



OPERATION DESERT SHIELD, OPERATION DESERT STORM 30TH ANNIVERSARY



REMEMBERING OPERATIONS AT BOTH OVERSEAS AND FORT MCCOY — 30 YEARS LATER



Fort McCoy historical photo

Desert bound

Soldiers board buses in November 1990 at Fort McCoy bound for Volk Field, Wis., in preparation for deployment to Operation Desert Shield and later Operation Desert Storm. Throughout late 1990 and early 1991, Fort McCoy served as a mobilization location for many Reserve and Guard units and personnel deploying for the Gulf War.

Desert Storm veterans recall pre-deployment training at McCoy, wartime service with 890th TC

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Thirty years after the completion of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, former Army Sgts. Mark Christensen and Phillip Cornelius remember their service with the Army Reserve's 890th Transportation Company quite vividly.

And through all the time since they served together in the deserts of Southwest Asia in 1990 and 1991, both men have remained the best of friends. Some would even say they are like brothers.

How it started

History shows Desert Shield and Desert Storm, also known as the Gulf War, took place from Aug. 2, 1990, to Feb. 28, 1991. On Aug. 2, 1990, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein led a well-equipped Iraqi army into Kuwait, a major supplier of oil to the United States.

According to a Department of Defense report in 2019 by Shannon Collins, it states the U.S. had supplied Iraq with military aid during its eight-year war with Iran, giving Iraq the fourth-largest army in the world at that time. This posed a threat to Saudi Arabia, another major exporter of oil. If Saudi Arabia fell, Iraq would control one-fifth of the world's oil supply. The Iraqi leader also was repeatedly violating United Nations resolutions, so the U.S. had U.N. support in responding to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait with Desert Shield and then Desert Storm.

Once the Gulf War began, thousands of Guard and Reserve services members were called to active duty — including Christensen and Cornelius. An Oct. 10, 1990, Associated Press news article by Robert Burns states that on



File Photo by Robert Schuette/Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office

Soldiers with the 890th Transportation Company, an Army Reserve unit based in Green Bay, Wis., complete land-navigation training Oct. 28, 1990, at Fort McCoy, Wis. The company was doing the training as part of training to deploy to Operation Desert Shield.

that date the 890th was among many activated.

"More than 33,000 military reservists have been called to active duty in support of the U.S. buildup in the Persian Gulf area — nearly as many as were activated during crises in Vietnam and Korea in 1968," the article states. "The Army today activated 12 National Guard and 24 Army Reserve units from 24 states and Puerto Rico, for a total of 4,846 troops. Meanwhile, the Marine Corps said Wednesday it was calling up about 160 reservists. Those actions brought to 33,252 the number of reservists from all services activated since Aug. 22 when President

tion Desert Shield. Soldiers with the 890th were among them and had already been preparing for deployment in September.

"While at McCoy, we painted the trucks, did weapons qualifications, and basic field combat training," Christensen said.

Just before leaving on deployment, 890th Soldiers were featured in a Nov. 16, 1990, article by Rob Schuette with the Fort McCoy Triad newspaper (now The Real McCoy). The article discussed land-navigation training the unit had completed on Fort McCoy's South Post in late-October 1990.

"Training has been keeping people very busy," said 890th's 1st Sgt. Calvin Thomson in the article. "They're enthusiastic because they know that their survival could depend on what they learn." Thomson noted that the 890th's mission is to haul containerized military cargo on 40-foot trailers.

Spec. John Panosian of the 890th also mentioned in the article, "We've got our trucks ready and in working order. I'm anxious to get over there and get the mission completed."

890th's Sgt. James Socha discussed how busy their time training at McCoy was in the article: "You put in a lot of long hours during something like this."

Christensen and Cornelius were among the many 890th Soldiers doing the land-navigation training and so much more before deploying. Christensen said his unit's mobilization training at the "Total Force Training Center" was "excellent."

By early November 1990, the 890th finished their two-plus months of mobilization training at Fort McCoy and departed the installation. The unit's Soldiers arrived at their deployed lo-

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Bush authorized their use in support of Operation Desert Shield."

The 890th, in 1990, was headquartered in Green Bay, Wis., and that's the area where both Christensen and Cornelius still reside. When the 890th was mobilized, that meant training had to be completed. To do that training, they went to Fort McCoy.

Training at Fort McCoy

By October 1990, Fort McCoy had already had many units — both Guard and Reserve — already busily training and preparing for Opera-

REMEMBERING OPERATION DESERT SHIELD/OPERATION DESERT STORM

890TH

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Courtesy photo

Army Sgts. Mark Christensen and Phillip Cornelius with the 890th Transportation Company, an Army Reserve unit based in Green Bay, Wis., are shown in Kuwait City, Kuwait, on Feb. 27, 1991. Both Soldiers were part of the deployed 766th Transportation Battalion and operated from Logistical Base Echo in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. The Soldiers became best friends during the operations and are still friends today. Both trained at Fort McCoy prior to deploying for the Gulf War.

cation in Saudi Arabia on Nov. 14.

In the fight

Christensen and Cornelius both knew when they arrived in Saudi Arabia that they had to hit the ground running to be ready for anything.

Both Soldiers served as truck drivers for the unit and had an important mission.

“We provided combat support,” Christensen said. “We were responsible for transporting ammunition, bombs, Patriot missiles, multiple-launch rocket systems, 155-millimeter rounds for tanks, water, and pallets of food.”

In the book “United States Army Reserve in Operation Desert Storm: Ground Transportation Operations,” which was released in January 1994, it shows the 890th supported the 766th Transportation Battalion and operated from Logistical Base Echo in Saudi Arabia.

The book states the units within the battalion primarily hauled spare parts, Patriot missiles, ammunition, and basically whatever was needed in support of the Army VII Corps.

“Their line-haul before the air combat began was from the port of Dammam (Saudi Arabia) to Log Base Echo, which was a 500-mile trip one way,” the book states. “During the ground war, continual transportation support of sustenance supplies — food, ammunition, and repair parts — was provided to the VII Corps elements as they moved deep into Iraqi territory. Once the ground phase ended, the 766th started to provide support to the XVIII Airborne Corps redeployment as well as the VII Corps. The 766th also hauled relief supplies into Kuwait while the corps were withdrawing.”

Both Christensen and Cornelius were part of those long hauls from the port to their base as well as other areas, especially in February 1991.

“We were all over,” Christensen said. “We were in Saudi, Kuwait, and Iraq.”

The book states the 766th experienced the same problems with inadequate communications for command and control as other units had during the war along with other issues. But the mission got done because Soldiers like Christensen and Cornelius were working hard.

“Some of the line-hauls were almost 1,000 miles one way, and days would go by before contact was re-established,” the book states. “Good platoon leadership and responsible E-4 and E-5 drivers kept things on the right track.”

The book’s review about the battalion Cornelius and Christensen were assigned to also states that for the entire period of the deployment, the battalion’s operational rate exceeded 95 percent, which was “a remarkable performance attributed to the versatility and multiple talents of the Reservists’ civilian skills. These units didn’t have to wait on direct support maintenance units for repairs. Their own mechanics could change a diesel engine in a tractor in one day or rebuild a transmission.”

In essence, Cornelius and Christensen and their fellow transportation Soldiers achieved amazing results despite the tough missions they faced in a wartime environment.

Looking back 30 years later

After three decades since they survived the war and did their part in liberating Kuwait, Christensen and Cornelius recall their service there as a hard one because of what they faced and experienced. But that service has also kept them bonded like brothers.

“What I remember most are the special friendships that I made and how well everyone worked together,” Christensen said. “I remember how hot it was during the day and cold at night. I remember the oil fires in Kuwait.

“I came home angry because we didn’t finish the job,” Christensen said. “I was feeling guilty because of helping in the killing all those people. Trivial things that bothered me before deployment were no longer a big deal, and I appreciated all that I had going for me at home.”

Cornelius added, “It feels like we didn’t finish the job that we were sent to do. I have suffered from hearing loss and PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). But even with these issues, I’m very proud to have served my country. I would do it all over again with my brothers and sister who I served with.”

Christensen talked about some things he and his fellow Desert Storm vets have done since the Gulf War.

“If I knew then what I know now, I would have done my full 20 years instead of getting out at 12 years,” Christensen said. “Having kids made me decide that I didn’t want to take the risk of being deployed. I saw how it affected my unit members who did have kids at home. Also, while deployed, I made the best friend for life that a person could ever ask for. That is Corny (Cornelius).

“When we got home, along with another friend of ours, Dave Rasmussen, had an idea to start a group similar to the Vietnam Vets of America,” Christensen said. “We all started the Desert Veterans of Wisconsin. The group is not only desert vets. It is open to any service member who was honorably discharged or is still in service in any branch of the military.”

Sadly, Rasmussen — also a 890th Soldier who served with them in Desert Storm — died in 2009 at the age of 39 from cancer. He is remembered by all the founding members of the Desert Veterans of Wisconsin with fondness and respect.

Through the group, Christensen said they make a difference in the lives of veterans and their families every day, and he knows Rasmussen is proud of everything the group does.

The 890th Transportation Company completed its active-duty activation for the Gulf War in June 1991.

The unit’s service, along with many like them in the Gulf War, helped end an invasion and occupation, and returned freedom to a foreign nation.

It also made two men brothers for life.

1990-91 Gulf War Timeline

On Aug. 2, 1990, Iraq invaded its neighbor Kuwait with four elite Republican Guard heavy divisions and the equivalent of a fifth composed of special operations commandos. President George H. W. Bush quickly announced that the United States considered Iraq’s aggression unacceptable.

On Aug. 7, the president backed up his words with a military response named Operation Desert Shield, and organized a coalition of 35 nations to defend Saudi Arabia and ultimately liberate Kuwait.

The XVIII Airborne Corps, with its elite 82nd Airborne Division, began to move to Saudi Arabia the next day, beginning a buildup of combat power in the region reaching at its peak about 600,000 U.S. personnel.

In rapid succession, the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), the 197th Infantry Brigade, and the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) moved to the Gulf. The U.S. Army Reserve began its largest mobilization since the Korean War. By early November, with the addition of the 1st Cavalry Division (Armored), the 2nd Armored Division’s 1st (or Tiger) Brigade, and the 3rd ACR (armored cavalry regiment), a lethal force of over 100,000 soldiers was assembled for the defense of Saudi Arabia.

On Nov. 8, President Bush announced that the U.S. VII Corps would move to the Gulf from its bases in Europe and the United States. This heavy corps, consisting of the 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized), the 1st and 3d Armored Divisions, and the 2nd ACR, would give the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) commander, Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf Jr. the armored fist he needed to take the offensive.

Operation Desert Shield transitioned to Operation Desert Storm on Jan. 17, 1991, with the start of the air war.

Early on Jan. 17, Operation Desert Shield came to an end when the air campaign of Operation Desert Storm began. Task Force Normandy, consisting of nine AH-64 Apache helicopters from the U.S. Army’s 101st Aviation Regiment, 101st ABN DVN (Air Assault), accompanied by four Air Force MH-53 Pave Low special operations helicopters, flying fast and low, opened fire.

“Our strategy to go after this (Iraqi) army is very simple. First we’re going to cut it off, and then we’re going to kill it,” said Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Colin Powell in 1991.

After their 27 Hellfire missiles destroyed Iraqi radar sites, the Apaches followed with 100 Hydra-70 rockets that knocked out the associated anti-aircraft guns.

The attack created a 20-mile gap in the enemy’s air defense network opening a corridor through which U.S. Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle fighters, supported by EF-111 Ravens, raced into Iraqi air-space virtually unopposed followed by hundreds of U.S. Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and coalition fixed-wing aircraft and cruise missiles.

Operating almost with impunity, U.S. and allied air forces pummeled Iraqi positions and supply lines. Massive B-52 strikes, and almost equally devastating psychological warfare leaflet drops, did much to sap the Iraqis’ will to fight.

Finally, on Feb. 24, the ground war began. Hours before the start of the offensive, special reconnaissance teams from the 5th and 3d Special Forces Groups (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, flying out of King Khalid Military City on specially configured helicopters, were sent deep behind Iraqi lines to gather intelligence.

Kicking off the main attack in bad weather, the XVIII Airborne Corps quickly made an end run around the open right flank of the Iraqi Army. Simultaneously, U.S. and allied forces in the east attacked directly north toward Kuwait City.

Penetrating the minefields to their front, U.S. Soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division overran Iraqi positions within a few hours. The Iraqi troops — tired, hungry, and physically and psychologically battered — began surrendering in droves. The next day, the 1st Armored Division quickly crushed the Iraqi 26th Infantry Division as VII Corps pivoted to the east.

The 24th Infantry Division’s heavy armor moved rapidly northward, meeting sporadic resistance from demoralized Iraqi troops. Linking up with the 101st battle positions, the 24th Division moved the 200 miles north to the Euphrates River Valley by noon on the 26th, blocking a major Iraqi supply route and possible avenue of retreat.

At the Battle of Medina Ridge on Feb. 27, the 1st Armored Division discovered an attempted Iraqi ambush and destroyed over 300 enemy tanks.

The battles of Desert Storm soon wound down against crumbling resistance. With the VII Corps poised to crush the remainder of the Republican Guard units, only the declaration of a cease-fire saved the Iraqis. When, two days after the cease-fire, elements of the Republican Guard’s Hammurabi Division engaged the 1st Brigade, 24th Infantry Division, just north of Highway 8, the Iraqis lost over 185 armored vehicles and 400 trucks within a few hours.

In 100 hours, U.S. and allied ground forces in Iraq and Kuwait decisively defeated a battle-hardened and dangerous enemy.

During air and ground operations, U.S. and allied forces destroyed over 3,000 tanks, 1,400 armored personnel carriers, and 2,200 artillery pieces along with countless other vehicles. This was achieved at a cost to the United States of 96 service members killed in action, including 105 non-hostile deaths.

(Article prepared by the U.S. Army Center of Military History.)

REMEMBERING OPERATION DESERT SHIELD/OPERATION DESERT STORM

Army Desert Storm vet, Bradley driver, recalls service in ground operations for Gulf War

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL

Public Affairs Staff

Growing up in Wakefield, Mich., in the state's western Upper Peninsula, former Army Spc. Arthur L. Saily II was described by many of his school friends as "one tough kid."

Wakefield sits in the heart of "Big Snow Country," where every winter the snowfall totals are in the hundreds of inches, and people native to the area are considered the hearty, tough, independent type. That certainly describes Saily, he'll admit.

Throughout his youth, Saily said, he enjoyed working to help his family get through tough winters, doing things outdoors, and having good friends. However, once he graduated from Wakefield High School in the spring of 1987, he also knew he wanted more adventure in his life. So, not long after graduation, Saily signed up to "be all he could be" in the U.S. Army.

Joining the Army

After entering Army basic training in May 1988 and then advanced individual training later that summer to further his Soldier skills and become the operator of an M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle, Saily was assigned to Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas.

Fort Hood is surrounded by the Killeen, Copperas Cove, Har-ker Heights, Belton, Gatesville, Temple, and Lampassas communities and was an area like a foreign country to a young man from Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Saily said.

According to the Fort Hood website, it's a 214,968-acre installation and is the only post in the United States capable of stationing and training two armored divisions. Saily said he was happy to be at a new place doing something new.

As an M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle operator, Saily was in control of one of the Army's newest armored vehicles at one of the busiest active-duty Army installations.

The Army introduced the M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle in the mid-1980s, according to Britannica.com. The armored vehicle weighs 27.6 tons, has a three-person crew, can carry six infantry Soldiers, and is armed with a turret-mounted 25-millimeter cannon and an antitank missile launcher.

"I enjoyed driving the Bradley and did it for three years before Desert Storm," Saily said. "I became very good at it."

Getting call to Desert Shield

By August 1990, when Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein sent his military forces into Kuwait on an invasion to take over the country's oil supply, Saily was a well-trained warfighter who had honed his skills as a Bradley driver.

As Operation Desert Shield began at that same time, Saily said he knew they were going to get the call. And he knew they were ready for anything.

"Prior to going to combat, we did three, three-week tours in a year and a half at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif., in the Death Valley desert," Saily said. "That was helpful."



Army Art Collection/Marion Acevedo

In Marion Acevedo's 1991 watercolor on paper, The Cavalry Advances, M3 Bradley Fighting Vehicles from a VII Corps cavalry unit pass by destroyed Iraqi armored vehicles.



Courtesy photo

Army Spc. Arthur Saily II with the Army's Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Division of Fort Hood, Texas, peers out the hatch of an M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle on Feb. 23, 1991, near the Saudi Arabia/Iraq border. Saily was part of combat operations in the ground war for Operation Desert Storm. Saily is a Wakefield, Mich., native.

On Oct. 1, 1990, Saily said his unit went on lockdown, and they were finalizing their deployment for Desert Shield to Saudi Arabia.

"During that time, we got a lot of medical shots, did our packing, and so much more," Saily said. "I felt nervous and excited at the same time."

By Oct. 6, 1990, Saily said he boarded a plane at Fort Hood wearing full combat gear and headed to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

"After arrival, we went through quarantine for a week, picked up brand new Bradleys and ammunition, and headed northeast to a neutral zone that Iraq had taken over. We dug in positions on the border there and waited for orders."

Transitioning to Desert Storm

Saily said he and his fellow Soldiers stood guard at their positions for three months.

"We trained doing what we could do with our guard up," Saily said. "There was lots of radio watch and guard duty. I got bored."

However on Jan. 17, 1991, everything changed. Operation Desert Shield transitioned to Operation Desert Storm with the start of the air war. The air war continued daily until the ground war started on Feb. 24.

Saily recalled some of his missions.

"I went on a reconnaissance mission in late February to blow up communication towers," said Saily who operated the Bradley Fighting Vehicle with his unit's commanding officer. "That was exciting because we called for fire from artillery and watched from a distance at night as that mission got done."

A day after that mission, Saily said his unit received orders to go forward through the Wadi Al-Batin border area. Wadi Al-Batin is an intermittent river in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait. It is the lowest and final section of Wadi al-Rummah, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. It runs 45 miles in a northeast-southwest direction through the Al-Dibdibah plain and has been recognized since 1913 as the border between Kuwait and Iraq.

After crossing the Wadi Al-Batin, Saily said, all hell broke loose. "Right away we engaged the enemy bunkers, artillery, and tanks," Saily said. "We lost two Bradleys and three comrades. Two

of those comrades were good friends.

"During this time, I did my job on instinct as the training took over," Saily said. "This was the most afraid I'd ever been in my life so far. I was sweating horribly during what was a 7-hour battle. I was praying as I was driving and taking orders from my captain."

Saily said that after he experienced that first contact, he was a changed man.

"I was so alert about everything and feared at some point my life could be taken," he said.

Saily said his unit continued to advance and they came across other skirmishes as the ground war continued. Officially, the timeline states the ground war lasted 100 hours. In reality, Saily said, there was more to everything they faced, but overall, the fight didn't last an extended time.

Looking back 30 years

In February 1991, Saily was in combat putting his life on the line. In February 2021, he still relives the combat he experienced and the things he saw in war and has severe PTSD.

Saily said he gets treatment and care for his condition, but it is not easy.

"I still stress out every time the third week of February comes around," Saily said.

Now approaching 52 years old, Saily is back living in his native Upper Peninsula. He's not in his native city of Wakefield on the west end of the peninsula — rather 300-plus miles east on the eastern section of the Upper Peninsula in Detour.

Saily said he misses the camaraderie he had with his fellow Soldiers, and is glad he was part of the Army.

"Even though I had to experience and see what I did, I would do it again," Saily said. "Proud to be an American!"

According to the Department of Defense, about 697,000 U.S. troops took part in the war, with 299 losing their lives — including the three Soldiers who served with Saily.

Additionally, the U.S. and 40 allied nations, including several Arab nations, flew more than 18,000 air deployment missions, more than 116,000 combat air sorties, and dropped 88,500 tons of bombs.

REMEMBERING OPERATION DESERT SHIELD/OPERATION DESERT STORM

This Month in Fort McCoy History

30 Years Ago — February 1991

Morale remained high among Soldiers completing processing and training at Fort McCoy for deployment to the Operation Desert Storm theater of operations, said Garrison Commander Col. Raymond Boland in February 1991.

Boland said that although the post was in a winding down stage for deployment, it is awaiting word of further missions. The short-term mission will include processing and training about 840 additional Soldiers for deployment.

More than 90 percent of these troops were with the 224th Engineer Battalion, an Iowa National Guard unit that has its headquarters in Fairfield. The 224th has subordinate units in Mount Pleasant, Burlington, Ottumwa, Muscatine, Centerville, and Keokuk.

The remainder of the Soldiers were from two small military police detachments, the 34th, and the 146th. The 34th is an Iowa National Guard unit from Camp Dodge, and the 146th, is a Michigan Army National Guard unit from Owosso. Each unit has about 30 personnel.

Beyond that, the post has had no further word of possible activations, Boland said. Fort McCoy is prepared to handle any future activations, he added, and preparations are being made for processing and returning re-deployed soldiers to their reserve units.

30 Years Ago — February 1991

Five units deployed from Fort McCoy in early February 1991 and one additional unit reported to the post after being activated, which left a total of about 350 soldiers on the installation who were preparing for deployment to the Desert Storm theater of operations.

The unit most recently activated, the 892nd Transportation Company, an Army Reserve unit from Belleville, Ill., arrived with about 220 soldiers. The unit had about 170 pieces of equipment that were painted a desert sand color and shipped by rail to the east coast. About 125 soldiers of the 822nd Military Police Company from Rosemont, Ill., were preparing for Desert Storm deployment as of Feb. 8, 1991. Up until that time, the post had processed and trained a total of 64 units with more than 8,000 Soldiers for deployment.

Fort McCoy also had not received word of possible future activations as of early February 1991, according to post Executive Officer Al Fournier. Any activations were depending on world events. Fournier said post personnel remained busy planning for the annual training season, a test of a Regional Training Center concept, and the opening of a new interim Commissary in March 1991, among many other things.

30 Years Ago — February 1991

After Feb. 8, 1991, one more Army Reserve unit had deployed from Fort McCoy, while six small detachments were activated and had reported to the post to process, train, and await re-stationing in the continental United States.

The 822nd Military Police Company, an Army Reserve unit from Rosemont, Ill., was deployed Feb. 15 to the Desert Storm theater of operations. There six U.S. Army Reserve detachments activated are from Wisconsin



U.S. Army file photo

Family members and friends gather to welcome back members of the 213th Combat Support Headquarters Detachment of Wausau, Wis., and the 32nd Transportation Corps Detachment of Fort McCoy in 1991. Both units are U.S. Army Reserve assets.

and Illinois. From Wisconsin, the detachment personnel are all from West Allis, and are in the 757th Transportation Company, Detachment 1; the 1150th Transportation Company, Detachment 1; the 1151st Transportation Company, Detachments 1 and 2; and the 1152nd Transportation Company, Detachment 1.

Also activated were the 226th Transportation Company, Detachment 1, from Granite City, Ill. Approximately 65 Soldiers are in the six detachments, and all specialize in railroad operations and maintenance. Additionally, 165 soldiers from the 892nd Transportation Company, a U.S. Army Reserve unit from Belleville, Ill., continued to process and train at Fort McCoy for deployment.

Post Executive Officer Al Fournier said in late February 1991 a total of 65 units with about 8,200 personnel deployed from Fort McCoy since August 1990. In total, 3,076 pieces of equipment were shipped from Fort McCoy on 1,150 rail cars. Placed end to end, these rail cars would form a line more than 19 miles long. Of the equipment shipped, post personnel painted 2,995 pieces in the desert sand color.

The post also worked closely with Volk Field to make the deployments a success, Fournier said. More than 100 air missions were flown to move equipment and Soldiers. Aircraft used to accomplish the mission included C-141 Starlifter and C-5A Galaxy aircraft as well as several chartered commercial planes.

30 Years Ago — March 2, 1991

Following is the text of a message of thanks broadcast by President George H.W. Bush to the Service members of Operation Desert Storm March 2:

Never have I been more proud of our troops, or more proud to be your commander in chief, for today, amid prayers of thanks and hope, the Kuwaiti flag once again flies high above Kuwait City. And it's there

because you and your coalition allies put it there. Kuwait is liberated, and soon hometowns across America will be welcoming back home the finest combat force ever assembled — Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Marines, Air Force — the brave men and women of the United States of America.

Saddam Hussein's dreams of dominating the Middle East by the terror of nuclear arsenal and an army of a million men, threatened the future of our children and the entire world, and the world was faced with the simple choice — if international law and sanctions could not remove Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, then we had to free Kuwait from Saddam Hussein. And that's exactly what you did.

"Throughout seven long and arduous months, the troops of the 28 nations stood with you, shoulder to shoulder, in an unprecedented partnership for peace. Today, we thank you, for the victory in Kuwait was born in your courage and resolve.

The stunning success of our troops was a result of superb training, superb planning, superb execution and incredible acts of bravery. The Iraqi Army was defeated. Forty-two divisions were put out of action. They lost 3,000 tanks — almost 2,000 armored vehicles — more than 2,000 artillery pieces, and over half a million Iraqi soldiers were captured, defeated or disarmed. You were as good as advertised. You were indeed, 'good to go.'

This is a war we did not seek and did not want. But Saddam Hussein turned a deaf ear to the voices of peace and reason, and when he began burning Kuwait to the ground and intensifying the murder of his people, the coalition faced a moral imperative to put a stop to the atrocities in Kuwait once and for all. Boldly, bravely, you did just that, and when the rubber met the road, you did it in just six weeks, and 100 decisive hours.

The evil Saddam has done can never be forgotten. But his power to attack his neighbors and threaten the peace of the region is today grievously reduced. He has been stripped of his capacity to project offensive military power. His regime is totally discredited, and as a threat to peace, the day of this dictator is over. And the bottom line is this: Kuwait's night of terror

has ended. Thomas Jefferson said that the price for freedom is eternal vigilance. We must remain vigilant to make absolutely sure that the Iraqi dictator is never, ever allowed to stoke the ashes of defeat into the burning embers of aggression.

The sacrifice you've already made demands nothing less. The sacrifice of those who gave their lives will never be forgotten. Saddam made many mistakes. But one of the biggest was to underestimate the determination of the American people and the daring of our troops. We saw in the desert what Americans have learned through 215 years of history about the difference between democracy and dictatorship.

Soldiers who fight for freedom are more committed than Soldiers who fight because they are enslaved. Americans today are confident of our country, confident of our future, and most of all, confident about you. We promised you'd be given the means to fight. We promised not to look over your shoulder. We promised this would not be another Vietnam, and we kept that promise. The specter of Vietnam has been buried forever in the desert sands of the Arabian peninsula.

Today, the promise of spring is almost upon us, the promise of regrowth and renewal. Renewed life in Kuwait. Renewed prospects for real peace throughout the Middle East, and a renewed sense of pride and confidence here at home. And we're committed to seeing every American Soldier and every allied POW home soon, home to the thanks and the respect and the love of a grateful nation, and a very grateful president.

Yes, there remain vital and difficult tests ahead, both here and abroad, but nothing the American people can't handle. America has always accepted the challenge, paid the price, and passed the test. On this day, our spirits are high as our flag, and our future, as bright as liberty's torch.

Tomorrow, we dedicate ourselves anew, as Americans always have, and as Americans always will. The first test of the new world order has been passed. The hard work of freedom awaits. Thank you, congratulations and God bless the United States of America.