

DECEMBER 1, 2004

DESERT VOICE



Kuwait kicks
American butt
in games at KNB

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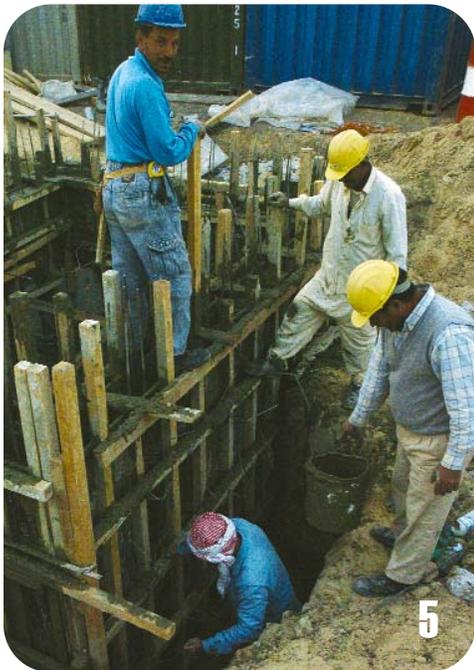
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Volume 26, Issue 16

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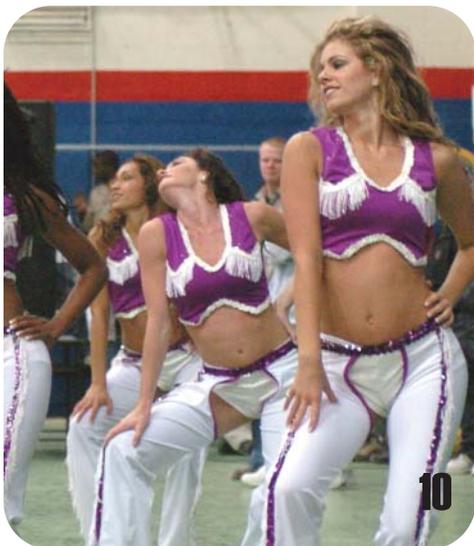
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CFLCC Commanding General
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On the Cover Kuwait trounced their American friends in three out of four sports during a quarterly sports day Nov. 24.

Illustration by Sgt. Matt Millham

Allow me to introduce myself

Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb took command of Third U.S. Army, CFLCC and Army Central Command in October, and he's got big plans and hopes for all of us in Kuwait.

It is an honor to join the ranks of "PATTON'S OWN", the Third Army, ARCENT and Coalition Forces Land Component Command as your Commanding General.

Our team of Soldiers and "Soldiers in slacks" – our civilians – join our supporting Marines, Sailors, Airmen, Coasties and Coalition Forces to work tirelessly with the same warrior spirit and commitment to mission accomplishment as their comrades in Iraq and Afghanistan. We share the understanding that we are in a fight with enemies who threaten our Nation, and perhaps civilization, with destruction. Make no mistake – this is a fight to the death for freedom, and many of you help carry this fight to the enemy.

I am proud to join a unit that has ensured that those fighting in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom have never been hindered by any shortage of people or "stuff." Our proud professionals ensure the commanders in the field get who they need and what they need, when they need it.

You were led for the last two years by a true warfighter, Lt. Gen. Dave McKiernan. He never let you down and you never let him or America down. However, a unit never stays the same; it gets better or it gets worse. We cannot live on past glories. Together we must continue to learn and improve because we face new challenges

ahead. Our immediate challenge is to continue to prepare for the next rotation of forces, which has already begun. CFLCC will manage the Coalition and Joint Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and successful Integration (CJRSOI) of 270,000 U.S. and Coalition troops and their associated equipment into and out of Iraq – a task that would amaze even General Patton!

Never lose sight of what you and those before you have accomplished. We have a responsibility to honor their service and to carry the colors in the current fight. More than 35 million Afghans and Iraqis have been afforded the opportunity to pursue freedom in a free and democratic country because of Third Army/CFLCC, just as Third Army helped liberate Europe 60 years ago.

Although we have had great success against the terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan, we did not come as conquerors; we came as liberators. And we must continue to build on our close relationship with our hosts in the greater region, building long term stability so that the peace that ultimately results will be one that lasts.

You should be proud, but we must remember that this freedom for Afghanistan and Iraq is not really free – it comes at the cost of our most precious resource – the sons and daughters of America, our Coalition partners and the lives of Afghans



Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb

and Iraqis who saw the opportunity for a better life and made the ultimate sacrifice in pursuit of freedom.

I have been a Soldier for my entire adult life, and I have been Blessed to serve with Soldiers around the world in places I could not spell or even find on a map, simply because our Nation needed us there – just as our Nation needs us here.

Remember, we are a professional Army that is disciplined and has high standards. That is what sets us apart from most armies and organizations. It's that simple – *be disciplined and have high standards*. Embrace and nurture in your fellow Soldiers our Army's values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage while never losing sight that we are all **warriors first and foremost**. We are warriors who place the mission first, never accept defeat, never quit, and never leave our fallen behind. It's that simple – discipline and high standards.

We will face new challenges today and tomorrow as we go about our missions in Kuwait or on convoy duty in Mosul, or at the ports of Ash Shuaybah or Kuwait Naval Base, or Camp Victory, or Bagram Airfield, or Camp As Sayliyah or wherever our Nation sends us. Look out for each other, and when you need to, reach over and grab your battle buddy by the belt and pull them along to safety – just as Soldiers have done for our Army for 229 years.

I look forward to serving with you.
PATTON'S OWN-ALWAYS FIRST!



photo by Spc. Curt Cashour

From right: After being stripped of his flags, Ray Meline of the 377th Theater Support Command regains his balance while Michael Mays and Ronnie Bush Jr. of the 175th Maintenance Company look on. The Nov. 25 game was part of a Thanksgiving flag football tournament at Camp Arifjan's football field hosted by the Coalition Forces Land Component Command C-6 section. A team of Soldiers from the 228th Signal Brigade won the tournament, which involved 10 teams from Arifjan-based units.

Not your average girl talk

story by Spc. Aimee Felix

Placing women in a combat environment requires a lot of adapting for both men and women. While many people would argue that eliminating women from a combat environment would be easier than adapting to them, female troops aren't going anywhere but closer to the front lines. According to an Oct. 22 Washington Times article, the Army is negotiating with Pentagon leaders about eliminating a women-in-combat ban, starting with a division going to Iraq in January.

Kuwait may not be a combat environment in the same way Iraq is, but women serving alongside men in this environment might feel unsafe, harassed or discriminated against.

As a preventive measure and to address the concerns of female troops and civilians in Kuwait, the Area Support Group-Kuwait command group has made having a female advisory committee in each camp a policy, said Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly A. Milam, ASG-Kuwait operations noncommissioned officer in charge.

Milam headed the first – and so far, only – female advisory committee meeting in Kuwait. Held for and run by females at Camp Doha, the Oct. 23 meeting brought to light the concerns of females in Doha. The meeting was open to all females living or working at Doha – civilians, and coalition and U.S. troops alike.

For most of the females, high-traffic areas with little to no lighting were the main concern. Spc. Latoya Hanson, the Personnel and Administrations Center clerk for the 723rd Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit deployed to Camp Doha, was one of those females. Hanson is the only female in her unit, and she doesn't always have the luxury of having a buddy at her disposal when it's dark out. The better lighting there is on camp, the less she needs a buddy, said Hanson.

Sgt. Antonia G. Hyde, another meeting attendee, brought up that while she understands the buddy system for females – a policy imposed in early October that requires all females to have a buddy anytime before sunrise and after sunset – she doesn't understand why it's specific to females. Not requiring males to have a buddy when it is dark out assumes that females are the only potential victims.

Hyde, a travel technician at the Camp Doha finance office, said that if that is the assumption, then males should probably have a buddy to keep them in check in case

they are thinking of doing something wrong. Her suggestion makes sense since the few incidents of inappropriate conduct that have occurred in theater have been one-on-one incidents, said Capt. Shawn Gralinski, the ASG-Kuwait deputy provost marshal.

At the core of most of Hyde's concerns was a desire for equality, in every sense of the word. "They should have a male advisory committee; I'm sure they have some valid concerns of their own," she said.

Hyde was also concerned with the lack of lighting, specifically in Doha's Post Exchange parking lot. The path between the PX and the post gym there used to be one of the most poorly-lit areas on Doha.

Milam and the others leading the meeting passed that information along to the commander's equal opportunity officer, and within a month the area was lit up, said Milam.

"Milam ensured those corrections were made," said Staff Sgt. Deborah J. Wright, ASG-Kuwait's administrative executive secretary. Wright, who worked together with Milam to form the committee, said that the meeting was a great opportunity to give females in theater a voice and an opportunity to vent.

Milam hopes these committees will create a situation where females will learn to work together and not against each other, which often happens, she said. She picked women to represent each of the units on Doha. Those representatives will meet again Dec. 18 and continue doing so every other month.

At the request of most of the attendees, Milam will invite a representative from the staff judge advocate office and from the provost marshal office in order to keep the females informed as far as their rights and the number of incidents that have occurred, if any.

"I think they are doing the right thing having these committees," said Gralinski who hopes the committees will provide females in Kuwait with a feeling of comfort and security.

When asked whether she thought it would be easier to eliminate females from a combat environment as opposed to adapting to them, Hanson said "That's not the issue. This is an issue of respect. We have to learn to respect one another because we need females as much as we need males in a combat environment."



photo by Spc. Aimee Felix

Air Force Lt. Col. Steve Liddy, protocol officer for the Office of Military Cooperation Kuwait, carries a tray of Kuwaiti food to his vehicle. The tray was one of many filled with rice, turkey and Kuwaiti pastries donated by Kuwait's Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations to all the camps in Kuwait. Representatives from all the camps went to the directorate on Thanksgiving Day to pick up the food and bring it back to their camps.

this is a COMMO CHECK OVER

story and photo by Spc. Brian Trapp

There is an ongoing project to build up the communication infrastructure at Camp Arifjan and Camp Buehring. Everything from wires and satellite dishes to towers and manholes are being put in place to help troops stay connected with people in the states and in the fight.

This project is coupled with the stand-down of Camp Doha's communication infrastructure as its communication responsibilities are moved elsewhere. The architecture for this communication system is slated to be ready by the end of next year.

There are a number of projects with different timelines, objectives, locations and technologies, but they are all supporting the same goal. That goal is to enhance services by increasing communication capacity with better equipment while reducing dependency on costly satellites and the Kuwaiti network to give us what we need to support the Coalition Forces Land Component Command mission, said Col. Robert Shaw, deputy director of communications for CFLCC.

Camp Arifjan will be a hub for communications for the South West Asia region, said Maj. Jim Harvey, communications projects officer with CFLCC. Next to Arifjan, Camp Buehring will be the second largest permanent presence Kuwait, and projects are ongoing to increase the capacity and reliability of the communications systems there as well.

A lot of the construction and digging at Arifjan is for manholes to access the lines that

will spider web underneath the surface of the camp to provide the critical connections between Kuwait, the United States and the troops in the fight, said John Hudak, project manager for Defense Wide Transmission Systems. "When you see the guys digging trenches and building forms, that's usually us," said Hudak.

The construction portion of this project, like many other projects in Kuwait, has been contracted out.

"The military could be doing this construction, but it's being contracted out to free up those military personnel to go home or go forward to Iraq," said Larry Bailey, product manager, DWTS liaison Officer and

project leader for the Al Tahreer microwave relocation project.

The build-up of Camp Arifjan's infrastructure began in 2000. After Sept. 11 the project halted twice; once for the ramp up to Operation Enduring Freedom, then for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

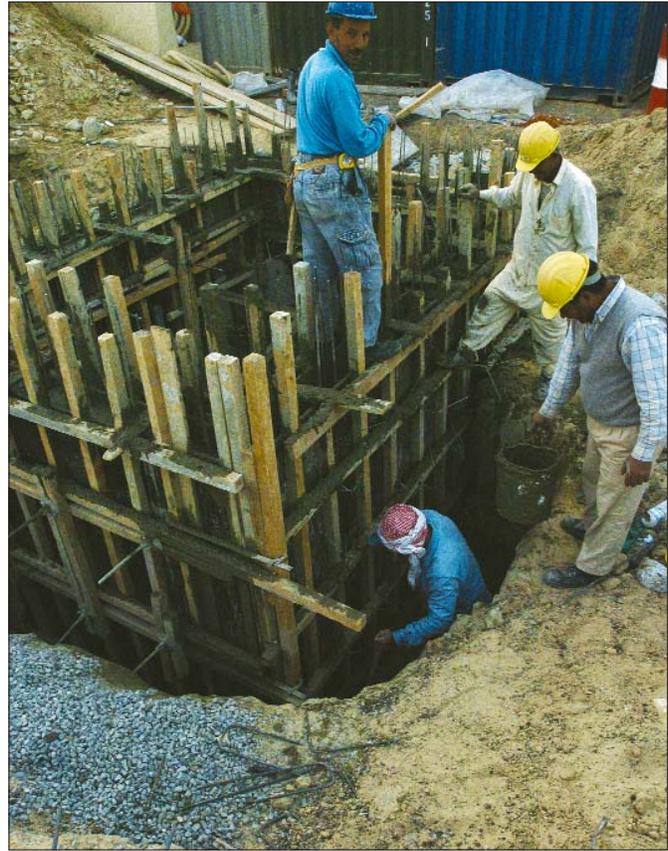
"We are striving to create a communication infrastructure capable of supporting everyone's communications needs," Hudak said. "It's just like the movie Field of Dreams; 'If you build it they will come.' At Arifjan we are overbuilding for the third time because requirements have outgrown capabilities."

One of the challenges of the project is that Camp Arifjan was originally built to meet the needs of the pre-OIF mission, which primarily consisted of desert training. After OEF and OIF began, the communications needs quickly surpassed the initial expectations and capabilities of many of Kuwait's camps. To meet the quickly growing needs, short-term tactical systems were

used in place of long-term solutions. Now, this project is replacing those tactical systems with a well-designed strategic system.

The long pole in the tent for this project has been the preparation of the construction sites. In every case, a significant amount of construction was required before the systems could be installed. Waiting for buildings to be constructed and working to bring existing structures to meet rigorous specifications for hosting sensitive information systems have caused the biggest delays. In some cases, buildings designed for administrative functions have been converted to support strategic communications.

The Combined Operations and



Third country nationals construct a manhole on Camp Arifjan through which conduit for new communications cables will run.

Intelligence Center in Zone II at Camp Arifjan, although well constructed, is a temporary answer to a long-term need. One of the new buildings that is slated to be built by Kuwait in Zone I is a new and permanent COIC. The current COIC was an expedient way to move an asset from Doah to Arifjan; the new COIC will be specifically designed for its intended purposes and won't occupy warehouse space that could be used for other purposes.

"Requirements change," said Hudak. "What the requirement may be today, may be different tomorrow. It's the nature of the way things are in South West Asia. It's a dynamic, evolving, mission-driven environment."

While construction has been the big issue, some of the biggest hurdles may be yet to come.

"The biggest challenge, in my opinion, would be to turn off communications in Doha and pick them up [in Arifjan] and not have a degradation in the services," Shaw said.

The completion of the Arifjan communication system stand-up will mark the point when the systems at Doha can be dismantled and possibly redistributed elsewhere. This final phase will restore Doha in preparation for its turnover to the Kuwaitis.

Requirements change. What the requirement may be today, may be different tomorrow. It's the nature of the way things are in South West Asia."

— John Hudak

The goalie for the Kuwait Navy water polo team blocks a U.S. Navy goal. Blocks like this led the Kuwaitis to their 11 to 9 victory in the Kuwait and U.S. Navy Sports Day Nov. 24.



Now boys, play nice

story and photos by Spc. Aimee Felix

It's expected that if you're 7,000 miles away from home, you'll enjoy, if not anything else, the chance to witness an entirely different culture.

With all the security restrictions keeping troops from traveling to the city though, troops stationed in Kuwait don't have that first-hand opportunity, unless the culture comes to them.

At Kuwaiti Naval Base Nov. 24, the U.S. Navy had that opportunity when they joined members of the Kuwait Navy in a day of soccer, squash, basketball and water polo.

Spirited cheerleaders and hard-core sportsmen, the Kuwaitis showed the U.S. Navy a good time. They cheered rhythmically and hollered at their athletes "Yalay Ya Shabab," which translates roughly to "Come on guys" in English. Chief Abdullateef Aldosary was the leader of the rambunctious group waving Kuwaiti flags to the beat of their hand-clapping as they cheered for the Kuwaiti water polo team. Aldosary and the rest of the group played soccer earlier that morning, and they were there to have a great time with the Americans, he said.

That seemed to be the consensus on both ends. The Kuwaitis and the Americans enjoyed each other's company and competitive spirit

even when they were losing miserably to each other. The Americans, though, found themselves doing most of the losing.

While the U.S. Navy basketball team whipped the Kuwait basketball team in a 62 to 44 victory, the Kuwaitis kicked butt in every other sports event.

"It's kind of a paradox – night and day. They're late and laid back, but when it comes to sports, man they play hard," said Capt. John Granville, MWR officer at KNB. He laughed about how bad they had lost to the Kuwaitis in soccer.

It was funny to him because this hadn't been the first time. The last time they had a Kuwait and U.S. Navy sports day, the U.S. Navy soccer team lost miserably to a group of 11- and 12-year olds, the children of various high-ranking Kuwaiti Naval officers. "We got our butts handed to us," said Granville as he got ready to have the same thing happen to his team in water polo.

The sports day started at 6 a.m. with a 5-kilometer run that included all of the competitors. After that came soccer, then a squash tournament and a basketball game. Granville said the U.S. Navy didn't stand a chance against the Kuwaitis in squash. They beat the Americans in the first few matches. The U.S. Navy basketball



team made up for the losses – somewhat.

The last event of the day was a game of water polo. The American team was made up of several Army and Navy divers who said they were playing with only four days of practice behind them. In the first half of the game, the Americans were hopeful for a win because of how unstoppable U.S. goalie Commander Tom Fritz seemed as he blocked several Kuwaiti goals. Standing at 6 feet eight inches, Fritz's wingspan seemed to guarantee an American victory.

But fatigue took over the Americans, a group not conditioned to tread water for an hour-long game of water polo in a 12-foot pool. The Kuwaitis came back in the second half, claiming an 11 to 9 victory over the U.S. team.

Members of the 389th Army Band were there to back up the American cheering section with songs like "Ring of Fire" and "Eye of the Tiger." At one point, the band and the cheering Kuwaitis battled it out, taking turns to see who could command the ears of the crowd. In the end it was the Kuwaitis' singing and hand-clapping that drowned out the American's eight-man brass band, which included a tuba and a baritone saxophone.

The Kuwaitis, in general, added a great touch of culture to the day's events. They threw in the works with a delicious display of Kuwaiti hors d'oeuvres and pastries, and tea and soda.

The U.S. Navy and the Kuwait Navy Sports Day used to happen twice a year, but when the energetic and active Granville took command six months ago, he made it a quarterly event. The sports day began with a suggestion from a Kuwait Naval officer, said Maj. Qasem Al Fadhli, the Kuwait Naval officer who coordinated the Kuwaiti's side of the events. "We enjoy it, and it's always very interesting," said Fadhli who explained that the purpose of the event is to maintain the relationship among the two groups sharing KNB, the U.S. Navy and the Kuwait Navy.

Fadhli's pleased tone saddened when he began talking about all the more things the Kuwaitis wish they could do with and for the U.S. troops if the troops were allowed to leave the camps. "I've invited them to go to museums and to our sports centers, but well, I guess the Americans are," he paused and finally said, "very cautious." He said the Kuwaitis have such a great appreciation for

the U.S. troops, he can't imagine anyone in Kuwait hurting them. The reactions of the Kuwaiti sailors who attended the sports day made this appreciation very clear.

"It's interesting to work with the U.S. troops; they're so friendly and social," said Kuwait Navy Lt. Adel Alfarhan who attended the event as a spectator. He added that he would love to see this kind of event happen with all U.S. troops and not just be limited to the ones at KNB.

At the end of the water polo game, there was a ceremony right next to the pool with medals and trophies for all the winners. Kuwait Navy Colonel and squash champion of the day Abdullrahman Al-Awayesh gave the U.S. Navy their prizes, and Army Lt. Col. Aloysius Lingg gave the Kuwaitis their awards.

At 7 p.m., a bonfire and barbecue on the beach culminated the day's events for everyone who participated. The bonfire was also open to all troops on KNB. They ate and danced the night away to the tunes of hip hop and salsa pumping from a stereo. Granville made sure the event lasted long enough for day-shift workers to be able to enjoy some of the fun as well.



1 The Kuwait soccer team cheered the Kuwait water polo team on as the water polo athletes struggled their way to victory.

2 A bonfire and barbecue on the beach culminated the day's events. The bonfire happened thanks to members of the National Guard's 2146 Field Artillery unit under the 81st Brigade out of Washington.

3 Basketball may have been the only victory for the U.S. Navy during the Kuwait and U.S. Navy Sports Day, but it was a great win with a 62 to 44 victory.

4 Squash champion and Kuwait Navy Col. Abdullrahman Al-Awayesh played against Kuwait Navy Chief Petty Officer Nasser Hadi during the finals. The Americans were out of the game within the first few matches.

Arifjan intros free Internet

story and photo by Spc. Brian Trapp

Don't want to pay \$5 an hour for Internet access?

The Camp Arifjan MWR library offers free Internet access to troops. This may come as a relief to Soldiers who were forking over \$5 an hour to AAFES' Cyberzone Internet cafés. If a Soldier were to pay that hourly rate for a month of service, they would pay about \$3,600, compared to the \$9.95 charged for monthly service with NetZero, which is one of the least expensive Internet service providers in the United States. Troops now have another choice with a free, daily half hour of Internet connectivity.

The MWR free Internet café opened Oct. 31, and it is building in popularity as word gets out about this service for the troops – and the word is spreading fast. Library attendance since the café's opening has more than doubled, jumping from 3,500 Soldiers in October to 11,000 in November, said Rhea Sarver, MWR branch manager for Camp Arifjan. Since the café's opening, more than 5,100 people have signed in to use the Internet.

"The idea has always been there," said Sarver. Sarver used Camp Doha's MWR Internet café as the example for setting this one up. She said it was just a matter of getting the computers, hubs and lines together and then getting everything up and running.

MWR worked together with the command group DOIM and a number of other agencies to get everything ready to operate, said Sarver.

Before the free MWR Internet café, Staff.

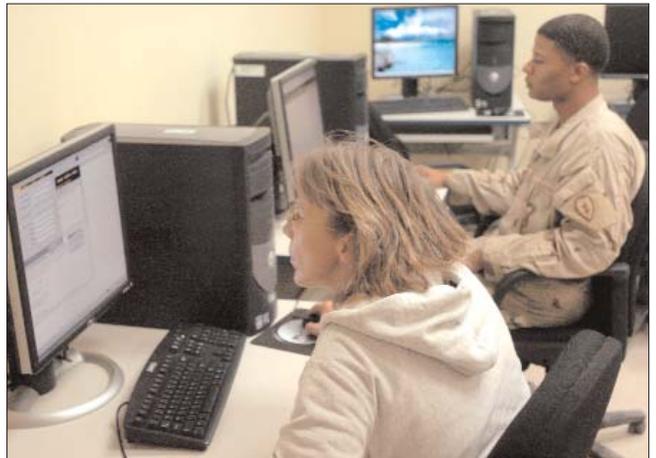
Sgt. Reggie Magwood, with the 889th Transportation Composite Detachment from Utah, was going to the Cyberzone Internet café, which he estimated cost him \$40 a month. "I spent tons of money there; it was a hassle, until they got this. They have a pretty quick connection here. The other Internet café computers took forever to load," he said.

Now Magwood is a regular at the MWR library.

"This is wonderful, opening up a new option to access the Internet for troops other than at work or where you have to pay for it," said Sandra Brack-Engles, with the MWR library and Internet café. "There are so many facets of MWR. We're here for the Soldier and we want them to know what we have available to them."

Troops can sign up for a block of time that runs on a half hour schedule seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. There are 11 computers available to be signed up for use in the 30 minute blocks of time and one computer available for 10 minute blocks. Soldiers can stop in and sign up for a time later in the day or in the evening. Walk-ins may luck out and happen to find an open time-slot, but they still need to sign in.

Once a Soldier's time is up, they can go out and sign up for another block of time if



Sgt. Susanne Hardin of the 251st Cargo Transfer Company and Sgt. James Twitdy of the 25th Infantry Division's Brigade Support Battalion spend some time Sunday morning checking their e-mail. Both are regular users of the new MWR Internet cafe located in the library in Camp Arifjan's Zone 1.

the space is open.

"This has a huge effect on morale," Sarver said. "Soldiers can come in and chat online with their family and send e-mails back and forth. The 10-minute computer is available for those who just want to quickly check e-mail. There are a lot of reservists with businesses back home, and they can go in and check on how it's doing to give them peace of mind. It's been a huge morale lift, and the fact that it's free makes [the troops] even happier."

Editor's note: AAFES did not respond to questions regarding their Kuwait area Cyberzone Internet cafés in time for the publication of this issue.



photos by Spc. Aimee Felix

Members of the Japanese media document the departure of the third rotation of Japanese troops as they board the plane that will take them back to Japan. They flew out Nov. 26 after a three-month deployment to Samara, Iraq, where they engaged in humanitarian operations, including reconstruction projects.

Curiosity of the Week

by Spc. Aimee Felix

Why are there no bags allowed in places like the DFAC?

Aside from being CFLCC policy, First Sgt. Keithly Warner, Area Support Group-Kuwait's Headquarters and Headquarters Company first sergeant, explains that it's a force protection issue. The reasoning behind the policy is to prevent anyone from bringing explosive devices into the facility, and to prevent any unnecessary commotion over harmless abandoned bags. While most, if not all, of those bags would be harmless, if a bag is abandoned, the dining facility managers have to assume the worse and call EOD, said Warner.

To submit a question for this column, e-mail the DV editor at the address on the back page of this magazine.

Cloak & dagger

297th MI Bn readies to head north

story and photo by Spc. Curt Cashour

The first time members of the 297th Military Intelligence Battalion deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, they conducted operations from the relative calm of Camp Doha, Kuwait.

That was during the first OIF rotation. This time around, they'll get a front row seat and a piece of the action in the third installment of the conflict.

Set to deploy to Iraq early this month, the unit from Fort Gordon, Ga., will provide intelligence support to Multi National Forces and Multi National Corps Iraq.

A multi-disciplined unit with Soldiers specializing in imagery analysis, electronic communications and counterintelligence and interrogation techniques, the 297th produces intelligence products that help high-level commanders and those in the field plan operations and deal with enemy activity, said 297th Commander Lt. Col. Napoleon Stewart.

Intelligence operations in Iraq have changed since the early stages of OIF. Because many of the targets during initial operations were static, imagery played a big

role in U.S. intelligence gathering, but as the focus has shifted toward wiping out the insurgency, human intelligence has come to the forefront, Stewart said.

"The basic principle is to go out to the communities, sit

down and explain what we're trying to accomplish, and hope they will be able to give [us] helpful information," said Capt. Octavio Navedo, commander of the 297th Headquarters, Headquarters and Service Company.

To get this info, units like the 297th rely on small groups called tactical human teams. Composed of a counterintelligence agent, an interrogator and a small security force, the teams roam the streets and interact with locals in search of useful informa-

tion.

"We try to get the pulse of the town to see if they can help us with anything," said Pfc. Matt Pride, a 297th interrogator.

The teams don't concern themselves with trying to persuade unwilling citizens to talk, but focus more on finding people ready to offer up info – mainly related to force protection issues – that will help the command, said Chief Warrant Officer Don Strock, a 297th counterintelligence technician.

Strock said helpful info can come from a variety of sources.

"Beat cops, religious figures, military members, to kids on the street – everybody is fair game. There are only certain individuals that are off limits," he said.

But the emphasis on human intelligence doesn't mean the battalion's imagery opera-

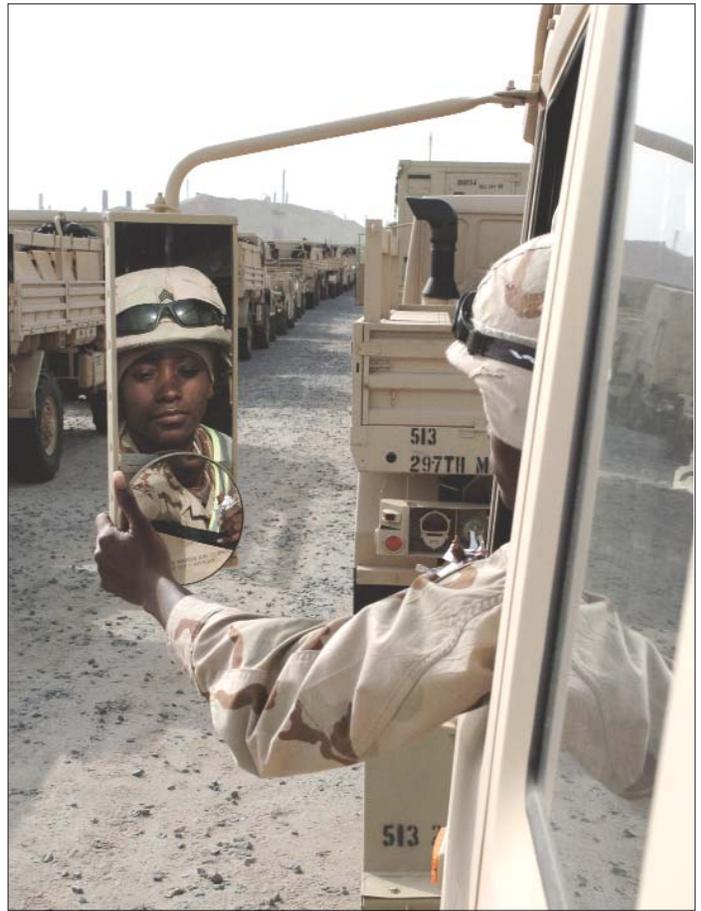
tions will be overlooked, according to Sgt. Barry Harper, a 297th imagery analyst.

As part of his job, Harper analyzes photos taken from satellites and other locations to spot potential targets and

suspicious enemy activity. Coupling photo analyses with info from archived intelligence reports, Harper and other analysts are able to create reports detailing situations commanders might encounter when they bring their units into certain areas, he said.

Because of their role at Camp Doha during OIF I, the 297th came into this trip with a wealth of deployment experience.

Approximately 50 to 60 percent of the unit's Soldiers have deployment experience, aiding a transition that, by almost all accounts,



Sgt. Latoya Pritchard, a food service specialist with the 297th Military Intelligence Battalion, adjusts a mirror on her light-medium tactical vehicle in preparation for the battalion's convoy from Kuwait's sea port of debarkation to Camp Virginia Nov. 26.

has been incredibly smooth.

"Most of us have been here before, so it's kind of second nature for us," said Staff Sgt. Derrick Edwards, a 297th Chemical Specialist.

Edwards and other 297th Soldiers were at the deployment yard of Kuwait's Sea Port of Debarkation Nov. 26 picking up the unit's vehicles and preparing them for a convoy to their temporary home in Kuwait, Camp Virginia.

Although he admitted that the unit's mission will be a world apart from the duties they performed at Camp Doha, Chief Warrant Officer Kenneth Grady, battalion maintenance officer, said the unit is well trained and ready for the mission at hand.

"Once we move [up north] nothing should change but the environment," he said, borrowing the quote from Stewart.

The Soldiers of the 297th started gearing up for this deployment about six months ago with common task training at Fort Gordon. Their stateside training concluded with a convoy operations exercise, Navedo said.

The 297th is one of four intelligence units set to head to Iraq under the direction of the 525th Military Intelligence Brigade, which is based in Fort Bragg, N.C.

"The basic principle is to go out to the communities, sit down and explain what we're trying to accomplish, and hope they will be able to give [us] helpful information." – Capt. Octavio Navedo

A touch of home for the holidays

story and photo by Spc. Curt Cashour

For many deployed servicemembers, Thanksgiving is just another day at the office. For the Soldiers and third country nationals working at forward dining facilities, however, the holiday is one of the busiest times of the year.

Despite being thousands of miles away from the holiday's birthplace, Soldiers and TCNs put in countless hours to turn DFACs across Kuwait into shrines dedicated to the celebration of Thanksgiving.

At Camp Arifjan's Zone 2 DFAC, visitors were greeted by Army cooks wearing white culinary uniforms complete with massive chef hats. Troops wandered around the building snapping photos of the many holiday-themed displays put together by the Soldiers and TCNs employed there.

Lines snaked around the warehouse facility, as Soldiers and civilian contractors waited for a meal that included Thanksgiving treats such as roasted turkey, stuffing and even non-alcoholic wine.

Although he said he was disappointed at the inevitable lack of beer, as he waited in line Army Staff Sgt. Christopher Shelton of the 233rd Transportation Company said he was looking forward to the meal.

"You know them cooks will get us squared away," he said.

Navy and Army officers at Camp Patriot, the U.S. installation at the Kuwaiti Naval Base, gave the camp's DFAC staff a break by carving turkeys and serving food to about 950 troops against a backdrop of



Soldiers pause to check out a holiday-themed display during the Thanksgiving meal at Camp Arifjan's Zone 2 dining facility Nov. 25. Facility workers served 5,500 soldiers during the meal.

turkey-day decorations and cornucopia ice sculptures, said Patriot DFAC Noncommissioned Officer in Charge Sgt. 1st Class Craig McClay.

While the main goal of the celebrations was to provide troops with a break from the rigors of deployment and create an atmosphere reminiscent of home, DFAC staff were also competing against one another in a contest to see which Kuwait facility offered the best Thanksgiving dining experience, said Chief Warrant Officer Peleti Peleti, a theater food advisor for Coalition Forces Land Component Command and one of the contest's judges.

While the performances of all the facili-

ties were impressive, Camp Virginia's DFAC took the contest's top spot, Peleti said. The DFAC's Soldiers went the extra mile when it came to presentation.

Virginia DFAC Manager Sgt. 1st Class Sef Romero said a team of about 15 transient cook Soldiers worked around the clock for two days with his staff of 15 Soldiers and additional TCNs to prepare for the meal.

While the days leading up to the meal were full of activity for Sgt. Randy J. Mills, a cook at Arifjan's Zone 2 DFAC, he said the hard work was worth it in the end.

"A lot of the Soldiers were smiling as they were coming through my doors. It's a great thing. They deserve it. They worked hard to get where they are," he said.

From hardened camps like Arifjan, to the most austere forward operating bases in Iraq and Afghanistan, Thanksgiving celebrations took place at nearly all military dining facilities and mobile kitchen trailers in the Central Command area of operation, Peleti said.

Preparations for what Peleti called the Super Bowl of military food service started in June, with officials shipping hundreds of thousands of pounds of turkey, ham and other holiday foods to DFACs throughout the CENTCOM AOR, he said. An emergency delivery of holiday food was even made to a facility at Camp Ramadi, Iraq, after coalition forces destroyed the original shipment, which was suspected of carrying a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device.

DFACs in Kuwait and Iraq alone served up 213,000 pounds of turkey, 119,000 pounds of ham and 236,000 pounds of shrimp. Troops can expect similar meals for the Christmas holiday as well, Peleti said.



photo by Spc. Curt Cashour

Washington Redskins cheerleaders perform during their show at Camp Arifjan's Zone 1 Gym Nov. 27. Approximately 500 servicemembers attended the show.

In & Around Our Community

Special and weekly events around Kuwait's U.S. military community for Dec. 1 – Dec. 8, 2004

Special Events: Arifjan

Wednesday

Moldy Oldies Night, 7 p.m. at the Community Center

Thursday

Texas Hold'em Poker, 7 p.m. at the Gym Tent

Saturday

Live showing of Army/Navy football game, 10:30 p.m. at the Community Center

Persian Carpet Seminar, 7 p.m. at the Gym Tent

Sunday

Hearts Tournament, 7 p.m. at the Community Center

Weekly Events: Arifjan

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. at Zone 1 gym tent

High Impact Aerobics, 7 p.m. at Zone 2 gym tent

Thursday

Caribbean Music, 7:30 p.m. at MWR stage

Country Music Night, 7:30 p.m. at the Community Center

Martial Arts, 7 p.m. Spinning Class, 5:30 p.m. at Zone 2 gym tent

Friday

Open Mic Night, 5:30 p.m. MWR stage

Step Aerobics, 7 p.m. Zone 1 gym tent

High Impact Aerobics, 7 p.m. at Zone 2 gym tent

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m. at the pool

Salsa Night, 7 p.m. at the Community Center

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. at Zone 1 gym tent

Martial Arts, 7 p.m. at Zone 2 gym tent

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m. at the pool

Sunday

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. at Zone 1 gym tent

Cardio Pump Kick Boxing 3 p.m. at MWR stage

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m. at the pool

Monday

Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m. at the MWR stage

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. at Zone 1 gym tent

High Impact Aerobics, 7 p.m. at Zone 2 gym tent

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m. at the pool

Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m. at the MWR stage

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. at Zone 1 gym tent

High Impact Aerobics, 7 p.m. at Zone 2 gym tent

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m. at the pool

Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m. at the MWR stage

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. at Zone 1 gym tent

High Impact Aerobics, 7 p.m. at Zone 2 gym tent

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m. at the pool

Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m. at the MWR stage

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. at Zone 1 gym tent

High Impact Aerobics, 7 p.m. at Zone 2 gym tent

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m. at the pool

Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m. at the MWR stage

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. at Zone 1 gym tent

High Impact Aerobics, 7 p.m. at Zone 2 gym tent

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m. at the pool

Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m. at the MWR stage

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. at Zone 1 gym tent

High Impact Aerobics, 7 p.m. at Zone 2 gym tent

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m. at the pool

Country Western Night, 7:30 p.m. at the MWR stage

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. at Zone 1 gym tent

High Impact Aerobics, 7 p.m. at Zone 2 gym tent

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m. at the pool

Tuesday

Spa Day, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Zone 2 gym tent

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. at Zone 1 gym tent

Martial Arts, 7 p.m. Spinning Class, 5:30 p.m. at Zone 2 gym tent

Lap swimming, 5 to 7 a.m. at the pool

For more information, call 430-1202

Special Events: Doha

Wednesday

Hip Hop Night, 7 p.m. at Frosty's

MWR Bazaar, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Marble Palace

Thursday

MWR Bazaar, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Marble Palace

Saturday

Live showing of Army/Navy football game, 10:30 p.m. at Frosty's

Tuesday

501 Darts Tournament, 7 p.m. at Frosty's

Wednesday

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

Weekly Events: Doha

Sunday

NFL Night, 10 p.m. at Frosty's

For more information, call 438-5637

Events: Navistar

Friday

AMC Rock Band, 7 p.m. at the basketball court

Saturday

Spa Day, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the 1st MWR tent

Sunday

MWR Bazaar, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at all the MWR tents

For more information, call 844-1138

Events: Virginia

Saturday

Live showing of Army/Navy football game, 10:30 p.m. at the MWR tent

Sunday

Marathon, meet at 6 a.m. at the Dusty Room

For more information, call 832-1045

Events: Victory

Wednesday

Decorating USO tent, all day at the USO tent

Karaoke Night, 7 p.m. at the MWR tent

Secret Santa signup begins, at the MWR tent, deadline is Dec. 15

Saturday

Spades Tournament, 7 p.m. at the MWR tent

Sunday

AMC Rock Band, time TBD at the MWR area

Monday

Foosball Tournament, 7 p.m. at the MWR tent

Wednesday

Karaoke Night, 7 p.m. at the MWR tent

Hello Dave Alternative Band, 7 p.m. at the MWR area

For more information, call 823-1033

Events: Buehring

Wednesday

AMC Rock Band at the MWR bunker

Wednesday

AMC Band (Salsa, Elvis and Blues) at the MWR bunker

For more information, call 828-1340

Events: KNB

For information, call 839-1007

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 movie schedule

| Date | Time | Movie | Rating |
|-------------|------|---------------------------|--------|
| WED, Dec. 1 | 1730 | SUSPECT ZERO | R |
| | 2000 | THE COOKOUT | PG-13 |
| THU, Dec. 2 | 1730 | THE BOURNE SUPREMACY | PG-13 |
| | 2000 | EXORCIST, THE BEGINNING | R |
| FRI, Dec. 3 | 1730 | NAPOLEON DYNAMITE | PG-13 |
| | 2000 | CELLULAR | PG-13 |
| SAT, Dec. 4 | 1400 | COLLATERAL | R |
| | 1730 | RESIDENT EVIL, APOCALYPSE | R |
| SUN, Dec. 5 | 2000 | THE FORGOTTEN | PG-13 |
| | 1400 | HERO | PG-13 |
| MON, Dec. 6 | 1730 | PAPARAZZI | PG-13 |
| | 2000 | THE FORGOTTEN | PG-13 |
| TUE, Dec. 7 | 1730 | RESIDENT EVIL, APOCALYPSE | R |
| | 2000 | WIMBLEDON | PG-13 |
| WED, Dec. 8 | 1730 | RAY | PG-13 |
| | 2000 | HERO | PG-13 |
| | 1730 | THE FORGOTTEN | PG-13 |
| | 2000 | RAY | PG-13 |

For more information, call 965-974,6174

Doha/Arifjan Shuttle Schedule

| Departs Doha Stop 1 (bldg. 6 PAX tent) | Arrives Doha Stop 2 (Bldg. 28&31) | Departs Doha Stop 2 | Arrives Arifjan | Departs Arifjan | Arrives Doha Stop 1 |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| | | | | 0545 | |
| | 0700 | 0715 | 0830 | 0845 | 1000 |
| 1015 | 1025 | 1040 | 1200 | 1300 | 1430 |
| 1445 | 1450 | 1505 | 1615 | 1630 | 1745 |
| 1900 | 1910 | 1925 | 2045 | | |

Virginia takes T-day DFAC honors

story and photo by Maj. Jim Blair
697th Quartermaster Battalion

We've often heard the saying, especially when we gather with family for the holidays, that we have enough food to feed an army. Well, this year, that saying was true for the dining facility personnel and the Soldiers at Camp Virginia.

For the 5,500 Soldiers stationed at Camp Virginia this would be a Thanksgiving unlike many they have ever experienced. For starters, this might be the first time these Soldiers celebrated Thanksgiving away from their families. Second, this was the first time many had celebrated Thanksgiving in the desert, and finally, this might be the first time they celebrated with Soldiers from so many other countries. At Camp Virginia, American Soldiers were able to share an American holiday with soldiers from Japan, South Korea, a United Nations unit from Fiji and our North American neighbor, El Salvador.

Helping to make the time away from their families a truly memorable experience was the Camp Virginia Dining Facility. The Dining Facility, managed by Mr. Abbassi from Saudi Arabia's Tamimmi Global and Sgt. 1st Class Romero from the 321st Signal Company, put in the extra time and effort necessary, if not for this facility to look like home, for it to at least taste like home. But for this holiday to be a success, it took an army to pull off this holiday meal.

We often hear about this being an Army of one, or that often cited "one Army" (when speaking about the Army, Army Reserve or Army National Guard one team concept). Nothing could be more accurate than this being a team effort. Soldiers from our Active, Reserve and National Guard forces worked side-by-side with our contracted workers from Tamimmi Global; together with a force of 130 personnel (90 contracted and 40 military) we successfully fed the 5,500 residents of Camp Virginia. Even more impressive, is the work this



team accomplished, especially when you take into account that Romero's Reserve and Guard Soldiers do not work in a food service career outside of the military.

In addition to the usual holiday meal expectations, these Soldiers and contractors were motivated by pride. A challenge was issued by the CFLCC food service officer for each DFAC to compete with the other Kuwaiti DFACS. The prize for the competition was the honor of having the best Thanksgiving DFAC for Operation Iraqi Freedom III (Kuwait).

Not to be outdone, the Camp Virginia staff, supported by food support professionals from the 1st COSCOM, went the extra mile to make this camp's the best DFAC. Leading the effort from the 1st COSCOM was Sgt. Maj. Belush, their food service officer. Belush rallied his team to support the permanent party food service team headed by Romero.

The theme they selected was a traditional holiday meal with accompaniments. What transpired was a culinary arts masterpiece for such an austere environment as Camp Virginia.

When entering the DFAC you could tell something special was occurring on this day. Many of the Soldiers took the extra time, and put in the extra effort, to transform the dining facility to a culinary arts display. Master Sgt. Warren, from the 507th Group, 1st COSCOM, sculpted a 400-pound block of ice with a chain saw into an airborne operations tribute to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Another example of the extra attention given to this Thanksgiving meal was the hand painted sign commemorating Thanksgiving that Romero prepared. Pfc. Citron joined Romero in the sign making business with a hand painted sign commemorating the 1st COSCOM personnel currently residing at Camp Virginia. Both signs greeted soldiers to the dining facility and wished them a Happy Thanksgiving on

behalf of 1st COSCOM Commander Brig. Gen. Fontaine, the dining facility staff and Camp Virginia Commander, Lt. Col. Dillard, 687th Quartermaster Battalion, Decatur, Ill.

Inside the DFAC, the spirit of Thanksgiving was clearly displayed by the unique displays created by the 1st COSCOM personnel. One display of carved turkey commemorating this Thanksgiving was prepared by Spc. Prude and Spc. Thomas, CDC, 1st COSCOM, Fort Bragg, N.C. Other soldiers from the 1st COSCOM (Spc. Berley, 507th Group, Spc. Harris, CDC and Pvt. Morgan, HHC) prepared a sand table depicting the layout and the significant landmarks for Camp Virginia.

Not to be outdone, Abbassi's contracted staff of more than 90 third country nationals prepared several fruit carvings, which decorated the salad bar and serving lines. One thing was certain; as you toured the facility prior to the opening at 11 a.m. for the holiday meal, you could see the energy and enthusiasm these Soldiers and contractors had for making this a special meal for those they served. The military and contracted personnel glowed with anticipation as the Soldiers lined up to enjoy the meal which they had worked so diligently to prepare.

Overall the day was a success for everyone. The meal was as good as home cooked, plus the DFAC earned honors as the best DFAC in Kuwait for Thanksgiving Day 2004. Romero commented on how well everyone worked together to make this day a success.

While discussing the meal, Abbassi said that this was the largest holiday meal they had ever prepared at Camp Virginia. Not to rest on their laurels, Romero has already begun his preparation for the Christmas meal. With only 28 days to go, the Camp Virginia team is now planning the theme and meal for this Christmas and will be working hard to exceed their standard.

DESERT VOICE

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