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DESERT VOICE



**FURRY
SOLDIERS**
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NCOIC 14th PAD
Staff Sgt. Sheryl Lawry

Editor
Sgt. Matt Millham

14th PAD Writers
Spc. Curt Cashour
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Broadcasters
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On the Cover Man's best friend can also be a formidable enemy, which is why dogs are effective tools of intimidation.
Illustration by Sgt. Matt Millham

No need to fret over taxes

Story by Capt. David Riddick,
Camp Arifjan Tax Center

April 15 is fast approaching, and for most people that means income taxes are due. However, it should not be a concern for servicemembers in Kuwait. The Internal Revenue Service grants an automatic extension for filing and paying taxes to any servicemember in a combat zone, so for those stationed here, there is no need to file or pay federal income taxes by April 15. This extension continues until 180 days from the date of leaving the combat zone. For instance, if a servicemember leaves the combat zone on May 1, he would have until Nov. 1 to file a federal tax return and pay any taxes due. There is no penalty or interest to pay so long as the servicemember files their tax return within 180 days of leaving the combat zone.

The extension for filing taxes is automatic, and there is no formal requirement to notify the IRS of a deployment to a combat zone. However, the IRS has set up an e-mail address, combatzone@irs.gov, where servicemembers can, if they choose, notify the IRS that they will not file on time because they are serving in a combat zone. Servicemembers choosing to do this need only provide the IRS with their name, home address, date of birth and date of entry into the combat zone.

For some Soldiers, tax time means a refund from the IRS. Servicemembers can file their taxes while in Kuwait. At Camp Arifjan, a tax center has been assisting servicemembers in electronically filing their federal returns, distributing IRS publications and offering tax advice since Jan. 15. The center is similar to commercial tax preparers back home, with refunds usually coming within two to three weeks by direct deposit. The Camp Arifjan tax center has processed more than \$460,000 in refunds so far, and the average refund exceeds \$1,000.

In order to file now, servicemembers need all tax- and income-related documents such as W-2 forms, bank routing numbers and account numbers for direct deposit. The routing and account numbers are listed at the bottoms of checks and deposit slips. Servicemembers with a spouse or children will need the date of birth and social security numbers for each family member. For married servicemembers filing a joint return, the spouse's signature is needed on a power of attorney to complete an electronic filing form. Otherwise the printed return can be mailed home to the spouse for signature and filing with the IRS. Should the service-

member's spouse want to file back at home, it is allowable to have the spouse sign both names to the return without a power of attorney, and attach a note that the servicemember is serving in a combat zone and unable to sign the return.

There are other tax benefits from serving in a combat zone in addition to a delay in filing and paying taxes. Military pay is excluded from taxation for enlisted troops and warrant officers, and most income is tax-free for commissioned officers. The time limits for filing a claim with the IRS for a claim or refund are also extended while in a combat zone, as is the period for making a qualified contribution to an IRA. Moreover, if the IRS gives any notice or demand for payment of taxes, any action is delayed for up to 180 days from the date of departure from a combat zone.

Regarding state taxes, the vast majority of states follow the federal guideline of 180 days for extensions. The exceptions are: Hawaii, which has an automatic four-month extension, and an additional two months may be granted if needed; Kentucky residents must file within 12 months after leaving combat zone; Oklahoma returns are due the 15th day of the third month following return to Oklahoma; Puerto Rico residents must file within six months of leaving a combat zone; Tennessee resident's investment income tax is due 90 days after leaving a combat zone.

Florida, Nevada, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Texas, Washington and Wyoming have no individual income tax. New Hampshire residents can also request abatement of other tax interest and penalties. All other states and the District of Columbia follow federal extension guidelines. Servicemembers filing state taxes after the state deadline need to write "COMBAT ZONE" at the top of their state tax return.

The tax center does not file state returns. Additional state-specific filing information is available at:

www.taxadmin.org/fta/llink/forms.html.

For more information on military tax issues see the Armed Forces Tax Guide, IRS Publication 3, which can be found at: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p3.pdf>.

For general tax information go to: <http://www.irs.gov>.

The Camp Arifjan Tax Center is in the Zone 1 PX, next to the Red Cross. Servicemembers and government employees can visit the center on a walk-in basis to get help filing their federal returns.

The tax center is open Monday through

Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. In order to receive help, there are a number of documents you need to bring to the center. They include: military or government identification, social security numbers of all dependents, a bank account number and routing number for direct deposit, power of attorney from your spouse, W-2 forms, 1099 forms (if applicable), mortgage interest statements and investment income.

If the 180-day extension isn't enough, you might qualify for more extensions depending on the timeframe in which your deployment took place. Call the legal assistance office for more information. The legal assistance office is located at Camp Arifjan, and legal assistance teams visit various American military camps on a rotating schedule. Their number is DSN 430-6307.

The Tax Assistance Center can be reached at DSN 430-1217 or 430-1218.

Tax Facts

- A combat zone is an area where U.S. forces are engaged in combat, as designated by executive order by the president of the United States. Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar and other locations are combat zones.
- Enlisted Soldiers and warrant officers can exclude from gross income all compensation received during the months spent in a combat zone.
- Commissioned officers can exclude up to the highest enlisted servicemember's pay plus the hostile fire pay amount (for 2004 that maximum amount is \$6,316 per month).
- If a servicemember spends any part of a month in a combat zone, compensation for that entire month is excluded from federal income taxes.
- Pay for accrued leave earned in any month where a servicemember served in a combat zone is tax free.
- There is no need to file a federal income tax return or pay federal income taxes until 180 days after leaving a combat zone.
- There is no penalty or interest to be paid so long as the tax return is filed within the 180-day period after leaving the combat zone.
- When filing the tax return, the words "COMBAT ZONE" should be printed on the upper right portion of the first page of the tax return or this fact can be noted on an electronic filing.

Good news from Maine

Story and photo by Spc. Brian Trapp

Most troops find out when they are going home from their commander. The 133rd Engineer Battalion (Heavy) with the Maine National Guard found out from their senator.

Maine Senator Susan Collins visited the Soldiers of the 133rd at Camp Victory Feb. 20 to thank them for their hard work. While there, she gave them the good news; the unit is slated to fly back to the Pine Tree State in the next few weeks. After spending nearly a year in Iraq, this information was received with smiles and cheers. Now, just a few days remain before they can put Iraq in the back of their minds and concentrate on their normal lives again.

"I imagine it must feel so good to be so close to going home," Collins said. "I'm so proud of you for what you've done, and proud for your sacrifice."

Collins delivered the news of their departure in a short speech, then spent some time talking to the Soldiers and posing for pictures with them.

"It's just nice now that we're going home," said 133rd member Sgt. Timothy Vashon. Knowing the official date for his flight home was a relief. "The rumors have been flying, and no one was really sure [when we were going home]. It was pretty special for us, and I'm sure for her, too."

During their time in Iraq, the engineers built more than just buildings. They helped lay the foundations for a better Iraq. The Soldiers carried out several missions across northern Iraq improving the quality of life for people in the area.

The engineers completed a number of projects in Mosul and the Dahuk Province. They built sleeping and showering facilities for the 104th Iraqi National Guard Battalion, which is stationed near Iraq's borders with Syria and Turkey. They also installed generators and improved roads.

The unit also played a role in the success of the Iraqi elections in Mosul. The Soldiers set up security perimeters around some 70 voting stations in the city.

Sgt. Ed Graves, a squad leader with the 133rd, spent the nights before the election driving through the dangerous streets of Mosul with a loader. Escorted by Strykers and other armored vehicles, he used the loader to put Jersey barriers around polling stations to protect voters from possible insurgent bomb blasts. Normally, operating at night isn't too difficult, Graves said, but his visibility was limited because he had to do it without his lights. The engineers armored four of their loaders with ballistic steel for the dangerous mission.



Maine Senator Susan Collins greets Soldiers of the Maine National Guard's 133rd Engineer Battalion (Heavy) Feb. 20 at Camp Victory. Collins made the visit while on her way to Iraq.

Graves' only view out of the loader was through a small porthole in the armor.

He summed up his feelings about the nighttime excursions in a few words. "Some days are better than others, but that's the way it goes." Graves didn't consider the nights before the elections as some of the better days, he said.

On the better days, the engineers worked with civil affairs teams on construction projects for local Iraqis.

In Hamzan, a rural village in northern Iraq, the engineers made some drastic improvements, tearing down the old school and building a new and better one. They also repaired roads and put in a new water tank for the town to replace an old crumbling one.

"We made a pretty big improvement on the area," said Sgt. David Roberge, an equipment operator with the 133rd.

Roberge, with the help of his children's teachers back in Maine, continued to help the children of Hazman. His children's teachers "wanted me to talk to some of the classes," he said. While he was visiting, the teachers got together and decided to send some school supplies back with him for the Iraqis. Roberge returned from leave with two duffel bags full of school supplies, he said.

Four more bags of school supplies arrived in the mail later on. When he got back into the DaHuk Province, he donated the four bags of supplies to another school.

"The second school I gave supplies to, the school headmaster took me around to all the classrooms," Roberge said. While he was going around the school, the headmaster had

a child in each class stand up and tell Roberge what they were learning about. Then the headmaster would explain to the classes that the supplies they were using were donated by the school Roberge's children attend.

But the engineers left behind something more valuable than donated food and school supplies. They also left their skills.

The engineers taught some of the local Kurdish construction workers how to work with equally-sized cinderblocks, which was a bit of a change for the Kurds who are used to working with irregularly-shaped blocks.

"All their blocks are made by hand, so they aren't really uniform," said Staff Sgt. Leo Bouley, a squad leader with the 133rd. "Some blocks have bulges that others don't. When you're laying them down, sometimes you have to put a little more mortar in some places than others to make it even." The Kurds liked the cinderblocks, though, and were receptive to the new method.

One day, Bouley and some of his Soldiers saw some locals putting a cement cover on a tank at Freedom Palace, a camp in Mosul. The Soldiers decided to go over and help them finish the cover.

"They were watching how we were doing it, then they borrowed our [trowels] and they started doing it, too," Bouley said. "We were showing them how we do it in America, and they were showing us how they do their work."

Bouley and other Soldiers with the engineers agreed their time in Iraq was an interesting and rewarding experience, but for now, they look forward to heading back to Maine and their families.

Driving IED Alley

Story and photos by Spc. Curt Cashour

There's a saying among servicemembers in Kuwait that goes something like, "If it weren't for what we do in Kuwait, the guys up north would get nothing accomplished."

This rings especially true for Soldiers like the ones in the 227th Transportation Company, one of 14 companies based at Camp Navistar and Camp Arifjan tasked with the tough job of delivering much-needed supplies to U.S. camps in Iraq.

The Soldiers of the 227th and other units like it are part of a new breed of transportation troops, ones that know as much about explosions and mortar attacks as they do about preventive maintenance checks and services.

Each month, members of the 227th, a Reserve unit from Albemarle, N.C., log a combined total of nearly 800,000 miles on the supply routes of Iraq, spending as many as 20 days each month in the war-torn country. As part of what's become known as the Iraqi Express, the troops deliver repair parts and other supplies U.S. troops in Iraq need to sustain daily activities, said Capt. Jeff Schneider, 227th commander.

It didn't take long for Schneider and other 227th members to get acquainted with the tactics and techniques of the insurgents in Iraq. The group arrived at Navistar in March, 2004. Within four or five days, a convoy Schneider was part of got caught in the blast of an improvised explosive device, Schneider said. The Soldiers have endured at least 40 attacks since then and have the war stories to prove it.

They've even taken to referring to one stretch of their convoy route as "IED Alley." A convoy driving through "IED Alley," a more than 13-mile stretch of Alternate Supply Route Sword in Baghdad, has a good chance of getting attacked, Schneider said. Each trip through the alley is marked by an intense rush of adrenaline, anticipation and sweat, 227th members said.

"It could be 25 or 30 degrees out. You'll be freezing. By the time you get done, you'll be sweating profusely," said Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Herman, a 227th platoon leader.

Sgt. Jimmy Hineman was part of an ammo-hauling convoy through the alley in November, when an IED exploded just a few vehicles up from his M-915 truck. Thick clouds of dust and debris filled the air, blocking Hineman's line of sight, he said.

Too close to change paths, Hineman stomped on the throttle, barreling through



Staff Sgt. Rick Rivera and Spc. Jordan Scanlan, both of the 227th Transportation Company, inspect damage inflicted on one of the unit's Humvees from an improvised explosive device attack in Iraq. At top, escort Humvees begin a convoy run at Camp Navistar in October 2004.

the dust. Just as he started to see light again, a second IED detonated on the driver's side of his truck. The blast blew Hineman into the passenger seat. The truck's windshield shattered, sending glass shards into the side of his face and neck.

Although his entire life had just flashed through his mind, the 39-year-old Hineman managed to regain control of the truck, piloting it for more than two miles before stopping to assess the damage, he said.

With the help of his truck's Level-3 steel plates, Hineman came away with nothing but cuts on his face and neck from the glass, and a temporary loss of hearing in his left ear, he said.

One of the company's most intense battles took place near Abu Ghraib Prison, when a 227th convoy headed from Baghdad International Airport to Camp Fallujah, Iraq, came under attack. Insurgents had blocked the road in several places with burning debris. As the convoy swerved between the obstacles, it became embroiled in a barrage of IED explosions, mortars and small-arms fire, said Spc. Jordan Scanlan, a 227th Humvee driver.

The April 9 attack differed from typical insurgent assaults because enemy rounds seemed to be striking consistently and dangerously close, said Scanlan.

"It was a well-planned-out ambush," he said.

Luckily, the convoy was supported by a

lot of firepower, including two Cobra helicopters. The group gained control of the situation by fighting back and eventually killing 14 insurgents, Scanlan said.

Later, when he got time to take a look at the outside of his Humvee, Scanlan made an alarming discovery. Scores of ricochet marks dotted the door of his Level 2-armored Humvee. Scanlan is certain at least some of the bullets would have struck his neck, maybe even his head, and said he wouldn't be alive today if it weren't for the armor.

After his brush with death, Scanlan said he prays before every meal. But he's not the only one who's been changed by nearly a year of clashes with insurgents.

A 15-year veteran of Army transportation units, Herman said he never would have imagined the situation facing today's transportation troops. Nevertheless, he has done his part to make sure he and his Soldiers can return home safely.

Each time he crosses the border into Iraq, he becomes a different person. The switch is necessary in light of the opposition, he said.

"When you cross the border, you have that feeling there's someone looking at you that wants to kill you," he said.

The 227th is scheduled to redeploy sometime in March. The 424th Transportation Company, a Reserve unit from Galax, Va., will take over the mission.

Soldiers with bite



Zita, a military working dog deployed to the Camp Arifjan Dog Kennel in Kuwait, practices her attack discipline skills on her master, Sgt. James Cooley of the 42nd Military Police Detachment, who is using a bite suit to protect himself from the canine's attack behavior.

Story and photos by Spc. Jonathan Montgomery

Zita, a three-year-old German shepherd military working dog, rustles around in the backseat of a white pickup truck rolling along a sandy stretch of gravel. Her handler, Sgt. James Cooley of the 42nd Military Police Detachment from Fort Bragg, N.C., is at the wheel looking back every now and then to give Zita a praise or a pet.

Military working dogs, first employed by the American Canine Corps in 1835 as sentries, messengers and ambulance dogs, serve as force protection multipliers at bases across the globe by helping their handlers to search mail, vehicles, aircraft and people for explosives, narcotics and other contraband.

Cooley and Zita are deployed to the Camp Arifjan Dog Kennel in Kuwait, which houses a total of 12 explosive and narcotic detection patrol dogs, worth between \$30,000 and \$80,000 each depending on the level of training.

The two are on their way to one of Camp

Arifjan's entry gates to search long lines of incoming cars and trucks for everything from TNT to cocaine.

Upon arriving at the security gate, Cooley leashes his beloved canine while Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Michelle Mruk, an MP out of the Naval Air Station in Sicily, Italy, also deployed to the Camp Arifjan Dog Kennel, purposely plants a Tupperware container filled with smokeless powder behind the wheel well of a semi-truck.

Zita passes the impromptu training exercise, sniffing out the banned substance almost immediately and with graceful ease. Her master rewards her with a favorite rubber chew toy called a kong.

"Building a rapport with the dog is the most important thing," said Cooley.

Establishing a solid trust relationship with the dogs goes hand-in-hand with getting the dogs successfully through base security missions that require the animals to search between 80 and 160 vehicles arriving through just one of Camp Arifjan's entry gates each day, said Cooley.



"If you're having a bad day, then your dog is going to have a bad day," he said. "Everything runs down leash."

More than 500 canine teams from all five military services are deployed to places such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Cuba, Bosnia, Kosovo and Africa, said Cooley.

"Our mission here is all about force protection," he said. "We do camp walks once a week where we travel to all the camps in Kuwait just to [make our] presence known."

The canine presence is a scare tactic, said Mruk, whose assigned dog is a six-year-old black Labrador trained in explosive detection. "The dogs are visual deterrents," she said. "It's definitely psychological."

But the payoff is greater than simply keeping explosives and contraband out of camps.

"The reward of the job is knowing that if we do find something, we could be poten-

tially saving lives," said Mruk. "Plus, it's fun. The dogs think everything is a game, so finding explosives is a game to them."

What most impresses Cooley, Mruk and the other dog handlers about man's best friend is how smart they can be.

"The dogs can read the tension in your voice to see if you're angry or sad," said Cooley.

But brains aren't what make the dogs invaluable. The canine's olfactory nerves enable the animals to detect explosives and narcotics when searching everything from car engines and rock quarries to pants pockets and postal packages.

"Dogs not only pick up the odor of where it is, but also the residue of where it was," said Cooley about the transportation of illegal substances. "Their sense of smell is at least a hundred times better than ours."

The demand for explosive detection dogs in particular has increased since 9/11, said Cooley.

"They're called on a lot more whenever a suspicious package shows up," he said.

Daily training exercises keep the dogs, many of whom are recruited from European

countries such as Holland, Germany and Czechoslovakia, on the tips of their paws and the handlers at the top of their game, said Mruk.

"Warehouses, vehicle lots ... wherever you can hide explosives, we train," she said about honing the canines' odor detection skills.

Training in the summer heat requires that handlers work the dogs no more than 15 minutes at a time and test them at nighttime and early morning hours, said Cooley.

"We also give the dogs IVs to keep them cool and put ice vests over their backs and booties so their paws don't get burned from the hot sand," he said.

Aggression training is equally important, said Cooley.

"Bringing the dog with you when you're going to shake someone else's hand, and making sure the dog doesn't bite the other person instills attack discipline in the canine," said Cooley.

Because of their discipline, the dogs are safer than guns, said Cooley, adding that it's easier to call back a dog than a bullet.

Chasing down criminals engages the dog's prey drive, and this instinct is reinforced with equipment such as bite suits. But exercising the dog's play drive is just as essential, said Cooley.

The dogs are trained daily on running obstacles such as steps, narrow bridges, window hurdles and tunnels, as well as catching Frisbees, tennis balls, and other chew toys, said Cooley.

"Everything is a toy to them," he said.

While some retired dogs are adopted by former handlers, many are often sent back to the schoolhouse at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, home of the U.S. military working dog training grounds, to serve as living examples of field experience to handlers-in-training. "More or less, the dogs are now teaching the students," said Cooley.

"If you're having a bad day, then your dog is going to have a bad day ... Everything runs down leash." —Sgt. James Cooley



1. Cooley makes sure Zita is properly leashed and groomed to carry out the day's force protection mission. 2. Cooley and Zita search a truck for explosives and contraband at one of Camp Arifjan's gates. 3. Zita runs her daily obstacle course steps, which keeps her in shape to catch criminals. 4. Cooley tickles Zita in praise of her successful completion of an obstacle course behind the Camp Arifjan Dog Kennel. 5. Zita hones her play skills by rolling around her favorite bouncing ball.

Defusing Iraq's buried weapons

Story and photo by Spc. Almee Felix

During their seven-month deployment, Slovakian soldiers sieved through almost 70,000 square meters of land by hand in southern Iraq, finding more than 2,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance. Now they're readying their replacements to continue this success.

Slovakia's third rotation of troops supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom is getting ready to redeploy, but not before they help soldiers from Slovakia's fourth rotation prepare

their gear and vehicles at Camp Virginia.

Early in March, the fourth rotation of Slovak troops will take over Slovakia's mission under Multinational Division Central-South in Al-Hillah, Iraq. That mission includes de-mining, providing force protection and providing staff officers for logistics and staff work.

The third rotation has been there, done that, and even had their six-month tour extended to seven months in order to help provide security during Iraq's landmark elections Jan. 30.

Since most of the Slovak soldiers volunteered for these missions for the extra money they'd receive in mission pay, the extra month was not much of a problem.

"I volunteered to improve my lifestyle," said redeploying Slovak soldier Staff Sgt. Patrik Boros. Boros said his job as a truck driver in Al-Hillah was one of the more stressful duties to have up north because of the constant fear of explosives on the road. Once, he thought his fears had become a reality when he heard a loud bang while he was convoying across Iraq. He tried to speed past what he thought were explosives on the road, but his truck couldn't speed up. He was relieved to find that there were no explosives. One of his tires had blown in the extreme heat.

The engineers – whose job it was to search for UXOs as well as carry out small construction projects – didn't agree that Boros' job was the most dangerous. In charge of de-mining almost 70,000 square meters of southern Iraq, their job required a huge amount of concentration because one small mistake could cost a lot of lives. They had to deal with the stress of digging by hand through thousands of explosives that could detonate at any moment if not properly handled, said Lt. Col. Anton Sladeczek, the officer in charge of the Slovak's third rotation.

While the Slovak army has de-mining tanks they brought with them to Iraq, the Slovak engineers ended up doing most of the de-mining manually because their tanks couldn't make it in the heavy terrain, said



Pfc. Josef Gazdov secures spare tires on the top of a Slovakian military vehicle at Camp Virginia Feb. 24. Gazdov, part of the fourth rotation of Slovak troops, will deploy to Iraq in early March.

Sladeczek.

Sladeczek said he will take with him the satisfaction that his soldiers did their job without any loss of life. He also said he learned a lot from the coalition partners he worked with at Al-Hillah, and, more specifically, he admired the versatility in skill among the Salvadorans and the bravery of the Mongolians. He also enjoyed the personalities of the Americans "who were unfortunately [military police], but they were still alright," said Sladeczek, joking about the American troops he shared a bay with at Al-Hillah.

The new rotation will go into Iraq with better vehicles, which Poland provided along with drivers. They will also have a chaplain, which Sladeczek thinks will help boost morale.

Warrant Officer 1st Class Milos Kubacka is glad the fourth rotation will have vehicles with better armor because he saw how much stress convoy movements caused his soldiers. Still, "it never affected their performance," he said.

Kubacka, a military police officer, can't wait to return to his wife, 1-year-old daughter and a better financial situation. He said he benefited greatly from the Internet and phone access available to the Slovak troops in Iraq because he could at least witness his daughter's growth through photos.

Slovak support for OIF is slated to continue. Aside from the six-month rotations, they also provide a 20-man contingent to teach de-mining procedures to Iraqi police officers.

Slovak facts

Slavic tribes occupied what is now Slovakia in the 5th century.

Slovakia is twice the size of New Hampshire with a population of about 5.4 million people.

You shouldn't admire anything in a Slovak home too enthusiastically, as the hosts may feel obliged to offer the object as a gift.

On Jan. 1, 1993, Slovakia became an independent nation-state.

Bratislava has been the capital of Slovakia since 1969.

The proper noun and adjective form is Slovak not Slovakian.

The value of Slovak currency, koruna or SKK, has steadily increased from 48.35 koruny per U. S. dollar in 2001 to the current rate of 28.61 koruny per U. S. dollar.

In Slovakia there are about 4,000 caves, 14 of which are open to the public.

Slovakia has military conscription, which will be completely eliminated January 2005. Efforts to make it an all-volunteer force began in December 2004.

Sixty percent of Slovaks are Catholic and the number of atheists in the country outnumbers the amount of Protestants in the country by about 71,000.

State universities in Slovakia charge no tuition fees, but admission is limited and highly competitive.

Slovakia has a parliamentary democracy. The Head of State, the President, is elected by the Slovak National Council, which has 150 members. The Prime Minister is the head of the government.

CFLCC celebrates flawless season

Story and photo by Spc. Jonathan Montgomery

The Coalition Forces Land Component Command pushed their undefeated streak to 12 games by shutting down the 62nd Medical Combat Brigade for the third time this season during a 60-51 championship finals win at the Zone 1 Fitness Center Feb. 20.

The over-40 league men's tournament included two preseason, eight regular season, and two postseason games pitting units at Camp Arifjan against one another.

CFLCC garnered a fast 10-point lead eight minutes into the game. That soon turned into a 16-point lead to close out the first half, 32-16.

"It was a hard game, but we hit the rebounds and ran with it," said Dwayne Williams, CFLCC guard.

Williams said he and his teammates did a good job of looking all around the court for open players and playing strong defense.

"It's all about team ball, hustle and defense," he said.

CFLCC managed to commit only three fouls in the first half as compared to the eight fouls charged against the 62nd.

"We were making some bad passes," said Scott Rose of the 62nd

about being down 24-12 with three minutes left to play in the first half.

During the second half, the 62nd was determined to close the gap on CFLCC.

"We had a really strong center and our biggest guys out there," said Rose. "We were playing physical ball."

However, it just wasn't enough firepower.

"It's hard to rebound when they got guys [that size]," he said.

Physical domination was the key to clinching the game, said Kenny Struggs, CFLCC guard.

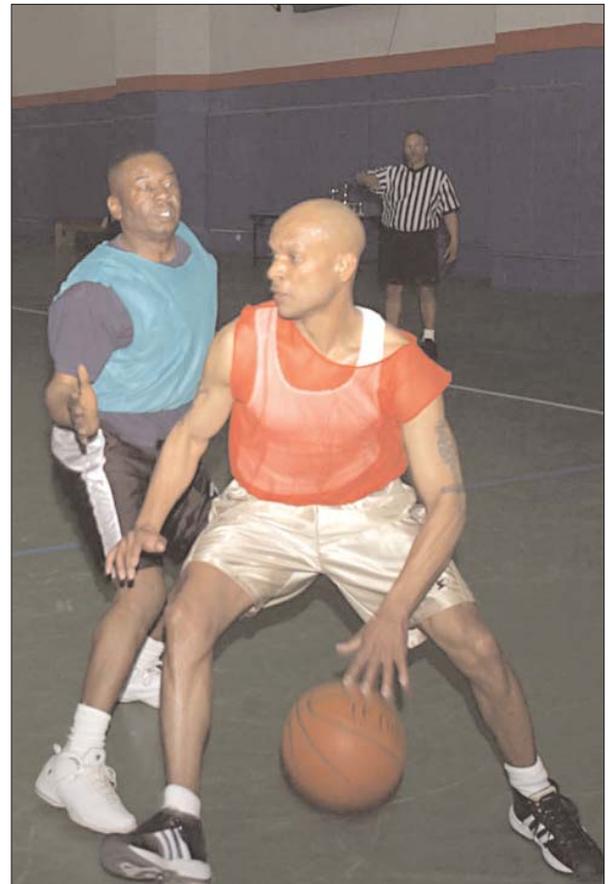
"We had some big guys on our team that controlled the tempo of the games throughout the season," he said.

"We started and finished on a high note, staying undefeated in the regular season and the playoffs," said Eddie Jiles of CFLCC.

CFLCC and the 62nd MCB faced off twice before. The first meeting saw CFLCC defeating the 62nd by 40 points. In the second meeting, CFLCC won by 14 points.

"They played a little harder and smarter this time," said Williams. "They had some good shooters."

The players on both sides were awarded trophies after the game for first and second place.



Coalition Forces Land Component Command player Dwayne Williams drives past 62nd Medical Brigade's Mark Parham in the championship game Feb. 20.

Redeploying Marines memorialize their fallen

Marines and Sailors of Battalion Landing Team, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, paid homage to their fallen comrades Feb. 20 in a memorial service at Camp Virginia.

The men of BLT 1/3 remembered their brothers, 48 Marines and two Navy corpsmen, who had fallen while serving in Iraq.

During the ceremony the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Mike Ramos, shared his heartfelt sentiments with the battalion.

"These men represented the best of America," Ramos said. "These men made a difference."

The formation stood at attention as the names of the honored were read and helmets were placed upon the upturned rifles of the fallen.

The Marines and Sailors of the 31st MEU are in Kuwait, having recently ended combat operations in Iraq, and are expected to return to Okinawa sometime in April.



Photos by Marine Lance Cpl. Will Lathrop

Have camera, will shoot

Story and photos by Spc. Aimee Felix

Along with their weapon, their gear and their uniform, almost every troop in theater has a camera. In trying to capture the moments they've shared with their battle buddies, troops have even pulled out cameras in the middle of firefights. While we at the Desert Voice don't condone putting yourselves in harm's way for the sake of a good photo, we would like to give you some tips on how to use those cameras you're carrying around.

TECHNICAL NOTE

Most point and shoot cameras have auto focus, which is programmed to automatically focus on the center of the photo. To focus on another part of the photo, try this: Center the subject and press and hold the shutter button halfway down. While still holding the shutter button, reposition your camera so the subject is away from the center. Now, take your picture.

RULE OF THIRDS

One of the most popular 'rules' in photography is the rule of thirds. It is also popular with artists. It works like this: Imaginary lines are drawn dividing the image into thirds both horizontally and vertically. You place important elements of your composition where these lines intersect. Bad places to put important elements of the photo are right in the middle, right at the top, right at the bottom or away in the corner. Using the rule of thirds you'll get nicely balanced photos that are easy on the eyes.



LEADING LINES

A leading line can be almost anything, a road, a path, a sidewalk, a fence, a shadow, even a line of Texas barriers. You will not always find a strong leading line around every subject, but you should look for them and if they are there take advantage of them because they can do a lot for a photo. Starting a leading line from the corner of your picture will often improve composition. Lines in a picture should lead into, not out of, the picture, and they should lead your eye toward the main subject.



FILLING THE FRAME

How many times have you tried taking a photo of someone and ended up with a photo of a large landscape and sky with your subject somewhere down in the bottom center of the photo? Try to get as close as you can to your subject so that it fills the viewfinder. Getting closer and maybe even going vertical can make your shot a lot better.



FOREIGN OBJECTS GROWING OUT OF HEADS: BAD

When you look through the camera viewfinder, study the area surrounding your subject. Make sure no poles are "growing" from your buddy's head.



DIRECTION

If you're taking an action shot or a shot of someone simply walking, make sure that the photograph includes space for them to walk into rather than having them against the edge, which just ends up making them look like they're about to walk off the picture.



CROWDED SHOTS

A plain background shows off the subject you are photographing. Focus on your subject and try taking the photo from an angle that provides a plain background. It could simply necessitate taking a knee and taking the photo from that angle to simplify the background or moving to a new location.



Community

happenings for March 2 through March 9

Arifjan

Wednesday

Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR tent
Combat Kick Boxing 5:30 a.m., Power Stretching 8 a.m., Bench/Step Workout 10 a.m., Body Pump Workout 1 p.m., Zone 1 gym tent
Aerobics, 6 p.m., Zone 6 gym tent
Aerobics, 7 p.m., Zone 2 gym tent

Thursday

Country Music Night, 7 p.m., Community Center
Spinning Class, 5:30 p.m., Zone 2 gym tent
Open Mic Night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR area
Karate Class, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR area
Basketball signups begin, Zone 1 gym

Friday

Salsa Night, 7 p.m., Community Center
Indoor theater, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR area
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool
Aerobics, 6 p.m., Zone 6 MWR tent
Aerobics, 7 p.m., Zone 2 gym tent

Saturday

Poker Night, 7 p.m., Community Center
R&B Night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR tent
Combat Kick Boxing 5:30 a.m., Power Stretching 8 a.m., Bench/Step Workout 10 a.m., Body Pump Workout 1 p.m., Combat Kick Boxing 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym tent
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool

Sunday

Women's History Jeopardy, 7 p.m., Community Center
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool
Bench/Step Workout 5:30 a.m., Super Abs 8 a.m., Power Stretching 10 a.m., Body Pump Workout 1 p.m., Bench/Step Workout 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym tent

Monday

Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 2 stage
Bingo Night, 7 p.m., Community Center
Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool
Combat Kick Boxing 5:30 a.m., Power Stretching 8 a.m., Bench/Step Workout 10 a.m., Body Pump Workout 1 p.m., Combat Kick Boxing 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym tent
Aerobics, 6 p.m., Zone 6 gym tent

Tuesday

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool
Bench/Step Workout 5:30 a.m., Super Abs 8 a.m., Power Stretching 10 a.m., Body Pump Workout 1 p.m., Bench/Step Workout 3 p.m., Zone 1 gym tent

Wednesday

Table Tennis Tournament, 7 p.m., Community Center
Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR
Combat Kick Boxing 5:30 a.m., Power Stretching 8 a.m., Bench/Step Workout 10 a.m., Body Pump Workout 1 p.m., Zone 1 gym tent

For more information call 430-1202

Buehring

Thursday

Tae-Kwon-Do Class, 7 p.m., MWR tent

Saturday

Tae-Kwon-Do Class, 7 p.m., MWR tent

Sunday

3-on-3 Basketball, time TBD, basketball court

Tuesday

Tae-Kwon-Do Class, 7 p.m., MWR tent
For more information call 828-1340

Doha

Friday

Karaoke Night, 7 p.m., Frosty's

Saturday

Top 40 All Request Music Night, 7 p.m., Frosty's

Monday

Country Music Night, 7 p.m., Frosty's

Wednesday

Country Music Night, 7 p.m., Frosty's

For more information call 438-5637

Kuwaiti Naval Base

Wednesday

Self Defense 1, 6 p.m., aerobics room
Foosball Tournament, 7 p.m., new gym

Thursday

Texas Hold'em Poker, 7 p.m., new gym
Techno Dance, 7:30 p.m., old temp. gym tent

Friday

Bowling, 4 p.m., bowling alley
Latin Dance, 7 p.m., old temp. gym tent
Basketball Tournament, 8 p.m., Kuwaiti gym

Saturday

Tennis Tournament, 4 p.m., side of Kuwaiti gym
Ping Pong Tournament, 6 p.m., new gym
Softball, 6 p.m., next to soccer field
R&B Dance, 7 p.m., old temp. gym tent

Sunday

Flag Football, 2 p.m., field next to gym
Aerobics, 6 p.m., Kuwaiti Gym
Self Defense 2, 7:30 p.m., aerobics room

Monday

Marine Corps Martial Arts, 1 p.m., TMC
Darts Tournament, 6 p.m., gym
Chess/Spades/Checkers/Dominoes, 6 p.m., gym
Bowling, 7 p.m., bowling alley

Tuesday

PS2, 5 p.m., new gym
Self Defense 1, 6 p.m., aerobics room
Chess/Spades/Checkers/Dominoes, 6 p.m., new gym
Self Defense 2, 7:30 p.m., aerobics room

Wednesday

Self Defense 1, 6 p.m., aerobics room
Foosball Tournament, 7 p.m., new gym
For more information call 839-1063

Navistar

Wednesday

Female Self Defense class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court
Aerobics Class, 6 p.m., Game tent

Thursday

Karate Class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court

Friday

MWR rep meeting, 1 p.m., MWR office
Aerobics Class, 6 p.m., Game tent

Saturday

Pool Tournament, 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., Game tent
Basketball Tournament, 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., basketball court

Sunday

Pool Tournament, 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., Game tent
Basketball Tournament, 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., basketball court

Monday

Cribbage Tournament Practice, 8 a.m., Rec tent

Softball Tournament signup, NLT 1 p.m., with MWR rep
Female Self Defense class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court
Aerobics Class, 6 p.m., Game tent

Tuesday

Cribbage Tournament Practice, 8 a.m., Rec tent
Softball Tournament signup, NLT 1 p.m., with MWR rep
Karate Class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court

Wednesday

Cribbage Tournament Practice, 8 a.m., Rec tent
Softball Tournament signup, NLT 1 p.m., with MWR rep
Female Self Defense class, 9 a.m. and 7 p.m., basketball court
Aerobics Class, 6 p.m., Game tent

For more information call 844-1137

Spearhead/SPOD

Saturday

Bazaar, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., PX area

For more information call 825-1302

Victory

Wednesday

Hip Hop and Salsa Night, 8 p.m., MWR tent

Thursday

Sports Trivial Pursuit, 8 p.m., MWR tent

Friday

Bazaar, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., behind PX

Sunday

Purrfect Angelz Tour, 6 - 7:30 p.m., place TBD

Monday

Spa Day, 10 a.m., MWR tent
Movie Night, 5 - 8 p.m., MWR tent

Tuesday

Spa Day, 10 a.m., MWR tent
Bingo Night, 8 p.m., MWR tent

For more information call 823-1033

Virginia

Wednesday

Bazaar, 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., Dusty Room
Country Western Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Thursday

Spades Tournament, 6 p.m., Dusty Room
Karaoke Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Friday

Billiards Doubles Tournament, 6 p.m., MWR tent
Salsa Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Saturday

Spa Day, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., MWR tent
Hip Hop and R&B Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Sunday

Checkers Tournament, 3 p.m., MWR tent
Old School Jams, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Monday

Foosball Tournament, 6 p.m., MWR tent
Movie Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Tuesday

Bingo Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Wednesday

Ping Pong Tournament, 6 p.m., MWR tent
Country Western Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

For more information call 832-1045

Send your community events to the Desert Voice editor at matthew.millham@arifjan.arcent.army.mil

The Waiting Game

By Staff Sgt. Dionicio Pena
1836 Transportation Company

Here we are sitting in line, once again waiting on S.P. time. We didn't know but before we could go, someone had to take charge of this rodeo.

Then Cowboy stood up and yelled from the rear, "this truck needs to go there and that truck has to go here." He knows the "what for" more so than the rest, though he's just an E-4 in his mind he's the best.

Then the C.C. comes on the two-way radio, "everybody wake up in five minutes we'll go". Five minutes went by then ten minutes more, yet we're still on the pad just as before, sitting in line, waiting ten minutes more.

We then rush for the gates our engines clicking, where we sit and we wait, as time keeps on ticking. The gate keeper asks for identification, he then has to call for verification. He hangs up the phone then chats with his friend, while we anxiously wait for this trip to begin. Now he's back at my truck and with a silly grin, says "y'all in luck your

clearance came in."

We're given the GO, we rush for the road where again we must wait for our chaperon. Now they're finally here, not a minute too soon, Kuwait's finest P.D. by mid-afternoon.

We finally arrive, the load at destination. Thirty minutes to drive, three-hours preparation. The folks in charge here, at this location, say we must wait again for load designation.

So we continue to wait, there's a realization. We're at the wrong gate is someone's exclamation. There's not much we can do but sit here and wait. Hope someone comes through, lead us to the right gate. Lo and behold someone on a gator, comes up and we're told we'll get loaded later.

Now eight hours have gone by, we're still desperately waiting. Enthusiasm once high, is now disintegrating. Nothing more we can do but continue the waiting.

So if waiting's the game, we're ahead of the mix. No-one's quite the same as eighteen-thirty-six.

By Lt. Col. Michael Verrett,
CFLCC C4

ARMY LIFE



FREE STUFF!

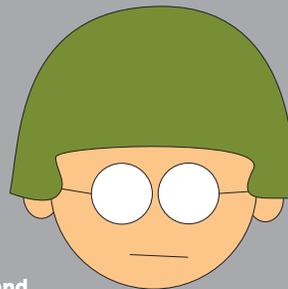
FirstSwing and The Sporting News have teamed up to provide fully-paid, one-year subscriptions of The Sporting News to the first 50,000 servicemembers who register. To register, you need only send your name and full home address information to firstswing36@hotmail.com. The magazine will begin coming to you in about six to eight weeks. Commanders may submit the name of their organization, in place of an individual's name, so that their unit may receive the magazine.

 Send your back page submissions to the Desert Voice editor at the e-mail or address listed below. We're looking for creative work – like photos, drawings, short stories or poems – but we'll even take even unit stories.

DESERT VOICE

Editor
CFLCC PAO/Desert Voice
Camp Arifjan
APO AE 09306
matthew.millham@arifjan.arcent.army.mil

By Capt. Paul Nichols,
377th Theater Support Command



NATURE CALLS



"It's inviting, but phew! ... I can't curl up with anything that smells that bad!"