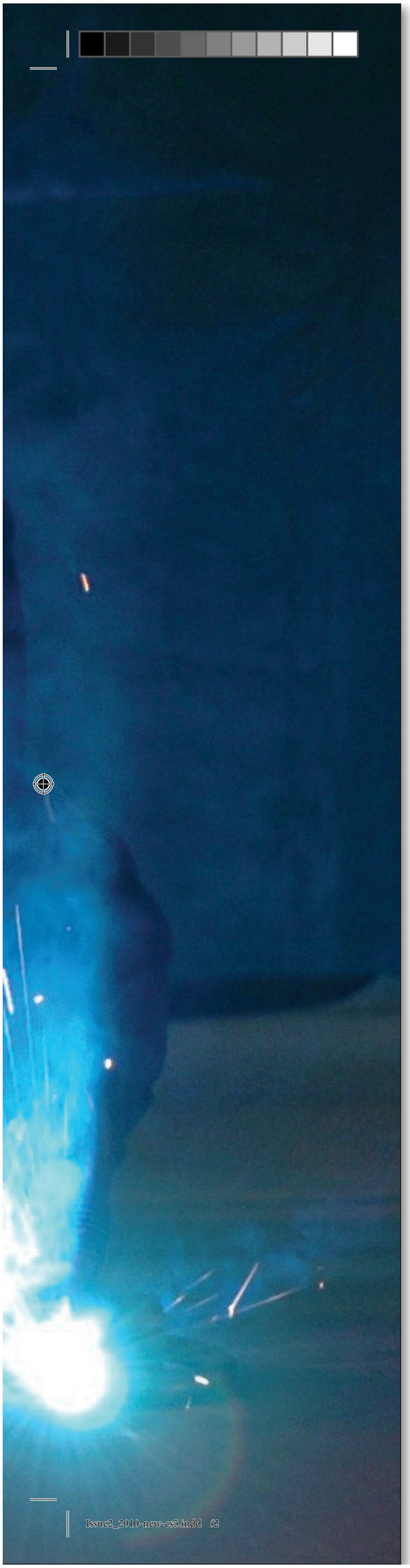

VILSECK, GERMANY
1508 HRS

IN GERMAN HANDS

The late afternoon drone of busy machinery, the scuff of booted feet striding across safety grip tape on cement floors and the omnipresent tang of machine oil in the air mix to set the backdrop for ***the maintenance shop****.*

There, you'll find the young, blue-coveralls-clad apprentice listening intently to instructions delivered in a distinct Bavarian accent. Knowing his mentor's advice is rooted in ***30 years of experience****, the apprentice assimilates it into his own knowledge base gained at trade school, and employs both when repairing Stryker parts for the U.S. Army.*

It is a scene almost identical to one the mentor himself recalls from several decades past. In fact, it is a staple in a ***'day in the life'*** *of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command's* ***Maintenance Activity in Vilseck****, Germany.*

By Angelika Lantz

The organization's name has changed five times since 1948. Its reputation for quality service and workmanship, however, remains well established and steadfast. The facility, which is still known as the "Tankshop" in the Vilseck and Grafenwoehr area, officially became the Maintenance Activity Vilseck and a subordinate activity of the 21st TSC's Theater Logistics Support Center-Europe in 1997.

MAV's mission is focused on the requirements of the Warfighter. No longer limited to direct service maintenance, MAV now supports the 21st Theater Sustainment Command's maintenance program for the European theater; provides maintenance support for the 7th Army's Joint Multinational Training Command, the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment legacy equipment, and operates an apprenticeship program in cooperation with the Bavarian government.

"MAV believes in providing the best support to our customer – the Soldier," is a statement featured prominently on briefings and presentations. Said customer support takes the shape of service and repair of wheeled and tracked vehicles and other automotive equipment and components, in support of sustainment, deployments, redeployments and reset of the U.S. Army in Europe.

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Fabian Luber, a heavy mobile equipment mechanic with the Stryker service team at the Maintenance Activity Vilseck, repairs an engine radiator bracket using a manual bending machine. (Photo by Hans-Juergen Pirner, MAV)

The workforce, which has been fully civilian since 1994, when its leadership changed from a military commander to a local national director, provides crucial constancy. It is comprised of 160 local national employees and one Department of the Army civilian. Far from feeling outnumbered, deputy director Mark Edgeington said he has the "best job in Europe."

Fluent in German and very much at home in the congenial civilian environment, Edgeington openly admired the work ethic and loyalty.

"Bavarians are very friendly and outgoing – and they want to work. They come to work ready to work," he said. "Additionally, the workforce is the best trained in the Army, exceptionally skilled and able to fix anything."

A case in point is Alfred Koenig, the allied trades shop officer. At age 61, Koenig is visibly proud to claim 40 years of employment in the same shop.

"We've had organizational and mission changes, but we've always had great managers and supervisors. I know and like the people here. I like going to work," he said.

He fondly remembered supporting numerous special missions, like NATO-led Implementation Force in former Yugoslavia, but remained matter of fact when he spoke of his work and the shop. Nevertheless, he mentioned that since there is a very low turn-over rate for employees at MAV, the resulting longevity creates competent professionals with high skill sets.

"If there is a tool our customers can't order, but need to do their work, we make it for them. For instance, we have fabricated more than 1,000 front-sight posts for M16 rifles. We also make our own tools to work on tracked and wheeled vehicles and on small arms," he said.

In addition to the special tools, the professionals in Meier's allied trades shop fabricate repair parts, steel hydraulic hoses and brake lines. Furthermore, they fabricate and repair targets and silhouettes. They also provide welding support and body work on all tactical and combat vehicles.

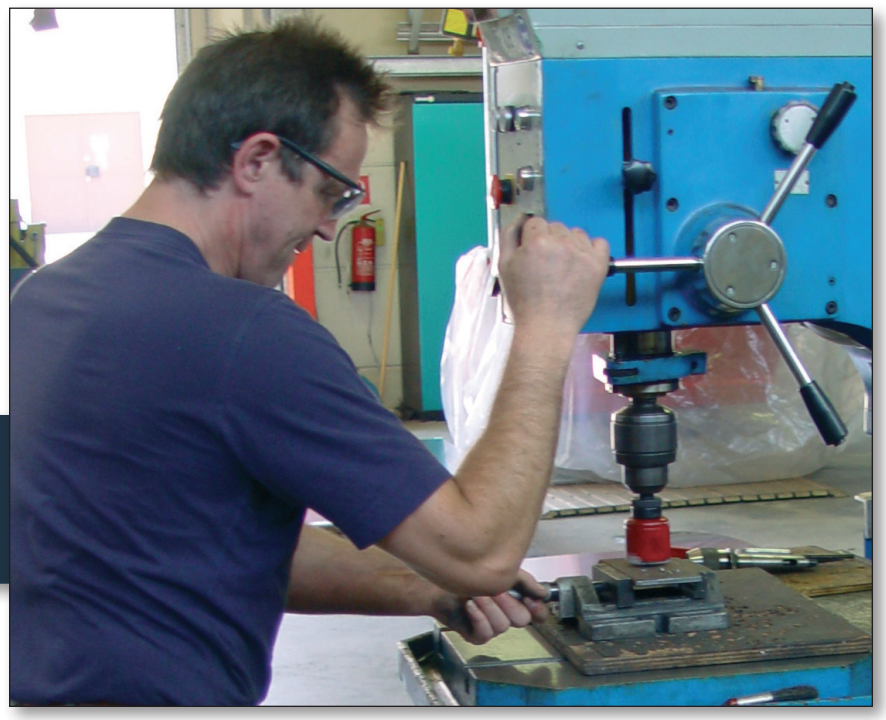
Blues eyes twinkling, Koenig encouraged fellow MAV employee Reinhold Meier to talk about recurring attempts to reinvent the wheel.

"Many of the 'innovative' ideas each new supervisor coming in has, have already been tried. I am not saying there aren't better ways to do what needs doing, but by now we do know what doesn't work," Meier, the 2nd SCR maintenance officer, said.

Meier, another Vilseck-native has been employed at MAV for 35 years. He, too, has been in the same position for the entire length of time and has seen numerous mission changes affect the work to be done. Nonetheless, he said, even as the workload fluctuates, there is always enough work to go around.

Since MAV has taken on the maintenance augmentation for the 2nd SCR, it had to customize that support to the regiment's status in the Army Force Generation process.

With the 2nd SCR currently deployed, that means MAV is responsible for the regiment's Left Behind Equipment. While Meier dismissed talk of his own experience, he turned animated and proud when speaking of "his" mechanics



Norbert Engelhard, a metal worker at the allied trades shop of the Maintenance Activity Vilseck, fabricates a target mount bracket using a drill press. (Photo by Hans-Juergen Pirner, MAV)

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and shop. He excitedly explained that there are seven motor pools full of vehicles and equipment waiting to be serviced and repaired by his skilled mechanics. Meier said that his team knows their equipment, their maintenance and that what they do is vital for the Warfighter.

"It is an enormous endeavor, and we do a lot of coordinating with the unit. It is all about customer service, after all," he said.

The 48 mechanics in Meier's shop support 1,300 vehicles with 30 different unit identification codes and require production schedules and charts to prioritize and track work flow and equipment. Another requirement calls for the right repair parts and service kits, oils and lubricants to be on hand where they are needed when they are needed.

"We always pair one of the older, experienced employees, with a younger one, and we rotate them through different sections to cross train everyone. The younger guys know more about computer usage, while the older ones often have more know-how and practice. It's a win-win situation both team members benefit from," Meier said.

He pointed out that you can't accomplish much of anything without a computer anymore. So, if it's required to do the work, you need to learn how to use it, he said. Additionally, he wants everyone in his shop to be able to work on everything that comes in.

"We send a lot of guys to school to train them on the different vehicles, which is also a great motivation factor. Furthermore, I feel it is important that you like going to work and have fun doing what you do," Meier said.

Nonetheless, it is not all fun and games and providing a healthy work environment for the employees features prominent in MAV's vision statement. Harald Thieme, the safety officer at MAV, took the lead in providing just that. The 18-year veteran of MAV assumed the responsibility for the safety program in 1997, which coincided with the unit being moved under the operational umbrella of the TLSC-E. Since then he has established what he called a "living document that needs constant changing and updating."

A quiet and modest man, Thieme employs "braving the gap," as a guideline in his professional and personal life. He said it means you have to have the courage to admit to not knowing everything. Moreover, it calls for an open mind and for a willingness to learn and to grow.

He only reluctantly admitted that his handling of the safety program has received accolades from the leadership of TLSC-E. Additionally, his qualifications as a safety officer have earned him a coveted spot for the Bundeswehr's 13-week safety course in Sonthofen, Germany, making him only the second civilian to win that distinction.

"The safety program actually is fun because I get to deal with people. I consider it an exercise in creativity, sometimes even an act of diplomacy. You have to make sure everyone fully understands the importance of a safe work environment – but you have to do it in a sound and rational way, without becoming dictatorial," he said.

Complementing his low-key style, Thieme seems to have found a discreet way to ensure he is kept up to date and informed of what is going on at MAV.

"I find that I learn more when I take the time to make coffee than when I take a formal walk through the shops. People open up and talk when they are away from their desks and places of work," he said.

This illustration of how three of MAV's long-term employees have taken the lead in ensuring mission success is by no means comprehensive, Edgeington remarked.

"They are all very modest and so used to doing what needs doing, they no longer think it's a big deal. There is so much more to their jobs than they let on," he said.

Nevertheless, while this glimpse at MAV may not be all-encompassing, it provides an impressive image of three dedicated employees' commitment to supporting the Warfighter. One day at a time.

Hans Meiler, a heavy mobile equipment mechanic at the automotive 1 shop of the Maintenance Activity Vilseck and Roland Sollfrank, a combat vehicle repair inspector at MAV, adjust the transmission of a M2A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle. (Photo by Angelika Lantz)

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RELIEF IS ON THE WAY

By Jennifer L. King
405th AFSB Public Affairs

Flood waters continue to rise, as they have been all day. In the remote village in northwestern Pakistan, families of displaced villagers flock to the high ground, and the distribution location for humanitarian aid. They have little left in the world, and only know where their very next meal is coming from. It's coming from the international aid workers handing out supplies from several pallets bearing a red white and blue sticker whose bright colors seem to defy their dreary, muddy surroundings; a sticker placed there by members of the 405th Army Field Support Brigade because for them, helping people they will never meet is just another part of a 'day in the life.'

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Italian local national employees of the 3rd Battalion, 405th Army Field Support Brigade, Livorno, Italy, prepare supplies for shipment to Pakistan. The battalion continues to send shipments of humanitarian aid supplies to Pakistan as requested by the U.S. Agency for International Development. (Photo by Joyce Costello, U.S. Army Garrison Livorno)

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The 3rd Battalion, 405th Army Field Support Brigade is critical to the humanitarian support mission of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command. During August the unit sent shipments of humanitarian aid supplies to Pakistan and Russia to aid with the flood recovery and wildfire containment in those two countries respectively.

Pakistan relief efforts

Northwest Pakistan has experienced significant flooding caused by extremely heavy monsoon rains, and millions of Pakistanis have been impacted by the natural disaster. At the request of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the unit sent supplies Aug. 13.

"We received a request to send 1,310 rolls of heavy-duty, waterproof plastic sheeting to Pakistan immediately in order to assist USAID in its disaster relief efforts," said Alberto Chidini, who manages the USAID program for the battalion. "The plastic sheeting will be used by USAID to construct temporary shelters for families whose homes have been damaged or swept away by the flood waters."

Lt. Col. Richard Pierce, commander of the 3rd Bn., 405th AFSB, is proud that his organization plays such an integral part in international relief efforts such as these.

"I have only been in command a short time and am already awed by the international scope and reach of our mission," Pierce said. "I am pleased that we have the ability to assist in relieving human suffering throughout the world, and I truly believe that support to these humanitarian missions is one of the most important missions that our battalion has."

The plastic sheeting was removed from the warehouse, packed for shipping and then trucked to the Pisa International Airport. The shipment left Pisa for Islamabad Aug. 14.

The 3rd Bn., 405th AFSB is responsible for the storage and maintenance of USAID emergency humanitarian assistance commodities under an interagency agreement between the Army and the U.S. State Department.

Russian wildfire containment efforts

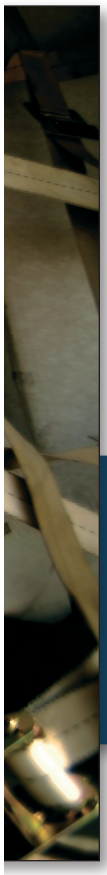
The U.S. government worked with the government of Russia to outline a comprehensive response to hundreds of wildfires across central and western Russian. On Aug. 14, fire-fighting equipment, including 40 toolkits and 45 chainsaws, was released from the Army Prepositioned Stocks in Italy at the request of the U.S. European Command.

"The U.S. European Command contacted us regarding the release of equipment," explained Lt. Col. Richard Pierce, commander of 3rd Battalion.

"We quickly retrieved the equipment from the APS and palletized it for shipment to Russia. Furthermore, we received phenomenal support from the Italian 46th Air Brigade in Pisa. We are proud that we are able to do some small part to help ease the suffering of the Russian people and hopefully assist with resolving this catastrophe."

Col. Ronald Green, commander of the 405th AFSB, strongly supports all humanitarian aid missions that the battalion receives.

Senior Airman Blake Mcardle, a C-130H Hercules cargo master assigned to the 746th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, pushes out cargo onto a forklift at Chaklala Air Force Base, Pakistan in support of humanitarian relief efforts on Aug. 25. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Andy M. Kin, 1st Combat Camera Squadron)



Airmen from the 746th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, load aid and supplies onto a C-130H Hercules aircraft in support of humanitarian relief efforts in Pakistan at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, Aug. 20. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Andy M. Kin, 1st Combat Camera Squadron)

"We routinely provide humanitarian assistance whenever we receive a request for aid," Green said. "We value our relationship with Russia, and this is an example of our ability to work together and support each other in times of crisis."

Shipment of the supplies was not an easy task for the battalion.

"Although we are only shipping 85 pieces of fire-fighting equipment, the sheer weight of the shipment presents some challenges," explained Angelo Borelli, support operations officer for 3rd Battalion.

"For example, each of the toolkits weighs more than 300 pounds; however, we're accustomed to challenging logistical operations, and we were able to get everything packed and palletized on six pallets within 24 hours of receiving the request from EUCOM."

The pallets were transported from the battalion via truck to the Pisa Military Airport, where it was to be loaded onto a U.S. Air Force C-130J for delivery to Russia.

USAID resupply mission

Quick response to disasters begins with preparation. In May, the unit completed a resupply operation in support of the U.S. Agency for International Development's U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance.

The battalion shipped 1,000 rolls of plastic sheeting to USAID's Dubai warehouse in preparation for future natural disaster response.

"Our battalion maintains USAID's emergency relief supplies under an interagency agreement," explained Col. Roger McCreery, former commander of the 3rd Battalion. "In addition to preparing USAID relief supplies for shipment directly to a disaster area, we also maintain their stocks and can ship them to the two other USAID warehouses in Dubai and Miami as needed."

The battalion is uniquely situated to support missions such as this because of its easy access to rail, water and air transportation.

"In this instance, we used water transportation to ship the plastic sheeting to Dubai," said Alberto Chidini, who oversees the humanitarian aid operations for the battalion. "We loaded the rolls of plastic sheeting into 40-foot containers and then transported the containers by truck to the Port of Livorno for water transshipment."

The 3rd Bn., 405th AFSB is responsible for the storage and maintenance of USAID emergency humanitarian assistance commodities under an interagency agreement between the U.S. Army and the U.S. State Department.

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By Sgt. Robert Larson
54th Eng. Bn. Public Affairs

SEEK AND

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HOHENFELS, GERMANY
1816 HRS

The sun is setting, and soon darkness will further complicate their task. The two sappers go back and forth, checking each others' calculations. They've laid the charge that will detonate the Improvised Explosive Device in place, and they think they've calculated the charge right, but thinking isn't good enough. They have to know. Too little explosive material and the charge won't destroy the IED and will probably make the situation much more unstable and dangerous instead of better. Too much of a charge will cause collateral damage and possibly injure or kill fellow Soldiers or the local citizens these Sappers are trying to protect from IEDs. Although it's only training for this 'day in the life' of a Sapper Squad, they take the task very seriously as they will likely be doing exactly this with real explosives and real IEDs downrange within a few months' time.

Soldiers in the 54th Engineer Battalion, 18th Engineer Brigade, train to use the RG-31 with mine rollers for route clearance operations during battalion's Mission Readiness Exercise in Hohenfels, Germany. Soldiers were evaluated during patrolling and discovery operations from the 31st of July until the 20th of August to prepare for deployment. (Photo by Sgt. Robert Larson, 54th Eng. Bn. Public Affairs)

—A SAPPER SQUAD'S STORY

DESTROY

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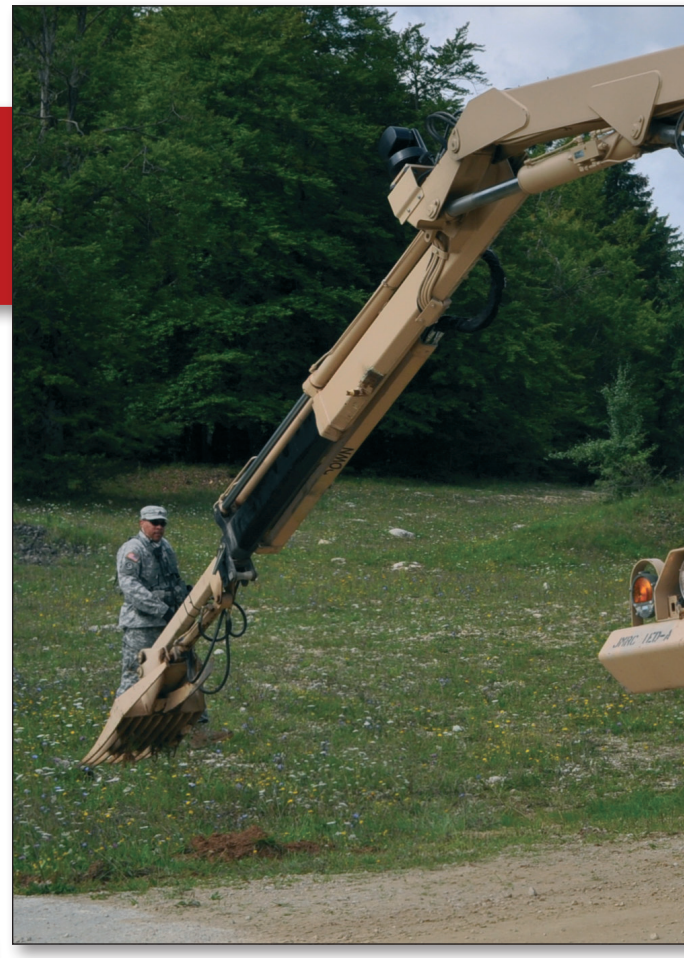

Soldiers from the 541st Sapper Company, interrogate a suspected Improvised Explosive Device as one of Raptor Team's observer controllers watches carefully during their Mission Readiness Exercise in Hohenfels, Germany, Aug. 16. The unit conducted operations such as route clearance, dismounted operations, patrolling and many other missions in order to better prepare itself for deployment. (Photo by Spc. Aislinn Amig, 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)

During the months following the 54th Engineer Battalion's return from Iraq and Afghanistan back to its home station in Bamberg, Germany, in July and August 2009, the battalion has gone through many changes. Changes in personnel, leadership and policies are a few among many. The new faces in the ranks kept up with the losses of older, more experienced Soldiers while also bringing fresh, new ideas to the unit. One squad out of many is 1st Squad, 2nd Platoon, 541st Engineer Company (Sapper). Sapper squads directly support infantry and other combat units by providing a variety of combat engineering capabilities including demolitions, bridge building, mine clearing and route clearance.

The squad has been around for many years, but it has never stayed the same. The people, the training, and the mission have all changed. The squad now is much different than before the company's deployment to Afghanistan.

"It's kind of odd because in the beginning 541st was torn apart due to PCS (Permanent Change of Station) moves, squad leaders leaving and leadership changing out all the time," said Spc. Christopher Lennon, an engineer with 1st Squad, 2nd Platoon, 541st Eng. Co., from Syracuse, N.Y. "We still maintained our friendships, those of us left. We had a common bond. We accepted the new Soldiers like they were our own; it was like they were already in the squad."

The squad had just returned from a tour in Afghanistan last year, and with that meant moves. The changes were bittersweet; it allowed Soldiers to step up and lead troops, but it also gave them another challenge – teaching new skills to the incoming Soldiers. It also meant that the company would lose a lot of its more experienced Soldiers. After a few months, the changes slowed down and since then the squad has begun preparations for deployment.

The squad was brought together under Staff Sgt. Ryan Newsome, the squad leader for 1st Squad, 541st Eng. Co. and a native of Tampa, Fla. His mentorship helped the squad through multiple training exercises as well as everyday garrison life. The squad consists of six Soldiers, two of which are team leaders

Staff Sgt. Ryan Newsome of Tampa, Fla., and Spc. Christopher Lennon, 1st Squad, 2nd Platoon, 541st Sapper Company, recover after a long, difficult mission during the 54th Engineer Battalion's Mission Readiness Exercise from July 31 to Aug. 20 in Hohenfels, Germany. (Photo by Sgt. Robert Larson, 54th Eng. Bn. Public Affairs)

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who are essential to helping teach and develop the younger Soldiers in the squad.

"We do our best to train as much as possible everyday on the skills we will need like drivers' training, demolitions calculations, infantry tactics, patrolling, IED (Improvised Explosive Device) defeat techniques and route clearance. We keep motivation and that (combat) mentality all the time to be successful downrange – even the new guys," said Newsome.

The younger Soldiers are enthusiastic about training and take their jobs seriously, soaking up every bit of advice and information their leadership gives them, he added.

"They give us information about what it was like when they were deployed to kind of ready us. Some things you can't teach just by the book alone; hearing about another person's experiences helps too," said Pvt. 1st Class Wendell Burley, an engineer in 1st Squad, 2nd Platoon, 541st Eng. Co. who is from Baltimore.

When asked about what he thought about sharing his experiences in Afghanistan with the younger Soldiers in his squad, Lennon said "Sometimes, it's easier for them to understand from someone who had just recently been there. It's easier just to open your heart and tell them how it is. It helps to build their strengths."

The squad spent a month in Grafenwoehr training area where they conducted gunnery operations, a few weeks in the Bamberg local training area working on individual and squad skills followed by several weeks in the Hohenfels training area. They geared up to conduct their Mission Readiness Exercise and refine their strategies and techniques at the platoon and squad level. Their missions were highly realistic, with multiple units conducting operations in the same area.

The staff of Hohenfels Observer Controller Team taught the Soldiers many new skills they hadn't previously had the technology or equipment to experience. The beginning of August marked the beginning of their training lanes outside of the classroom environment. The Soldiers of 1st Squad couldn't wait to be outside doing their mission.

"They are a great group of guys, and some of the hardest workers I've ever had. Lennon is a robot. The rest of us have to try and keep up. I don't think I could have asked for a better squad of Sappers to work with than this one, just don't tell them I said that," said Sgt. Leslie Pittman, a team leader with 1st Squad, 2nd Platoon, 541st Eng. Co. and a resident of Detroit.

With all of that motivation, the Soldiers said they believe the upcoming deployment will bring them closer together as a team.

"It will make us stronger as a team and get us mentally ready to go," said Lennon. "I absolutely believe that we're the strongest team – we work hard together, train together and we will come back together. We are not only a team, we are a family."

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Maj. Lloyd Togisala performs a traditional fire dance during a community event in Kasierslautern, Germany.
(Photos courtesy of 405th AFSB)

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Samoan Fire

Uniforms are starting to trade places with jeans, T-shirts, and in some cases, traditional Polynesian dress. The **duty day is over** *for most, and the evening is well on its way. Outside the sun has already set, and inside the stage alights with fire, and primal* **Polynesian drumbeats** *pound through the air. The large Polynesian man takes the stage and begins pounding, slapping and stomping with amazing speed, rhythm and accuracy. Not just passing time during off-duty hours, he and his fellow dancers are involved in a conscious effort to maintain their* **physical, mental, spiritual and family fitness** *in a unique way near the end of this* **'day in the life.'**

By Jennifer L. King
405th AFSB Public Affairs

Maj. Lloyd Togisala is not a small man. Thick of chest and broad of shoulder, he fills every door he enters, both with his size and his engaging personality. But his muscular physique is misleading; Togisala is as light as a feather when he performs as a Polynesian dancer.

Togisala, who is assigned to the 405th Army Field Support Brigade, is a sight to behold when he steps out of his uniform and dons a traditional Polynesian cloth skirt.

His hands slap with astonishing speed, pounding a steady staccato of beats, as his feet stomp the floor in a blur of movement. He twirls and flails with a grace and rapidity that seems virtually impossible. It's more than just physical exercise, though. It's an expression of heritage, a preservation of culture and an embrace of history that drive Togisala to perform.

When asked how he became involved in Polynesian dance, Togisala laughs.

"I really had no choice but to get on the stage," he said. "My family has performed traditional dances from the Pacific Islands since before I was born, and performing has always been part of our family."

Although Togisala's father hails from American Samoa and his mother is a native of Western Sa-

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moa, the dances he and his family performed came from all over Polynesia: Samoa, Hawaii, Tonga, New Zealand, Tahiti and Fiji.

"I've been on stage since I could walk, which is both good and bad," Togisala said. "It's good because it's entertaining, and I learned a lot, but it's bad because perfection is often required in order to stay synchronized with the other dancers. You can't mess up or you'll hear about it from the group."

"Or from my mom," he said with a grin.

Virtually every member of Togisala's extended family is involved in Polynesian dance or music, and in addition to dancing, Togisala plays a variety of instruments, including the piano, guitar, ukulele and drums. Togisala also has the unusual ability of playing two drums at one time, each with a different hand, which he performs during the luau dances.

Not only are Togisala and his fellow dancers showing their skills, and enjoying the dance, they're actually keeping fit in many ways. What's obvious is the physical benefits from such a physically exerting past time. What's less obvious is the family well-being that is fostered by these activities that makes Togisala's main support network, his family, stronger each time they share this special cultural observance.

"The important thing to us is that the traditional dances remain fresh in our minds and an integral part of our lives," Togisala said. "In this day and age – traditions, culture and language can easily get lost or forgotten."

Indeed, dancing and performing is still a family affair for Togisala. His wife and all five of his children practice the art.

"We have many great memories of the different shows we've been part of since our children were

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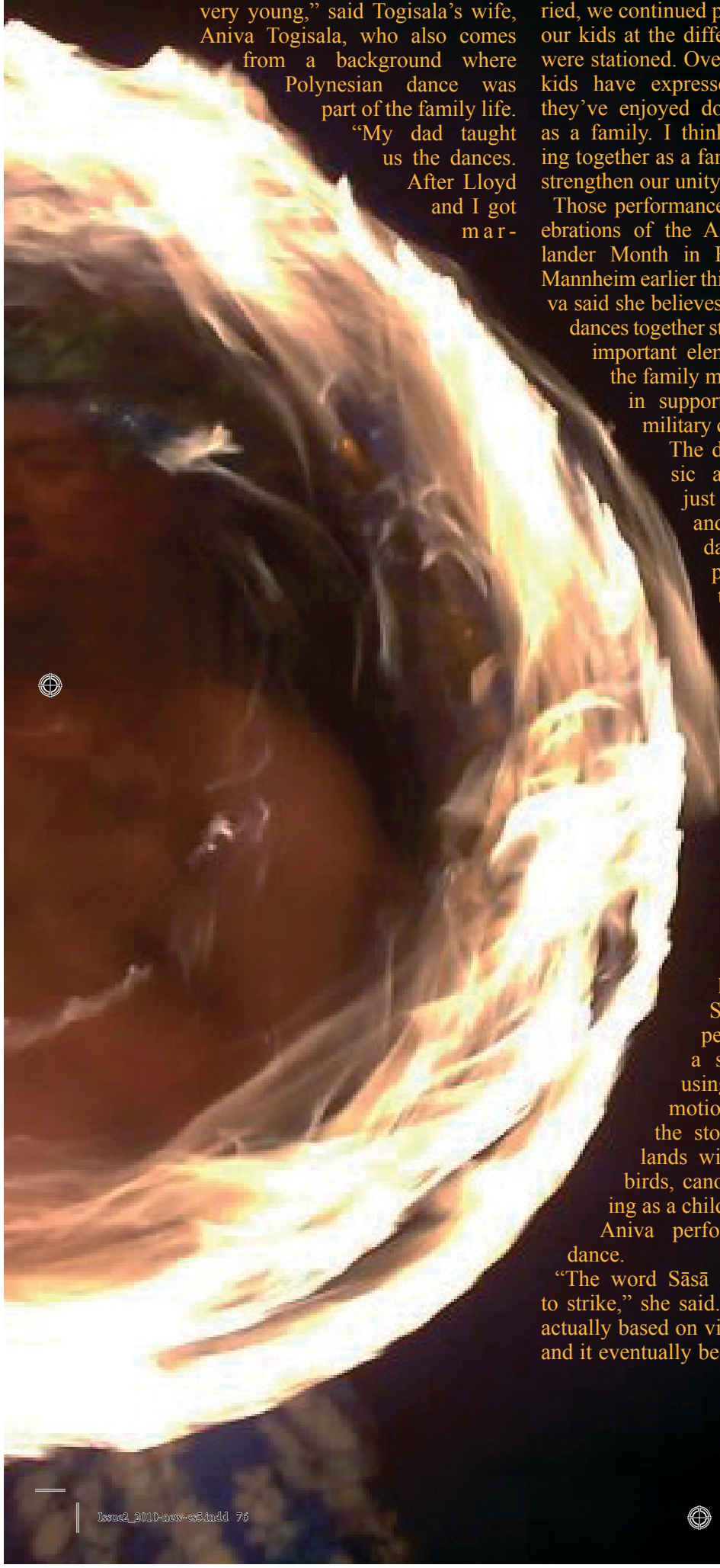

very young," said Togisala's wife, Aniva Togisala, who also comes from a background where Polynesian dance was part of the family life.

"My dad taught us the dances. After Lloyd and I got married, we continued performing with our kids at the different places we were stationed. Over the years, our kids have expressed how much they've enjoyed doing the shows as a family. I think our performing together as a family has helped strengthen our unity."

Those performances included celebrations of the Asian-Pacific Islander Month in Heidelberg and Mannheim earlier this year, and Aniva said she believes the family that dances together stays together, an important element given that the family moves frequently in support of Togisala's military career.

The dances and music are more than just movements and sounds. Each dance tells a particular story that relates to the Polynesian culture.

"The Samoan slap dance or siva patipati is actually about mosquitoes and how the Samoan people always have to slap and shoo the bugs away," Togisala said. "The Sāsā dance is performed from a sitting position using legs and hand motions, and it tells the stories of the islands with themes like birds, canoeing and playing as a child."

Aniva performs the Sāsā dance.

"The word Sāsā literally means to strike," she said. "The dance is actually based on village activities, and it eventually became a form of entertainment for the Samoan Royal family and other royal dignitaries that visited the islands."

In addition to the Sāsā dance, Aniva also performs the Hawaiian Huki lau, a graceful dance where the hands tell the story, and the Tahitian dance, where the hips tell the story.

"Tahitian-style hula dancing is a cultural dance that mimics the movement of the ocean," Aniva said.

Although both the slap dance and the Sāsā dances are well-received by audiences, neither is Togisala's favorite dance to perform.

"The Samoan fire dance is my favorite," Togisala said.

The dance derives from ancient Samoan warriors who showed no fear of threats, a necessary trait when performing the dance, and it's a dance that takes a great deal of skill and training.

"I actually put the fire on my tongue and then twirl the flames on a knife," Togisala said. "The Samoan fire dance is a very serious dance and demonstrates skill, bravery and maybe just a touch of crazy. When I eat the fire or put it on my feet, there's no faking it. My tongue is on fire, and my feet get hot."

Togisala also performs a nunchucks and staff dance very similar to martial arts, and he admits there is some degree of danger in that performance as well.

"In these types of performances, you simply cannot make a mistake," he said. "There is no room for error. The last thing you want is a knife flying into the audience or your nunchucks hitting someone."

Although Togisala admits the dancing is a great physical conditioner, he said he and his fellow dancers don't do the dances only to keep in shape.

"The dances remind me of the culture of the South Pacific," he said. "Dancing keeps our heritage alive and helps me remember my family traditions."

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Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Stoner, the master resiliency trainer for the 18th Military Police Brigade, 21st Theater Sustainment command, teaches 230th MP Co. Soldiers a resiliency course at Sembach Air Base, Sept. 1. (Photos by Sgt. Fay Conroy)

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MANNHEIM, GERMANY
2030 HRS

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS STONER STRENGTH★ RESILIENCE

It's 8:30 p.m., and the kids are finally in bed. The oldest has been playing that stupid war game on his video game console all night, and the sounds still reverberate in his father's head. That same father sits in the living room now, trying to watch the football game, but he can't focus. He can't think about much else besides the events that occurred during the deployment he just recently returned from. He's not said a single word to his wife since yesterday morning. Each time the bathroom door slams shut, it sounds just like an incoming mortar. His fists clench and unclench rhythmically. He senses his wife come into the room, and his whole body tenses. She senses this herself and leaves again. As the bathroom door slams one more time, he actually jumps out of his chair and both hands clench into tight fists. It's not a good 'day in the life' for him. Hands balled into fists, he walks over to the phone, forces his hand open, and dials his platoon sergeant's phone number. "I need help, sergeant."

By Sgt. Fay Conroy

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The difficulty Soldiers can have adjusting to civilian life after returning from war is not a new problem. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have brought to the military a new awareness of these problems, and new ways of dealing with them.

A little over a year ago the Army introduced Master Resiliency Trainers as part of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program as a way to teach Soldiers how to develop skills to help them deal with not only the stresses of combat, but also problems with family and everyday stressors.

Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Stoner, the MRT for the 18th Military Police Brigade, 21st Theater Sustainment Command, not only helps Soldiers build resiliency, but at one point in his 25-year career he also had to ask for help.

"I decided to become an MRT because when I came back from the Gulf in March of 2003, I actually went home on emergency leave and I had some very difficult times reintegrating. I also had some severe marital problems as a result of it," he said.

He eventually decided to ask his command for help with his problems despite the fact that in 2003, there was still a stigma attached to Soldiers who requested help when they felt like their problems were becoming overwhelming.

"My chain of command was very supportive, which was rare back in 2003. Back in 2003, especially being a military policeman, if you asked for help you were going to be put on the rubber gun squad," he said.

The support he received from his command at the time is one reason that Stoner was able to bounce back from his problems.

He attended the University of Pennsylvania's MRT program last year and realized that the skills taught in the MRT course were similar to the ones he used to pull himself through after asking his command for help.

"Some of the same skills that I was taught and developed personally to help me get through those times and to become an effective Soldier again are the same skills that are taught in resiliency training," he said.

"One of the things that distinguishes the Master Resiliency

Training program or the resiliency training that we are doing now is that it's not just military involved," said Stoner. "This is a way for you to be able to not just increase your effectiveness as a Soldier, but as a human being – how to more effectively communicate with your family, your loved ones, your friends, and to make you just a more all around more effective person."

Stoner's past struggles and his ability to overcome them give him a unique perspective on the program.

"His previous experiences that he has gone through during his military career as well as personally has allowed him to understand the needs and requirements of the program to equip Soldiers, civilians and others in resiliency factors," said Clarence Woods, a training support specialist at the 21st TSC's training and school directorate.

According to Sgt. Antoine Ingram, a prescribe load list clerk for the 230th Military Police Company who recently attended one of Stoner's MRT programs, Stoner has served as an example of how a change can be made.

I think it's an inspiration learning from someone else's experiences to better yourself, said Ingram. "It's pretty awesome that he went through all that and now he's a changed man since going through this training."

Spc. Richard Glenn, a military policeman with the 230th MP Co., was able to put the skills he was learning during the training into practice while still in the class.

"I have this Soldier who wants to take leave, but he hasn't met the qualifications for it. Instead of harping on him about it, I've actually identified several things that he needs to do calmly instead of just jumping down his throat," he said.

The MRT program has continued to make changes in Stoner's life.

"One of the ways that it has helped me personally is that I tend to be very blunt with the way I respond to people sometimes. It has made me really consider the other person's point of view on how I might be responding to them and in doing so, it has made me a more effective father, a son, a better husband, and I believe a better Soldier," he said. "I actually express myself better to my peers, subordinates and superiors."

Stoner has become an active participant in the Army's campaign to help Soldiers dealing with the stressors of everyday life and traumatic experiences and has become a vital part of the CSF campaign at the 21st TSC.

I Will NEVER *quit*

By Sgt. Fay Conroy

The phrase "I will never quit" is a very essential part of every Soldier's daily life. Part of the Warriors Ethos, the phrase was put into practice by the winners of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command Warrior and Warrior Leader of the Year competition.

Sgt. Richard Hunter, a petroleum supply specialist with the 240th Quartermaster Company, 391st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, was named Warrior Leader of the Year and Spc. Michael Freas, a human resources specialist for the 7th Warrior Training Brigade, 7th Civil Support Command, was named Warrior of the Year.

The 21st TSC 2010 Warrior and Warrior Leader of the Year competition was held June 13-15 at Lampertheim Training Area in Mannheim, Germany, however, this was not the first year Hunter had competed. The previous year Hunter had competed for the title at the Baumholder Training Area.

"What made me want to go back to the 21st TSC

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The chill of night has set upon the dark landscape as the young 21st Theater Sustainment Command Soldier *peers intently into the night landscape looking for his marker. It's the last point he has to find in this night land navigation course, and it's been a long tiring day of road marching, warrior task testing, and land navigation. He shakes off the night chill and digs deep into his warrior ethos. Reminding himself that* "I will never quit," *he peers again into the darkness and finally finds the marker. Writing down the coordinates, and plotting his way back to the start point, he is one step closer to the end of this very tiring* 'day in the life.'

competition is that I was so close to winning," he said. "I knew I had what it takes to be Warrior Leader of the Year so I decided to give it a second chance."

For Freas, the support and encouragement of the non-commissioned officers in his unit inspired him to compete.

"I started competing in the Warrior of the Year competitions because I was encouraged to by the NCOs in my unit," he said. "The decision to compete in the 21st competition was made to further challenge myself and get a better understanding of what was included in these competitions."

(from left) Sgt. Luis Mitchell, 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, Spc. Michael Freas, 21st Theater Sustainment Command, and Pfc. Jennifer Eldridge, 12th CAB pull security after being dropped off at their landing zone at the beginning of the land navigation event of the U.S. Army Europe 2010 Best Warrior Competition. (Photo by Sgt. Joel Salgado, USAREUR Public Affairs)

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Training

To boost his chances of winning, Hunter attended a two-week training course dubbed Knights University by the 16th Sustainment Brigade command sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. Ismael Rodriguez.

"As far as Warrior Leader of the Year is concerned, Knights University trains and mentors 16th Sust. Bde. Soldiers and leaders competing for Soldier and NCO of the year boards," said Rodriguez. "This grueling, rigorous, and scenario-based training spans a period of two weeks with two physical training schedules so you extrapolate the depth and intensity of training."

Several noncommissioned officers throughout the 16th Sust. Bde. also helped Hunter prepare for the competition.

"There was more than one NCO who helped me train for this competition," said Hunter. "A series of NCOs throughout the brigade trained me up on some events that could possibly come from the 21st competition. I had Staff Sgt. Axel Rivera, who was a Ranger transfer, train me physically and of course my sponsor who helped me prepare for the board."

Coming almost straight from the Joint Multinational Training Center competition may have helped Freas get into the competition mindset, but it was the support of his unit that helped him the most.

"For the 21st TSC competition, I had taken part in the JMTC Best Warrior Competition the week before in preparation, which helped wonderfully because it was a refresher of all the Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills prior to the 21st competition, but at the same time, the fatigue factor played somewhat of a role, as the competitions were 48 hours apart," he said.

As much as a Soldier can train for the Warrior and Warrior Leader Competition, it's almost certain that the actual competition will throw in a few surprises.

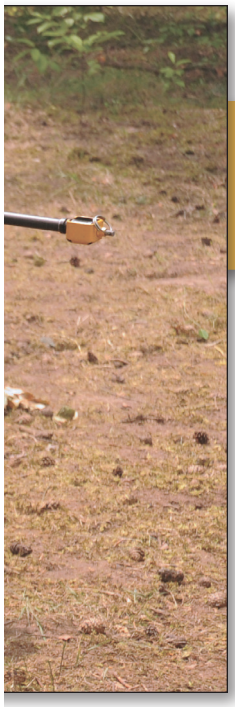
21st TSC Competition

The 21st TSC WOY/WLOY competition was a punishing three days designed to test the strength, endurance, and knowledge of the competitors. On the first day the contenders took an Army Physical Fitness Test and had only a brief rest period before they gathered up their gear and began the 12-mile ruck march. For the next two days they competed almost continuously in night- and day-land navigation, qualified with various small arms weapons, and put up their fists in a combatives event. They also were tested on their leadership skills when they had to lead a squad of Soldiers through an urban assault course.

"It has been a challenge. I just came out of another competition, but so far so good. It has been a learning experience, and it's been something to grow from." said Freas during the competition.

For Freas the competition had an unannounced surprise when the competitors sang "Happy Birthday." Freas and the Army share the same birthday of June 14.

Sgt. Richard Hunter, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the fuel farm, provides fuel to CH-47 Chinook helicopter at Pajimo Barracks in Kitgum, Uganda. (Photo by Spc. Jason Nolte)



Spc. Michael Freas Jr., a human resources specialist for the 7th Warrior Training Brigade, 7th Civil Support Command fires his M16 rifle while participating in a situational training exercise during the Warrior of the Year competition at the Lampertheim Training Area just outside of Mannheim, Germany in June. (Photo by Sgt. Frank Sanchez)

"It's always nice to have camaraderie with all the other competitors," said Freas. "Even though it's a competition, it's nice to meet new people from different places."

Hunter and Freas were announced as the winners of the competition by Maj. Gen. Patricia McQuistion, the commanding general of 21st TSC, at an awards ceremony held at Panzer Kaserne.

"When I was announced as the Warrior Leader of the Year for 21st TSC, I could not believe it," said Hunter. "The competition between me and another competitor was so close I didn't really know who the winner was. I was excited and pleased too. This competition will be one that I will always remember."

For Staff Sgt. Michael Freas Sr., his son's win was just a validation of his determination.

"Every goal he has set, he has achieved," said the elder Freas. "I'm real proud of him."

USAREUR Competition

With only a little more than month between the 21st TSC competition and the U.S. Army Europe WOY/WLOY competition, which was held July 26-29, Hunter again turned to a strenuous training schedule to prepare him for the upcoming event. Following a regimen of physical training twice a day, completing road marches on the weekends, study sessions with another NCO after work and weekends, he was training for the competition constantly.

Freas focused on areas that he knew he needed to improve upon.

"For the USAREUR competition, I was trained up by various NCOs within the 7th WTB and the 21st TSC over a variety of subjects. I focused mainly on areas I knew I was weak in such as combatives, operation orders, and weapon assembly and disassembly.

The USAREUR competition was designed to run continuously. The only time participants had to sleep was what they were able to grab in between events.

"It was designed to run continuously 24 hours a day for 96 hours and your time to eat, sleep, drink water, use the bathroom, and change your uniform, socks, t-shirt, etc. was either between events or when there was down time," said Hunter. "The down time was not controlled. It was all up to you as to what you wanted to do with it. We never knew when it was coming so it was important to make haste in order to finish in the top competitors for each event to ensure downtime because when that last man made it in, it was time for the next event."

Then Cpl. Richard Hunter, a petroleum supply specialist with the 240th Quartermaster Company, 391st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, trudges up a steep hill during the 12-mile ruck march portion of the 2009 21st Theater Sustainment Command's Warrior and Warrior Leader of the Year Competition. (Photo by Sgt. Fay Conroy)

The USAREUR event included day- and night-land navigation, an obstacle course, night qualification and added a new twist with the mystery event. Competitors were required to perform an "evacuate a casualty" task using the help of the German Bundeswehr as well as actual helicopters.

Although the continuous part of the competition along with the harsh physical conditions of the competition took a toll on their bodies, the mental aspect of the competition played an important part in keeping the contestants going.

"I believe the hardest part of the competitions is keeping a clear mind," said Freas. "Mental and physical exhaustion plays a great factor, but it's important to keep a positive and strong mentality."

Despite the mental and physical challenges of the competitions, Hunter and Freas pushed through. Although Hunter and Freas did not win at the USAREUR level, their example of never giving up embodied the Warrior Ethos.

"I want Soldiers to understand that persistence pays off and that the words 'I will never quit' in our Warrior Ethos are much more comprehensive than what it might seem," said Rodriguez. "Personally and professionally we must always move forward until we reach our goals despite obstacles."

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Air Assault Training

Pfc. Matthew Sexton, 527th Military Police Company, 709th MP Battalion, repels down the side of a tower during Air Assault training. Soldiers from across U.S. Army Europe converged on Camp Robertson, Germany, to take part in the Air Assault School training, hosted by the 21st TSC and 172nd Infantry Brigade. (Photo by Sgt. Fay Conroy)

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