

DECEMBER 8, 2004

DESERT VOICE

Coming to a
tent near you

Page 6

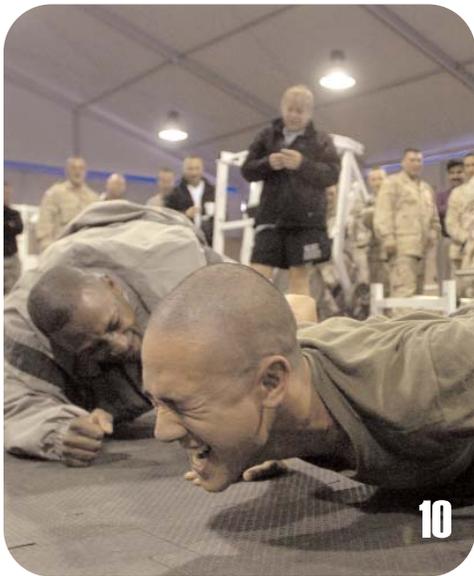
CONTENTS

DESERT VOICE

Volume 26, Issue 17

The Desert Voice is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of the Desert Voice are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government or Department of the Army. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Coalition Forces Land Component Command Public Affairs Office. This newspaper is published by Al-Qabandi United, a private firm, which is not affiliated with CFLCC. All copy will be edited. The Desert Voice is produced weekly by the Public Affairs Office.

17



10

Page 3 Les Brownlee retires

After serving as undersecretary of the Army for three years and acting secretary of the Army for more than 18 months, Brownlee calls it quits and says goodbye to the Army.

Page 4 The other New York

Missing the big city? No help here. Unlike its namesake, Camp New York lacks a decent skyline – it does have a good DFAC, though, and the tents are spectacular.

Page 5 You left paradise for this?

Fijian troops headed north last week to guard U.N. workers who are readying Iraq for elections next month.

Pages 6&7 This place is bugged

Desert foxes, giant lizards, miniature hawks, exotic arthropods – it sounds like some sort of zoo exhibit, but it's right in our back yard.

Page 8 278th RCT gears up

They're part-time Soldiers, but they're taking on a full-time mission in one of the most hostile places on the planet. First things first; make sure the weapons still work.

Page 9 Burnin' down the house

During the holidays and winter, lights can bring a little extra cheer to tents, but beware – they can also bring fire.

Page 10 It's brand new for you

The new MWR/Gym tent at Kuwaiti Naval Base took a bit longer than planned, but now that it's up, it was worth the wait.

Page 11 Community

Featuring the bands **Hello Dave** and **AMC**, Soldier's **flea market**, Christmas movies, **flag football sign-up**, Kuwait Singers, weight lifting competition.

Page 12 Warming up for Christmas

Soldier submissions: Lt. Col. Michael Verrett's cartooning and a submission from the states by Andrea Kraehmer



4



8

CFLCC Commanding General
Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb

CFLCC Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. Julian Kellman

CFLCC Public Affairs Officer
Col. Michael Phillips

Commander 14th PAD
Maj. Thomas E. Johnson

NCOIC 14th PAD
Staff Sgt. Sheryl Lawry

Editor
Sgt. Matt Millham

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

Broadcasters
Sgt. Scott White
Spc. Chase Spears



6

On the Cover A sand viper, Kuwait's most venomous snake, stares down the camera.

Photo by Jason McCann, KBR Vector Control technician

Goodbye & farewell

by Les Brownlee

It has been a great honor and privilege for me to serve as the undersecretary of the Army for the past three years and concurrently, for the past 18 months, as the acting secretary of the Army.

Our nation's greatness was achieved by the generations of Americans who have served their country with honor. From your grandparents who fought and won the Second World War and assured freedom for South Korea, to your parents who served our nation in Vietnam and in the Cold War, in Panama and Desert Storm, to the conflicts of today, the courage and sacrifices demonstrated by American Soldiers remain the foundation of our United States Army.

Soldiering is an affair of the heart, and it is that spirit, that fundamental commitment to volunteer, to place the nation's needs above one's own, that makes our Soldiers the best in the world today. Your professionalism, dedication, and valor are the hallmarks of the values our Army has upheld for over 229 years of service to our nation.

I am immensely proud of what our Army has accomplished over the past three years. Our Army has carried the heaviest burden in

fighting this Global War on Terror. Soldiers have set two nations – Iraq and Afghanistan – on the path to democracy and economic recovery.

Less than 12 months since we first rotated our combat formations in Iraq, the Army, for the second time, is executing the most massive movement of troops and equipment seen since World War II. And, even as we continue to take the fight to our nation's enemies and improve the quality of life for our Soldiers' families, our Army continues transforming its training, organization, and equipment.

Our Army is far more than people and equipment – it is made of men and women with hopes and dreams, a passionate commitment to the ideals of freedom, and the willingness to fight for those ideals. But freedom is not free! And in today's War on Terror, some of our Soldiers have lost their lives, and many have been wounded.

I have had the honor of visiting many of these wounded Soldiers, and I am always moved by their unanimous expressions of dedication, their commitment to service, and their desire to return to their units and comrades-in-arms. I'm equally touched by the tremendous commitment displayed by their families, and the support that they provide.

When we talk of service

and sacrifice, we must never forget the wives, husbands, sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, and other loved ones who stand behind our Soldiers. Their unconditional love and their steadfast loyalty to our Soldiers are invaluable in every aspect of what our Army does. The devotion and support of our Army families represent all that we fight for and all that we hold dear.

It has been my honor to represent the wonderful men and women who volunteer to be a part of the Army – and their families as well. The nation will be eternally indebted to you for your service and sacrifice.

God bless each of you, God bless the United States Army, and God bless this wonderful nation we all love and so proudly serve.



photo by Sgt. Reeba Critser

Former Undersecretary of the Army Les Brownlee covers his heart during the national anthem at his retirement ceremony at Fort Myer, Va., Nov. 29.

Army's Brownlee retires after 42 years of service

from the Army News Service

WASHINGTON — Under Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee officially retired Dec. 3 after more than 42 years of service to the nation, including more than 18 months as acting secretary of the Army.

Brownlee spent 22 years in uniform, retiring as an Army colonel. He then spent 18 years serving the Senate, much of that time as staff director of the Senate Committee on Armed Services under former Chairman Sen. Strom Thurmond and current chairman Sen. John Warner.

Brownlee became the 27th undersecretary of the Army Nov. 14, 2001, following his nomination by President George W. Bush and confirmation by the Senate. From May 10, 2003, until Nov. 19 he served concurrently as acting secretary of the Army.

The length of time Brownlee served as acting secretary is unprecedented, said Secretary of the Army Dr. Frances J. Harvey.

"Since the founding of the Republic, only 24 men have served as the acting secretary

of war, or, after 1947, the acting secretary of the Army – men like Winfield Scott, Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman," said Harvey at a ceremony for Brownlee Nov. 29.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker hosted the full-honors ceremony for Brownlee at Fort Myer's Summerall Field.

"I know firsthand that there are few people who have stood as firmly on the side of our Soldiers as has Les Brownlee, and that has been the great good fortune of the United States Army and our country," said Rumsfeld.

Rumsfeld presented Brownlee the DoD Medal for Distinguished Public Service. Schoomaker presented Brownlee the Army Distinguished Civilian Service Medal. Sen. Warner presented Brownlee's retirement certificate.

"As a Soldier, Mr. Brownlee had an impeccable reputation and he lived the Warrior Ethos," Schoomaker said. "Mr. Brownlee cares about the Army and

Soldiers as much as anyone I've met or served with.

"His service as undersecretary and later as acting secretary coincided with one of the most turbulent periods in our nation's history – a period that offered unprecedented challenges for our Army. Through it all, he provided strong, supportive leadership to help us contend with those challenges, and to ensure the Army accomplished our mission," said Schoomaker.

Brownlee commented on a question he received recently about how he'd like to be remembered, citing a quote from the Anton Myrer novel, *Once an Eagle*: "That's the whole challenge of life – to act with honor and hope and generosity, no matter what you've drawn. You can't help when or what you were born, you may not be able to help how you die; but you can – and you should – try to pass the days between as a good man," he said. "And if those who have served in our Army while I was here might believe that I was a good man who always acted in their best interests, then that is more than I can ask."

NEW YORK, KUWAIT

Start spreading the news; Camp New York reopens

story and photo by Spc. Curt Cashour

It may not have the tall buildings, wild nightclubs or scenic skyline of its namesake, but the cost of living is certainly cheaper for its residents.

Camp New York, Kuwait, unofficially opened Dec. 1 when servicemembers from its roughly 175-member support staff began moving into tents on the desert outpost adjacent to Camp Buehring.

During the first two Operation Iraqi Freedom rotations, the camp, which opened only during each cycle's population surge, served as the temporary home to tens of thousands of troops on their way to and from Iraq.

This year the camp will do the same for one last time. When the population surge of servicemembers traveling through Kuwait subsides in April, the camp will be torn down. Camp support staff will spend about a month returning the site to its original condition, and the land

will be given back to the Kuwaiti people, said Master Sgt. William Cruz, the camp's acting sergeant major and a member of the Army Reserve 687th Quartermaster Battalion from Decatur, Ill.

In an October interview with Desert Voice, Area Support Group-Kuwait Commander Col. Brick T. Miller cited the costly process of reopening the camp each year as the reason for its closing.

As support staff moved into their tents, servicemembers from several units put the finishing touches on projects vital to the camp's completion. Soldiers with the 319th Signal Battalion's A Company, a Reserve unit from Sacramento, Calif., ran communication lines and members of the 448th Engineer Battalion, a reserve unit from Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico, finished augmenting tents for the camp's troop medical clinic, finance office and command cell with wooden shelves, partitions and dividers.

Dining facility staff from various units opened the doors to their facility, which seats 1,500 people. Some New York Soldiers lauded the facility as one of the best in Kuwait. Outgoing DFAC noncommissioned officer in charge Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Ellis, of the 699th Maintenance Company from Fort Irwin, Calif., said the quality comes down to a simple philosophy.

"If I put a meal out there, I better be willing to eat it as well," said Ellis, who is in the

process of handing over the DFAC reins to Master Sgt. Debra Thomas of the 687th.

Preparations for this year's opening began in September, with Soldiers of the 115th Field Artillery Brigade, the camp's previous caretakers, initiating projects like road grading, tent preparation and shower stall refurbishment. Still, when the current command cell assumed operations at New York Oct. 14, there was much work to be done, according to Maj. Jeffrey Doll, New York commander and a member of the Army Reserve 317th Quartermaster Battalion.

"When we first started, the camp consisted of nothing more than some eroded berms and shower trailers," he said.

Doll and his command cell team, a group of about 23 Soldiers from the 317th, 687th and 699th went to work compiling a list of

205 projects that had to be completed before the camp could resume operations. Working with various contractors throughout the construction process, the team set out to incorporate les-

sons learned from other U.S. military camps in Kuwait to ensure New York offered the best quality of life possible, Doll said.

Doll and his team worked hard to control the camp's construction down to the smallest details, with the thought that little things add up to make a big difference in quality of life and safety, he said. Tent bottoms were secured with two sandbags instead of one to provide additional protection from the weather. Wooden vestibules were installed at tent entry points to allow easy access for troops while keeping out snakes and rodents. Designated smoking areas were even built at each of the tent pads to prevent smokers from being tempted to light up in their tents.

In keeping with the spirit of the camp's name, tent pads will be named after different New York City neighborhoods, Cruz said.

At first, the task of standing up a camp designed to hold 10,000 transient troops seemed daunting to Doll and his Soldiers, but after the second week of preparations, it became clear to the team that the job would get done. Doubts dissipated, confidence ensued and soon the task became not just doable, but something that could be done better than before, Doll said.

With most of the camp support staff now in place, and essential services like the DFAC, Internet and phone systems up and

running, camp staff will now focus on completing the camp's construction and tweaking operations to make New York one of the finest camps in Kuwait, Doll said.

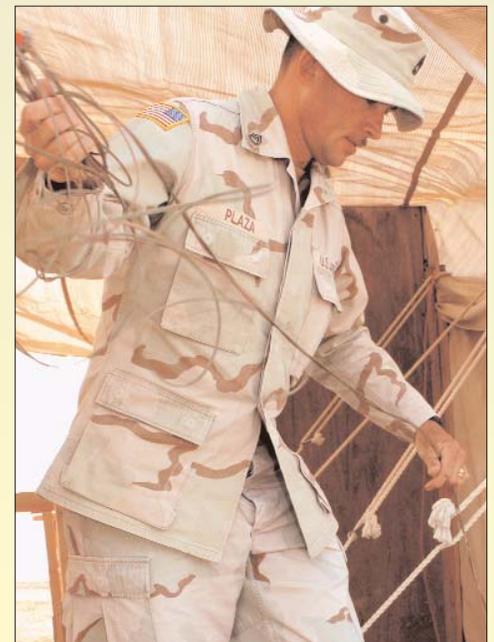
Projects yet to be completed include furnishing the camp's Morale Welfare and Recreation facilities and opening businesses that will serve troops, Cruz said.

MWR offerings will consist of a gym, a television and reading room, educational activities and sand-volleyball courts, Cruz said. Businesses include a Post Exchange, an alterations shop, a barber shop as well as Nathan's, Subway and Burger King restaurants. The businesses and MWR facilities are scheduled to open Dec. 15, Cruz said.

Cruz said the camp's focus on MWR and related activities is important to provide transient troops with at least a temporary break from the whirlwind of activity associated with OIF deployments and redeployments. It's touches like this that go along with the broader mission of New York.

"We just have to make sure the troops have what they need. If they don't have it, we'll get it for them or provide them the resources so they can get what they need," he said.

Transient troops are scheduled to begin cycling through the camp Dec. 18. The camp should reach its full capacity in late January, Doll said.



Sgt. 1st Class Harvey Plaza of the 319th Signal Battalion's A Company, a Reserve unit from Sacramento, Calif., runs communications wire at the Camp New York Technical Control Facility Dec. 1.

"When we first started, the camp consisted of nothing more than some eroded berms and shower trailers." — Maj Jeffrey Doll

Fijian troops enter Iraq ahead of elections

story by Spc. Aimee Felix

With Iraqi elections planned for Jan. 30, the United Nations has increased its presence in the country to 35 members. U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan requested support from various countries to guard the U.N. perimeter in Baghdad with the hope of improving the security situation to the point that more U.N. members could go there to help with the election. At first, a response to Annan's request did not look hopeful, but finally one country stepped up to the plate and volunteered its troops.

Fiji, a country smaller than New Jersey with an army of roughly 3,000, sent about 130 of its soldiers to protect the U.N. compound in Baghdad, which when last occupied was bombed, killing 22 people.

After two months of pre-deployment training in Fiji and two weeks waiting for their equipment to arrive in Camp Virginia, Fijian troops were anxious, excited and ready for their six-month deployment in support of the stabilization of Iraq.

Most of the troops have deployed to peace-keeping missions in the Sinai Peninsula, Lebanon and East Timor. This mission, though, isn't really about peace-keeping, it's about providing security in one of the most hostile and visible conflicts in the world. "It's big; it's been all over the news. It's a chance to be on the ground and see what's going on," said contingent sergeant major Warrant Officer Sisa Saukawa. Saukawa has been in the Fijian army for 26 years and has a son in the reserve. While Saukawa is excited to be a part of this deployment, he is thankful his son is not a part of the mission.

Saukawa is religious like many Fijians, and according to his peers, he knows the Bible inside and out. While at Camp Virginia, Fijian troops had a church service every night under the ministering of Battalion Chaplain Capt. Josefa Sewale. Sewale, a Methodist minister in Fiji, joined the Fijian army specifically for this trip so that the troops would have a reverend in Iraq.

On Dec. 2, their last night in Camp Virginia, the Fijians had their last church service in Kuwait, followed by a special gathering, which they had shared with some members of the Virginia command cell several times before. The Fijians gathered on mats made out of pandana leaves, drank from a bowl filled with the traditional Fijian drink, yaqona, and talked about their day and future plans. "It's a great way to open up," said Capt. Pacob Luveni, who attributed the Fijians' documented low blood pressure to the yaqona, a natural relaxant



photo by Sgt. Matt Millham

Fijian troops gathered to drink yaqona and sing songs on their last night in Kuwait before heading to Iraq where they will serve as a personnel security detail for U.N. staff.

made from the pulverized root of a tree that belongs to the pepper family. The yaqona is passed around in two little bowls made of coconut shells. The Fijians brought several boxes of the root with them to help make it through the deployment, said Luveni, the group's legal and operations officer.

Col. Meli Saubulinayau, the commanding officer of the Fijian group, was thankful to the Americans in Camp Virginia for hosting them through a delayed stay. The delay was due to mechanical problems with the aircraft carrying their equipment to Kuwait.

Their time in Kuwait, though, was not wasted. Sitting through their church service and farewell gathering, it was no wonder the Fijians had charmed the Camp Virginia command cell. "They were a blast to have around," said Maj. Jim Blair, Virginia's coalition forces liaison officer.

During their church service, the Fijians sang several hymns in their native language. Harmonizing with one another without hymnals, it was hard to believe such music was coming from the mouths of trained Soldiers. During the yaqona gathering, they sang as well, except this time they were accompanied by a guitar, and they sang traditional Fijian songs and their Army song, written by their forefathers during World War II.

Enamored with the Fijians, the command cell asked the dining facility chefs to make two birthday cakes to celebrate the Fijian troops' November birthdays. Things like this

and the Fijian's own good-humor kept Sgt. Mela Salacakau cheerful through the birthdays of two of her four children on Nov. 29 and Dec. 1. The petite Salacakau, skilled in the martial art of Hapkido, was part of the first batch of women to ever join the Fijian army. Salacakau, a platoon sergeant, is one of six women deployed on this mission. The women are there primarily to search women entering the U.N. premises in Baghdad, because in Muslim culture it is inappropriate for a man to search a woman. Salacakau's fellow pioneer female soldier, Sgt. Keleni Raisili, said she was excited about the deployment because she expects it will be adventurous and challenging.

Luveni said that was the general feeling among all the troops. After two months of pre-deployment training, the longest ever for the Fijian Army, the troops were ready to deploy. While in Kuwait, they also trained with the British on rules of engagement, and they also took Arabic language classes. With their uniforms distinguishing them as falling under the U.N., the troops hoped they would be afforded a little more safety than the average U.S. trooper, Luveni said.

With their equipment finally in Kuwait, the troops were issued their weapons and headgear after the church service and before the evening's celebrations. The morning after, Fijian troops deployed to Iraq to protect U.N. personnel there as the United Nations assists in what will be the largest step toward democracy for Iraq.

Desert jungle

A close-up photograph of a man wearing dark sunglasses and a blue uniform, looking slightly to the right. A falcon is perched on his hand, its head turned towards the camera. The falcon has a light-colored head with a dark eye and a sharp beak. The background is a clear blue sky.

We don't get a chance to see it very often, but Kuwait is teeming with wildlife. KBR Vector Control captured or exterminated thousands of pests in the last year, like flies, scorpions and rats. Animals, like the lesser kestrel (above), which was found caught up in concertina wire, are captured and released back into the wild where they do no harm to troops.

photos by Jason McCann

story by Spc. Brian Trapp

When troops live in secluded patches of desert, they start to overlap with Kuwait's wildlife. There are poisonous snakes, scorpions, a number of lizards that grow to more than 2 feet long, feral cats and dogs, rodents and thousands upon thousands of insects that either feed on blood or just plain annoy humans. What stands between the troops and the creatures that call this harsh environment home? KBR Vector Control, with a staff of five, takes on the job of controlling the population of rodents, insects, and various cold- and warm-blooded wildlife that roam Kuwait.

Now that the temperature is cooling off, one of vector control's biggest challenges, controlling the insect population, has slowed as the bugs go into their dormant stage.

"Here the major concern is flies and stuff like that," said Doyle Lawhorn, KBR vector control manager.

When fly season is in full swing the technicians who work in and around Camp Navistar and Camp Buehring spend all day taking care of flies.

"At Navistar, when the sun would come up and start to warm things up, they said they

could see the flies coming in like a cloud," Lawhorn said.

At both camps KBR installed flay traps that can hold around 22,000 flies each. "They were filling up in two or three days," Lawhorn said. "It was just unbelievable; the traps looked like an Alfred Hitchcock movie."

The problem stemmed from the fact that Kuwaitis were dumping dead sheep, goats and even camels along the road between Buehring and Navistar. "We don't know why, but there were a lot of them and they attracted a lot of the flies," Lawhorn said.

Even though the fly population has died down, rodent activity remains a year-round problem, Lawhorn said.

The desert has its fair share of rodent life, but the seaside of this country may have more than its fair share. At the SPOD and Kuwaiti Naval Base, vector control technician BJ Watkins, also known as "the rat man," takes the challenge head-on.

He recalled one particularly bad infestation where rats had overrun tents in which Marines were living. It was so bad, "they said they would crawl over you in the middle of the night. I went out there and in three days I killed 68 rats, almost 30 from just one tent."



The rodent problem isn't limited to just wharf rats. There are plenty inland as well.

"All it takes is one guy in the tent eating and leaving food there," Lawhorn said. "I tell the guys that the mice are going to visit, but it's up to [the troops] on whether or not they stay."

In the desert, where an animal's meals can be few and far between, any food source will attract them. "It could be as simple as orange rinds, banana peels, or a bag of chips. In a harsh environment like this, a bag of chips goes a long way," said Jason McCann, vector control technician.

"It works like the food chain; you leave food, you get rodents, then the snakes come in," Lawhorn said. Compared to the rodent population, though, there really aren't that many snakes here.

The vector technicians use a proactive approach to extermination by continually baiting and inspecting their areas for rodent activity, Lawhorn said.

"I check my traps and walk my tents every day," Watkins said. "If I see a rodent hole, I'll bait the hole and take care of the problem before it gets out of hand."

In holding with his "rat man" title Watkins bragged about catching two rats that were about 8-to 10-inches long – not including the tail. He said this as he held his hands out to show the size as if he were telling a fishing story. Watkins comes from a long line of "hired killers." His father has been in the exterminator business for about 50 years, and Watkins for nearly 35.

"Some people really develop a knack on where to look," said McCann. "[Watkins] showed me how he keeps personal logs on where he baits and the concentration of

what he's caught to identify the hot spots."

Besides making their daily rounds to prevent anything from getting out of hand, they are also on call 24 hours a day in case anything unexpected springs up.

"Once there was a huge dhub-dhub lizard that for some reason walked over into [Camp Arifjan's] Zone 2 area," Lawhorn said. "It was freaking everyone out, so we came out and grabbed it, took it and released him back out into the wild."

In the two years Lawhorn has been in Kuwait, KBR received three calls for snakes in tents in the middle of the night; all were non-poisonous. If treated within four hours, even a bite by Kuwait's most venomous snake, the desert viper, won't prove fatal, said Lawhorn.

While vector control is on call, Lawhorn emphasized it was for life-threatening problems, not the routine mouse.

"Sometimes we do get calls for a snake or a scorpion sitting here and there outside," McCann said. "We go out there and take care of it and tell them they don't really need to worry about that sort of thing outside, and they say 'wow thanks.' That's how we end up coming out and giving classes."

Besides controlling animal problems, vector control also has an education mission to let people know what's out there and what they can do to prevent problems from coming up.

"When we get a rotation of new troops, a lot of them don't know about the wildlife here," Lawhorn said. "We set up a display with our live animals and have a tech there to answer questions. It works a lot better than just showing a picture. The more people know, the safer they feel."

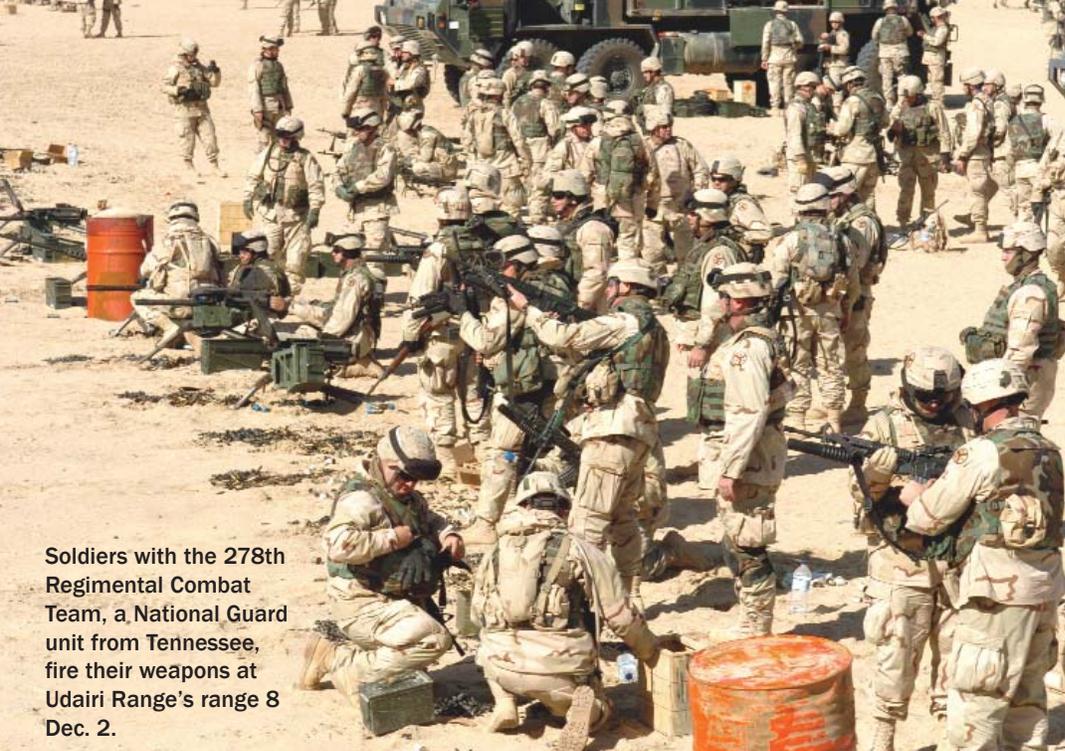
Top: A captured Wurrel Desert Monitor, a relative of the giant Komodo Dragon, looks menacingly through the bars of its cage. Moments later, the lizard struck, breaking the lens of KBR Vector Control Technician Jason McCann's new camera.

Middle: A Blue Throated Agamid bites the boot of a KBR vector control technician. Parts of the lizard's skin turns blue when the animal is angered.

Bottom: A dead camel spider sits unmenacingly for a photo shoot. Contrary to popular belief, they aren't likely to grow much larger than five inches across. Also, they aren't spiders – they're solifugae, like scorpions. Unlike scorpions, though, they have no venom. As for their storied jumping ability, speed and screaming? The only thing running, jumping and screaming are troops who are afraid of bugs.

Right: A thirsty Desert Fox caught, scavenging on a camp, drinks from a water bottle.





Soldiers with the 278th Regimental Combat Team, a National Guard unit from Tennessee, fire their weapons at Udairi Range's range 8 Dec. 2.

Part-time Soldiers, full-time mission

story and photo by Spc. Curtis Cashour

The range was packed. Hundreds of National Guardsmen crowded behind the firing line, waiting for their chance to pop off rounds from their .50 caliber machine guns, MK19 and M203 Grenade Launchers. About a hundred meters down the lane, Bradley Fighting Vehicles sat, their 25 mm "Bushmaster" chain guns firing thunderous blasts down range.

Elements of the 278th Regimental Combat Team conducted training with their Bradley Fighting Vehicles and crew-served weapons at Udairi Range, Kuwait, Dec. 2. For the National Guard unit based in Knoxville, Tenn., the training was what many Soldiers called a final confidence builder before the team deploys to Iraq as part of the New York National Guard's 42nd Infantry Division in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom '04-'06 early this month.

Recently reunited with their Bradleys, which were in transit for about two months, members of the team's K troop used the training to ensure the weapons systems on the 50,000 pound vehicles functioned correctly, said Capt. Paul Shannon, a Clarksville, Tenn., native and commander of the K Troop, a company-size Bradley unit with the 278th.

For this deployment, K troop has been

assigned to augment the 1st Battalion of the 128th Infantry Regiment, a National Guard unit based in Eau Claire, Wis., that is also deploying in support of the 278th. In addition to conducting its own missions, the troop will provide Bradley support to the infantrymen of the 1/128th, Shannon said.

The 278th is deploying with several smaller National Guard units from various states. Many of these units have been separated and assigned to different fighting elements to form a mix match of platoons, companies and battalions in an effort to create small, self-contained fighting forces, Shannon said.

The rearranging even allowed certain units to pick and choose individual troops in search of the ultimate fighting force.

Leaders of the 278th Regimental Reconnaissance Team scoured various Guard units from Tennessee and put together an elite

150-man reconnaissance team full of scouts, rangers, Bradley operators and other weapons crews, said RRT 1st Sgt. Daniel Jennings, who hails from Clarksville, Tenn.

"We took the best of what we had and made one unit," he said.

Before arriving in Kuwait, the Soldiers with the 278th went through a lengthy train up, spending about four months at Camp Shelby, Miss., followed by another month at the National training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

Coupled with their year-long rotation in Iraq, the Soldiers will have been activated for at least 17 months when they return home. Many of the 278th soldiers list the time they have spent away from their families as the toughest part of the deployment, but their stint on active duty does have its benefits.

The full time training allowed the many units deploying with the 278th to cram what would have been a year's worth of weekend drills into five months, Jennings said.

With repeated booms and thuds from the weapons firing on the range in front of him, Spc. Eric Lau, of the 1/128th, discussed the deployment process as he waited to fire his M249 squad automatic weapon.

Lau, a Marshfield, Wis., native, landed in Kuwait just five days before and said he had already completed MOUT training along with reflexive and live fire exercises since arriving.

He was one of a number of Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers who normally serve with other units and volunteered for this deployment. Normally a combat engineer with the 724th Engineer Battalion from Superior, Wis., Lau attended a two week infantry course to learn the skills he would need to serve with the 1/128th.



Spc. Eric Lau of the Wisconsin National Guard's 1st Battalion 128th Infantry Regiment, adjusts his Advanced Combat Helmet at range 8 at Udairi Range Dec. 2.

Soldiers of the 278th began trickling into Kuwait about two weeks ago. The nearly 4,000 Soldiers descended on Camp Buehring, which was already holding thousands of servicemembers on their way up north, adding to the heightened period of activity in Kuwait's U.S. military camps known as the surge. This year's surge will push Kuwait's desert camps to near-full capacity until the beginning of April.

When they cross the berm into Iraq, the 278th will assume operations east of Baghdad. The team will replace the 30th Brigade Combat Team, a National Guard unit headquartered in Clinton, N.C.

Burnin' down the house

story by Spc. Brian Trapp

The holiday season is in full swing, even in the desert, and that means holiday reminders that you'll burn down the house with Christmas lights if they aren't used responsibly.

A tent can burn down in a matter of just a few minutes, and if one goes down, it's likely another one will catch fire.

One of the most common causes of those fires is electrical overloads. Before plugging in eight strings of Christmas lights festively strung outside the tent to bring a little holiday cheer, there are some things troops should know.

"Christmas lights fall under general electrical safety," said Mike Sallee, Camp Arifjan fire prevention office, with the Camp Arifjan Fire and Emergency Services. "The major issue is when they plug an extension cord into a power strip then to the lights."

When educating people during Christmastime in the states, Sallee recommends to only use decorations if they're Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) listed. Those lights are tested for around the home use. They're low wattage and don't give off much heat. "Unless they were made in the U.S., they're not going to be UL tested," Sallee said.

Some of the most common safety haz-

ards Sallee sees is people daisy-chaining power strips together, he said.

"[Daisy-chaining power strips] is against policy and against the manufacturer's recommendations," said Jon Ashlin, Arifjan Fire and Emergency Services Battalion chief. "It overloads the transformer. They overheat, melt and can cause fire. Many of the problems stem from too small of a power converter with too many things plugged into it."

Another cause for concern for the fire prevention team is the overuse of extension cords. There are not enough outlets, or too many people in one area, and they start stringing extension cords across rooms or tents, Sallee said. The cord is just taped to the ground and not really protected.

"Some people even splice extension cords together, and those can short out really easily. It's definitely a safety hazard," Sallee said. "The policy says, extension cords are for temporary use only, not to replace permanent wiring."

The number of calls to the fire department fluctuates with the population of the camp and with a surge coming on they are expecting an increased number of calls.

One of the main points that Sallee and Ashlin stress for electrical hazards – even more than Christmas lights – is the year-round problem with transformer use. Transformers should be plugged directly

into the wall, Ashlin said, and the appliances plugged into the transformers should not exceed the transformer's maximum recommended wattage. If the transformer is plugged into an extension cord or power strip, it may draw too many watts and cause a fire by causing a short somewhere in the line. "It will short out at the weakest link in the chain," he said.

"Someone could have a TV, light, stereo, X-box, then plug in a hair dryer, and easily max out one of those small transformers sold at the PX," Ashlin said.

The second largest problem for fire departments around Kuwait seems to be the much-despised cigarette smoker.

Ashlin said that a number of fires in dumpsters and even in the barracks buildings on Camp Arifjan have been caused by improper disposal of smoking materials.

"A lot of our calls are for dumpster fires from when people flick cigarettes into the dumpsters," said Staff Sgt. George Gillaspie, crew chief with 295th Ordnance Fire Detachment. A concern for the firefighters is the possibility of wind whipping flaming debris over toward the tents where it could start a fire.

Those living in tents or barracks buildings are not necessarily living in a tinder box because most tents are treated with a fire retardant, and buildings have sprinkler systems; but both tents and buildings are full of fuel for fire. Blankets, mattresses, wood flooring in the tents and home-made wood furniture all burn if a fire were to start, so be smart about using outlets and displaying holiday cheer.

Safety Corner

Sandstorms

from the 377th Theater Support Command Safety Office

This is the time of year for sandstorms. These storms can cause blizzard-like conditions, making driving hazardous. Common hazards are reduced visibility, sand drifts, high cross winds, dust inhalation and eye irritation.

You can protect yourself and your buddies by driving only when necessary, turning your lights on, decreasing your speed, increasing following distances and double-checking all loads prior to leaving. Wear a dust mask or scarf as well as sunglasses or goggles to protect your lungs and eyes.

If you have questions or comments about this information, please refer them to the 377th Theater Support Command Safety Office's Maj. Phelps at DSN 430-6113 or 1st Lt. Surgi at 430-5414.



photo by Spc. Curt Cashour

HM2 Patrick Tate, HM1 Cliff McAnally, HM3 Trang Kien, HM2 Jason Allen and HM2 Al Montalbo cheer on the Navy at the Camp Arifjan Community Center during the team's game against the Army Dec. 2. The contest, which the Navy won 42-13, drew about 50 visitors to the center.

A little late, but worth the wait

story and photo by Spc. Aimee Felix

After a long day of work, troops in a repressed theater of operations like this one often seek relief in a big-screen TV and a couch, or in the ever-pumping adrenaline rush of a bench-press session. Either way, Camp Patriot's new Morale, Welfare and Recreation tent is sure to fulfill most troops' relaxation needs.

MWR facilities and gym equipment at Kuwaiti Naval Base's Camp Patriot were once split up among eight large general purpose tents, and the opening of a brand-new MWR/Gym tent was a significant consolidation.

The tent officially opened Dec. 1 with an afternoon of celebration that began with a ribbon-cutting ceremony headed by Lt. Col. Aloysius Lingg, battalion commander for the 2nd of the 146th Field Artillery's Headquarters and Service Battalion. After the ceremony, KBR workers, who will be running the tent, gave the roughly 150 troops who attended the ceremony a tour of the facility. A large part of the tent is dedicated to weight machines and benches for every single muscle group. There is also a cardio room with 10 treadmills and 20 elliptical machines. In the weight room there are also 25 aerobic bikes. It was obvious that troops in KNB were anxious for this sort of tent to open when, during the tour, there were already several troops running on the treadmills as they watched the news on a big screen TV.

Troops were so excited because "you used to have to go to a different tent for every different muscle group," said Capt. Michael A. Zumwalt, Camp Patriot's contracting officer. Zumwalt added that the fact that troops are no longer allowed to take



Seaman John Gray, with the 2nd Medical Battalion tries to make it through one more push-up in a push-up competition held Dec. 1 as part of the celebrations for KNB's new MWR tent.

MWR trips off post makes the opening of this tent an even bigger deal.

After the tour of the gym side of the tent was over, troops moved on to see the MWR side, which has six PlayStation 2 game consoles and four TV rooms, each furnished with a big screen TV and chairs.

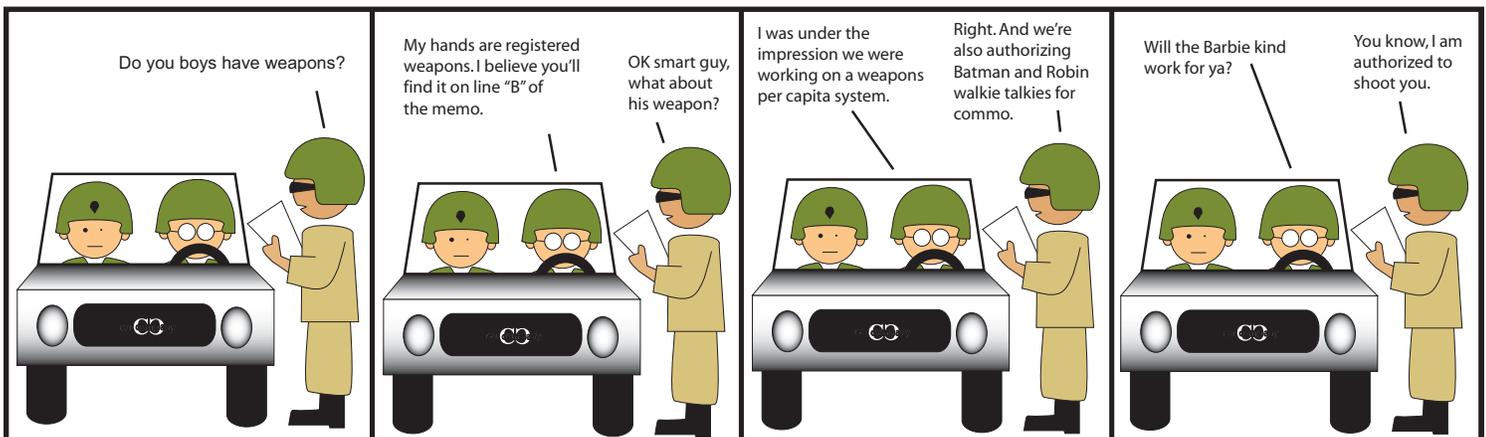
When the tour was over, troops ate from a large cake and a deli and fruit spread prepared by cooks at the Camp Patriot dining facility. Soon after, Capt. John Granville, MWR officer at KNB, inaugurated the tent with dip, pull-up, push-up and sit-up competitions. Several contenders tried their best at a win with motivational cheers coming from the crowd. The shouting kept troops from giving up sooner than they would have without the cheers, said Seaman John Gray, with the 2nd Medical Battalion. Gray gave his all in the pushup competition, but when Petty Officer 1st Class Lemuel Paalam ran up to him and jokingly yelled "You better not give up," Gray couldn't keep from laughing, and he reached muscle failure and collapsed – still laughing. "My arm was dying on me anyway," Gray added.

Another troop, Chief Petty Officer Karen Reyes, also gave her all in the push-up event. Reyes had just arrived to KNB, and although she was still suffering from jetlag, she tied for first with another female at 60 pushups. "The rest of my guys are busy working, so I decided to represent."

The tent, a long-awaited arrival at KNB, has been in the works for four months. It would have been built sooner, but the KBR subcontractor that delivered the tent brought the wrong one at first. Among some of the minor conflicts faced along the way were the Kuwaitis' concern that the tent would be too much of an eye sore and that its height would outdo the mosque on KNB. That was quickly resolved, though, and within a month's time subcontractors delivered the right tent, and it was ready to be opened, said Grenon. The tent, paid for by base-camp funding, will be run by KBR employees 24 hours a day.

Granville said that the tent will allow for bigger, better events, and it will make for a more organized MWR program at Camp Patriot.

behooverly



In & Around Our Community

Special and weekly events around Kuwait's U.S. military community for Dec. 8 – Dec. 15, 2004

Special Events: Arifjan

Thursday

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

Saturday

AMC Rock Band, 7 p.m. at the MWR Stage

Totally 80's Night, 7 p.m. at the Community Center

Sunday

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

Soldier's Flea Market, 9 a.m. to Noon at the MWR Courtyard

Wednesday

Christmas Movies at the Zone 2 MWR Tent

Tree Trimming Party, 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 the Zone 1 gym tent

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

Thursday

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

Spinning Class, 5:30 p.m. at the Zone 2 gym tent

Friday

Open Mic Night, 7:30 p.m. at the MWR stage

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

High Impact Aerobics, 7 p.m. at the 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 the Zone 1 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 the Zone 1 gym tent

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

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 the Zone 1 gym tent

High Impact Aerobics, 7 p.m. at the 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 the 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 the Zone 1 gym tent

Spinning Class, 5:30 p.m. at the Zone 2 gym tent

R&B Night, 7:30 p.m. at the MWR stage

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

For more information, call 430-1202

Events: Buehring

Wednesday

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

Sunday

Weight-lifting Competition at the gym

For more information, call 828-1340

Special Events: Doha

Wednesday

Hello Dave Show, 7:30 p.m. Zone 2 at the MWR stage

Thursday

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

Saturday

All request Dance Night, 7 p.m. at Frosty's

Monday

Spades Tournament, 7 p.m. at Frosty's

Wednesday

Kuwait Singers, 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: KNB

Thursday

Bowling (NAVELSF/NCWG2), noon at the bowling alley

Big Rock Show Band/Dance, 7 p.m. at the DFAC

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

Friday

Jazz Combo, noon at the beach

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

Show Band, 7 p.m. at the beach

Basketball Tournament, 8 p.m. at the Kuwaiti Gym

Saturday

Weight-lifting Competition, 1 p.m. at the new gym tent

Tennis Tournament, 4 p.m. at the side of the Kuwaiti gym

Softball, 6 p.m. next to the soccer field

College Football, 10 p.m. at the MWR movie tent

College Football, 11:30 p.m. at the MWR movie tent

For more information, call 839-1009

Events: Navistar

Thursday

Country Music Night, 7 p.m. at the #1 MWR

Friday

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

Saturday

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

For more information, call 844-1138

Events: Victory

Wednesday

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

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

Friday

Bingo Night, 6 p.m. at the MWR tent

Christmas Caroling practice, 7 p.m. at the Chapel

Sunday

Christmas Movie Day, all day at the MWR tent

Christmas Caroling practice, 7 p.m. at the Chapel

Tuesday

Christmas Movie Day, all day at the MWR tent

Wednesday

Karaoke Night, 8 p.m. at the MWR tent

For more information, call 823-1033

Events: Virginia

Thursday

AMC Rock Ensemble, 7 p.m. at the Dusty Room

AMC Jazz Ensemble, noon at the DFAC

Friday

Billiards Tournament, 6 p.m. at the MWR tent

Saturday

Spa Day, 10 a.m. at the MWR tent

For more information, call 832-1045

Doha/Al 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 | | |

CHRISTMAS OLYMPICS

What: Dinner and Sporting events

When: 12 Dec., 1 p.m. – 9 p.m.
(Dinner 5:30 -8:30 p.m.)

Where: Arifjan's Zone 1 Community Center

SPORTS: Volleyball, Ultimate Football, 10K Relay Run, PS2 Tournament, Checkers, Dominoes, Spades, Tug-O-War, Ping Pong

There will also be movies with *Scrooged* starting at 6 p.m. followed by *Bad Santa*.

SIGN-UP SHEETS FOR SPORTS ARE AVAILABLE @ CFLCC STB TRAILER AND BLDG 506 CHAPLAIN SECTION.

Doha/Arifjan Shuttle Schedule

| Departs Doha Stop 1 (Bldg 6 PAK tent) | Arrives Doha Stop 2 (Bldg 28&21) | Departs Doha Stop 2 | Arrives Arifjan | Departs Arifjan | Arrives Doha Stop 1 |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| | 0700 | 0715 | 0830 | 0545 | 1000 |
| 1015 | 1025 | 1040 | 1200 | 0845 | 1430 |
| 1445 | 1450 | 1505 | 1615 | 1630 | 1745 |
| 1900 | 1910 | 1925 | 2045 | | |



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

Top 10 reasons to enjoy the Holidays in Kuwait

submitted by Andrea W. Kraehmer

- 10 Family will be happy with any gift that survives Surface Air Mail.
- 9 Shovelling sand doesn't require all those bulky clothes you need when shoveling snow.
- 8 Food sent from home will taste better than it did at home.
- 7 Missed name-drawing for the dreaded \$10 gift.
- 6 No mind-boggling decision – buy a turkey or a ham?
- 5 You don't have to put on a play to recall biblical times – you can just look outside your tent.
- 4 No opportunity at the company party to do something for which you will be fired.
- 3 Icy roads will not complicate your attempt to drive home drunk.
- 2 Won't waste Dec. 26 standing in line to return your presents
- 1 Everyone will be that much happier to see me for Christmas 2005!

**DESERT
VOICE**

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