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Desert Voice Magazine
Serving U.S. and Coalition Forces in Kuwait

May 9, 2007



UNDERWATER ENGINEERS

► Taking a look at the unique mission of the Army's 7th Engineer Dive Team

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On the cover

Spc. Jonathan Luchak waits to dive into the Persian Gulf recently during a partnership dive on the Kuwaiti shores of the Persian Gulf recently.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Patrick N. Moes

New driving policy increases safety

In the past few weeks, I've had a lot of Soldiers ask me about the new vehicle commander driving policy. The wording confused some and the intent confused others.

This isn't a punishment. We want to keep you safe. We want to keep you alive. We want to ensure you go home to your families.

In the past few months, there have been several incidents where junior enlisted

Soldiers have gone off-post without an NCO in the vehicle. There have been losses of Soldiers and equipment.

One of the most dangerous things we do daily in Kuwait is drive a vehicle, so it deserves the right level of attention from leaders.

The responsibility lies with the leadership. To ensure our Soldiers are protected and supervised, the regulation governing vehicle commanders and driving privileges had to get tougher.

So, let me clarify the policy. It isn't just off-post driving. Vehicles on post must have a commander in the grade of E5 or above or the civilian equivalent.

I realize that Third Army is a bit top heavy in rank. Thinking creatively, I encourage senior NCOs and officers to volunteer as vehicle commanders to help get the mission accomplished.

Nobody can drive in a vehicle alone. There must be two people in the vehicle. They need a TC to help maintain vehicle safety.

I also understand there are some NCOs and officers out there who prefer to be the driver. The vehicle commander can also be the driver, as long as there's a TC sitting in



Command Sgt. Maj. Franklin G. Ashe
Third Army Command Sergeant Major

the passenger seat.

And this policy isn't just for Soldiers. It's for all U.S. Army Central personnel, both military and civilian. It also applies to contractors and their employees who are operating vehicles on U.S. military bases.

And this isn't just for Humvees. All tactical and non-tactical vehicles owned, operated or leased by the Army are

affected. It doesn't matter if you're on or off post.

All Soldiers must also get a safety briefing from a colonel, a staff principal in the grade of O6 or officer who has been delegated that authority, or a battalion commander before driving off post.

And before Soldiers head out on a mission, all PMCS and safety concerns must be addressed.

The policy is so restrictive because experience and events have shown us that it needs to be. Neither Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb nor I want people to die because leaders aren't actively involved in what our subordinates or employees are doing.

We know it's going to cause some challenges – think creatively and proactively to make the mission happen.

We don't want Soldiers dying because of a lack of supervision or leadership. If this policy saves just one life, and it will, then it's worth it.

To see the guidance, go to the Third Army Web site, click on the policies link and look at the vehicle commander and safety program.

Third -- Always First!

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Photos by Sgt. Thomas L. Day

The Tryouts

Sgt. Thomas L. Day
Desert Voice staff writer

Operation Hardwood is coming back to Camp Arifjan. The Fox Sports production this year carries the heading, "Hoops with the Troops."

The first and second Operation Hardball tournaments were held in Kuwait; the third was held in Japan.

Before the tournament, it had to be decided which troops will be hooping it up with some of college basketball's most successful coaches.

After four days of tryouts, more than a hundred participants, and two scrimmages, the Camp Arifjan team was set May 4.

The tryouts tested prospects on leadership, ball handling, decision making, passing, speed and quickness, shooting, defense, rebounding, shot

blocking and rigorous conditioning drills. Judges carried clipboards, scoring each player on each aspect on a scale of one to ten.

"Everyone say it with me now, FAT," Sgt. Maj. Gregory Ransaw, who ran the tryout, told his players. FAT, he explained, stands for fundamentals, attitudes and teamwork.

"My big thing is leadership – team ball, attitude," said Master Sgt. Charles James, a judge and parks and recreation manager in his hometown of Moss Point, Miss. "A lot of them can handle the ball, shoot the ball – but without teamwork..."

Guards were tested April 30; forwards and centers were tested the next day. It was the forwards and centers who got to witness their coach's fury after several missed lay-

ups on a three-man ball-movement drill.

Sensing a lack of concentration, Ransaw blew his whistle and stopped practice. "Y'all can't even make a lay-up?" It was five minutes before anyone on the court missed a lay-up again.

Midway through the practice, Ransaw decided to test the players' conditioning. Wind sprints culled several players from the first cut.

Two days of scrimmages set the final cuts.

Coaches for the tournament, scheduled for May 24 to May 28, will include Notre Dame Head Coach Mike Brey, Wake Forest Head Coach Skip Prosser, Georgia Head Coach Dennis Felton, and Army Head Coach Jim Crews. All games are scheduled at the Camp Arifjan Zone 1 Fitness Center.



Homeward bound

Kuwait-based Sailors help redeploy

Petty Officer 1 Brian Anderson Navy Expeditionary Logistics Support Group

In the hazy distance off the coast of Camp Patriot, three U.S. ships sat anchored, awaiting the arrival of 2,200 Marines to send home.

Recently, Marines from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, returning from their deployment in the Anbar Province in western Iraq, were staged for redeployment at Camp Patriot, Kuwait. The Marines are based at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Marines, along with more than 900 pieces of equipment ranging from tanks to storage containers, had to first complete a thorough inspection by Navy Customs Battalion Sierra inspectors. The next step was to place

the equipment onto Landing Craft Air Cushioned boats before they could journey off to their respective ships, awaiting them in the Persian Gulf.

This, however, would require equipment which the 15th MEU did not have. Senior Chief Petty Officer Glenn Todd, a boatswain mate with Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Group, stepped up to the task, volunteering the assets and expertise of his personnel. Seventy-five ton Abrams M1A1 tanks were the most challenging, requiring heavy equipment transporter systems and operators for their journey onto awaiting LCACs.

Maj. Sampson Avenetti, embark officer for the 15th MEU, said, "Without the assistance from the sailors of NAVELSG, their

departure would have been delayed considerably."

Ahead of Schedule

In the pitching-well decks of the USS Comstock, sailors from NAVELSG were conducting forklift operations. With the supervision of the Senior Chief Edgar Holland, a boatswain mate, they were able to unload and maneuver the equipment in just two days, ahead of schedule.

Forklifts were used to stage 15th MEU equipment into position for LCAC loading. Along with equipment comes maintenance and repair. Petty Officer 1st Class Gregory Schaefer, a carpenter's mate in the Seabees, was tasked

On a Kuwaiti morning, the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit sails from Camp Patriot after completing its tour in Iraq.



y sea ploy Marines

Photos by Petty Officer 1st Class Brian Anderson

to help repair several pieces of downed equipment that had been stalling the operation.

In a recent e-mail to NAVELSG (Forward) group commander, Capt. Terry Rivenbark, Commodore Peter Dallman, commander of Amphibious Squadron Five, wrote, "Across the board, the support was outstanding and it is very much appreciated. The determination and professionalism of all hands involved resulted in our completing the backload two days ahead of schedule and will most likely result in [more than] 4,300 Sailors and Marines... returning home early. To your entire team, my personal thanks for a job exceptionally well done."



(Top right) Petty Officer 2nd Class Amile West of Navel Expeditionary Logistics Support Group chains down a tank onto a heavy equipment transporter. The tanks, belonging to the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, were then loaded onto Landing Craft Air Cushioned boats for redeployment from Camp Patriot, Kuwait.

(Top left) Petty Officer 2nd Class Steven Potts, an equipment operator with NAVELSG, secures a tank to a heavy equipment transporter. Potts and fellow shipmates assisted the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit redeployment from Camp Patriot, Kuwait.

(Below) Petty Officer 2nd Class Amile West tosses aside an extra chain and loadbind after securing a tank to a heavy equipment transporter. The tanks were then loaded onto landing craft air-cushioned boats for redeployment.



Under Engineer



Staff Sgt. Patrick N. Moes 40th PAD NCOIC

Many engineers work with heavy construction equipment to create new schools in Iraq or do demolitions work in Afghanistan.

For an elite group of engineers in Kuwait, however, they see things a little differently from the rest – they go to work with an air tank on their back in the murky waters of the Persian Gulf.

“Engineers usually get to the waterline and go ‘ah we need some divers,’” said Capt. Dan Curtin, commander of the 7th Engineer Dive Team. “We take

the fight from there.”

“The diving equipment we use is just our mode of transportation to get to work,” said Curtin.

“U.S. Army Engineer divers are all engineers. We do all engineer tasks there are except we do them wet...and if you add water to it, then it’s a whole different world.”

That world has seen the 7th deploy from Fort Shafer, Hawaii, to Camp Patriot, Kuwait, in support of Third Army/U.S. Army Central.

The mission of the 7th includes providing underwater engineering capabilities to all countries in Third

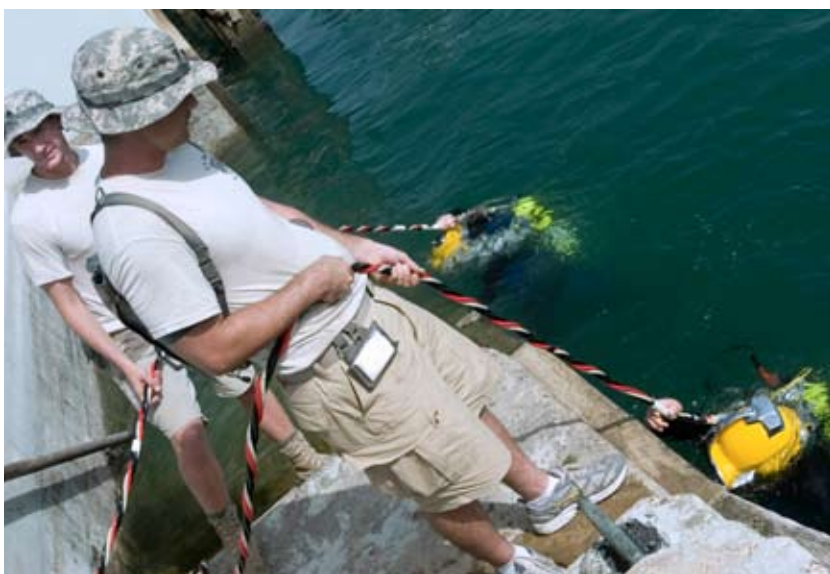
Army’s area of responsibility, diagnosis and treatment of diving diseases and disorders and port opening and harbor clearance operations, said Curtin.

The reason the 7th has the ability to accomplish these missions with skill and poise can be summed up in one word - diversity.

“These men are trained on more individual engineer tasks than probably most engineers,” said Curtin with a sense of pride as he looked at his team. “Even if you take the water aspect out of it, I think they are probably some of the more highly trained [engineers] that the U.S. Army has.”

Underwater Engineers

► Looking inside the mission of the 7th Engineer Dive Team



Photos by Staff Sgt. Patrick N. Moes



(Left) Spc. Jonathan Luchak leaves the water after a dive in the Persian Gulf during a partnership dive on the Kuwaiti shores of the Persian Gulf. **(Top center)** Sgt. Nathan Haney helps pull out Spc. Jonathan Luchak during a partnership dive on the Kuwaiti shores of the Persian Gulf. **(Top right)** Staff Sgt. Christopher Foster prepares diving equipment.

Part of this diversity comes from working with divers from different services and nationalities.

“When you conduct joint operations with other nations, you go one step beyond a demonstration of your abilities,” said Curtin.

“You also display your proficiency at those tasks. This can significantly boost the confidence of those who call on you for your expertise.”

The 7th did exactly that recently on the shores of Kuwait. Working with the Navy’s Explosive Ordnance Disposal divers and divers from the French navy, the 7th had the

opportunity to see how their diver brethren operate.

“One of the main things is you understand what capabilities you have,” said Sgt. Nathan Haney, an Orange County, Calif., native, about the importance of working with foreign nations. “You network with other countries.”

“They know what we can do. If they’ve got something that they can’t handle they know who to call,” added Haney.

The training opportunities are not all work, though. The divers get the chance to share diver stories and

compare experiences.

“It’s always a good time, Haney said. “You’re always switching patches and shirts and building camaraderie. “Everyone’s real eager to swap T-shirts or patches.”

Whether they are exchanging T-shirts with members of foreign militaries or doing partnership dives, the common thread always remains the same.

“It doesn’t matter what country your working with, diving is diving and military is military,” concluded Haney. “No matter who you talk to, it’s always the same story.”

Brig. Gen. Khaleel Al-Shemali, the Kuwait Ministry of Interior's top patrol officer, talks about his working relationship with the 39th Movement Control Battalion's Kuwait Rear Operations Center.



Making the connection

American liaison team keeps line open to Kuwaiti

Sgt. Thomas L. Day
Desert Voice staff writer

The 39th Movement Control Battalion's Kuwait Rear Operations Center has posted their mission statement on the wall in their Kuwait City office to guide their 24-hour operation.

In bold letters, it instructs the servicemembers to "facilitate the safe and timely movement of Coalition forces traveling through Kuwait, in accordance with host nation and (higher) guidance."

Two 39th MCB Soldiers and six U.S. Air Force

Airmen work in an office no bigger than a street-corner convenience store, directing every last American convoy through Kuwait, a mission that supports Third Army/U.S. Army Central.

1st Lt. Samuel Arnett of Murray, Ky., is the officer-in-charge. When units schedule large-scale convoys through Kuwait, Arnett's office will coordinate the movements with the Kuwaiti police so they do not impede on the flow of traffic for Kuwait City citizens.

Arnett, when instructed by the Kuwaiti police, will call for restrictions on convoys





when traffic is particularly heavy. He has a weekly meeting with the Brig. Gen. Khaleel Al-Shemali, the Kuwait Ministry of Interior's director general of the department of patrols, to map out operations.

Problems, Arnett insists, are brokered with civility.

"They just want to make sure nothing happens. We don't want to congest their areas," Arnett said.

"They view us as guests and we view them as hosts," Arnett added.

"If there is any accident or a wreck on the road, they'll call the KROC and of course we'll send someone there," said Arnett.

"When they get a report, they follow up on it. They let us know what's going on."

Arnett's office has been strategically located down the hall from Al-Shemali, a

native Kuwaiti, staying in his homeland even during Saddam Hussein's brief occupation from August 1990 to January 1991.

Al-Shemali says the key to a good relationship is "good communication" with the American military presence.

The relationship between Al-Shemali's police and Arnett's office is so strong, in fact, that when a bit of bad news came down from the 39th MCB higher headquarters, the Kuwaitis were there to cheer up their demoralized colleagues. "Our unit got extended and the Kuwaitis were happy," Arnett recalled. "We weren't as excited as they were."

1st Lt. Samuel Arnett, the Kuwait Rear Operations Center officer-in-charge, enjoys a glass of chai tea with his Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior friends.



on
cops



60 Tops

'Tops in Blue' performs for Airmen in Kuwait, celebrates Air Force's 60th anniversary

Photos by Staff Sgt. Ian Carrier

"Tops in Blue," an Air Force entertainment unit, performs a tune at an air base in Kuwait May 2. The show was a tribute to 60 years of Air Force history, as the Air Force became a separate department of the U.S. military on July 26, 1947.

Staff Sgt. Ian Carrier 386th AEW Public Affairs

"Tops in Blue," an Air Force entertainment group, performed at an air base in Kuwait May 2 to a standing-room only crowd.

The show, themed "The Fly By," featured hit songs by Tom Jones, the Supremes, the Beach Boys, Chubby Checker and the Charlie Daniels Band. The show was presented as a tribute to 60 years of Air Force history. The Air Force became a separate department of the U.S. military on July 26, 1947.

"I was so impressed with the performances," said Tech. Sgt. Treka Bunkley, 386th Expeditionary Services Squadron. "This was the first time I've seen them, and it was more than I expected."

The group is an active-duty Air Force unit made up of performers selected for their entertainment abilities.

Before each tour, performers train for a month and a half at Lackland Air Base, Texas. The team learns the instrumental and vocal parts of the show, as well as

the choreography and technical aspects. The team not only performs but must also set up more than 36,000 pounds of lighting, staging, audio and special effects equipment.

"Tops in Blue" travels throughout the world to entertain servicemembers and their families, with priority given to those stationed at remote and deployed locations. Presently, they are continuing their morale tour throughout the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

While here, in the Third Army/U.S. Army Central area of responsibility, they helped lift the morale of audience members.

Staff Sgt. Shanate Jones, 386th ESVS, was dazzled by the effort of the members of the troupe.

"It was very energetic. I don't know how they keep up that

energy through a whole show. I've been to Broadway shows, and I put this on the same level."

The finale was a rendition of Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A." This particular song has been part of "Tops in Blue" tradition for 20 years, being performed in every show.



Members of "Tops in Blue" perform for an audience comprised of mostly Airmen of the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing on May 2 at an air base in Kuwait.

Chain of Command

With new leadership, units need to replace the photos depicting the chain of command to reflect current Army leaders.

It's a little more difficult to find those authorized photos while in a combat zone, but the Web site links provided below will help individual units post accurate photos of their chain of command.

President George W. Bush:
www.whitehouse.gov

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates:
www.defenselink.mil/osd/topleaders.aspx

Acting Secretary of the Army Hon. Pete Geren :
www.army.mil/institution/leaders/

Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. George W. Casey :
www.army.mil/institution/leaders/

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston :
www.army.mil/institution/leaders/

U.S. Central Command Adm. William Fallon:
www.centcom.mil

Third Army/U.S. Army Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb:
www.arcent.army.mil/welcome/cg.asp

Third Army/U.S. Army Central Command Sgt. Maj. Franklin G. Ashe:
www.arcent.army.mil/welcome/csm.asp

Just One Question...

“If you could bring any restaurant or shop to your camp, what would it be?”



“Applebees would be nice; Olive Garden if possible.”

Sgt. Jose Castillo
 Chicago, Ill.
 Master Driver
 13th Sustainment Command



“Braum’s (Ice Cream)”

Lt. Cmdr. Jeanne Cook
 Williard, Mo.
 Security Manager
 Navel Expeditionary Logistics Support Group



“A juice bar.”

Lt. Col. Ralph Fehlberg
 Tacoma, Wash.
 Plans Officer
 377th Theater Support Command



“Popeye’s”

Lt. Cmdr. Laura Foster
 Mobile, Ala.
 Supply Officer
 Navel Expeditionary Logistics Support Group



“Seattle’s Best coffee shop”

Master Sgt. Richard Pollack
 Milford, Kan.
 Leader Reconnaissance
 377th Theater Support Command



Hometown Hero

Mark Conley
 Security Guard
 Combat Support Associates

Conley checks security badges and ensures that unauthorized personnel cannot enter secure areas.

Conley talks about why he misses Columbus, Ga..

“It’s a close knit community. The interaction of cities -- Phoenix City, Ala., Columbus, Ga., and Fort Benning -- all have a good working relationship.”



**For information on what it takes to be an
Army Diver** visit www.goarmy.com/JobDetail.do?id=83