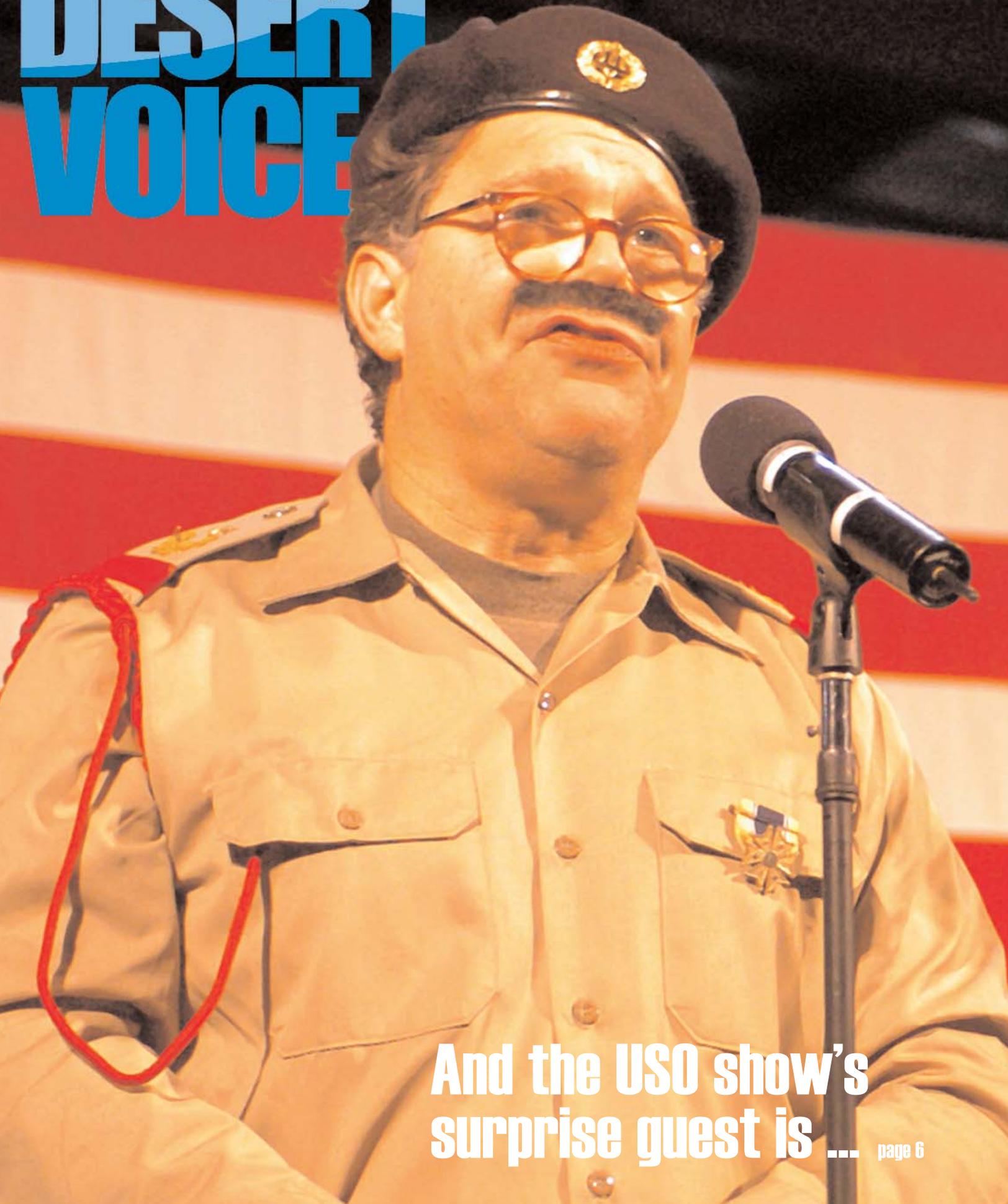


DECEMBER 22, 2004

DESERT VOICE



**And the USO show's
surprise guest is ...** page 6

CONTENTS

DESERT VOICE

Volume 26, Issue 19

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19



Page 3 Holiday messages

Holiday messages from the commanding general and the ASG-KU commander.

***Special Christmas meal hours**

Page 4 It's begun: THE SURGE

The word "surge" can mean a lot of things, but in Kuwait it takes on its most extreme definition as hundreds of thousands of humans and machines push through the tiny country in a matter of months.

Page 5 When it's good to be E-1

In most cases, it helps to have a little rank on your collar, but this Christmas, troops in the grades of E-4 and below get something the rest of us don't – presents from Kuwait.

Pages 6&7 SMA & USO

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston brought along some friends for a nearly three-hour-long music and comedy extravaganza at Camp Arifjan Dec. 17.

Page 8 Estonian troops homeward

After a six-month rotation in Iraq with the 1st Cavalry Division, Estonia's Stone Platoon makes its way back home.

Page 9 Real Christmas trees

In a land where even the roadside vegetation has to be watered to stay alive, it's almost a miracle that we have real Christmas trees in Kuwait.

Page 10 I got it at the PX

Secret Santa got you down? We're here to help with great gift ideas under \$5!

Page 11 Community

Jingle Bell Bingo Bash, Flea Market, PS2 Tournament, Tennis Tournament.

Back page Poems & Cartoons

Poems from Maj. Gerald L. L'Ecuyer and Sgt. 1st Class Phyllis M. Brown (apologies for last week's mistaken listing) and cartoons from Lt. Col. Michael Verrett and Bob Rosenburgh.



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CFLCC Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. Julian Kellman

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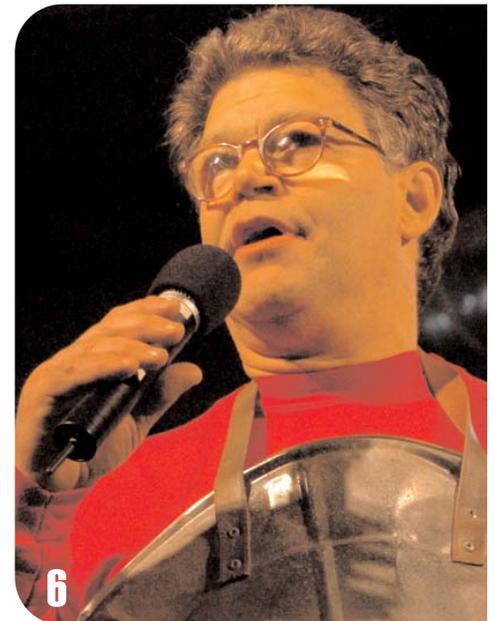
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On the Cover comedian Al Franken poses as former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein at the USO show at Camp Arifjan Dec. 17.

Photo Illustration by Sgt. Matt Millham

Holiday message from the CG

This Holiday Season we honor our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coasties and Soldiers in Slacks for the dedication and sacrifice they make every day while serving and supporting in the defense of our great Nation.

The men and women of Third U.S. Army and the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) continue a proud tradition of liberation, carrying freedom to Southwest Asia as we did to Europe 60 years ago, by standing firm against those who would deny basic human dignity to those less fortunate. Our commitment to defeat terrorism at its doorstep has never been more resolute. Brave men and women continue to preserve liberty for our Nation and our coalition partners. Our proud professionals are war-



Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb

rriors first and foremost, placing the mission first and demonstrating the same warrior spirit, courage, tenacity and heroism as the brave men and women who long ago willingly sacrificed their own welfare and safety to guard our Nation.

You have given 50 million Afghans and Iraqis an opportunity to experience freedom, democracy and a future free of tyranny. As I

reflect on the values of the American people and the Nation in which we serve, I realize how important it is for our men and women to remain steadfast in our fight.

We know we do not soldier alone. The families and friends of our great warriors have long provided strength and support to the men and women in uniform. This is a

time for families to join and celebrate in the satisfaction of knowing that they are protected by their own. Families across our Nation are truly grateful for your service.

As you celebrate this holiday season, the Nation thanks you. May you find strength and fulfillment in knowing that you bring the message of hope and peace. You have your Army family to ease the loneliness of separa-

tion. Look out for your buddy, remain disciplined and remember the Army values. Whatever your mission, take pride and satisfaction in knowing that you are securing a

brighter future for yourselves and generations of Americans.

God bless each of you and your families. God bless our servicemen and women, and God bless the United States of America.

“This is a time for families to join and celebrate in the satisfaction of knowing that they are protected by their own.” – Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb

Happy Holidays from the ASG-KU commander

If you're reading this message, it's a safe bet this won't be a typical holiday season for you. No matter how well decorated they are, the landscapes of our desert camps don't evoke the same type of holiday spirit associated with this time of year back in the states, and unit or office gift exchanges and parties can't compare to holiday celebrations with close friends and family members.

But, as you know, we're not here to celebrate. As servicemembers, we have a job to do. The people of the United States have called upon us to bring order and freedom to some of the world's most troubled regions in an effort to thwart the spread of global terrorism.

Accomplishing this mission is not easy. The war on terror isn't a nine-to-five job. It's a match of good versus evil, a test of wills that will determine the course of history. Its battles are fought and won around the clock 365 days a year. As servicemembers, we must keep these thoughts foremost in our minds.

We have overcome numerous challenges since the start of our efforts. Since the horrific events of 9-11, we have liberated two countries, freeing millions of people from two of the most oppressive regimes in recent history. As the battle continues, it's



Col. Brick T. Miller

up to brave souls like you to lead our country in this monumental effort.

Today, nearly 200,000 Soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsman are deployed throughout the Central Command Area of Operations, serving in harm's way not just for the citizens of the United States, but for freedom loving people around the globe. As part of this group, you are blessed with a unique opportunity to help change the course of history.

However hard they have been, the times you have spent during this deployment will offer dividends for the rest of your life. In 10 years, when most memories of the 2004 holiday season will consist of nothing more than a blur of turkey dinners and failed New Year's resolutions, you'll recall stories of hard work and determination in the face of adversity.

But your actions are doing more than instilling fond memories. Each day, your work allows military personnel throughout the CENTCOM Theater to uphold our nation's commitment to peace and freedom. It's a grand undertaking made possible with the help of brave Americans like you.

On behalf of myself and the rest of the Area Support Group Kuwait team, I wish you the best this holiday season. In light of your continuing service and sacrifice, you deserve nothing less.

Christmas meal hours

December 25

There are special dining hours for all camps in Kuwait for Christmas day.

Continental breakfast:

regular breakfast hours

Christmas dinner:

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

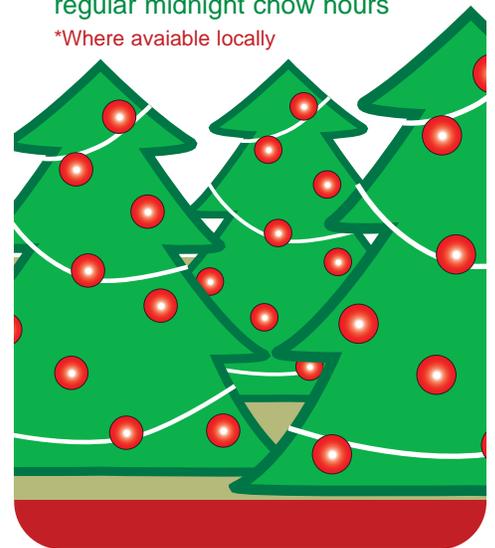
Dinner:

regular dinner hours

Midnight Christmas dinner*

regular midnight chow hours

*Where available locally



THE SURGE



story and photo by Spc. Curt Cashour

It's called the surge. The annual, heightened period of activity from December through April in which tens of thousands of American and coalition forces travel through Kuwait on their way to and from Iraq.

The influx of troops and equipment pushes Kuwait's U.S. military camps to their capacities, creating an atmosphere with all the activity, anticipation and long lines of a busy amusement park.

But there's a method to the madness. Despite their sometimes haphazard appearance, the ebb and flow of these troop rotations, the largest since World War II, is meticulously orchestrated by the command cell staffs of Kuwait's desert camps. Serving as innkeepers, landlords and entertainment coordinators, they react to the constantly-evolving conditions on the ground to keep the gateway between the United States and the central front in the War on Terror running smoothly.

The hard part for Pfc. Torrian Ollie, a member of the 687th Quartermaster Battalion, a Reserve unit from Decatur, Ill., that operates Camp Virginia's command cell, is keeping the camp within its 12,000-troop capacity. Servicemembers often show up unexpectedly at the camp needing a place to stay, he said.

"A lot of times it's out of their hands, but once they get here we have to make the necessary adjustments," he said.

Surprises are a daily event for Capt. Holly Hileman. As logistics operations officer for Camp Buehring's Command Cell, she's responsible for ensuring the camp's life-support services — food and water deliveries, dining facility, latrine and shower services — meet the demands of Buehring's transient population, she said.

On a typical day, this might entail arranging for 100,000 gallons of water to be distributed among the camp's shower trailers or ensuring the dining facility efficiently distributes hot meals to more than 5,000 troops, said Hileman, of the 317th Quartermaster Battalion, a Reserve unit headquartered in Lawrence, Kan.



Hundreds of Soldiers wait in line at the main dining facility at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Dec. 7. The camp is hosting thousands of transient troops moving to and from Iraq. Despite its length, the line only took about 15 minutes to navigate.

Complications arise, however, when things don't go according to plan. In early December, for instance, an electrical glitch in one of the camp's shower trailers caused a fire that rendered the trailer useless, sending Hileman and other command cell staff scrambling to get contracted workers to repair the damaged trailer and modify the rest of the trailers to prevent the same problem from occurring again.

To efficiently maneuver through the complex contracting process, officials from Kuwait's camps rely on people like Maj. Mark Allen, a 317th member who is Buehring's supply and contracting officer. It's his job to deal with contractors who work on the camp's many construction, repair and surge-preparation projects, he said.

The need for contractors, a relatively new element for U.S. military operations, was created by the downsizing of some combat service support elements, and dealing with them has its advantages and disadvantages, Allen said. On the plus side, contractors can be cheaper for the Army, but money allotted for contractors must be closely watched to keep waste, fraud and abuse to a minimum.

A unique challenge to Buehring's surge-related activities is its distinction as one of Kuwait's few enduring camps, meaning it's slated to sustain operations for years to come. This forces the camp's command cell staff to continue big picture operations, such as completing important infrastructure

upgrades, while maintaining the camp's immediate role as one of Kuwait's largest transient camps, said Capt. Stuart Wolfer, Buehring's intelligence/operations officer who is also with the 317th.

As part of his job, Wolfer manages billeting assignments for the nearly 40,000 transient troops Buehring will host this surge. One of the problems in this area is the fact that Buehring officials and transient troops don't always agree on the definition of adequate housing, Wolfer said.

"Everybody wants to have their own tent, their private tent, and that's not going to happen in a northern camp," he said, adding that Buehring's housing standards — 60 people per fest tent and 14 people per temper tent — are the same for grades E-1 through O-6.

While folks at Camp Victory, Kuwait's primary redeployment camp, deal with many of the same billeting and supply issues that affect the other camps, their job is made somewhat easier by the fact that most of the troops passing through the camp are on their way home and in high spirits, said Maj. Nathaniel Cotton, logistical operations officer for Virginia and a member of the 397th Quartermaster Battalion, a Reserve unit from New Haven, Conn.

To ease the transition for the troops, many of whom are returning from a year's worth of ambushes and improvised explosive device blasts, support staff put a special emphasis on Morale Welfare and Recreation activities, said 395th member Sgt. Leslie Ornelas, the camp's noncommissioned officer in charge of MWR.

"[MWR] helps them remember they're not only a Soldier, they're also a person," she said.

In the end, keeping a camp running smoothly in the midst of a surge comes down to striking a balance between the comforts transient unit commanders want for their troops and the accommodations the camp is equipped to offer, Wolfer said.

"In their eyes, [commanders] are trying to do the best that they can do for their Soldiers. In our eyes, we're trying to ... make sure everyone gets some rather than all," he said.

"Everybody wants to have their own tent, their private tent, and that's not going to happen in a northern camp."

—Capt. Stuart Wolfer

During the Holidays, being lower enlisted has its perks

story and photos by Spc. Brian Trapp

While some lower-enlisted troops in Kuwait may be in seemingly thankless positions where the trickle-down praise for a job well done doesn't reach, they are appreciated. A Kuwaiti charity program set up to honor them during the holidays recently ended another successful operation, which was handed out in the form of a wrapped thank you.

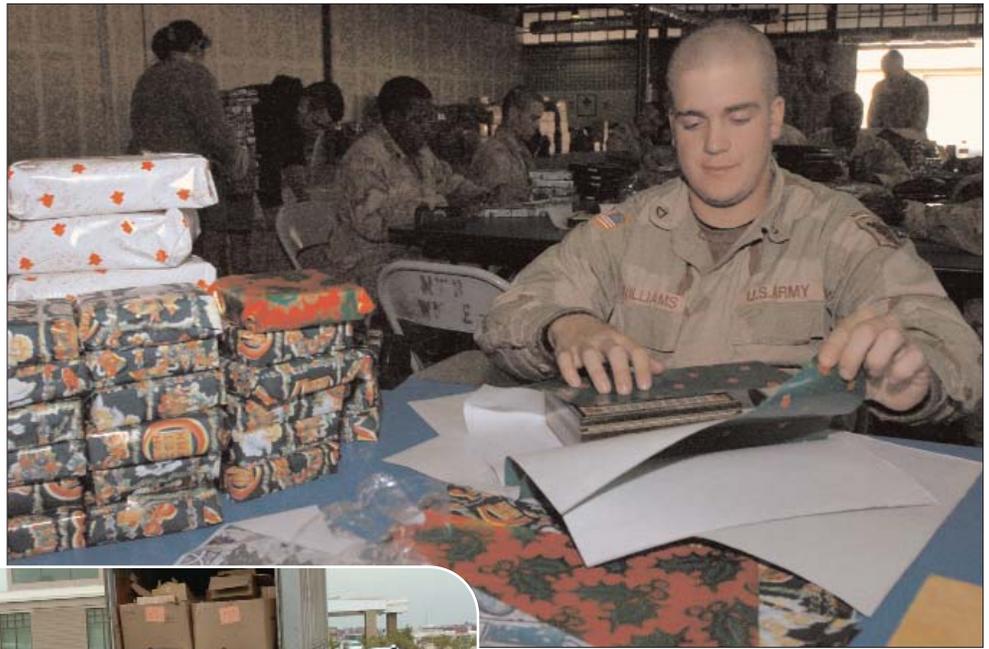
Operation Christmas, a charity set up by an American couple in Kuwait, gives gifts to troops during the holiday season. Lionel and Sheila Gittens gather cash donations from local Kuwaiti businesses, and then use the money and buy thousands of gifts for the troops. The presents are then wrapped and handed out to the troops E-4 and below.

The charity organization's aim is to ensure the men and women of the U.S. armed forces in Kuwait know they are appreciated for their efforts of securing a lasting peace in this region of the world.

"It's nice to know there's someone out here that cares for the Soldiers," said Staff Sgt. Michael Kiritikos, who works in operations for Area Support Group-Kuwait Doha. "This is a great morale booster."

The Gittens, in memory of their deceased son Darnell, created Operation Thanksgiving in 1994 and treated more than 2,500 troops to a traditional turkey dinner. The name and mission was changed to Operation Christmas in 1996. This annual show of support has continued to grow and prosper throughout the years, according to a press release from Operation Christmas.

"We've accomplished what we've needed as parents, inside," Sheila said. "To see [the troops] open the gifts up and see their eyes, it's like they've gotten a car or a stereo system. It's not about politics, not about liking me, it's not about color; it's about giving and bringing joy to those who wouldn't have it



Above, Pfc. John Williams wraps gifts at Camp Doha Dec. 13. Left, hundreds of people gathered to get early Christmas presents in the Zone 1 PX parking lot at Camp Arifjan Dec. 19.

otherwise."

For the 11th year in a row, Operation Christmas organized its annual Christmas basket drive. Though no one can possibly know what the next few months will bring, we can be certain of one thing: many young men and women will be spending this holiday season in Kuwait defending freedom and securing peace.

During a luncheon for Operation Christmas donors and organizers, the Gittens' thanked all of the contributors and troops involved in making this year's drive possible.

"We couldn't think of a better way to thank Soldiers for everything they do," said John Cobb, chairman of the American Business Council and regular Operation Christmas contributor. "We get a chance to contribute because we can't go up to each and every one of you and shake your hand."

After purchasing the thousands of gifts, the immense task of wrapping each one still stared volunteers in the face. In previous years, troops would go to Kuwait City and wrap the gifts. This year, for the first time, force protection measures stopped troops from making the annual trip to the city, and the gifts were shipped to Camp Doha where a detail of troops

wrapped about 50,000 gifts in 13 days. About 20,000 more were wrapped by spouses and other volunteers in Kuwait City and brought to Doha.

A lot of the lower-enlisted troops didn't know they were wrapping their own gifts, said Kiritikos. Some of the troops there for the detail were under the impression they were wrapping gifts to give to local Kuwaiti children. Organizers tried to staff the detail with as many officers and senior enlisted as possible, but they couldn't staff the whole thing with the leadership.

During an interview, Desert Voice inadvertently ruined the surprise for some of the Soldiers on the detail, telling Pfc. Tyler Web, a radio access unit operator with the 50th Signal Battalion, all the details of what he was doing. "That's something – we're wrapping up our own presents," he said. "I say; if they want to take their time out to help me, that's great."

For the sergeants running the detail, they didn't seem too bothered putting in all of this work and not receiving any of the gifts themselves.

"I don't [feel slighted]. It's like being a mother," said Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly Milam, noncommissioned officer in charge of operations for ASG-Kuwait, Camp Doha. "It's the Soldiers that do the work, Soldiers that complete the mission, and they should be rewarded. It's the parent mentality to make sure they get taken care of first."

"It's not about politics, not about liking me, it's not about color; it's about giving and bringing joy to those who wouldn't have it otherwise." –Sheila Gitten



photos by Sgt. Matt Millham

After a dramatic entrance in which Saddam Hussein, performed by comedian Al Franken from Air America Radio, cursed the audience, the former dictator converses with television star Karri Turner from JAG about his infamous "spider hole" during the USO show at Camp Arifjan Dec. 17.

Where **country** met **comedy**

story by Spc. Aimee Felix

Walking out on stage wearing a garbage can lid held on by leather straps, comedian Al Franken announced, "The SECDEF guaranteed all of us on the USO tour sufficient armor. So I've got some bad news and some good news. The bad news: this year we didn't bring any cheerleaders. The good news: I've got 750 more of these, and for regular Army they come with the straps." At this, the 3,400-person audience roared with laughter.

It was an evening of laughs, tears and plenty of country music. Headlined by Franken and country singer Darryl Worley, the USO Sergeant Major of the Army Hope and Freedom Tour also included actress Karri Turner, who plays Lt. Harriet Simpson on the TV drama JAG, country singer Mark Wills, members of the U.S. Army Band, a group of four singers called Down Range and, of course, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston.

Following Franken's armor debut, Turner, the master of ceremonies, found herself being questioned by Franken about why he hadn't been a guest star on JAG. He pulled

out a script he had written to be considered as a possible JAG episode and put on a Navy hat that Sailors in the crowd reacted to with "Go Navy." The script was a setup to kiss Turner, and after Franken planted one on her, she said, "If I was going to kiss anyone it would be one of these guys," she said, pointing to the audience.

Turner, in her third year as part of the USO tour, said she felt privileged to be spending her third birthday in a row with who she called "her people."

After the skit was done, Turner introduced the members of the Army band already on stage. With backing from the Army Band, Down Range slowly but surely pumped up the audience with hip hop, R&B and salsa as they invited audience members to test their Latin dance skills on stage. They ended their performance with a touching rendition of Toby Keith's "American Soldier."

If tears were shed, they were quickly forgotten when Franken reappeared for another 12 minutes of standup comedy that produced continuous laughs.

"We were told this was an eight-day USO tour, but we've been extended to fourteen

months," said Franken. "It's the first stop-loss USO tour ever. I'm a little pissed, but you know." He stayed away from his personal political views, minus the brief comment, "I imagine most of you here are Democrats." As could be expected, the audience responded with raucous booing. "Ok, Ok, that's what we Democrats do when we're asked to identify ourselves; we boo," he said, earning another laugh.

After the comedy it was time for some two-stepping as the next act, country singer Mark Wills, came on stage. Holding a guitar decorated with the insignia of units like the 101st Airborne and the 1st Infantry Divisions, Wills got a thunderous applause when he asked how many country fans were in the audience. Wills said he felt close to the military because he has family members in the military and lost a close friend in Iraq. On a lighter note, Wills joked that he was too lazy to actually serve in the military, so this was the best he could do.

After an entertaining performance and a tender anecdote about his six-year-old daughter praying for the troops in her bedtime prayers, Wills' set was over and the audience gave him a standing ovation as he



Clockwise from the top: A crowd of some 3,400 troops stands to applaud country musician Darryl Worley at the end of his set at the USO show. Turner and Sgt. Maj of the Army Kenneth O. Preston share a few onstage laughs. Franken shows off his makeshift body armor, which he said was given to all USO performers by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld. Members of the Army band back up the singing and dancing of the group Down Range. Country musician Mark Wills gives a shout during his energetic performance.

walked off stage.

Turner came back out, explaining that what followed was going to be kind of weird. "The brass, especially SMA Preston, really wanted us to remind you why we're all here," she said. "So, direct from an 8-by-10 prison cell with an unreliable toilet, the former Iraqi president you guys, Saddam Hussein." Out walked Franken dressed as Saddam and escorted by two Air Force military policemen. Saddam yelled expletives at the crowd – until he saw Turner. The two chit-chatted away, and Saddam wondered openly why his sons Uday and Qusay had not written to him. Then, just as he was

brought out, Saddam was dragged away screaming again at the crowd.

Next, Turner introduced a "great American and a great friend," as Darryl Worley stepped on stage wearing a U.S. Army jersey and a U.S. Marine Corps baseball cap. After singing a few of his hits, he put down his guitar for a country version of "Oh Holy Night." As he sang, a few troops raised lighters in the air while others closed their eyes as if in prayer. Worley ended his performance on a patriotic note with a song provoked by 9–11, "Have you forgotten." "It was inspiring," said audience member Spc. Kelsey Lamb, a Soldier with the 1075th

Transportation Company, a National Guard unit from Nebraska.

To end the show, one of the Down Range singers invited audience members to come on stage to join in singing "Stand by Me" with all of the show's performers.

After Kuwait, the tour was headed to Iraq and then Afghanistan, which spurred Franken to another comedic quip. "If in [an insurgent propaganda] video, you see me, and it looks like I've been crying, that's a signal, which means rescue us. And if they pan down and it looks like I've wet myself or soiled myself, that's also a signal. It means rescue us and bring some more pants."

Former Soviet republic, now coalition ally,

redeploys third rotation

Estonian facts

Traditional Estonian foods include marinated eel, boiled pork in pork jelly (the jelly is made by boiling bones, hooves and heads), blood and barley sausage and a dessert drink made with sour milk and a mixture of ground rye, oat barley and pea flour.

Human habitation in the area dates back to at least 7500 B.C., but the forefathers of the present inhabitants were Finno-Ugric hunters who probably arrived between 3000 and 2000 B.C.

In a fight to gain independence and self-rule, huge numbers of people gathered in Estonia to sing previously banned national songs in what became known as the Singing Revolution in 1988. An estimated 300,000 attended one song gathering in Tallinn, Estonia's capital. Estonia is generally flat. A lot of the country can be seen from the highest point – 1,040 foot Suur Munamägi (Great Egg Hill) in the southeast.

Estonia's more than 1,500 islands make up nearly 10 percent of Estonia's territory. Forests covering nearly half the country are home to European flying squirrels. About a quarter of Estonia is wetland – some of the peat bogs are 20-feet deep.

A number of travel guides describe Estonians as seemingly reserved and non-talkative, but assert they are friendly people who will grow on you.

Estonian Christmas Eve begins with a cleansing trip to the nearest sauna.

Estonia is about the size of New Hampshire and Vermont combined.

story by Spc. Aimee Felix

After a run in formation around the lakes of Baghdad, six battalions of Soldiers find themselves in formation again as they wait for their combat patch ceremony to begin.

For one of the units the ceremony isn't an expected honor. It's not automatic the way it is for American troops finished with a deployment. For this group, being a part of this ceremony is a surprise gift earned for exceptional service.

The 32-man Estonian army scout platoon, known by the 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment as the "Stone Platoon," went home Dec. 16 after six months in Iraq. They served so well, the 1st Cavalry decided to give them each a 1st Cavalry patch.

The scout platoon, the third rotation of Estonian troops, served under the division's 12th Cavalry Regiment, providing light infantry support to the regiment's armored battalion. "We were there, boots on the ground every day, wherever the 2-12th went," said Capt. Jaano Mark, the Estonian unit's platoon leader. The unit, always in the thick of things, Mark said, conducted arrest and search operations, provided security and conducted daily patrols near Abu Ghraib.

"We're professionals treating this as a professional job," said Mark. "It was risky, but it was part of what we chose." Despite his stoic manner, Mark admitted he missed his wife and children, but in the same

breath he cut himself off and said his time in Iraq wasn't so bad, as it was only a six-month deployment.

"They were the same professional Estonians that we've always come to see," said Capt. Joseph C. James, the 2-12th's public affairs officer, who described the Estonian troops as the 1st Cavalry's trump card.

During a patrol on Oct. 26, the Estonians lost a brother-in-arms, 1st

Sgt. Arre Illenzeer, when the unit was ambushed with an improvised explosive device. Illenzeer was "one of the best [non-commissioned officers] in the Estonian Army," said 1st Lt. Andres Sang, the unit's public affairs representative.

The loss, while difficult, never lessened the Estonians' already fierce bravery and confidence.

With less than two years in service, machine gunner Sgt. Dimitri Petrov found his first combat in Iraq. The experience taught him that "the key [to combat] is to not be scared so that you won't let that control the way you react," he said. Petrov's parents were concerned for his safety, but they understood that "things aren't always any better in Estonia," he finished.

One of Petrov's more experienced peers, 1st Sgt. Andreas Rebane, has been in the military for 10 years and has been on several missions, but this was his first combat mission. Rebane enjoyed working with the Americans and said "they were good comrades; it was like a brotherhood." Rebane added that he learned a lot from them, especially from observing the way an American first sergeant operates.

For Mark this was also a learning experience. "Lt. Col. [John T.] Ryan was a good example for me and the other troops," he said, adding that he was honored to have served with the 2-12th.

The Stone Platoon falls under the only deployable battalion in the Estonian Army. The battalion is Estonia's rapid reaction team, and long before their Iraq deployment they trained on how to conduct patrols, searches and urban combat. They received additional training from a former British Royal Marine and some of their NCOs and officers trained at Fort Bragg and West Point.

The stone platoon's replacement will also be attached to the 2-12th until the middle of February when the 1st Cavalry redeploys. Then the Estonians will likely support the 1st Cavalry's replacement, said Mark. He hopes to share what he learned in Iraq with his replacements, handing down knowledge just as the first two rotations did.

Mark said the majority of Estonian people don't see the point of this war and don't support it, but they do support the troops. That support kept him going while in Iraq.

"We were a small group, but we gave 100 percent. Maybe we made a difference even," said Mark.



photo by 1st Lt. Andres Sang, Estonian army public affairs officer

Capt. Janno Mark, platoon leader for the Estonian army "stone platoon" sits in the back of a truck on a patrol near Abu Ghraib.

Tricky trees play hide and seek

story and photo by Spc. Brian Trapp

Kuwait's only real trees seem to reside along the side of the road, and those are all of the leafy variety, making the prospect of having a live Christmas tree in Kuwait somewhat farfetched. But while troops in Kuwait might not have a real tree in their tent, they'll at least have one in their camp thanks to a generous donation from some Midwestern tree farmers.

More than 20 long-needled pines donated from an Ohio tree farm made their way across the ocean to Camp Doha before being sent out to all the Kuwaiti camps. And because trees need trimmings, children from Jane H. Bryan and Robert R. Moton Elementary Schools in Hampton, Va., hand-made decorations to go with the trees.

Thanks to their generosity, Kuwait's troops avoided celebrating Christmas under synthetic trees, which are quite common in Kuwait.

"Out on the economy you can get pink ones and even neon yellow ... they are ugly, ugly trees," said Rhea Sarver, Morale Welfare and Recreation branch manager for Camp Arifjan. "[With a real tree] you have the pine smell, you can feel the needles, and you can see it's a real tree. Real trees are so much better than aluminum."

Even though artificial trees have made a comeback in the last decade, and are seemingly the only choice in a nearly tree-less country, MWR officers and Soldiers are embracing the donated vegetation.

"It feels good to know [the troops] will have a real piece of home," said Bill Wasil, MWR officer for Kuwait. "They can get artificial or they get the real thing. It's like serving a real turkey at the DFAC

for Thanksgiving compared to a turkey loaf."

The recipients of the out-of-place holiday symbols were very happy. "They're surprised we have live Christmas trees," Sarver said. The Soldiers were asking how they got these trees and where they came from because "the desert scrub doesn't really bring the Christmas feel."

But it's more than just the smell and texture of a live tree; it's what they symbolize. The true superiority of the trees comes in the taste of Americana they bring to the deployed troops.

"It's gotta be tough," said Wasil about troops being away from home and family for the holidays. "Little things make the difference."

Every year MWR orders a number of artificial trees for the holiday season. They find the largest tree they can order and make that their main tree. This year the donated trees will act as the main trees, and all of the over-dressed aluminum poles will supplement the real thing.

"Trying to bring a piece of home is probably the most important thing we can do," Sarver said. "Christmas is a huge family event in the states. When you're away from family it makes for a depressing time. Our whole thing here is to keep [the troops'] spirits and morale up."

The trees didn't just materialize in Kuwait to bring up troops' spirits' though. They were donated from Bailey's Christmas Tree Farm in Lordstown, Ohio. The trees were cut, packed up and put on an airplane to make sure they made it here without dying. The shipment from the United States was coordinated through Fort McPherson, Ga., but after arriving in theater, responsibility passed to Paul Heilman, theater MWR manager.

The trees' trip to Kuwait, like so many unit's equipment, wasn't without incident. After their delivery to Doha, they became lost among the thousands of containers there. A week passed as MWR officials searched for their holiday package.

Wasil was involved in the search and was running out of places to look when Heilman got a good lead and hit pay dirt.

"I started calling around," he said. "There was a warehouse that gave me a name and number; that led to another name and number." Finally, Heilman got a hold of someone who had seen the trees.

With the trees finally tracked down, there was still a moment where the searchers held their breath as they opened up the shipment to see how it fared through the journey.

"Surprisingly, [the trees] were in good

shape," Wasil said. "I was worried we'd have [bare trees] and a pile of needles. This shows there is a Santa out there somewhere."

In a nation where the American holiday season is a blip on the map, like American's acknowledgement of Botswana's independence day, there are millions of people back home thinking of their troops during this time of the year.

"[This] shows somebody cares back in the states," Heilman said. "They have the Soldiers in their prayers and hearts. It tells us they're thinking about it enough to donate Christmas trees and coordinate sending them halfway around the world."

Safety Corner

Negligent discharges are no accident

from the 377th Theater Support Command Safety Office

Clearing procedures for the M9 (9mm)

- 1 Orient weapon in a safe direction (clearing barrel if possible)
- 2 Place decocking/safety lever on SAFE
- 3 Depress the magazine release button and remove the magazine
- 4 Grasp the slide narrations and fully retract the slide to remove the chambered cartridge.
- 5 Lock the slide to the rear.
- 6 Release the slide stop to allow the slide to return fully to the forward position.
- 7 Aim weapon into clearing barrel, rotate selector lever to semi, squeeze the trigger.
- 8 Charge the weapon once.
- 9 Place selector lever on safe.

Clearing procedures for the M16 & M4

- 1 Orient weapon in a safe direction (clearing container if available).
- 2 Remove magazine from weapon.
- 3 Ensure selector lever is on safe.
- 4 Lock bolt to the rear.
- 5 Inspect the receiver and chamber to ensure no ammunition is present.
- 6 With no ammunition in the chamber or receiver, allow the bolt to go forward.
- 7 Aim weapon into clearing barrel, rotate selector lever to semi, squeeze the trigger.
- 8 Charge the weapon once.
- 9 Place the selector lever on safe.

For more information contact the 377th TSC Safety Cell's Maj. Phelps at 430-6113 or 1st Lt. Surgi at 430-5414.



I got it at the PX

Last-minute solutions for the under \$5 Secret Santa gift exchange.

Super Mini Umbrella

Nothing says *I grabbed the first thing I saw* like a collapsible umbrella, which is the perfect gift to give either the consummate procrastinator or the thoughtless twit. Chances are, though, that if you find yourself buying this gift, you're either a consummate procrastinator or a thoughtless twit.

\$2.95



Odor Eaters Sneaker Tamers

Touting long-lasting protection against foot odor through the use of patented activated charcoal, the Sneaker Tamer provides the unique opportunity to alert your Secret Santa gift recipient in a non-combative way that they should indeed consider a trip to the podiatrist.

\$3.35



\$2.50

Wisconsin floating mouse pen

The novelty pen features a mouse that playfully chases a block of cheese when the pen is tipped in one direction and then retreats as the cheese taunts him with the prospect of dying under a crushing mass of dairy when tipped the other way. The name Wisconsin is emblazoned on the side of the utensil, which gives an immediate impression of worldliness. However, convincing your coworkers that you went on leave to Wisconsin and while there had enough forethought to consider the Secret Santa gift exchange could prove difficult.



\$0.25

OIF postcard

This 4-by-6 inch reminder of why we're here is actually three gifts in one. The first image provides a clever idea for how to use the card. The second image provides an insight into the overwhelming power of teamwork, with which, we learn, we can move tents. The third image gives us the sense that we are not alone as we, too, would much rather be in Florida.



\$3.95

Value Pack Spray Bottles

Featuring three spray modes, these bottles are a versatile solution for all your liquid dispersion needs. The translucent containers allow a reasonable view of the contents inside, so there's only a slight chance of mistaking ammonia for water.

In & Around Our Community

Special and weekly events around Kuwait's U.S. military community for Dec. 22 – Dec. 29, 2004

Special Events: Arifjan

Wednesday

Christmas Party, 7 p.m. at the Community Center
Dominoes Tournament, 7 p.m. at the Zone 2 MWR tent

Thursday

Spades Tournament, 7 p.m. at the Zone 2 MWR tent

Saturday

Jingle Bell Bingo Bash, 7 p.m. at the Community Center

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

Sunday

PS2 Tournament, 7 p.m. at the Community Center

Soldiers' Flea Market, 9 a.m. at the Zone 2 MWR courtyard

Wednesday

Ping Pong Tournament, 7 p.m. at the Community Center

Foosball Tourney, 7 p.m. at the Zone 2 MWR tent

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Monday

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

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

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

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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

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

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NFL Sunday, 11 p.m. at the MWR movie tent

Monday

Darts Tournament, 6 p.m. at the new gym

Spades/Chess/Checkers/Dominoes, 6 p.m. at the new gym

Tuesday

PS2 Tournament, 5 p.m. at the new gym

Chess/Spades/Checkers/Dominoes, 8 p.m. at the new gym tent

Country Western Dance, 9 p.m. at the dry DFAC

For more information, call 839-1009

Events: Navistar

Friday

Christmas Dance at Tent 1

For more information, call 844-1138

Events: Victory

Wednesday

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

Thursday

Christmas Movie Day, at the MWR tent

Friday

Christmas Movie Day and Christmas Party.

Saturday

Christmas Movie Day and Raffle

Wednesday

Karaoke Night

For more information, call 823-1033

Events: Virginia

Wednesday-Thursday

Christmas decoration contest

Friday

Christmas Caroling

Ping Pong/Foosball Tournament

Saturday

White camel gift exchange, 10 a.m. at the MWR tent

For more information, call 832-1045

To post an event in this section of the Desert Voice, please e-mail the DV editor at the address on the back of the magazine. Please get submissions in at least two weeks before the event.

Events: Buehring

Friday

Jingle Bell Jog 5K run

Monday

Bingo, 7 p.m. at Tent 1

For more information, call 828-1340

Special Events: Doha

Wednesday

Holiday Celebration, 7 p.m. at Frosty's

Thursday

Flag Football Signups, at the Fitness Center

Saturday

Jingle Bell Jog 5K run, 6 a.m. at the flagpoles

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

Monday

Bid Whist Tournament, 7 p.m. at Frosty's

Wednesday

Flag Football signup cutoff at the Fitness Center

Flag Football coaches meeting at the Fitness Center

Weekly Events: Doha

Sunday

NFL Night, 8 p.m. at Frosty's

For more information, call 438-5637

Events: KNB

Thursday

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

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

Friday

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

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

Saturday

5K Fun Run, 6 a.m. at the Camp Commander

Parking Lot

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

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

College Football, 7:30 p.m. at the Gym/MWR

Movie Tent

Christmas Pageant, 8 p.m. at the DFAC

College Football, 10:30 p.m.

Sunday

Flag Football, 2 p.m. at the Kuwaiti Soccer Field

PSU 307 Bowling, 6 p.m. at the Bowling Alley

NFL Sunday, 6 p.m. at the MWR movie tent

Doha/Arifjan Shuttle Schedule

Departs Doha Stop 1 (10:00 AM)	Arrives Doha Stop 2 (10:15 AM)	Departs Doha Stop 2 (10:30 AM)	Arrives Arifjan	Departs Arifjan	Arrives Doha Stop 1 (10:45 AM)
	0700	0715	0830	0545	1000
1015	1025	1040	1200	1300	1430
1445	1450	1505	1615	1630	1745
1900	1910	1925	2045		

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		

A Love Letter to my fellow Soldiers

by Sgt. 1st Class Phyllis M. Brown

I love you because you
Paved the way for me
I love you because you
Made it a better place to be
I love you because you
Sacrifice your self, family and time
I love you because you
Showed me how to sacrifice mine
I love you because you
Were not afraid to die for me
I love you because you
Help me to be free
Some people just don't understand
How we can fight and take a stand
What they do not know
Is that we took an oath
We promise to defend
Against all domestic and foreign enemies to the end
We kept that promise
So that they can be free
To do and be whatever they want to be
That is why I love you and will continue to be me

2nd Louie



by Bob Rosenburgh, Cadet Command



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

What price freedom?

by Maj. Gerald L. L'Ecuyer

Ask not those who dream of better life to be,
Returning then to hovel dark and cold.
Who do not, will not work to better be,
But cry that we must share our hard earned gold.
Can lives long spent in plaintive resignation,
Waiting still for hands to lift them out,
Be changed anew to selfless dedication,
With toil and sweat turn poverty to rout?

WHAT PRICE FREEDOM?

Are life and limb worth more than it's possession?
Are peace and quiet the virtues we hold dear?
Is there no anger at terrors' cruel oppression?
Are timeless values now not quite so clear?
If we won't strive, then who else will defend them?
If we won't fight, why should foes make amend?
If freedoms' call is stifled by amendment,
Who then shall go, it's victories to win?

WHAT PRICE FREEDOM?

The Price: 'tis life, and all that we hold dearest,
Our wealth, our homes, the richer prize to win.
For when you give yourself and your creation,
The joy of Freedom is yours to live again.
And when you've done all that the job requires you,
And you can stand, an honest soul again.
Then Freedom's prize is yours just for the taking,
And Freedom's fight, a battle you can win.

For LIFE is the Price of Freedom!

DESERT VOICE

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