

JANUARY 5, 2005

DESERT VOICE



**CLOSING THE
DOOR ON 2004**

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DESERT VOICE

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CFLCC Commanding General
Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb

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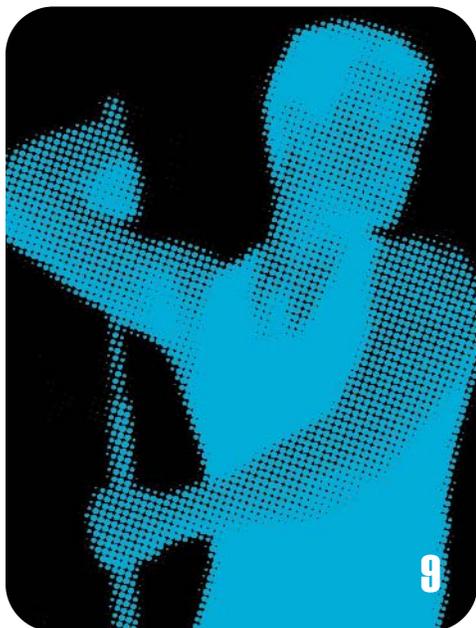
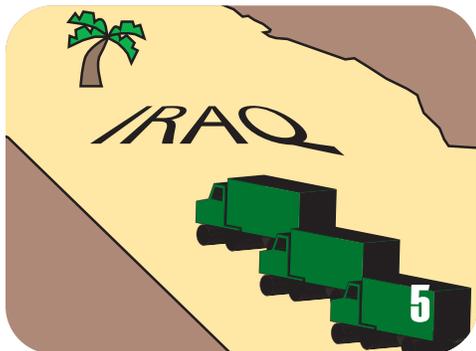
Commander 14th PAD
Maj. Thomas E. Johnson

NCOIC 14th PAD
Maj. Thomas E. Johnson

Editor
Sgt. Matt Millham

14th PAD Writers
Spc. Curt Cashour
Spc. Brian Trapp
Spc. Aimee Felix

Broadcasters
Sgt. Scott White
Spc. Chase Spears



On the Cover The door is shut on 2004 as a tsunami sneaks up to finish off the year with one of the largest natural disasters in human history.

Illustration by Sgt. Matt Millham

First stop on the trip home

Troops returning from Iraq can't just jump on a plane and head for home. Instead, coming out of Iraq is much like hitting the rewind button as troops wind up back in Kuwait in yet another waiting game. But first, they have to drop off all that extra equipment.

story and photo by Spc. Brian Trapp

It's not the Salvation Army. It's not Goodwill. It's not a local soup kitchen. But they will take your hand-me-downs and your leftovers.

Camp Victory's four corners, the first stop troops leaving Iraq make on their way home, is essentially an Army recycling program. Everything from food, ammo and cots, to NBC gear, construction materials and repair parts are offloaded so that they can be recycled into the Army's supply system.

Recently, a new unit took over this mission. The 146th Quartermaster Company, an Army Reserve unit based out of Fort Titan, N.Y., officially took over the job about a month ago, and they are facing the challenges of deploying without all of their Soldiers. More than 30 troops remained behind at the mobilization station waiting to get medical and dental clearances for the deployment. On top of that, the unit has its eyes on a busy future with the redeployment surge coming up.

Despite the challenges they face, Capt. Michael Walker, 146th commander, asserts they're "very prepared." Walker has commanded the 146th for three years. He said the six weeks the unit spent at the mobilization station adequately prepared his unit for the deployment. "The right-seat-ride went well; [the outgoing unit] was very friendly," Walker said.

Due to a shortage of space in which to operate, the 146th has taken to housing the headquarters of the company in the same tent that a number of Soldiers sleep in.

Walker only has to roll out of his bunk and move about three feet to be at his desk.

"[We] adapted and overcame, and it has had minimum effect on operations due to a high degree of maturity," Walker said.

When convoys come into Camp Victory to run through the four corners, they first turn in their ammo. Then they pull up to the down-load site, a series of dirt lanes separated by pallets where growing piles of gear meet the homeward-bound troops. The convoy's trucks pause about every 20 feet along the

"We'll be really busy when the surge starts, but at least it will make the time go faster." – Staff Sgt. Judith Garcia

lane for just long enough to unload their extra gear at the appropriate station.

Most of the collected items will head to the Camp Arifjan retrograde yard. There the items are inspected and classified as serviceable or unserviceable. The serviceable equipment is returned to the supply system.

The 146th also takes troops' vacuum-packed nuclear, biological and chemical protective equipment, known as JSLIST, and sorts it out and inspects for compromised packaging. After the gear is sorted it is prepared for shipment back to Camp Doha for redistribution. The Soldiers unloading their gear seem glad to get rid of it and look forward to the trip home, which is so close they can taste it.

"They're redeploying. They want to get through the process as quick as possible because they're anxious to go home," Walker said. He's ready to help them get home as quick as he can. Walker estimates his Soldiers can push about 60 trucks



Spc. William Motley, 146th Quartermaster Company, offloads gear from the back of a trailer moving through the four-corners process Dec. 23 at Camp Victory.

through the lanes in one hour.

Because of the recycling effort, the U.S. military has saved about \$3.7 billion since December 2003. The ammo dropoff alone has returned about \$469.5 million of repackaged ammunition. Before December the supplies getting pushed back to the retrograde yard were just sitting there "because we were focused on other missions," said Maj. Russell Holscher, logistics-sustainment operations officer with Coalition Forces Land Component Command.

While the surge for troops headed to Iraq began weeks ago, the surge for redeploying troops has yet to begin, but it should begin shortly, Walker said. The 146th hasn't had to make any special changes yet to take on the extra workload. Once the surge does start, they plan on switching to a 24-hour operation.

"We'll be really busy when the surge starts, but at least it will make the time go faster," said Staff Sgt. Judith Garcia, non-commissioned officer in charge of the JSLIST operations, who is looking at about 11 more months before she will be the one turning in her gear to head home.

De-armor. The Army's official hand-me-down up-armor program

story and photos by Spc. Brian Trapp

The only markings for their shop are a couple of conexes, some pallets of steel and a string of concertina wire around a patch of inconspicuous dirt.

A group of Soldiers waits for a convoy to approach. When the first truck stops, the Soldiers swarm it in a flurry of activity, torching steel, unscrewing bolts and prying off armored panels that will eventually get reinstalled and save the next wave of Soldiers' lives. The 323rd Maintenance Company has been up-armor-ing vehicles for a while, and now they've picked up a new mission; de-armor-ing vehicles at Camp Victory, Kuwait.

"It's great; it's about time we reused armor," said Chief Warrant Officer Karl Hannan. "It has worked really well, and it augments some of the cutting and fabrication [of new armor]."

De-armor is a concept that has only been in operation for about six weeks. While helping meet the demand for the limited supply of steel-plate protection for Soldiers headed north, de-

armor saves the tax payers' ever-important dollar, said Staff Sgt. Alison Kafer, de-armor project noncommissioned officer in charge. The amount of Level 3 armor on just one convoy is thousands of dollars in materials.

A plate for one Humvee door is about \$400 worth of steel. That comes out to roughly \$1,600 per four-door Humvee. Each Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck requires about three full sheets of ballistic steel for Level 3 protection; at \$1,200 a sheet, the cost of up-armor-ing a convoy quickly begins to sky rocket.

The 14-member de-armor team's workload varies depending on the incoming convoys, but they are already integrating themselves into the four-corners process at Camp Victory where redeploying units offload all of their ammunition, extra equipment and spare parts.

The 323rd was taking on only 13th Corps Support Command vehicles, but last week their mission changed to de-armor-ing all vehicles in theater, Kafer said.

The team is ready day and night, said Sgt. 1st Class Greg Driscoll, Mobile Maintenance Team NCOIC. Once the team came in at midnight because a convoy was coming through that had to make an appointment at the wash rack.



Above: Spc. Joe Brown uses a cutting torch to remove bolt heads that hold an armor plate to the side of a Heavy Equipment Transporter at Camp Victory Dec. 29. Left: Brown, left, and Sgt. Jason Glaser, both of the 323rd Maintenance Company, pry a panel loose.

They still are anticipating the big push of the upcoming redeployment surge this month. The de-armor shop's work comes in feast or famine. If there are no trucks, there's nothing to de-armor; but when a convoy comes in, the work day doesn't end until the job is done.

"One day they worked from 8 a.m. to 1 a.m. — straight through," Driscoll said. "As long as there's stuff coming in, they'll work." He didn't remember how many vehicles they worked on that day, but based on their hourly average, he estimated they worked on more than 200 vehicles.

Setting up the shop took figuring out what exactly the Soldiers needed to disassemble the shielding — a few tools, air compressors, blowtorches and plasma cutters. Despite the de-armor shop's low-key appearance, word is getting out, Hannan said. He expects other allied trade shops to use similar armor recycling projects also.

The hours they work ripping armor plates off the vehicles is worth the time, because in the end it's saving troops' lives. Hannan has tracked the armor installed by the 323rd's up-armor shops, a separate part of the unit's mission, and it has already saved the lives of 29 troops in Iraq, he said.

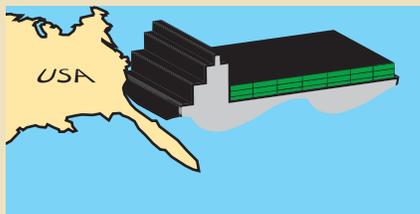
During the beginning of Operation Iraqi

Freedom, units were putting any metal they could find onto their trucks, including "soft steel," which offered little in the way of safety because it is much weaker than the ballistic steel now used for Level 3 armor. Often the troops fastened the plates onto the vehicles in any way possible, even going so far as to weld it directly onto the doors. Now the Army is changing its tactics and changing the attachment methods.

"This is a new concept, a new type of war, and the Army is adapting as best it can," Driscoll said. The "unharvestable" soft steel is taken off and cut up. The high-quality ballistic steel that is distributed now is harvestable. "It can be pulled off and reused," he said. The 323rd attaches their doors using a clip-on method that appears to be working well and is the preferred configuration for easy reuse. All that is required to remove a clipped-on panel is grinding on one spot and pulling the panel off. Not all up-armor facilities use the same attachment method, though.

The attachment methods decide how quick the team can take the plates off. "It all depends on how the armor is put on, but we take about 20 trucks an hour," Hannan said. "If it's all welded on, that's a different ball game."

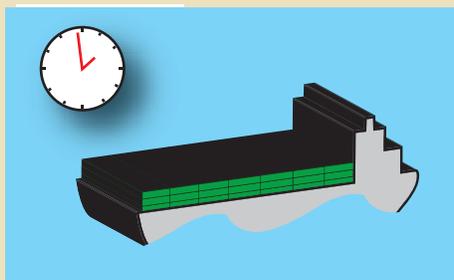
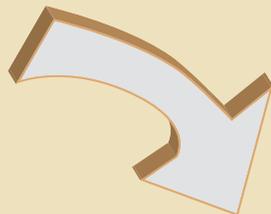
Port deployment operations: how your stuff gets to Iraq



illustrations by Sgt. Matt Millham

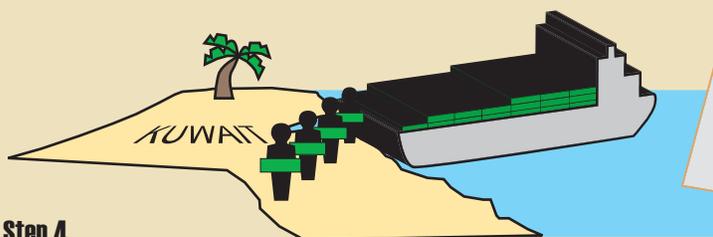
Step 1

A loaded ship with a unit's equipment leaves the United States. The unit sends a load plan to the 595th at the sea port of debarkation. With the information on the load plan – which includes what is on the ship and where, and if there is any special or sensitive equipment like hazardous materials or helicopters – the 595th can determine if they need to have special loading equipment when the ship arrives, said Maj. Jennifer Smith, 595th operations officer.



Step 2

The ship shows up in the Arabian Gulf three to four weeks later. The 595th is contacted, and if the unit the equipment belongs to has not yet arrived, the 595th will coordinate for the ship to wait at another location until the unit does arrive, said Smith.



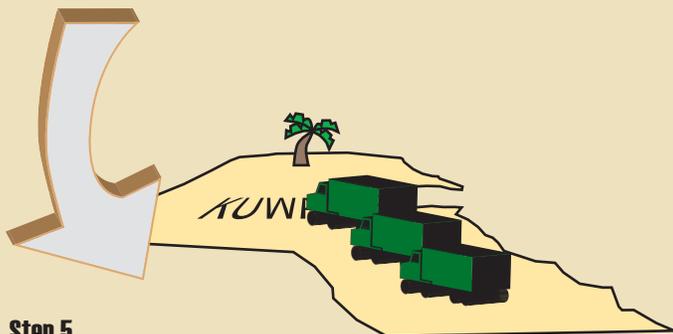
Step 4

At this point the unit liaisons at the 143rd fusion cell, where all the planning elements work together, have coordinated with the unit that is receiving equipment to have Soldiers ready to download the equipment from the ship, said Maj. Carlos Palacios, 143rd battle captain. They will download the equipment under the management of the 1174th Terminal Transportation Battalion and the Naval Expeditionary Logistics Support Force. Once the equipment is downloaded the Soldiers drive it out to storage yards.



Step 3

When the unit arrives in country the ship is directed to berth. The 595th will have coordinated which berth they'll dock at in advance, said Smith.



Step 5

Once the equipment is in the yard, the unit is bussed out to the yard from whatever deployment camp they're staying at. The unit then convoys out to their camp. The Movement Control Battalion under the 143rd coordinates the convoy out to the deployment camps after the unit submits a Transportation Movement Request, said Palacios.



Step 6

From the deployment camp, the unit convoys out to their final destination, Iraq. The Movement Control Battalion will have also coordinated this convoy.

Happy New Year Kuwait!

commentary by Sgt. Matt Millham

Years from now when we look back at 2004 we will likely remember it as the Year of the Yogi Berraism. Berra, whose constant misspeaking has earned him a reputation for quotable miscues, has unwittingly provided us a profound lens through which to view the events of the past year.

This is not to make light of the circumstances, happenings, woes, trials (though there were many, including those of Scott Peterson and Martha Stewart) and successes of the past year. Instead, Mr. Berra helps to remind us that life, like baseball, is an unpredictable and stubborn game.

In a cliché that will likely end up with its own sappy, strangely patriotic movie in a decade or two, the Boston Red Sox broke the Curse of the Bambino to win their first World Series in 86 years. It was an epic feat made all the more heroic and poetic by the fact that they were the first major-league team ever to come back from three games down in a best of seven series — and they did it against the all-time best team in the game, the New York Yankees. As Yogi said of the World Series-winning 1986 New York Mets, the Red Sox, too, were “overwhelming underdogs.” Even those Americans who weren’t Boston fans, with the exception of New Yorkers, smiled a collective smile.

But that was after the nation cried a collective tear at the passing of former President Ronald Reagan. Everyone in the campaign for the presidency in 2004 seemed to speak of the former president as if they knew what it would take to carry on Reagan’s legacy of economic reforms and his steadfast resolve to beat a determined aggressor. Not that none in American politics are up to the task of following in



Camp Doha

Reagan’s shoes, but as Berra rightly said, “If you can’t imitate him, don’t copy him.”

The election itself, while lacking the post-election turmoil of the 2000 election, still had its hairy moments. In the State of Washington, Republicans and Democrats are still fighting a bitter battle over who won the governorship there, though on New Year’s eve, Democrat Christine Gregoire was certified the winner. Republican challenger Dino Rossi plans to continue the fight, though the inauguration is just a week away. While the majority of Americans are not involved in this contest, the fact that elections in the United States can still be too close to call makes it feel as if “it’s déjà vu all over again.”

Operation Iraq Freedom hasn’t gone exactly according to plan, but there were a lot of successes. A tricky hand-over of power from the Coalition Provisional Authority to the Iraqis took place right under the nose of insurgents, and those who may have been planning attacks didn’t even know it happened.

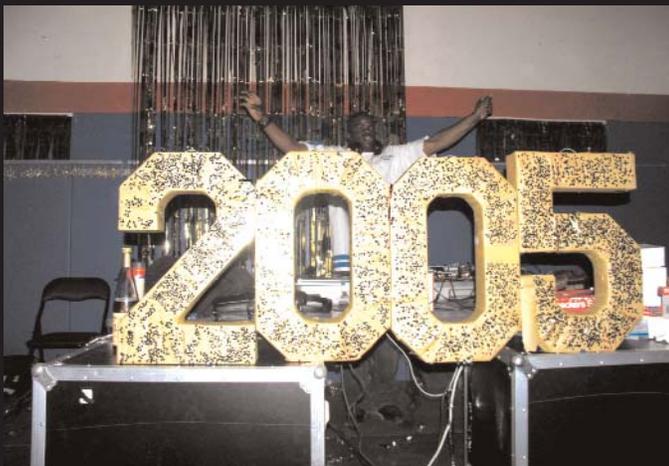
Successes such as this are lost in history and amid the din of recent bad news. It’s no secret that things in Iraq aren’t as good as they could be. But now that we’re here,

regardless of your stand on the war, we have to stay the course. As Berra said, “The other teams could make trouble for us if they win.”

On a lighter note, those of us who spent their first summers in Southwest Asia couldn’t help but notice the sweltering temperatures. After having spent months where the simple task of walking to chow would produce a sweat so severe that it would soak through DCUs, we were forced to rethink the statement, “It ain’t the heat; it’s the humility,” and wonder if maybe it weren’t a malapropism after all.

But the heat died down. December came, Christmas passed, and those of us in Kuwait were ready for the new year. With just days left before the ball dropped on 2005, the biggest earthquake in 40 years struck Southeast Asia creating a giant tsunami that killed more than 150,000 people. As people across the globe wrote off the past year as finished and planned their New Year’s resolutions, 2004 proved that “it ain’t over till it’s over.”

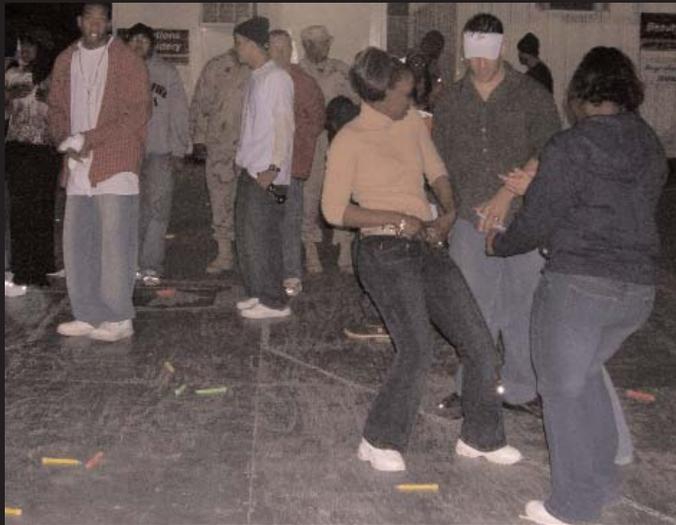
Now that 2005 has arrived, the first major event we have to look forward to is Iraq’s first democratic election, which happens at the end of this month. Berra didn’t have the weight of a nation on his shoulders when he spoke to fans during St. Louis’ Yogi Berra Appreciation Day in 1947. But on Jan. 31, Iraqi election day 2005, millions of free Iraqis will go to the polls and quote Berra when they say to America, “I want to thank you for making this day necessary.”



Camp Arifjan



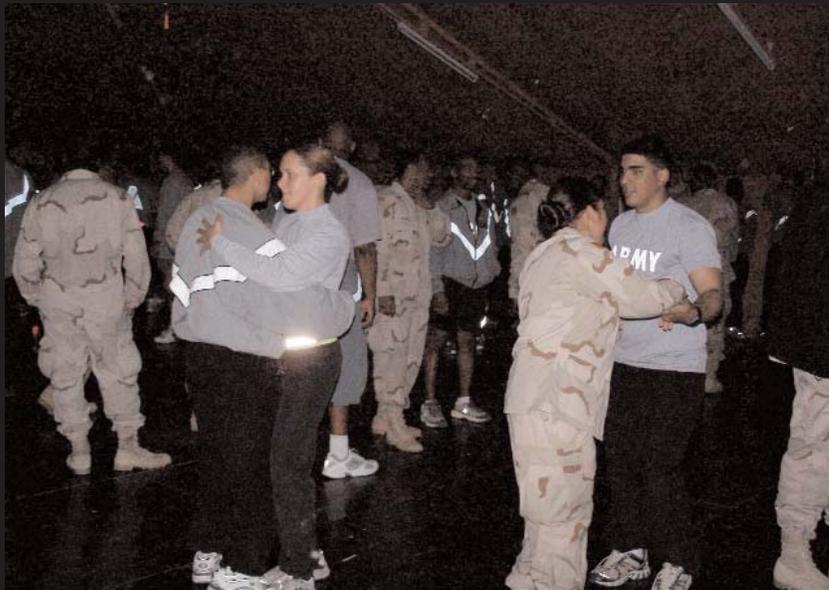
Camp Virginia



Camp Navistar



Camp Spearhead



Camp Victory

Editor's note:

The Desert Voice would like to thank everyone who sent in pictures for this page; Staff Sgt. Linda Leetucker from Camp Virginia, Sgt. Ryan Meeks from Camp Spearhead, Rachel Bacon from Camp Doha, Richard Fears from Camp Arifjan, Katherin Donovan from Camp Navistar and Rev Kelley from Camp Victory.

Give us everything you've got

Azerbaijani troops who spent the past six months in Iraq met up with their replacements at Camp Virginia last week to trade out their mission and their equipment.

story by Spc. Aimee Felix

After six months of protecting a major source of electricity in Iraq, 100 Azerbaijani troops returned to Camp Virginia, Kuwait, Dec. 29 to meet their replacements.

The troops leaving Iraq would hand over more than the mission, though. Because of limited resources, the outgoing Azerbaijanis also handed over weapons, flak vests, Kevlars and sleeping bags to the incoming troops.

Having just arrived from Azerbaijan, the new troops were scheduled to take over the third rotation's role in Al Haditha, Iraq, just hours after arriving in southwest Asia. Their mission will be to protect the Haditha Dam and hydropower complex on the Euphrates River in support of the 1st Battalion 23rd Marine Regiment.

All four Azerbaijani rotations, consisting of about 100 soldiers each, have been part of an all-volunteer force. Although

Azerbaijan's military is conscripted, requiring all Azerbaijani males 18 years of age or older to serve in the military for at least 18 months, all missions outside of Azerbaijan are volunteer missions.

"This mission is the right thing to do. We must [defeat] terrorism in order to make peace in all countries," Pvt. Zaur Suleymanov said emphatically, explaining why he volunteered. Suleymanov has only been in the military for six months — long enough for basic and pre-deployment training. With great support from his parents, Suleymanov feels prepared for this mission, and he would volunteer to stick around for the next Azerbaijan rotation if given the opportunity to, he said.

During his brief stay in Kuwait he readied himself by listening to lessons and stories told by the redeploying rotation of Azerbaijani troops. One story told by Capt. Intigam Hacıyev, the third rotation's company commander, was about an insurgent who, under the guise that he was delivering food, almost made his way into the dam complex with explosives in his vehicle.

Even with stories like this, though, the new troops were unafraid. "If they were afraid, they shouldn't have come," Maj. Elkhen Salbuzov said jokingly. For Salbuzov, the fourth rotation's company commander, this deployment is a first-time thing. With the exception of his five years of service as a platoon commander in the former Soviet Union's East Germany, his 20 years in the military have been dedicated to help quell political unrest in Azerbaijan. Fighting terrorism is nothing new for members of the Azerbaijani military. A country slightly smaller than Maine, Azerbaijan has been on the receiving end of terrorist attacks for the last decade and a half during conflicts with Armenia over disputed territory.

Because of conditions at home, Azerbaijani officers are often eager to leave Azerbaijan and stay away by exercising their options to extend the missions they volunteer for, which is a right given exclusively to officers. In addition to that, it's an opportunity to save money through mission pay.

With his future bride waiting to marry him



immediately upon his return, 1st Lt. Javid Abbasov exercised his option, and he extended his deployment to 14 months. Having just returned Dec. 28 with the third rotation of Azerbaijani troops, Abbasov emphasized to the soldiers from the fourth rotation how rewarding the mission was for him and will be for them. Abbasov made this assertion based on what he witnessed as a civil affairs officer in Iraq.

Through his job as a civil affairs officer, one of several job positions Abbasov held during his year and two months in Iraq, he was able to see firsthand the improvements in Iraq. "The irrigation projects, the new schools, the multiplied power output in the dam, the police force — things began changing. I think in five or six years Iraq will be an improved country," he said. In his voice was the same sense of hope he had for his own downtrodden nation.

If anyone in the fourth rotation was down or scared, which Salbuzov assured was not the case, they were comforted by the knowledge that they would have Internet access where they'd be staying. They are also traveling with satellite phones given to them by the Azerbaijani government, so they could call home. Salbuzov also looked forward to improving his English-speaking skills.

Prepared with the lessons learned from prior rotations, and with the support of his country, his wife and his two daughters, Salbuzov, along with his troops, was looking forward to actually participating in a deployed mission, and not just an exercise in deployment operations.

Azerbaijani facts

Azerbaijan has nine climatic zones, ranging anywhere from subtropical to arid to high mountains.

Azerbaijan has the largest number of mud volcanoes in the world — 250. In the 16th century, Azerbaijan was 30 times larger than it is today. If the same territory had been retained, Azerbaijan would be the tenth largest country in the world.

Azerbaijan's name derives from the Persian words meaning "the land of fire," a reference either to the natural burning of surface oil deposits or to the oil-fueled fires in temples of the once-dominant Zoroastrian religion.

The first data about the existence of mankind in Azerbaijan dates to the Neolithic Age, between 7,000 and 10,000 years ago.

Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, is the largest city in Transcaucasia, the area between the Black and Caspian Seas. Baku has been inhabited for more than 3,000 years.

The Azerbaijani population is 93.4 percent Muslim, and it is one of the most liberal Muslim-majority countries.



► Standard fare for everyone from elementary-school gym students to the most elite military fighting forces, pushups are perhaps the most versatile and widely-used exercise. The callisthenic is even a main ingredient in many forms of martial arts training, helping students achieve the balance, endurance and strength crucial to many different fighting techniques.

Below, karate black belt Shaji Valsarajan demonstrates how to do pushups the karate way and explains how variations of the exercise can help prepare you for hand-to-hand karate combat. So suit up, stretch out and get ready for a workout.

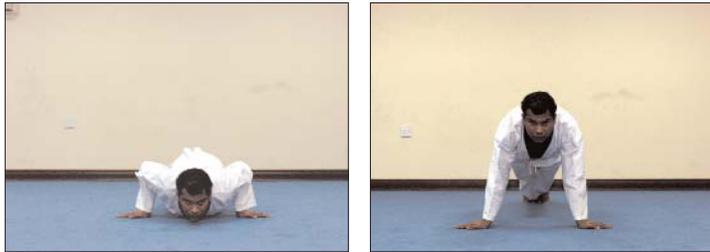
Karate pushups

steps and photos by Spc. Curt Cashour



1. Breathe in, breathe out

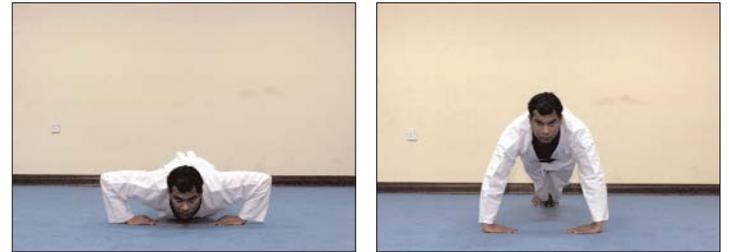
Kneel on the ground as shown, make a fist with each hand and extend your arms in front of you. Thrust your arms to your side, breathing out as you do so. Pull your arms back to the original position while breathing in. Do this movement before the workout and between sets to relax your muscles and ensure they are getting plenty of oxygen



2. Hands out

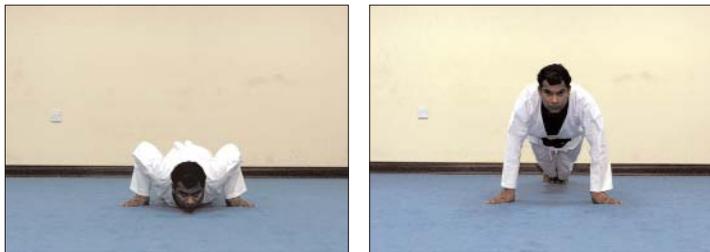
Assume a regular pushup position while orienting your hands outward. This variation will target your triceps and shoulder muscles, Valsarajan said.

Shaji says: Breathe in on the way down. Breathe out on the way up.



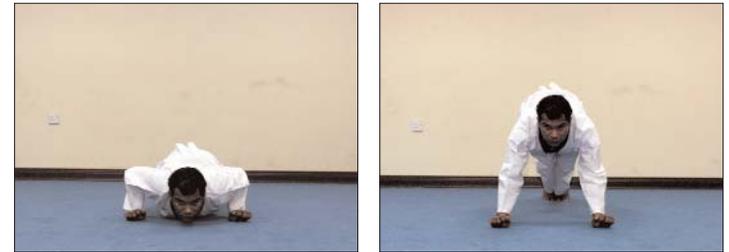
3. Hands in

Position yourself the same as before, this time pointing your hands inward. This pushup will strengthen the forearms, biceps and rear shoulders, Valsarajan said.



4. Inner hand

Strength of the index-finger side of the hand is crucial when it comes to executing grabs, hooks, locks and other karate combat moves, Valsarajan said. Prepare for the fight by doing this pushup. Keep your fingers tight and close together, folding your thumbs into your palms. Place your hands on the ground pointing outward, resting your weight on the insides of your hands.



5. Palm-heel

The palm heel is part of the hand that is important in karate, Valsarajan said. Strengthen it by performing this pushup variation. Curl your fingers in tight, bending them at the knuckle in a claw-like shape. Keep your thumbs flush against the sides of your hands and rest your weight on the heels of your palms.

Shaji says: To mix it up, draw out your repetitions. For instance, take one minute to complete one pushup.



6. Side-hand

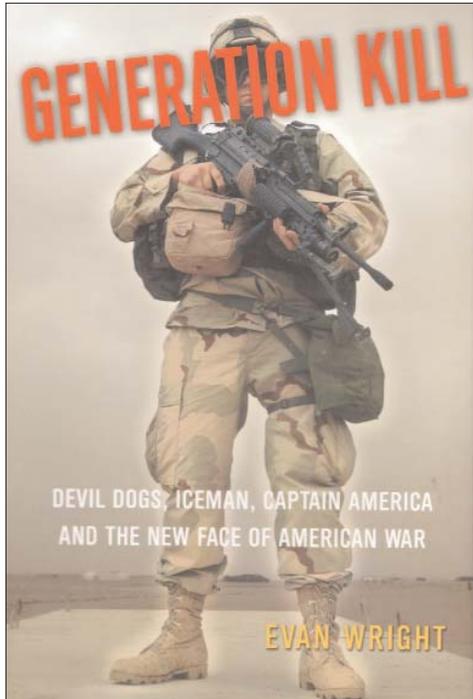
For this pushup, remember to keep your fingers and thumbs tight against one another. Balance your weight against the outer edges of your hands, keeping the outside of the hands and pinkies against the floor.

Shaji says: This movement will strengthen the outer edges of the hands, which are crucial for powerful karate chops.

Some of these movements might be a bit uncomfortable for beginners, so use some common sense when starting out. A good guideline is 10 repetitions per variation, said Valsarajan, adding that experienced brown and black belt martial artists typically include 25 to 50 repetitions of each variation into their workouts.

Valsarajan has a black belt degree in Sports Karate-Do from the Academy of India, which is sanctioned by Japan-based World Shotokan Karate Federation. The 29-year-old is a housing technician at Camp Doha, Kuwait.

Review



review by Spc. Curt Cashour

As far away as most servicemembers in Kuwait are from the continuing struggle in Iraq, sometimes a first-hand account of the events up north can be helpful in putting the “Hoohah” back in your vocabulary.

In his book, “Generation Kill,” Evan Wright presents an inside look at the first stages of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Wright, who is also a contributing editor for Rolling Stone magazine, traveled with a platoon of Marines from the First Reconnaissance Battalion, tracing their two-month journey from the now-defunct Camp Mathilda, Kuwait, to the outskirts of Baghdad.

For much of the invasion, the Marines were the northernmost unit in Iraq. They raced ahead of the main troop contingent checking for ambush points and other forms of resistance. Along the way, they encountered fierce battles, Marine and civilian casualties and a slew of other unexpected variables.

Wright lays out the facts in a beautifully descriptive style, blending his own research and insights with the action on the ground. Mixing quotes and anecdotes from the Marines with excerpts from his interviews with upper-level brass, he paints a picture full of intense battlefield action and perspectives on the Marines’ overall strategy.

The cast consists mainly of Recon Marines, elite fighters trained to travel into enemy territory and provide info on enemy capabilities and troop movements. Highlights of the group include Cpl. Harold Trombley, whose accuracy with an M249

SAW is the only thing more unbelievable than his tall tales about his parents and household pets; Cpl. Josh Person, the Humvee driver whose Ripped-Fuel binges spark profanity-laced tirades on everything from anti-war celebrities to letters of support the Marines received from benevolent grade schoolers; and Lt. Nathan Fick, the Ivy League-educated platoon commander who holds the group together despite his doubts about the competency of other leaders.

All the gritty details are here. You’ll find yourself flinching as the Marines dodge bullets on hostile city streets, empathizing as the men struggle to help an innocent shepherd accidentally shot in a firefight and feeling sorry for an Iraqi enemy prisoner of war who soils himself out of fear during an Iraqi artillery attack. Through it all, Wright gives the reader intimate details about life during the invasion without excessively inserting himself into the story. The result is an unapologetic look at the Marines as both heroes and humans.

“Generation Kill” is available in both hard cover and paperback versions from G.P. Putnam’s Sons publishers.

Correction

In the story “The biggest gun truck in the Army” Nov. 24, a person who was integral in creating the truck was not given credit. The following is excerpted from communication with 1st Lt. Brian Dawson, 2123rd Transportation Company.

After coming up with the idea for a Heavy Equipment Transporter gun truck, 1st Lt. Brian Dawson was told that the configuration would be slow and difficult to maneuver. “I just kept to myself and drove on,” said Dawson. Lt. Col. Timothy Collins, commander of the 6th Transportation Battalion, approached Dawson one afternoon in the motor pool and expressed interest in the motor truck idea. Collins asked Dawson to put his ideas into a working drawing.

A few days later, Dawson got word to bring a HET over to the 175th Maintenance Company, which would build the gun truck platform. Dawson explained to the 175th how he wanted the gun box to sit on the fifth wheel and the ramps. The box would be bolted to the frame with the existing lifting/towing eyes.

After returning from a mission, Dawson came back to find the floor of the gun box already welded together, and he began brain storming the expanded metal which was to wrap the gun truck to protect it from RPGs. He was asked about using ballistic blankets, but said that he didn’t think it would matter. The idea was to get the RPG to detonate outside of the crew area.

The gun truck began to take form. The next time he visited the 175th, after another

The biggest gun truck in the Army

story by Sgt. Matt Hillman

Chances are that if someone had brought up the term VBIED in casual conversation before the invasion, most of us would have had to ask, “What’s that?”

Two, 12 months after the beginning of the conflict, servicemembers were well-versed in the terminology of the invasion’s ground units. These words have become military mantras, at all levels of the chain of command, to a number of battlefield innovations. One of those innovations is the modernized gun truck.

Transportation units on the ground and the air are limited to more than a year and all-terrain designs for gun trucks, armored vehicles with heavy weaponry used to defend convoys and others from attack. Most gun trucks are quick, agile vehicles that can handle up and down the length of a runway to most attacks. A new design, recently unveiled at Camp Arifjan by the 175th Maintenance Company, comes from an enemy without precedent: bigger is better.

It’s more than 20 tons and 500 horsepower: the Heavy Equipment Transporter, the biggest truck in the Army’s fleet and the newest platform for an M2 gun. Sgt. James King knows. It’s a gun truck. One inside the unit’s maintenance shop, the other is the gun truck in the field. It can be moved from one IED to another.

“It’s just like everything else in this country; you’ve got to beg, borrow and steal.” — Staff Sgt. James King

The design and construction of the box was a joint venture between the 175th Maintenance Company and 103rd AEWB at Camp Arifjan. Because of the explosion in building small gun trucks and in waiting and maintaining them, King was chosen by his commander as the lead engineer and the main technician.

“The ball was in his court,” said King. “The box can attach to the back of any M2 or M160 truck with a set of plates and bolts. The only modification needed to the exhaust when removable plates reduced the exhaust so that it doesn’t show on the ground.”

After King, 103rd AEWB’s John Wilson had the biggest role in the box’s construction. It took King, Wilson and a team of four other

The Heavy Equipment Transporter gun truck built by the 175th Maintenance Company and 103rd AEWB at Camp Arifjan is as far as the 175th’s Staff Sgt. James King knows the limit of its kind. The truck is 20 tons and 500 horsepower. It’s more than 20 tons and 500 horsepower: the biggest truck in the Army’s fleet and the newest platform for an M2 gun. Sgt. James King knows. It’s a gun truck. One inside the unit’s maintenance shop, the other is the gun truck in the field. It can be moved from one IED to another.

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trip to Iraq, the walls were up and the two gun ring mounts were in place. The ideas for the platforms, kick plates and angle iron under the platforms to help secure gear came out in that meeting. The idea for ammo storage also came about as the gun rings were added. The seats, one of the final touches, were discussed among Dawson and the 175th and KBR welders before the platform was set on a HET provided by the 233rd Transportation Company.

Editor’s note: While the Desert Voice approach the 7th Transportation Group (Composite) public affairs section for information on who had initiated the HET gun truck concept, we didn’t receive this information until after the story was published. Because we feel that 1st Lt. Dawson was not given his due in creating the truck in the original story, we asked him to send us everything he could about his involvement in the gun truck’s creation.

Safety Corner

Safety Training

A mobile training team from the Army Safety Center has been on the ground in Kuwait since Oct. 29, 2004. So far, the team has trained 465 people to be unit safety officers. Unit safety officers are usually enlisted Soldiers in the grades of E-7 to E-9 or officers in the grades of O-1 to O-3. A two-day risk management safety course trains leaders how to integrate risk management into unit operations. The team conducts this training six days a week around Kuwait. To enroll a Soldier in the training contact the mobile training team’s Chief Warrant Officer Angel Acevedo at DSN 438-5188 or at cell phone 962-1964.

Community

happenings for Jan. 5 through Jan. 12

Arifjan

Wednesday

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

Thursday

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

Friday

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m., pool
Aerobics, 6 p.m., Zone 6 MWR tent
Salsa Night, 7 p.m., Community Center
Step Aerobics, 7 p.m., Zone 1 gym tent
Aerobics, 7 p.m., Zone 2 gym tent
Open Mic Night, 7:30 p.m., MWR stage
Outdoor theater night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6

Saturday

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
Motown Night, 7 p.m., Community Center
Salsa Night, 7:30 p.m., MWR stage
R&B night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR tent
Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR tent

Sunday

NFL, AFC, NFC Wildcard playoffs, 12:30 a.m., Community Center
NFL, AFC, NFC Wildcard playoffs, 4 a.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
Salsa Night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR tent

Monday

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, 7 p.m., Zone 2 gym tent
Aerobics, 6 p.m., Zone 6 gym tent
Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m., MWR stage

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
Spa Day, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Zone 2 gym tent
Spinning Class, 5:30 p.m., Zone 2 gym tent
Spades Tournament, 7 p.m., Community Center
Top 40 Night, 7:30 p.m., Zone 6 MWR tent
R&B Night, 7:30 p.m., MWR stage

Wednesday

Combat Kick Boxing 5:30 a.m., Power Stretching 8 a.m., Bench/Step Workout 10 a.m., Body

Pump Workout 1 p.m., High/Low Aerobics, 7 p.m., Zone 1 gym tent
Hip Hop Night, 7 p.m., Community Center
Aerobics, 6 p.m., Zone 6 gym tent
Aerobics, 7 p.m., Zone 2 gym tent
For more information call 430-1202

Buehring

Wednesday

BCS Championship, 5 a.m., MWR tent
For more information call 828-1340

Doha

Wednesday

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

Saturday

Open Mic Night, 7 p.m., Frosty's

Sunday

NFL, AFC, NFC Wildcard playoffs, 12:30 a.m., Frostys
NFL, AFC, NFC Wildcard playoffs, 4 a.m., Frostys

Monday

Cribbage Tournament, 7 p.m., Frosty's

Wednesday

Racquetball signups begin, Fitness Center
Karaoke Night, 7 p.m., Frostys

For more information call 438-5637

Kuwaiti Naval Base

Wednesday

Foosball Tournament, 7 p.m., new gym

Thursday

Self Defense 1, 10 a.m., Aerobic Room
Bowling (NAVELSF/Miuwu 204), 12 p.m., Bowling Alley

Texas Hold 'em Poker, 7 p.m., new gym

Techno Dance, 7:30 p.m., temp gym tent

Continental Tire Bowl, 9 p.m., movie tent

Friday

Bowling (SDDC 598th), 4 p.m., bowling alley

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

Sunday

Ultimate Football, noon, Kuwaiti Soccer field

Flag Football, 2 p.m., Kuwaiti Soccer field

Country Dance Instruction, 8 p.m., West gate's white tent

NFL Sunday, 9 p.m. and 12 a.m., movie tent

Monday

Marine Corps Martial Arts, 1 p.m., TMC

Darts Tournament, 6 p.m., Aerobics Room

Chess, Spades, Checkers, Dominoes, 6 p.m., new gym

Tuesday

Self Defense 1, 10 a.m., Aerobic Room

PS2 Tournament, 5 p.m., new gym

Chess, Spades, Checkers Dominoes, 6 p.m., new gym

Country Western Dance, 8 p.m., West gate's white tent

Self Defense 2, 8:30 p.m., gym (open area)

Wednesday

Foosball Tournament, 7 p.m., new gym

For more information call 839-1009

Navistar

Saturday

Bench Press Competition, 2 p.m., gym

Wednesday

Organizational Day, all day, outside MWR tents

For more information call 844-1138

Spearhead/SPOD

Friday

SPOD social dance, 9 p.m. to midnight, DFAC
For more information call 825-1302

Victory

Saturday

Bazaar, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Place TBD

Monday

Oldies but Goodies Night, 8 p.m., MWR tent
For more information call 823-1033

Virginia

Wednesday

Dominoes Tournament, 6 p.m., MWR tent

Country Western Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Thursday

Ping Pong Tournament, 6 p.m., MWR tent

Karaoke Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Friday

Spa Day, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., MWR tent

Salsa Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Saturday

Unit Feud Night, 6 p.m., Chapel

Hip Hop and R&B Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Sunday

Bazaar, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Dusty Room

Old School Jams, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Monday

Bazaar, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Dusty Room

Movie Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Tuesday

Bingo Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Wednesday

Line Dancing Contest, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

Country Western Night, 7 p.m., Dusty Room

For more information call 832-1045

Doha/Ali Al Salem Bus Schedule

	Departs AAS	Arrives Doha	Departs Doha	Arrives AAS
			0615	0745
			0815	0945
0800		0930	0945	1115
1000		1130	1245	1415
1130		1300	1415	1545
1430		1600	1615	1745
1600		1730	1745	1915
1800		1930	1945	2115
1930		2100	2115	2245
2130		2300	0015	0145
2300		0030	0145	0315
0200		0330	0445	0615
0330		0500		
0630		0800		

Doha/Arifjan Shuttle Schedule

Departs Doha Stop 1*	Arrives Doha Stop 2*	Departs Doha Stop 2*	Arrives Arifjan	Departs Arifjan	Arrives Doha
				0545	
		0700	0715	0830	1000
1015	1025	1040	1200	1300	1430
1445	1450	1505	1615	1630	1745
1900	1910	1925	2045		

* Stop 1 is behind the Building 6 PAX Tent
Stop 2 is between Buildings 28 and 31

Please send your event to the DV editor. E-mail and address is listed on back of this issue.

Phone time

by Petty Officer 2nd Class Edwin Garcia-Lopez

It was zero two fifteen when Petty Officer 1st Class Kathryn Morrison stepped into the camp phone center. She was still in body armor and helmet. Her boots clunked on the wooden deck as she walked toward a small, narrow, solitary cubicle. She took her helmet off and placed it with a heavy thud on the deck as she wedged herself inside the booth. She immediately punched the numbers required. She has done this so often the rapid movement of fingers is automatic, a process memorized.

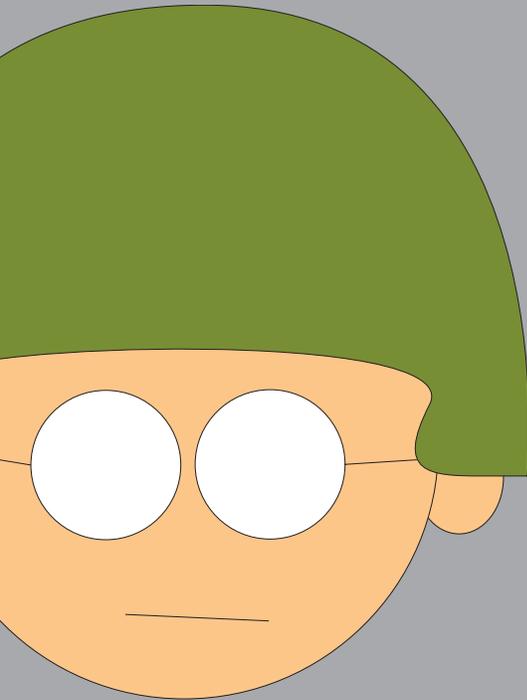
The phone rang twice then, "Hello" came from the line. "Hi Ma," was the answer.

"Kathy, how are you? The girls here have been driving me crazy waiting for your call. Are you okay?" "I'm fine Ma. How are you? How are the girls?" Kathy said. "Everyone is fine," was the response. The conversation continues on to the last week's events, mishaps and little girl transgressions. "Oh and their father said he was taking them this weekend. He is taking them to Busch Gardens." "That's fine Ma." From the background, a little girl voice comes through, "Grandma, this is my phone time with Mommy." "Okay Bunny, I know. Okay Kathy let me put them on before I have a mutiny in my hands. And don't forget little Bunny, straight to your bath after you talk to your Mommy." "Hello?" a shrill little voice immediately piped through. "Hi Annie, how are you sweetie?" "Okay Mommy, but let me tell you what happened..." It was a rapid fire monologue from a precocious child with bottled-up words to her mother not seen in months. Finally, "Put your sister on the phone now Annie." "Ma' I don't understand?" answered the little one in return. "What don't you understand honey?" "Why are you fighting for salad dressing?" Kathryn's eyebrows wrinkled together in puzzlement. "Salad dressing?" "Yeah, stup...ah...silly Timmy from across

the street said that his father said that you were over there fighting for oil. That's what Grandma uses to make her salad dressing, right?" After laughing aloud and hearing the chuckles in the background, she proceeded to try to communicate briefly, in words that a six year old would understand, about global politics, anti-terrorism and the importance of a strong nation. "Okay bye going to play with my Barbie's now. Bye. Love you Mommy, bye." In the background she can hear the child, "Grandma, Mommy said it was okay to play Barbie now." Her Mother returns to the phone and Kathryn needs to say, "I said no such thing Mother." "I know Kathy, I know her ways. She reminds me of you. I can take care of her."

It is the nine-year-old's turn. "Hi Mom." "Hi Jennifer." With her oldest, Kathryn usually needs to prod her shy daughter to express feelings and needs. After some small talk, Jennifer surprises her by relating an event of extroversion. "Mommy, my teacher says she wants us to send letters to our troops. She says that we should support our military. I got up in front of the class and said that I was proud of you. Mommy, I miss you. I wish you were here to read and put us to bed and stuff, but I really am proud of you Mommy."

After the goodbyes and "I'll call again soon" and hanging up, Kathryn stared at the phone in front of her for a few seconds. She felt the pangs of diverse emotions that always come after the phone calls. She quickly got up before it took hold of her. Once outside, with the helmet tucked under her arm she stood at the exit door and expertly snapped her eight-point cover out of her side cargo pocket. She snugly placed it on her head. Then it caught up with her, as she had expected. She quickly swiped two tears away before they strayed down her cheeks, and yet she smiled. And as she walked, each step of boots on gravel accentuated her love back home, the "I'm proud of you Mommy" still echoing in her ears. All the way back to her tent the smile remained on her face.



by Lt. Col. Michael Verrett, theater container manager, CFLCC C4

**DESERT
VOICE**

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