

ANACONDA TIMES

March 28, 2007

PROUDLY SERVING LSA ANACONDA

Can you spot the rocket launcher?

Page 16

Vol. 4, Issue 12

Women make their mark on the mission

by Staff. Sgt. Glen Chrisman

1744th Transportation Company Public Affairs

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq – The face of war has changed in many facets over the years. One aspect that continues to evolve is women in the military.

More than 200,000 women currently defend America in our Armed Forces. According to the Department of Defense, about 15 percent of today's military is comprised of females. That compares to 10 percent in 1990, 4.6 percent in 1975, and 1.4 percent in 1970.

The 1744th Transportation Company surpasses the national average, with about 21 percent of their 170 Soldiers being female. Most of the female Soldiers with the Streator, Ill. based National Guard unit say diversity is good for our Armed Services.

Sgt. Maggie Corcoran, 21, of Champaign, Ill. said she works hard to prove she is as good as any Soldier out there.

Spc. Heather Rutledge, 19, of Columbia, Ill. is a prime example of how a woman can do a job that many men have traditionally done.

Rutledge is a gunner on a Security Escort Team that speeds out in armored vehicles protecting damaged trucks until a wrecker can haul them to a coalition operation base.

The Soldier from Southern Illinois is qualified on four out of five weapons used by the 1744th and takes pride in being a female sitting in the turret of a gun truck.

"I really like it," Rutledge said. "Because I am smaller I can move around better than a big guy." The teenage Soldier who just graduated high school one year ago maintains that diversity in the military is a good thing. "It proves that we can do it just as good as the male Soldiers," Rutledge said with a smile.

Pfc. Heather Graham, 20, of Ottawa, Ill. says she feels equal to the male Soldiers most of the time.

See **Women**, Page 4

Here comes the cavalry

Soldiers prove their skills to earn their spurs

See Page 8-9



Photo by Sgt. Kevin McSwain

Spc. Tony Brollini prepares to throw a simulated grenade at the enemy at a grenade throwing station during a spur ride exercise at Logistical Support Area Anaconda on March 18. Soldiers attached to 1st Squadron, 167th Cavalry (RSTA) participated in the spur ride in order to earn the right to wear spurs during ceremonial occasions.



"I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values."

**I am Sgt. 1st Class Kendall T. Booker from Lanett, Ala.
Company B, 125th Finance Battalion >> Detachment Sgt.**

Major in the pink of health for cancer benefit

by Sgt. KaRonda Fleming

Anaconda Times Staff

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq – More than 600 service-members and civilians will participate in a Race for the Cure scheduled for March 31.

The five kilometer run is sponsored by the Air Force 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group. They decided to hold such a race because there was a large interest in trying to do something that would connect back to the United States, said Capt. Michele T. Vita, senior physical therapist with the 332nd EMDG Operations Squadron.

“The race for the Cure is here to bring breast cancer awareness to the people,” Vita said. “To make sure that everyone knows about the research that is being done, and to try and raise money to continue that research.”

The San Antonio, Texas native said breast cancer is one of the most deadly cancers that women face today.

“I was so excited to find out there was a race here at LSA Anaconda,” said Maj. Laurie K. Turner from Eustis, Fla., the overseer for the Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility.

Turner said she lost her mother in 1991 due to multiple melanoma cancer and has also overcome her own battle with breast cancer. She has been cancer free since Sept. 28, 2000.

She said during that time, she had turned 40 and was a full time student as well as in the AF Reserves. She also had a teenager in the home; therefore her schedule was very busy.

“I procrastinated for almost a year, and finally went in for a mammogram,” Turner said.

The doctors noticed that something didn’t look right and diagnosed her with cancer. A couple weeks later a fourth radiologist looked at it and decided that the cancer was deeper than expected, which put off the operation another month, she said.



Maj. Laurie K. Turner, the overseer for the Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility updates the number of critical care air transport team patients on the board. Turner is a cancer survivor from Eustis, Fla. and will give opening remarks to Saturday's Race for the Cure, 5K run, as well as participate.

“Thankfully, they got everything with surgery,” Turner said. “I didn’t have to have any follow up with chemotherapy or radiation. I am very fortunate about that.”

One of the most important things that women and men can do to detect cancer early is to follow their doctor’s advice of self examinations, annual mammograms, and of course physician’s examinations.

“Also, have the mindset that it can happen to you,” Turner said. “Just like anything else, you may feel that you are immune, but you’re not.”

Today’s technological advances are phenomenal,

she said.

“What makes me sad is that there are a lot of people out there that don’t take it seriously, and don’t realize how fortunate they can be if they catch cancer early,” Turner said. “Had I waited another year, I might would have had to take lymph nodes and had to do radiation and chemotherapy, which is a lot more severe.”

Turner said that she will be giving opening remarks before the race begins on Saturday. She was excited to learn that cancer survivors were allowed to wear pink t-shirts.

She said she will also have a knitted pink scarf that her cousin made for her the day after her granddaughter was born. Once she read the enclosed note, she realized that it was made in her honor.

The note stated that if draped just right, it will make the breast cancer ribbon. “So I’m going to bring that to the race,” she said.

Nancy G. Grinker founded one of the world’s largest networks of breast cancer survivors and activists in 1982 called the Komen Foundation.

It created various foundations through annual events in honor of her sister who died of breast cancer at the age of 36. The events honor those who have survived breast cancer, as well as those who have lost their lives to the disease, according to the website, www.komen.org.

Vita said that she and Senior Airman Amanda R. O’Brien, with the Patient Administrative Department at the Air Force Theater Hospital, contacted the Komen Foundation of San Antonio to have a race here.

Similar to the race held at the Alamo Dome in San Antonio, LSA Anaconda is also hosting its Race for the Cure coinciding on the same day.

“I think we are all just excited that we can stay in touch with our community and still be involved with things back home,” O’Brien said. “There are so many people that want to help raise awareness because it’s such a great cause.”

O’Brien said she felt overwhelmed after completing the race for Cure last year in her hometown of San Antonio.

For more information about the race, contact Capt. Michele Vita at 318 443 8530 or Michele.vita@blab.centaf.af.mil.

Recruiting referral bonus now available to Army civilian employees

Army News Service

WASHINGTON – The Army has expanded its \$2K Referral Bonus program to include civilian employees, making it possible for them to earn \$2,000 while helping the Army boost enlistments.

Until yesterday, the recruiting incentive – known as the “\$2K Referral Bonus” program for the regular Army and Army Reserve, and “Every Soldier is a Recruiter” in the National Guard – applied only to Soldiers and Army retirees who referred applicants who enlist, complete basic training and graduate

from advanced individual training.

The bonus for referring a prospective applicant who has never served in the armed forces originated in January 2006 with a \$1,000 bonus. It was doubled in November 2006.

Under the newly expanded program, a Department of the Army civilian who refers a prospective recruit before the applicant meets with a recruiter is eligible for the award. Restrictions preclude the referral of an immediate family member (including an adopted or step-child). Additionally, the referral

must be made via the following Web sites, respectively, for active-duty Army prospective recruits and Army National Guard prospective recruits: <https://www.usarec.army.mil/smart/> or www.1800goguard.com/esar.

Referrals for the regular Army and Army Reserve may also be made by calling U.S. Army Recruiting Command’s toll-free number: 1-800-223-3735. Referrals to the National Guard may be made by calling the Guard’s toll-free number: 1-866-566-2472.

“As the Army Civilian Creed notes, Army civil-

ians are dedicated members of the Army team. They support the mission, and they provide stability and continuity during war and peace,” said Lt. Gen. Michael Rochelle, the Army’s deputy chief of staff for personnel.

“I know they are directing deserving youth to recruiters now. This will not only encourage them, but also reward them for their service.”

For more information about the referral program, visit <https://www.usarec.army.mil/smart/> or call 1-800-223-3735, extension 6-0473.

ANACONDA TIMES

13th SC (E) Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Michael J. Terry

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657th Area Support Group
1/34 Brigade Combat Team
45th Sustainment Brigade
82nd Sustainment Brigade
593rd Corps Support Group
15th Sustainment Brigade

Commander's leadership gets Army's attention

by Spc. Dustin Perry

1/34 BCT Public Affairs Office

CAMP ADDER, Iraq – In two months, Capt. Scott J. Rohweder is going to receive an award that he doesn't feel belongs to him.

On March 1, he was notified by the Department of the Army that he was one of only seven commissioned officers in the National Guard to be named winners of the Gen. Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award for 2006.

The award was established in 1987 to "recognize company-grade officers who demonstrate the ideals for which Gen. MacArthur stood – duty, honor, country," according to an Army Web site.

However, Rohweder, a 34-year-old husband and father of two from Princeton, Minn., humbly said most of the accolades for the award should go not to him, but to a much larger group of people.

"I look at this as something that goes to all the Soldiers that I've had the opportunity to serve with, because without them I couldn't have done it," he said. "Without their guidance and leadership, there's no way I could be where I'm at today. This award is more for what they've done rather than what I've done."

Rohweder is the Company E commander for the Moorhead, Minn.-based 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 136th Infantry Regiment.

His unit has been deployed to Iraq for almost a year. The company he commands consists largely of Soldiers who conduct combat logistics patrols, escorting supply trucks to bases throughout the country.

In January, Lt. Col. William Lieder, battalion commander of the Stillwater, Minn.-based 1st Brigade Troops Battalion, 34th Infantry Brigade, was deciding on a Leadership Award candidate from one of the eight company commanders in the 2/136th, which is attached to the battalion.

The decision was a tough one for Lieder, who said he is "blessed with having a lot of company commanders who are deserving of awards." He eventually chose Rohweder, a first-time nominee, because he said the officer's strongest trait was the namesake of the very award for which he was being recommended.

"What impresses me most is his leadership," Lieder, of Eagan, Minn., said "He just exemplifies

"I look at this as something that goes to all the Soldiers that I've had the opportunity to serve with."

- Capt. Scott J. Rohweder



what it means to be a leader. That puts him in a very narrow field of officers out there."

The next step was for Maj. Christopher Lindberg, the battalion executive officer, to put together a packet documenting, among other

heweder said

Being in charge of building those various structures probably came easy to Rohweder; when not in uniform, he works as a project manager for Kellington Construction in Osseo, Minn. He is also the volunteer coach of a youth team in the Princeton Hockey Association.

Lindberg said he is not at all surprised that Rohweder was chosen to receive the award, "based upon what he's done for our country and the [Minnesota] community."

"There are a number of criteria needed to be selected for the award, and he meets every single one of them," Lindberg, of Cloquet, Minn., said. "It's amazing to watch his Soldiers perform their mission on a daily basis with a high level of precision, based upon the leadership and guidance he gives them on a routine basis."

Being selected for the Gen. Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award was a "true honor" for him, Rohweder said. He takes particular pride in the award because it is based on an entire ideal rather than a specific deed, he said.

"[This award] is more significant because it encompassed everything I do," Rohweder said. "To be selected, it just kind of gives you a sense of great accomplishment that you must have done something well in your career and in your life to get this."

Rohweder will travel to Washington, D.C., for a May 16 ceremony where he and 27 other award winners will be presented their award: a 15-pound, hand-sculpted bronze bust of MacArthur.



Capt. Scott J. Rohweder, commander of Company E, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 136th Infantry Regiment addresses his Soldiers during a formation in November 2006. Rohweder was recently named as one of 28 company-grade officers who will receive the Gen. Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award during a ceremony May 16 in Washington, D.C.

Photo by Spc Dustin Perry

How have the contributions of women impacted the military?



Staff Sgt. Juliana Collins

"They're examples that women can perform equally with men in the military. Women also bring a different approach to problem solving."



Lt. Col. Russell Rogers

"Women from Harriet Tubman, Buffalo Soldier, Cathy William, a.k.a. William Cathy during the civil war, Women's Army Nursing Corps to the present, have positively shaped the course of our military."



Sgt. 1st Class Wanda Williams

"The success of women in the military shows young girls and women that they can achieve their dreams. It fills me with pride, just seeing women going out on convoys doing the jobs that they're trained to do."



Staff Sgt. Juan Rivera

"I feel that young Soldiers are more comfortable talking to female leaders about a job-related or family problem compared to a male, maybe because they listen and are less judgmental."

New commander takes the helm of CENTCOM

by Sgt. Sara Wood

American Forces Press Service

MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. — For the first time since the United States created a combatant command with responsibility for the Middle East, Northern Africa and Southwest and Central Asia, a naval officer took over the helm of U.S. Central Command here today.

Adm. William J. Fallon, a naval aviator with almost 40 years of service, assumed duties as commander of CENTCOM from Army Gen. John P. Abizaid, who is retiring after leading CENTCOM for more than three years.

Fallon comes from commanding U.S. Pacific Command, the largest geographical command in the military, where he worked to improve military ties with China.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates presided over the ceremony. He praised Abizaid for the work he did in the Middle East while commanding CENTCOM.

Abizaid studied the region's culture extensively, becoming an expert and forging important relationships with the people, Gates said. Abizaid took over the command early in the Iraq conflict, at a time when there was much work to be done, he noted.

"He accepted enormous responsibility at a crucial time in history," Gates said of Abizaid.

Under Abizaid's leadership, CENTCOM helped Iraq conduct three elections, form a new government and constitution, and grow the Iraqi security forces threefold, Gates said. In Afghanistan, he noted, thanks in large part to

"This conflict is greater than the sum of Iraq and Afghanistan."

- Gen. John P. Abizaid

Abizaid's efforts, NATO countries have stepped up and taken responsibility for the security of the country, in partnership with Afghan security forces.

Gates said he is confident that Fallon will build on Abizaid's good work, noting the admiral brings decades of experience and a record of success to the command.

He praised Fallon as one of the military's top strategic thinkers, who built important relationships with other nations during his time in Pacific Command.

After relinquishing command to Fallon, Abizaid thanked the members of the coalition for the work they do with CENTCOM.

He also thanked the officers under his command, who he said do so much to fight the war on terror, provide humanitarian assistance, and strengthen partnerships around the world.

"Never has a commander been so blessed by a team of capable and heroic leaders," Abizaid said.

Abizaid noted that war is never easy,



From right: Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, U.S. Navy Adm. William J. Fallon and U.S. Army Gen. John P. Abizaid prepare to pass the U.S. Central Command flag signifying the official passing of leadership from one commander to the next during a change-of-command ceremony at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., March 16.

and the war on terror will be long and will require "courage and time." Victory against terror will require not only military effort, but also political and diplomatic work, he said.

"This conflict is greater than the sum of Iraq and Afghanistan," Abizaid said.

Upon taking command, Fallon thanked Abizaid for the legacy he left and pledged to strengthen and nurture relationships with members of his command and other nations. Fallon ac-

knowledgeed that much work lies ahead of CENTCOM in the months ahead, and that Iraq and Afghanistan are both at critical points.

However, he said, the troops and commanders of CENTCOM and allied countries are capable and dedicated, and can help the people of the Middle East achieve what most people in the world want: peace, security and stability.

"In concert with our allies, if we put our minds to it, there's very little we

can't accomplish," Fallon said.

CENTCOM was created in 1983 and is responsible for U.S. military activity in a 27-country region in the area between U.S. European Command and Pacific Command.

CENTCOM is responsible for the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, focused on defeating terrorism, strengthening regional stability, building the capacity of partner nations, and protecting U.S. interests in the region.

Black market oil seized by Iraqi Army

by Staff Sgt. Antonieta Rico

5th MPAD

QAYARRAH, Iraq — Iraqi Army soldiers seized a convoy of 20 illegal fuel trucks carrying crude oil in the Qayarah region, south of Mosul, Feb. 20.

Crude oil is often sold on the black market in the Irbil Province, which has an oil refinery in eastern Iraq. Profits are believed to fund terrorism.

"We know black market (oil) profits are ... used to support anti-Iraqi forces," said Master Sgt. Hernan Rincon, intelligence noncommissioned officer-in-charge for the "Black Dragons," 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, out of Fort Bliss, Texas.

Iraqi Army soldiers, manning a check point, stopped the convoy of vehicles after determining they were illegal based on fake documents the drivers were carrying. Iraqi Police were then notified about the incident.

"As far as Coalition Forces and the Iraqi army are concerned, (oil smuggling is) a criminal act that the IPs deal with," said 1st Lt. Alexander Moen, a native of

"We taught these guys how to do this, now they are doing it."

- Sgt. 1st Class Robert Blanchard

Winnebago, Ill.

"Once the (Iraqi Army) realized this was just illegal (oil) smuggling they contacted the IPs and the IPs came," Moen said, "It's a good working relationship between the two of them; it's a big step forward for the area."

It was also a big step forward for the Iraqi Army and soldiers of 1st Platoon, Battery B, who a month prior had trained the Iraqi Army on these types of patrol operations. The platoon worked with them in the area to teach them how to search vehicles and how to spot fake

documents.

"We taught these guys how to do this, now they are doing it," said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Blanchard, 1st Platoon sergeant.

"This is good news to me because the lessons that we taught these guys, and what to look for, are now paying off," he said.

Training the Iraqi Army has a positive chain reaction in the region. Having the Iraqi security forces successfully perform their job helps discourage criminal activity, said Duran.

"It scares other people and they will not do it as much, because they know that those guys got caught," he said.

It also sends a positive message to the people in the area.

"It makes them feel better, that we are actually out there, and the IPs are out there, and the (Iraqi Army) are out there doing their job," Duran said.

Blanchard, originally from Aurora, Colo., credits the junior leaders and soldiers in his platoon with training the Iraqi army to be successful.

"Those are the guys that are really where it happens at," Blanchard said.

Women

Continued from cover

"We're usually treated the same," she said.

"It's nice to see so many women doing the same jobs as guys and doing those jobs to the same standard or better," Graham said.

As a driver on a Security Escort Team, Graham said the responsibilities she has been tasked with have helped her mature and grow professionally.

She says she has learned to look after others and that is a life lesson that she may not have discovered this early in life had it not been for being mobilized.

While many female Soldiers claim they have to work harder to earn respect from male Soldiers, one woman maintains that's the way it should be.

Sgt. Daphne Michaels, 36, of Staunton, Ill. said you earn respect and that means proving yourself as a good Soldier and leader.

Even though most of the females in the 1744th are young, Michaels

said they are developing and their futures are bright.

"The unit has had some growing pains but we are developing strong future leaders because they continue to step up," she said. "It doesn't matter what your age or gender, if you can do the job and prove yourself then you will earn respect from your peers and leaders."

Sgt. Michaels is currently serving as a Truck Commander and Assistant Convoy Commander on a Security Escort Team for the 1744th TC.

Nine of the 35 females in the 1744th TC are mothers away from their family for more than a year.

Company 1st Sgt. Royal Schaefer emphasized that no matter the gender, they are all Soldiers.

"The females are accomplishing the mission just as well as the males and are fulfilling the same roles, which shows equality."

The 1744th TC was mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom in June 2006. They are expected to accomplish their mission and return to Illinois early this fall.

Combat Stress Control

(113th Medical Company (CSC))

829-1402

Building 4146
open 24 hours
7 days a week

individual counseling by
appointment or walk-in

command referrals

services for combat and
operationally stressed
soldiers

prevention team comes to
you for group sessions

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

MONDAY TO SATURDAY
7:30 A.M. AND 9:30 P.M.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

MON., WED. THURS.
9 TO 10 A.M.

HOME FRONT ISSUES

MON., WED., THURS.
7 TO 8 A.M.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

TUES., THURS., SAT.
10 TO 11 A.M.

ANGER MANAGEMENT

TUES., THURS., SAT.
9 TO 10 A.M.

DEPRESSION AWARENESS

ANXIETY AWARENESS

TUES., THURS., SAT.
7 TO 8 P.M.

COPING SKILLS

TUES., THURS., SAT.
8 TO 9 P.M.

GOAL SETTING

MON., WED. FRI.
10 TO 11 A.M.

PROCESS GROUP

MONDAY, TUESDAY,
THURSDAY - SATURDAY
2 TO 4 P.M.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

TUESDAY AND FRIDAY
10 TO 11 A.M.

RELATIONSHIP GROUP

WEDNESDAY
2 TO 4 P.M.

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Directing traffic throughout the skies of Iraq

by Maj. Damien Pickart

332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq – Orchestrating the airpower symphony over Iraq are the Airmen of the 727th Expeditionary Air Control Squadron, better known as Kingpin, who turn non-stop air operations into ground forces' favorite tune – the sound of jets prowling the skies overhead.

Currently manned by the Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., 728th ACS, the 727th EACS is responsible for controlling all aircraft operating inside Iraq's 277,000 square miles of airspace.

As a testimony to how daunting that task can be, during its previous deployment here from May to September 2006, the Eglin based unit surveyed, identified and controlled more than 166,000 aircraft.

"Our 200 Airmen keep all airborne assets arranged and under control so ground forces get the air support they need," said Lt. Col. Frederick DeFranza, 727th EACS commander. "A pilot is concerned about one mission. My Airmen are concerned about every mission so troops on the ground never have to wonder if their insurance policy in the sky is good."

The heart of Kingpin's operations lies in several mobile Operation Modules; Conex-shaped trailers stuffed with an array of computers and communication equipment chilled to a frigid 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Inside each 'box,' enlisted surveillance and weapons directors and air weapons officers (AWO) chatter away in a language foreign to the untrained ear, simultaneously directing



Senior Airmen Amanda Hoffman and Rebekka Baker conduct an operational check of an AN/TPS-75 radar system at Balad Air Base, Iraq. Both Airmen are assigned to the 727th Expeditionary Air Control Squadron (EACS) and are deployed from the 728th Air Control Squadron at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. Also known as Kingpin, the 727th EACS is responsible for maintaining positive control over aircraft operating in Iraq's 277,000 miles of airspace.

roughly 40 separate aircraft to multiple headings, altitudes and locations with the eventual goal of providing air support to ground forces.

"Thud 35 - approved 88 Alpha Sierra 12 to 15,000 - traffic stacked below you - surface to 10,000 - traffic stacked above 16 to 22,000 - elevator into your blocks and push tactical," rattles off Senior Airman Andrew Labadie, an enlisted weapons director.

To bring a semblance of order to the myriad of aircraft over Iraq, Kingpin divides the country's airspace into "kill

boxes," referred to as the Common Grid Reference System.

As aircraft launch and exit a ring of airspace surrounding military airfields, they are passed from the military air traffic controllers in the airfield tower and the Combined Enroute Radar Approach Control to the capable hands of Kingpin's controllers.

As new blips appear on dimly illuminated scopes, Kingpin assigns each to a block of airspace to conduct missions such as surveillance or close air support. Other aircraft are shuffled to mate up

with tankers or committed to support time-sensitive missions such as troops in contact (TIC) with enemy forces.

Eyes dart from the scopes to a separate terminal that displays a classified version of a chat room.

Snippets of information pop up as a Joint Terminal Air Controller embedded with ground forces punches in a TIC request for airpower and supporting organizations confirm and contribute other critical data.

Kingpin controllers scan the Air Tasking Order, cross reference the radar scopes, and quickly determine the weapon configuration and fuel load of the nearest available aircraft. Within seconds, they've cleared the

airspace and determined the ideal aircraft to assign to the unfolding drama on the ground.

"We're continuously developing a three-dimensional, real-time picture of the battlespace," said AWO Capt. Stefanie Emery.

"Our Airmen build the safety net in the sky that pilots, aircrew and ground forces depend on. It's an incredible team effort."

"It gets a little hairy sometimes, but
See **Traffic**, Page 11

Fitness programs help keep Airmen in trim condition

by Senior Airman Candace Romano

332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq – Peek into the H-6 fitness center any time of the day or night, chances are someone is huffing, puffing and sweating their way to being 'fit to fight.'

It's not too late to start working on those push ups, crunches and 1.5-mile run.

"The current Air Force fitness program directs Airmen to work out three to five times a week and take a physical fitness test regularly," said 1st Lt. Kathryn Romano, unit fitness program manager for the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing. "It's a good foundation for Airmen to maintain a healthy lifestyle."

Maintaining top physical fitness is not only what servicemembers train for, but becomes even more important at a deployed location.

"In our profession, being fit is one of the most important tools we can obtain," said Senior Airman Christopher Pickarz, 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing information manager and certified spin class instructor. "For proof, ask the men and women performing their jobs outside the



Certified spin class instructor Senior Airman Christopher Pickarz provides instructions for a class Mar. 14 at the H-6 fitness center. Airman Pickarz is an information manager with the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, deployed from Aviano Air Base, Italy.

wire."

Finding time to hit the treadmills may be challenging for Balad personnel putting in 12-plus-hour workdays, but many have found a way to make it a priority.

"It's easier to make the right choice and go to the gym because I don't have the daily distractions I have back home,

like hanging out with friends," said Senior Airman Gilbert Pries, who works out six days a week and is currently training to compete in the powerlifting competition in April.

Working out has its benefits for those participating in fitness center events - keeping more than 15,000 Air Force,

Army and civilian personnel coming back for more every week, said 2nd Lt. Tiffany Castleberry, 332nd Expeditionary Services Squadron deputy commander.

"Going to the gym takes my mind off the stresses of work and helps me build self-confidence," said Pries, who is currently deployed from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, as a force protection member with the 332nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron.

Fitness training specifically for a healthy lifestyle has produced positive results for one Tuskegee Airman.

"Successful fitness training incorporates an elevated heart rate for cardiovascular strength and keeping it there for an extended period of time for endurance," said Lt. Col. Kevin Wilson, 332 AEW chief of wing plans, deployed from Scott AFB, Ill. "My workout schedule alternates between weight training and cardiovascular activities, seven days a week."

According to Airmen who scored "excellent" on their last physical fitness test, developing and sticking to a fitness routine is key, and there's no better time

See **Fitness**, Page 11

Soldiers provide security for post and operations

by Sgt 1st Class Clinton Wood

1/34 BCT Public Affairs

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq – During their first three months in Iraq, Staff Sgt. Brad Lahti and his platoon from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 136th Combined Arms Battalion manned an entry control point 24 hours a day, which meant the same routines day after day.

There has been much more variety in their missions over the past five months. The platoon's mission can be anything from providing security for a civil military operations mission to patrolling for insurgents.

"There's no routine. The time frames are all different," said Lahti of Robbinsdale, Minn. "And it gets us out seeing things."

And a combat reconnaissance patrol definitely "sees things." They patrol the perimeter of the base searching for suspicious individuals and items at all hours of the day.

On a terrain denial patrol, the objective is for these Soldiers to prevent rockets and mortars from being fired at the base. Lahti said his patrol tries to focus on areas where attacks are likely to occur.

"We want to catch them in the act," he said. "(The unit that owns the land or the landowners) like to have us out in that area."

Being in an area also can mean searching several vehicles. During a recent search, the squad discovered motorists with identification cards dating back to Saddam Hussein's rule. It had a distinct emblem of that era. The civilians turned out to be okay. Photo identification is rare in Iraq and many civilians rely on old ID cards.

A squad will spend the morning on a combat reconnaissance patrol, come back to the base for a while and then head out for another tour.

He said the most challenging part of



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Wood

Above, Sgt. Danny Kraskey of Grand Rapids, Minn., (left) and Staff Sgt. Bradley Lahti of Robbinsdale, Minn., both of Company C, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 136th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, search a car on Dec. 13 near Logistical Support Area Anaconda. Sgt. Ed Raati of Chisholm, Minn., (left), and Kraskey wait to search approaching cars near LSA Anaconda.

this new mission is ensuring good relations with the landowners.

It is important for his patrol to follow the use agreements with the landowners.

Lahti's company commander, Capt. Eduardo Suarez of Golden Valley, Minn., said this new mission has given his Soldiers new purpose and a sense that they are really making a difference and contributing more to the fight.

"As a tank company with qualified tankers, the ability to shoot, move and communicate came naturally," he said.

And with no routines.



"We believe it's important to provide veterans ... with the opportunity to share their ideas and experiences."

- Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson

Benefits site seeks input

Department of Veterans Affairs

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson, head of the new inter-agency task force examining the processes for combat veterans seeking services and benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs and other federal agencies, announced the creation of a dedicated Web page to solicit input on the ease of accessing federal services.

"As the task force moves forward in studying how we can enhance services and cut red tape, we believe it's important to provide veterans, their family members and others with the opportunity to share their ideas and experiences," Nicholson said.

People can email their comments to the task force at TFHeroes@va.gov or fax comments to (202) 273-9599.

Information on the task force, and mailing addresses are available at www.va.gov/taskforce.

The Web page allows active-duty servicemembers, veterans, family members and others to comment directly to the task force on the accessibility, timeliness and delivery of services.

Comments will be studied by the task force, used in the panel's evaluation of gaps in service and will form the basis of recommended solutions.

Called the "Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes," the panel consists of the secretaries of Defense, Labor, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Education, plus the administrator of the Small Business Administration and the director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Under the terms of the executive order creating the task force, the group has 45 days to identify and examine existing federal services for returning war on terror servicemembers; identify gaps in such services; seek recommendations from federal agencies on ways to fill those gaps; and ensure that appropriate federal agencies are communicating and co-operating effectively.

SHOW me the MONEY



LSA Anaconda Tax Center
Consolidated Legal Center (Bldg 9103)

**Open through
May 15**

Hours of Operation

Mondays
9 a.m. to noon

Wednesdays
Noon to 8 p.m.

Fridays
9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Please be sure to bring any related documents (W2s, interest statements, spouse and/or childrens' SSNs, etc.) We will assist with preparation of Forms 1040a or 1040EZ. The Form 1040 and any kind of business ownership are outside the scope of our program and we will not be able to assist customers with these issues.

If you have any questions, contact Sgt. Bethany Becker at 829-1838 or email her at:
bethany.becker@balad.iraq.centcom.mil.



You break it, we fix it

Daily weapons maintenance proves vital for safety of Soldiers

Story and photos by Sgt. KaRonda Fleming

Anaconda Times Staff

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq – The primary weapons maintenance shop in the theater of Iraq is located right here.

“Anything from broken firing pins, malfunctioning bolts, or bad gas rings can constitute as needing maintenance on a weapon,” said Sgt. Todd G. Kerwin, a small arms repairman with the 758th Maintenance Company.

The Conway, Ark. native said the shop is in charge of small arms repairs of anything from 9 mm pistols to 120 mm mortar tubes.

“Each repair takes 24 hours or less to turn around and get fixed, in which if you come here you will leave with a weapon, whether it’s the one you brought in or a brand new one,” he said.

Kerwin said if there is a weapon that can’t be fixed, then it is tagged, coded, and the unit is issued a new weapon. The supply section will then do all needed document changes.

Fifty caliber machine guns are one of the most popular weapon systems that is brought to the maintenance shop, said Spc. Eric J. Rose, from North Richland Hills, Texas.

“The design on it has been the same for the last 40 to 50 years,” Rose said. “It’s the same key weapon, but only requires a lot of maintenance.”

He recalled one of the most gratifying moments he had in the past.

“There was a convoy getting ready to move out

three hours later, and had weapons that needed to be repaired. I fixed their .50 caliber machine gun and mounted it right onto the truck before the unit left,” he said. “A couple days later, the Soldiers came back and said they used the previously repaired weapon in combat and that it worked flawlessly. They then thanked me for my work.”

Rose stresses that the pre-combat checks and inspections that Soldiers are taught at Basic Combat Training as well as throughout their military career should be done daily, even if it seems redundant.

“The one time you start getting complacent in checking your weapon, it is going to fail on you,” Rose said. “PCCs and PCIs are key to making

sure your weapon works. It can very well cost a life if you don’t do it properly.”

Rose said “Don’t modify your weapon outside of the military regulations just to make it more comfortable.”

Kerwin said he loves what he is doing here. For approximately 16 years now, he has been working as a weapon repairman both in the military and as a civilian. On the civilian side, he works on the area maintenance support activity for the Army Reserves.

He said that the maintenance shop usually aver-



Sgt. Todd G. Kerwin, small arms repairman with the 758th Maintenance Company from Conway, Ark., tightens the rivet arms of the buffer housing. The rivets are designed only to only move up and down, not left and right.

“PCCs and PCIs are key to making sure your weapon works.”

- Spc. Eric J. Rose

ages about 20 weapons a day, but previously had a record of 53 in one day.

During the slower days, Kerwin said that the damaged beyond repair weapons are worked on and shipped out to receive new weapons.

“We just make sure we get the weapons back to the Soldier as

quickly as possible,” Kerwin said.

The shops hours of operation are from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m., supporting anyone in the entire theater of Iraq, he said.



(Left) Spc. Eric J. Rose, small arms repairman with the 758th Maintenance Company from North Richland Hills, Texas, tightens the lacing wire on a .50 caliber machine gun in order to make sure the screws will not loosen up. (Right) Sgt. Todd G. Kerwin, small arms repairman with the 758th Maintenance Company from Conway, Ark., grinds a metal plate in order to smooth out its edges.





Spur of the moment

Story and photos by Sgt. Kevin McSwain

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq — Spurs often conjure up images of the Wild Wild West for most people. But for cavalry Soldiers in the U.S. Army, spurs mean a whole lot more.

“Spurs in a cavalry unit are the one thing that is not just given to their Soldiers,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence A. Hall, of 1st Squadron, 167th Cavalry (Reconnaissance, Surveillance, Target, Acquisition). “It is a badge of honor.”

The only way a cavalry Soldier can earn his spurs is through a skills test called a spur ride.

“There are many different stories on how a spur ride came to be,” said Maj. Eric Teegerstrom, executive officer, and spur meister for 1/167 RSTA. “But the basis of a spur ride is for a Soldier to show they are experienced enough to wear them.”

As Teegerstrom explained it, an inexperienced rider is not given his spurs because he would hurt the horse. To negate this problem, the rider was trained and taken through a number of tasks to prove they were worthy to don the equestrian equipment. “But now that armored vehicles and helicopter have become our horses, the spur ride prepares Soldiers to work as a team and build leadership characteristics,” the Cortland, Neb. native said.

Hall said the spur ride the Soldiers here experience is totally different from other spur rides, with different requirements.

“Each unit has a different set of requirements in their spur ride,” he said. “Some spur rides can last three days or more. We decided to make the event here last for a day due to the location of the ride.”

The Omaha, Neb. native said each task, ranging from communications checks to tire changing, was chosen to help the Soldiers in the long run.

“Each station will help the Soldier become more proficient at skills they will need here,” he said. “We wanted to make this a training event while they compete and earn their spurs.”

Teegerstrom, the senior spur holder, said any personnel attached to a cavalry unit are able to earn their spurs when the opportunity permits.

“We have several Soldiers in units that are attached to us that want to earn their spurs,” he said. “To us, earning your spurs is a team building experience, so we allow them be a part of the cavalry family.”

The opportunity even stretches across military branches.

“Beyond being a personal goal, not many Air Force personnel have the opportunity to earn their spurs,” said Air Force Maj. Eduardo Monarez, joint intelligence center chief. “I have more than 60 Soldiers working for me and they challenged me to compete in the event.”

The El Paso, Texas native said he takes the test as seriously as the cavalry Soldiers. “I have learned the history of the cavalry and I am proud to be a part of this,” Monarez said. “And it will feel good to be able to wear my spurs around the cavalry Soldiers after I earn them.”

The Soldiers conducting their spur ride in theatre received a very rare opportunity to earn the right to wear two different types of spurs.

“The Soldiers who earn their spurs here, along with the Soldiers that have already earned them, will be able to wear gold spurs also,” Hall said. “Soldiers in our unit are eligible to wear gold spurs once they have been in a combat zone, pending approval of the commander. So each Soldier who earns their spurs here will be authorized to wear silver or gold spurs.”

Hall emphasized that each unit has a different set of traditions and standards for earning spurs. He said it is not uncommon for a cavalry Soldier to move to another unit and have to do some form of spur ride to prove his mettle against their standards.

“The constant characteristic of all spur holders is that they are strong, motivated Soldiers with the drive to accomplish anything they put their mind to,” Hall said.

As the Soldiers progressed through the day, they are constantly tested mentally and physically with cavalry trivia questions and physical fitness training.

“The first task was for the Soldiers to complete a 2.2-mile timed ruck march,” Hall said. “And throughout the day spur holders ask questions to the participants to see how well they know the history of the cavalry.”

Another distinctive item associated with cavalry Soldiers is the Stetson, a cavalry hat named after its creator.

“In our unit, any cavalry Soldier can wear the Stetson whether they have earned their spurs or not,” he said. “In some units, the Soldier has to earn the right to wear it just as he does his spurs.”

Spur holders operate each station in a spur ride and motivate the participants, commonly called shave tails, to complete the task within the prescribed time.

“Shave tails refers to the horse Soldiers new to the cavalry unit,” Monarez said. “The horse’s tail was shaved so everyone would

know that the rider was inexperienced and they would be given more room to train and learn to control their horse and their saber at the same time.”

As the teams accomplished task after task, they began to notice the theme behind the entire event. “This has been a good team builder,” said Sgt. Brent Benes, squadron mail clerk. “Each task has strengthened team cohesion.”

Benes said tradition and history motivated him to earn his spurs. “This was my first opportunity to earn my spurs,” he said. “I have been in the cavalry for more than three years and I have been waiting on this opportunity.”

During the day’s events, the Soldiers were able to take their mind off the mission for a moment and enjoy time with each other as they upheld the time-tested tradition.

“This was a great time to have this event,” Hall said. “It gave the Soldiers an opportunity to relieve stress that can build up over a long deployment. And it allowed us to instill the skills needed to bring these Soldiers back home safe.”



(Above) Sgt. Daniel Halan reassembles a .50 caliber machine gun at a weapons station during a spur ride here. Servicemembers moved through 10 different stations during the event, with each testing their proficiency in tasks they perform on a daily basis. (Below) Two Soldiers motivate themselves by adding improvised face paint to their faces while a spur holder asks them trivia questions during a spur ride here.



(Above) Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence A. Hall quizzes Sgt. Nicholas Reedy while he stands guard at a station during a spur ride here. Hall asked participants several questions pertaining to horses and cavalry history. (Right) Spc. Aaron Darsow changes a flat tire, as Sgt. Nicholas Reedy maintains security during a tire changing station during a spur ride here. Soldiers attached to 1st Squadron, 167th Cavalry (RSTA) participated in a spur ride recently here to give servicemembers a chance to earn the right to wear spurs. (Far Right) Staff Sgt. Jerry Chavers inputs information into a system as Spc. Andres Lebron provides help at the convoy operations station during a spur ride here.



Determination, pride in her job helps mechanic do tough tasks

by Sgt. KaRonda Fleming

Anaconda Times

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq — A female generator mechanic takes pride in her job of ensuring that Soldiers are mission ready.

Spc. Veronica C. Gutierrez, with the Headquarters and Support Company, 449th Aviation Support Battalion, 36th Combat Aviation Brigade said she has faced difficulties in her job.

"You are only as strong as you think you are," she said, explaining how her strength sometimes is not as great as she would like for it to be.

Here at Logistical Support Area Anaconda, the variations in weather pose the biggest challenge, the San Antonio, Texas native said.

"One day, it might be raining here, and the next day it could be sunny or cloudy," Gutierrez said. "However, the rain is what gets us here at the generator shop."

She said when there's rain, it is very difficult to go out and do services and maintenance on the generators.

"Sometimes you just have to do what you have to do to get the job done," she said.



Spc. Veronica C. Gutierrez

Patience is a distinguishing advantage Gutierrez possesses. She said she is capable of taking on very tedious tasks, which is something she thoroughly enjoys.

"There was an occasion where I had to break a generator down completely and put it back together again," Gutierrez said. "It took a lot of time, and there were a lot of nuts, bolts, small parts, and a lot of wiring to reassemble. I just took

my time and slowly repaired it."

Joining the military is one of the best decisions she made in her life, she said. It has improved not only her life, but her children's lives, too.

She said she joined in 2005 and was the oldest female in her basic training platoon.

"I never gave up," Gutierrez said. "You can accomplish any goal and reach any dream as long as you have perseverance."

She said she has five children, and they email her daily telling her how proud they are of her, and she then tells them how proud she is of them.

"They don't have to necessarily fall into my footsteps, even though my three boys all say they are going to go into the service now," Gutierrez said. "I want to look back in my life and say that I have accomplished something, and that I have no regrets."

She said she has a lot of pride in her job, the military, and her family.

"I enjoy it, I think I enjoy it too much sometimes," she said. "I like the job here. I like taking things apart and putting them back together. I just love it. There's not another job I would rather have."



Spc. Veronica C. Gutierrez with the Headquarters and Support Company, 449th Aviation Support Battalion, loosens the bolt on a turbo charger that was recently taken out of a generator.

Gauntlet

Continued from page 16

convoy if they see something suspicious.

Geren said small details can make the difference. When he spotted the improvised rocket launcher, he was in charge of the Buffalo, an oversized armored vehicle equipped with a mechanical arm to examine the possible threats they find.

"You're really just looking for something out of the ordinary," he said. "Sometimes you've got to take a second look at it. You know when something is off."

The battalion has uncovered more than 550 explosive devices since it began its daily hunt. Normally, the engineers find the devices before the explosions find them.

"We find a lot more than goes off on us," Rau said.

Because they travel the same roads over and over again, day after day, the Soldiers have built a familiarity with the area that has become second nature.

"We go down this road so much, that if a rock moves, we know it," Spc. Erich Smallwood, a driver from Truman, Ark., said.

Soldiers discussed their numerous close calls, describing various rocket launcher attacks, close calls with improvised explosive devices, and what it's like to be moving targets for area snipers.

There was the time their vehicle

stopped, only to find it was straddling a landmine. Or the long firefight they faced in November. Or the mortar attacks where the engineers have watched the shells land closer and closer as the enemy fine-tuned its aim.

Several said they don't tell their families about these experiences. Mays, who in civilian life supervises the construction of tractor trailers, said his family knows that he clears roads, but he doesn't get into details when he talks to them.

"We don't like them to know we're doing the most dangerous job in theatre," the platoon sergeant said.

At times, nothing can happen for long stretches. Then they have to fight the boredom of hours of driving with little result. Rau, who graduated from college with a degree in criminology just before his deployment, said his fellow Soldiers and the mission keeps him focused.

"We communicate a lot. It keeps everyone alert," Rau said. "What keeps me alert up here is if I mess up, some of the guys in the back of the convoy can get hit."

Smallwood, sitting in the driver's seat next to him, works as a lifeguard for his civilian job and said survival also plays a part in staying attentive. "Your life is on the line."

Many of the farmland roads the unit travels are pocketed with potholes caused by IEDs. Even the smooth sections aren't as peaceful as they seem. Concrete patches mark past explosive craters.

Civilian cars pulled over quickly as

the convoy passed. Children ran up to the road waving and pointing to their mouths, seeking food. Occasionally, an adult driver smiled and waved, but most watched the military vehicles without any expression at all.

Spc. Adam Williamson of Whiteville, Tenn., serves as a gunner in Iraq and a carpenter in the civilian world. He said you can tell a lot about the situation by the way people react and behave. When the shooting starts or the explosions hit, the gunners have to make fast decisions, particularly when discerning bad guys from innocents.

"It's frustrating and you have to be quick," Williamson said. "Your situational awareness has to be very keen."

The constant presence of civilians offers other hazards. Whether the engineers are "interrogating" a possible explosive or clearing the roadside of debris, they know they are being studied. The unit strives to avoid habits that could be used against it.

"These guys are watching you every day," Smallwood said. "You can't set a pattern."

Then there are the problems provided by other convoys. The unit members

said many combat logistical patrols are in a hurry and don't want to stop for the cordons the engineers set up to protect traffic from potential IEDs.

Civilians and Soldiers alike have become angry and impatient at having to wait for the road ahead to be cleared, and some will deliberately drive around the cordon, members of the unit said.

Smallwood said some convoys seem to believe there aren't that many explosive devices in the area, but that only tells him that the battalion is doing its job really well.

"They don't really understand how many IEDs are out here," he said.

As if to confirm this, another unit found a 130 mm round along the road and detonated it that afternoon. Shortly after, a land mine was discovered in the middle of the road 1st Platoon had just traveled on that morning.

The platoon and the 756th Explosive Ordnance Disposal team accompanying it moved forward to take care of the hazard, which ended with the crack and thunder of a safe detonation. Another blackened hole was added to the road.

As the convoy drove back to its headquarters after more than eight hours of driving, it passed the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office, a yard holding military vehicles, destroyed by IEDs.

Williamson pointed it out as a reminder of the dangers improvised explosives and rocket launchers offer the unwary.

"That's what happens when you don't find them," he said.



Engineers use the mechanical arm of the Buffalo armored vehicle to check a land mine planted in the roadway



If it sinks, they'll be swimming for raft competition

by Sgt. Kevin McSwain

Anaconda Times

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq — On your mark, get set, float!

Servicemembers will be putting their buoyancy to the test in the second annual Anaconda Raft Race scheduled April 15 at the outdoor pool here.

The event, which coincides with the seasonal opening of the facility, will consist of two events.

"There will be a best raft theme competition, followed by the raft race," said Meredith Waters, aquatic technician for the Morale Welfare and Recreation center.

Waters, the organizer of the event, said the idea came from a similar event held previously in Baghdad.

"If during the race the raft falls apart before it reaches the deep end of the pool, the team will be disqualified."

- Meredith Waters, aquatic technician

She was here for Logistical Support Area Anaconda's race last year and said participants can get very creative with the construc-

tion of their rafts — despite the strict building requirements.

"The rafts can only be constructed of water bottles, duct tape, and 550-cord (parachute cord)," she said.

Waters added that there is no limit to how many people can work on the raft, but each team will only have four participants the day of the race.

"Each team will have four members; one person to paddle in the raft, one in the water pushing or pulling the raft, and two on each end of the pool," she said.

Waters encourages participants to make sure their raft is put together carefully.

"Rafts will not be allowed to be tested at either pool prior to the event," she said. "And if during the race the raft falls apart before it reaches the deep end of the pool, the team

will be disqualified."

The raft must complete one lap in the pool in order to complete the race.

"The raft must touch the edge of the pool on both ends and the flag must be handed to the person standing at the shallow end to complete the race," she said.

Waters added that no outside help can be used to propel the raft across the pool.

"No line may be strung across the pool to aid in the movement of the raft," she said.

Participants can sign up at any MWR center, or the indoor pool until 7 a.m. the day of the event. In case of a delay in the opening of the outdoor pool, the event will be held April 29.

If there are any questions, contact Meredith Waters at the MWR aquatic division at DSN 829-1431.

Traffic

Continued from page 5

it's nothing the four of us can't handle," said Airman Labadie. "Working together in close quarters every day, it sometimes seems as if we can accurately anticipate what we're all going to think and do as a particular situation arises."

The Airmen's faces reflected in the

scopes display a calm demeanor in spite of the intense tempo. Their cool judgment and quick decisions are the result of the thorough training that precedes every deployment. It also helps that 45 percent of Kingpin's current Airmen were here only four months ago; hardly time for their Balad-honed skills to grow rusty.

"This TDY has been better than the last because of how quick we've returned," said Senior Master Sergeant

Scott Delveau, 727th EACS first sergeant. "Many of us just left in September, so the tempo is still fresh. It has made a difference in how seamlessly we picked up the baton Mountain Home's 726th ACS handed to us."

Success inside the chilled boxes hinges on the hard work of the miniature Air Force that operates within Kingpin's compound.

With 27 different Air Force specialties, an EACS is a self-sustaining force. Its diverse ranks include operations, security forces, medics, intelligence, services, supply, satellite communications and an array of maintainers including vehicle, radio, radar, communications, aerospace ground equipment and heating, ventilation and air conditioning, to name a few.

"Our unique composition and mobile nature allows us to pack up and deploy to austere locations," said Major Cooper Bowden, chief of maintenance. "The ingenuity and diverse skills of our maintainers and support personnel are the driving force that keeps Kingpin moving."

A stroll through the compound reveals Airmen changing humvee brakes, conducting communication component operational checks, diagnosing ailments in the clinic and even enjoying some downtime in the unit's fitness and recreation centers.

These amenities support the Airmen whose job responsibilities often require them remaining on a short tether should the need arise for their invaluable skills.

"As important as it is for our controllers to direct aircraft in the skies, it's equally important to the Kingpin mission for an HVAC maintainer to repair an air conditioning system that keeps the controller's equipment operating properly," said Technical Sgt. Josh Phillips, Non-commissioned officer in charge of the AGE and HVAC maintenance shops.

Having deployed with the 728th ACS for all four of its OIF deployments since 2003, Phillips makes sure his troops treat the equipment as if it were their own.

"We have some unique power and voltage requirements," Phillips said. "We might operate outside the box, but the sharp Airmen maintaining our generators and cooling units know how critical they are to keeping those boxes humming."

"If we didn't do our job, our controllers couldn't do theirs and same for the operators in the sky. The food chain starts with these maintainers and we're proud of what we bring to the fight."

Well into this deployment, the Airmen of Eglin's 728th ACS are constantly looking for opportunities to improve future Airmen's deployments to the 727th EACS.

While it enjoys the recreation and fit-

"We're continuously developing a three-dimensional, real-time picture of the battlespace"

- Capt. Stefanie Emery

ness centers christened by its predecessors, Kingpin's current occupants are looking to improve overall communications and situational awareness of the battlespace with a new Battle Command and Control center slated to open in November 2007.

The center will co-locate the boxes, CERAP function and an Air Support Operations Center liaison to enhance communications and improve CAS response time.

"We know we'll be proudly sporting the Kingpin call sign in eight months, so we're starting the improvements now to reap the benefits when we return, De-Franza said.

"Between the contributions of Mountain Home, Eglin and Hill AFB's 729th ACS, Kingpin and its mission are a work in progress each of us leaves a little better off than we inherited it."

Fitness

Continued from page 5

than "right here, right now."

"My advice to Airmen trying to get 'fit to fight' is to start now," said Romano, who is deployed from Mountain Home AFB, Idaho.

"Keep a positive attitude ... it's going to be tough, and you may not always see immediate progress, but stick with it, set realistic goals and be patient. Being 'fit to fight' encompasses not only a change in your physical fitness, but could also mean an overall change toward a healthier lifestyle."

In addition, don't forget that waistline. Diet and healthy food choices

are crucial to overall health.

"Being healthy and fit requires many small efforts that make up the bigger picture," said Pickarz, deployed here from Aviano AB, Italy.

"Eating healthy, exercising, drinking plenty of water and getting adequate sleep all work together to get you to your goal faster. Without any one piece of the puzzle, the rest is incomplete."

To access the weekly classes at the H-6 fitness center, visit the 332nd Expeditionary Services Squadron intranet page under "upcoming events."

To gauge individual fitness progress, log in to the Air Force Portal at www.my.af.mil and click "Air Force Fitness Management System."

LSA ANACONDA RELIGIOUS SCHEDULE

Religious schedule subject to change

Roman Catholic Mass

Saturday 5 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel
Saturday 8 p.m. Provider Chapel
Sunday 7:30 a.m. Freedom Chapel
Sunday 9 a.m. Tuskegee Chapel
Sunday 5:30 p.m. Provider Chapel
Sunday 11 a.m. Air Force Hospital
Monday - Friday 5 p.m. Tuskegee
Sacrament of Reconciliation
30 minutes prior to each mass
Protestant-Contemporary
Sunday 10 a.m. Town Hall
Latter Day Saints

Sunday 1 p.m. Provider Chapel
Sunday 4 p.m. Freedom Chapel
Sunday 7 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel
Church of Christ
Sunday 2 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel
Islamic Prayer
Friday 12:30 p.m. Provider Chapel
Samoan Congregational Service
Sunday 4 p.m. Provider Chapel
Friday Shabbat Service
Friday 7 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel
Protestant-Gospel
Sunday, 11 a.m. MWR East Building

Sunday 11:30 a.m. Freedom Chapel
Sunday 2 p.m. Air Force Hospital Chapel
Sunday 7 p.m. Provider Chapel
Protestant Praise and Worship
Sunday 9 a.m. MWR East Building
Sunday 9 a.m. Eden Chapel
Sunday 7 p.m. Freedom Chapel
Sunday 7:30 p.m. Eden Chapel
Wednesday 7 p.m. Freedom Chapel
Protestant-Traditional
Sunday 9:30 a.m. Air Force Hospital
Sunday 9:30 a.m. Provider Chapel
Sunday 10 a.m. Freedom Chapel

Sunday 5:30 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel
Sunday 8:15 p.m. Air Force Hospital
Non-Denominational
Sunday 9 a.m. Signal Chapel
Non-Denominational Spanish
Sunday 2 p.m. Freedom Chapel
Protestant-Gospel
Sunday 3:30 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel
Protestant-Liturgical
Sunday 11 a.m. Tuskegee Chapel

March 28

Green Bean Karaoke
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

8-Ball Tourney
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

9-Ball Tourney
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

Music Producing Class
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

Spades & Ping Pong
8:30 p.m. and 2 a.m.
H6 MWR Recreation

Dance Aerobics
5:30 a.m., East Fitness Center

Aikido
5 p.m., East Fitness Center

Step Aerobics
5:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Open Volleyball
6 to 8 p.m., MWR Circuit Gym

Floor Hockey
8 to 10 p.m., MWR Circuit Gym

Spin Class
3:30 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

Cardio Funk
8 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

50m Backstroke
9 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Indoor Pool

Pyscho Swimming
5:30 a.m., noon and 7:30 p.m.
Indoor Pool

March 29

Console Game Tourney
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Country/Western Dance Classes
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

9-Ball Tourney
8:30 p.m. and 2 a.m.
H6 MWR Recreation

Karaoke Night
8:30 p.m., H6 MWR Recreation

Pilates
7 p.m., West Fitness Center

Open Court Basketball
West Fitness Center

Aikido
5:15 a.m., East Fitness Center

ANACONDA ACTIVITIES

Your one-stop connection to activities around LSA Anaconda
to add your activity to the event calendar, email anaconda.times@balad.iraq.centcom.mil

Tae Kwon Do
7 p.m., East Fitness Center

Combative Training
8:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Spin Center
6 a.m., H6 Fitness Center

Korean Martial Arts
4:30 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

March 30

Scrabble Tourney
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Chess Tourney
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Hip Hop Dance Class
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

R&B Music Night
9:30 p.m., H6 MWR Recreation

Open Volleyball
West Fitness Center

Self Defense Class
7:30 p.m., West Fitness Center

Step Aerobics
5:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Boxing
7:30 to 9 p.m., East Fitness Center

Dance Aerobics
5:30 a.m., East Fitness Center

Friday Night Spikes
7 p.m., East Fitness Center

Spin Class
3:30 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

Psycho Swimming
5:30 a.m., noon and 7:30 p.m.
Indoor Pool

March 31

Country/Western Dance Class
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Texas Hold'em
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Salsa Dance Class
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

Bingo Night
8:30 p.m., H6 MWR Recreation

Wrestling
9 p.m., West Fitness Center

Aerobics
7 p.m. West Fitness Center

Boxing
3 to 4:30 p.m., West Fitness Center

Pilates
7 p.m., West Fitness Center

Aikido
5 a.m., East Fitness Center

Tae Kwon Do
7 p.m., East Fitness Center

April 1

Magic, The Gathering
11 a.m., West MWR Recreation

Green Bean Karaoke
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Spades, Dominoes & R&B
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Poker
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

Poetry Night
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

Salsa Dance Class
8:30 p.m., H6 Recreation

Gaston's Self Defense
7:30 p.m., West Fitness Center

Boxing
3 to 4:30 p.m., West Fitness Center

Aikido
10 a.m. to noon, East Fitness Center

Capoiera
noon to 2 p.m., East Fitness Center

Swing Dance
7:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Spin Class
1:30 a.m., H6 Fitness Center

Abs Salute
8 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

Swim Technique
8 and 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
Indoor Pool

April 2

Poetry Jam
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

9-Ball Tourney
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

Karaoke
8 p.m., East MWR Recreation

Texas Hold'em
8:30 p.m. and 2 a.m.
H6 MWR Recreation

Aerobics
7 p.m., West Fitness Center

Martial Arts
9 p.m., West Fitness Center

Dance Aerobics
5:30 a.m., East Fitness Center

Tae Kwon Do
8 to 9:30 a.m., East Fitness Center

Step Aerobics
5:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Boxing
7:30 to 9 p.m., East Fitness Center

Floor Hockey
8 p.m., MWR Circuit Gym

Spin Class
3:30 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

Cardio Funk
8 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

50m Backstroke
9 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Indoor Pool

Pyscho Swimming
5:30 a.m., noon and 7:30 p.m.
Indoor Pool

April 3

Foosball/Ping Pong
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

8-Ball Tourney
8:30 p.m. and 2 a.m.
H6 MWR Recreation

Pilates
7 p.m., West Fitness Center

Martial Arts
9 p.m., West Fitness Center

Aikido
5:15 a.m., East Fitness Center

Tae Kwon Do
7 p.m., East Fitness Center

Combative Training
8:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Spin Class
3:30 and 8:30 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

Korean Martial Arts
4:30 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

Kung Fu
7 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

April 4

Green Bean Karaoke
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

8-Ball Tourney
8 p.m., West MWR Recreation

9-Ball Tourney
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

Music Producing Class
7 p.m., East MWR Recreation

Spades & Ping Pong
8:30 p.m. and 2 a.m.
H6 MWR Recreation

Dance Aerobics
5:30 a.m., East Fitness Center

Aikido
5 p.m., East Fitness Center

Step Aerobics
5:30 p.m., East Fitness Center

Open Volleyball
6 to 8 p.m., MWR Circuit Gym

Floor Hockey
8 to 10 p.m., MWR Circuit Gym

Spin Class
3:30 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

Cardio Funk
8 p.m., H6 Fitness Center

50m Backstroke
9 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Indoor Pool

Pyscho Swimming
5:30 a.m., noon and 7:30 p.m.
Indoor Pool

Share your unit's story

Contact anaconda.times@balad.iraq.centcom.mil

SHOUT OUTS FROM HOME

Richard Lantz
Our Hero Richard Lantz,
We are waking each morning
knowing we are one day closer to
being with you. Myself, Madison
and our lil baby girl are all awaiting
your arrival home. We are Very
proud of you Rich! Stay safe
and know you are appreciated by
many! Keep up the good work.
We Love and Miss YOU!!!
Hugs and Kisses,
Katee, Madison, and Our Baby
Girl

Robert Lawton
A shout out to Rob Lawton:
Happy Birthday Birthday Boy!
You get better looking every year
and I'm sure, when I see you in
a few weeks, you will look better
than ever. Ooooh yeah! Your
Loving Wife... and Wee Bug Girl

John Gumataotao
Uncle Nino John
I love and miss you! See you real
soon! I can't wait. Thank you for
the football and shirts!
Love you, Ethan
ps. don't forget my ninja turtles.

John Gumataotao
Uncle Nino John,
I Love You! Thank you for all you
do! Miss you lots and lots.
Love you,
Chelsy
ps. dont forget my lesportsac
bag!

John Gumataotao
Nino,
I love and miss you! I can't wait to
see you. Thank you for my new
game.
love, AJ

ps. don't forget my power
rangers.

Lyle Cheairs
Hey Lyle, Hope you are still in high
spirits and doing well. We finally
got dug out from the snow and
will run to Lincoln in the morning
to pick-up Stacey. Better make
this quick. Please take care, and
remember that I am very proud of
you and your fellow soldiers. Love
You Very much. Dad....

Zosima Richards
I just want to say how proud I am
of my wife to achieve the rank of
MSG. She is an inspiration to me
and truly an example of a Soldier
a mother and a wife. I am blessed
to have this one!

Ian Grant
Ian, just wanted to know that we
prayed for you at bed time tonight
just like every night. Can't wait for
you to get back here and help the
kids say their prayers! We love
you and miss you so much. Chels
and the kids

Glen Sutton
To bad you missed all the fun.
Sure could used another person
shoveling.. p.s. if the dog was not
black he would have been lost.

Ruben Sanchez
Hey Sweetie!! Hope that you are
doing well...thinkin about you all
the time and I cant wait to see
you!! Take care and talk to you
soon!!

Roger Davis
Hi honey
we can't wait to see you we love
and miss you Baileigh,Reid and
Tonia

Thomas Calzado
Just want you to know we miss
and love you very much. Everyone
is doing great and can't wait for
you to come home..
I love you....

Roger Davis
Hey bubba hows thing going, hope
good i heard ur going home soon
i know the kids will be happy to
see, hope 2 hear from. We love
U & be safe.

Roger Davis
Hi honey
we can't wait to see you we love
and miss you Baileigh,Reid and
Tonia

Peter Rampaart
Keep the faith Pete and hang in
there. Counting down (again) till
you come home.
Love Mom and Dad

Christopher Lee
I just wanna say, chris i love you
and thank you for what you are
doing you are making such a
difference in so many lives. keep
your head high and keep God first
because through him all things are
possible. be safe and careful, love
you and talk to you later. bye

Edwin Thompson
Hey there Eddie, I just wanted

to say hi and that I love you very
much! Take care and smile lots...
Love you
Robin Thompson

John Ternus
Love u tons!!! can't wait to have u
home in our new house!!

David Mendoza
To my sweet husband,
I miss you so much and i love you
even more. i am so proud of you
david and so is our Lord. God
Bless Love your Angel, Amanda

Neal P Roberts
I love you so much, honey and I
could not be prouder!

Nathan Malmberg
Dear hubby hun Nate, we love
you and miss you so much! All of
the family is so proud of you and
what you are doing. Your son, my
love, loves you so much and can't
wait to be best buddies.
He's cutting all his teeth now so
he won't be so cranky when you
get back. The catch-up time is
going to be fun! We carry you in
our hearts always!
Love, Julie and Evan

Edward Alumbaugh
Hi honey. We love and miss you
very much. You are doing a great
job. Love, Crissy, Brooke, Aimee,
Derek, Chad, and Ethan

Amanda Bjurback
Hey Amanda, dad and I love you
and we're so proud of you!

Philip K. Johnson
Daddy I Love You!

Shane Reynolds
I miss ya!!! Can't wait for you to
come home for good. xoxo

JUSTIN AND STEVEN ANGELL
Hey little brothers,
We hope you are both doing well.
We miss you and can't wait for
you to come home.
I Love You both
I am so proud of you!!
Your sister
Tina

My Dearest Danny,
I am very proud of you and all that
you do. Please know that I love
you and miss you every day. One
day soon, you will be putting your
name on that list!

Take care of yourself until I can
help with that again.
Forever yours,
Theresa

Hey Steve Imeraj,
We miss you and we're thinking of
you. Go Tigers hope they play the
Rockies in the world series
Love Sazan, Barb & Andrew

J. Wayne Wade
Hang in there Wayne. Only a
few more days and your 2 weeks
R&R will be here. Can't wait to
see you.

Jason Drayer
Hey baby! It was so nice having
you home for the last 2 weeks! I

only wish you could have stayed
home longer! Can't wait to see
you again! Take care my love!
Loving You Always, Sue

Scott McLean
Just wanted to say hi and tell you
that I love and miss you! Can't
wait to see you!!

Kristopher Lydon
Take care and be safe!

Richard Stedman
Hey little brother hope everything
is going good over there. We love
you.

Sabino Hernandez
Hi Daddy - here I am with my
teacher at day-care. I'm getting
big and can't wait to see you!
We are very proud of you here at
home! Hugs and kisses from me,
Mommy and brother Mark.

Ramon Lopez
I love you baby and miss you so
much! I can't wait to see you!!

Joanna L. Marquez
Hey sis, just wanted to let you
know que te queremos mucho,
and we're proud of you,
take care of yourself, cant wait till
you come home so we could go
party whoop!
whoop! love you
your family: Abel, teresa, favian,
denis

AJ Mason
Hey baby! Ariana and I love you
so much and can't wait until you
come home. We are so proud of
you! I love you!
Jess

SUSTAINER REEL TIME THEATER

(Schedule is subject to change)

Wednesday, March 28

5 p.m. Reign Over Me (R)
8 p.m. Happily N'ever After (PG)

Thursday, March 29

5 p.m. Shooter (R)
8 p.m. Stomp the Yard (PG-13)

Friday, March 30

2 p.m. Primeval (R)
5 p.m. Reign Over Me (R)
8:30 p.m. Stomp the Yard (PG-13)

Saturday, March 31

2 p.m. Freedom Writers (PG-13)
5 p.m. Alpha Dog
8 p.m. Shooter (R)

Sunday, April 1

2 p.m. The Queen (PG-13)
5 p.m. Dreamgirls (PG-13)
8 p.m. Smoking Aces (R)

Monday, April 2

5 p.m. Stomp the Yard (PG-13)
8 p.m. Dreamgirls (PG-13)

Tuesday, April 3

5 p.m. Reign Over Me (R)
8 p.m. Smoking Aces (R)

Wednesday, April 4

5 p.m. Smoking Aces (R)
8 p.m. Freedom Writers (PG-13)

Jenny, the Military Spouse

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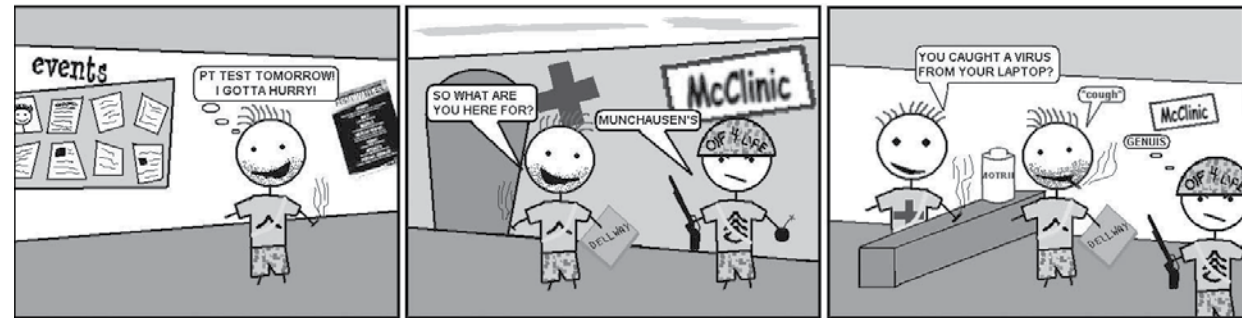
http://jennypouse.com

Pvt. Murphy's Law



http://www.pvtmurphy.com

Back of the Formation



Defense secretary: Surge provides time for Iraqi government

by Stephen Donald Smith
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – The U.S. troop surge in Iraq is in its early stages, but seems to be paving the way for a political solution to the country’s woes, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said March 18 on CBS’s “Face the Nation.”

“The way I would characterize it is so far so good,” Gates said in his first network one-on-one interview since taking over at the Pentagon in December.

Gates said the situation in Iraq cannot be solved by the military alone, but the troop surge is helping create a political environment where issues can be sorted out among the Iraqis.

“We’re basically buying them time. That’s the purpose of this whole strategy,” he said. “They’re going to have to step up to the plate. And we can help them by giving them the time to do that, and to make their military forces able to carry the burden by themselves.”

In January, President Bush pledged 21,500 additional U.S. troops to Iraq to help stem sectarian violence, and

last week the Defense Department announced that 7,000 more support troops are on their way to Iraq.

Gates said the Iraqis are meeting their commitments and working to reconcile their differences.

“The troops they have promised are showing up,” he said. “They are allowing operations in all neighborhoods. There is very little political interference with military operations.”

Gates said Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander of Multinational Force Iraq, has said it will probably be summer before it’s known if the surge has been successful.

“That’s why we have to wait and see what kind of trend line appears over the next weeks and few months,” Gates said.

U.S. military commanders anticipate that as the U.S. changes its strategy in Iraq, terrorists and insurgents will also change strategies by operating in areas on the outskirts of Baghdad.

Al Qaeda in Iraq leaders have stated that they wanted to create a firm base in Anbar province and other areas to de-

stabilize Iraq’s neighbors and launch attacks against the U.S.

Characterizing the situation in Iraq as a civil war is an oversimplification, Gates said.

“The reality is that stoking sectarian violence is a very specific strategy on the part of al Qaeda and the insurgents,” he said.

“You don’t have thousands of Shia and Sunni falling in on each other or attacking each other. You have hit squads going around the city.”

The defense secretary also talked about the vote to take place this week in the U.S. House of Representatives on a bill that would place constraints and a timeline for U.S. troop withdrawals from Iraq.

Gates said everyone involved in the debate is patriotic and looking out for America’s best interests, and that most people agree, regardless of political affiliation, that leaving Iraq in chaos would be a mistake.

“We’re all wrestling with what’s the best way to bring about a result that serves the long-term interest, not only



Department of Defense
Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates

of the Iraqi people but of the United States,” he said.

Gates said he was concerned that the specific deadlines and strict conditions in the House bill will make it “difficult, if not impossible” for military com-

manders to achieve their objectives. “And frankly, as I read it, the House bill is more about withdrawal, regardless of the circumstances on the ground, than it is about trying to produce a positive outcome.”

Rigging the game by air to reduce logistical convoys on the ground

by Pfc. Robert H. Baumgartner
82nd Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq - With the majority of American deaths in Iraq attributed to roadside bombs, Coalition Forces are taking steps to counter the threat posed by improvised explosive devices.

Planners of the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) are in the process of perfecting a method of keeping isolated units supplied without putting convoys on the road.

It seems the answer, and the answer to so many convoy commanders’ prayers, might come from above in the form of an airdrop.

“Everything we’re doing here is trying to save lives and limit the number of convoys that have to go out,” said Warrant Officer David Bird, a parachute rigger with the 600th Quartermaster Detachment (Airborne) here.

Airdropping supplies to remote outposts, such as military transition teams, provincial reconstruction teams, and border transition teams, is crucial to minimizing the effect insurgent IEDs have on logistics.

“It took four trucks to get these supplies here (in the rigger shed) to us, and that was an inter-post transfer. Outside the wire you’re going to need at least two gun trucks to protect them,” reasoned Bird.

“Then you know they are going to stumble on some “Christmas lights” strung out along the side of the road, so then you are going to have to call out an (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) team to clear it. Now even more trucks and more security. As you can see, the costs in fuel

and time are spiraling upwards,” Bird continued.

For the riggers it is not just a matter of keeping as many convoys off the road as possible, but also getting the airdrop recovery asset out of the area as fast as possible.

They want to make sure they can just snatch their supplies and move with as little hassle as possible.

“The whole thing is we’re trying to save lives so we want to get them off the drop zone quickly. We don’t want them worrying about this item or that item. Just cut, grab, and go,” Bird said.

For Bird and the riggers, it is not just about speed. It is about efficiency and smooth operation. It’s about getting the job done right, safely and quickly.

“We are constantly improving, faster pack up, faster response, providing for faster recovery on the ground,” Bird said

With an eight-man team, the riggers of the 600th QM Detachment, who hail from Fort Bragg, N.C., can push out faster than the last detachment even though the last detachment was comprised of more than twice the number of Soldiers. On top of that, they are increasing the overall capabilities, Bird said.

Instead of just dropping cargo from Air Force C-130 aircraft, they are also designing loads that can be dropped by Army Sherpa light planes as well as UH-60 Blackhawk and CH-46 Chinook helicopters.

“Utilizing U.S. Army platforms will hopefully cut through some red tape, allowing a faster response time for emergency re-supply,” Bird said.

With baby steps at first, it is hoped



Sgt. 1st Class Mark Bell
Staff Sgt. Franz Tovar, Spc. James Ahern and Spc. Wesley Desouza, all assigned to the 600th Quartermaster Detachment (Airborne), based at Fort Bragg, N.C., glue together Energy Dissipation Material that provides protection and absorbs the energy of an airdrop for the bottom of the Improved Cargo Delivery System.

that airdropping supplies to remote units will eventually leap over the precarious routes traveled by ground convoys.

“Once we get the system rolling a lot more smoothly and some of the other units realize that it’s not really that difficult of a task, hopefully they will start using it more often. The overall thought is we want to save lives,” Bird said.

“That is the way we look at it. If we can keep just one convoy off the road for now, then that works for us,” he said.

Help wanted: Warrant officer openings

The United States Army is looking for highly motivated Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airman to fill its Warrant Officer ranks. Positions are open in all 44 active duty warrant officer specialties, and the following are experiencing critical shortages: Criminal Investigation, Military Intelligence, Special Forces, Food Service, and Airdrop Systems Technicians. Applicants with less than 12 years active federal service (AFS) are encouraged to apply. For more information on becoming a U.S. Army Warrant Officer, please go to our official website www.usarec.army.mil/warrant or you can send an e-mail directly to wo-team@usarec.army.mil.

CELEBRATING Women in the Military

*Servicemembers recognize achievements,
milestones for women in the military*



Servicemembers participating in the Women in Military seminar stand at attention during the singing of the National Anthem.



Spc. Mary Lee Likins, from Clovis, Minn., Sgt. Cheryl Nelson, from Washington D.C., and Spc. Dominique Lurke, from Chicago, watch participants in the first Women in the Military observance held at Logistical Support Area Anaconda on March 21. All three Soldiers are assigned to the 22nd Personnel Services Battalion, based at Fort Lewis, Wash.



Col. Megan Tatu, 164th Corps Support Group commander, addresses a large crowd as the key note speaker during the Women's Observance held at LSA Anaconda March 21.



Staff Sgt. Debra Fulk gets into costume to represent the first African American Buffalo Soldier, Cathay Williams.



Senior Airman Amanda O'Brien, assigned to the 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group, tells a brief history of Lt. Col. Jacquelyn Susan Parker, the first American woman to become combat qualified in the F-16.

March 21, 2007



At left, Spc. Adam Williamson, a gunner from Whiteville, Tenn., with 1st Platoon, Co. A, 875th Engineer Battalion, searches for potential explosive devices alongside the road. Above, the convoy negotiates a road pitted by improvised explosive device detonations. Below, Explosive Ordnance Disposal detonates a land mine in the road.

The gauntlet

by Staff Sgt. Gary A. Witte
Anaconda Times

LSA Anaconda, Iraq – You need stamina. You need patience. And most of all, you need a sharp eye to do this job.

After two hours on the road, the slow-moving convoy stopped to examine something spotted by one of its vehicle commanders, Sgt. Patrick B. Geren of Fort Smith, Ark.

The berm, covered in patches of grass, was about 30 feet from the road and appeared much the same as everything else. There was seemingly nothing to look at but more countryside, but the members of 1st Platoon, Company A, 875th Engineer Battalion knew better.

In another vehicle, the crew spent several minutes explaining exactly where the object was located, although their passenger couldn't see it. Finally, there it was – the tube of an improvised rocket launcher – little more than a small black dot against the landscape.

If left there, it would be used again.

Uncovering this kind of deadly surprise is the mission of this Arkansas National Guard unit based in Jonesboro, Ark. The battalion constantly drives the roadways around Logistical Support Area Anaconda and other territories, hunting improvised explosive devices.

"Every time you find one, it makes you feel good because you're potentially saving someone's life," Sgt. Walter E. Rau, a team leader from Piggott, Ark., said. "Every IED has the po-



tential to hurt someone."

All but a few of the platoon members have personally experienced the impact of an IED hit and they have earned their share of injuries. One of the Soldiers not accompanying this mission was still recovering from a concussion gained during a recent explosion.

Company Commander Capt. David Moore of Conway, Ark., noted their work continues day and night, regardless. Since arriving here in September, Company A itself has driven more than 28,800 miles.

"Even on the holidays such as Christmas and Thanksgiving these guys were still clearing the route," Moore said. "They don't get much rest and continue to do the mission everyday."

On this Saturday morning, 1st Lt. George Collins of Hot Springs, Ark., finished up the pre-mission briefing and included a few reminders to his men about procedures – plus a warning about complacency.

"These guys are not out there to pop your tire," he said. "They're out there to kill you."

Before they climbed into their vehicles, the platoon knelt together, their hands on each other's shoulders. The platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Kahlon Mays of Paragoul, Ark., led the platoon in prayer. It was time to put on their armor and go.

While technology plays its part, the simple act of watching everything around them is one of the engineers' key defenses. Every Soldier has the authorization to immediately stop the

See **Gauntlet**, Page 10



Above, a RG-31 armored vehicle maintains security during a halt on an area roadway. At right, members of 1st Platoon, Company A, 875th Engineer Battalion take a moment together to pray prior to leaving on their mission on March 17. Their battalion has uncovered more than 550 improvised explosive devices and improvised rocket launchers since the beginning of their deployment in September.



Photos and photo illustration by Staff Sgt. Gary A. Witte