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## Awards section proves mettle in medal operation

By Staff Sgt. Nate Orme  
3rd Personnel Command Public Affairs

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait (February 12, 2004) - It's ironic that working in the Army military award section can sometimes be a thankless job. But according to those working in the 377th Theater Support Command's award section, the pleasure of recognizing a soldier for a job well done far outweighs the often loudly voiced concerns about process leading up to an award.

"We process ARCOMs (Army Commendations), Purple Hearts, Bronze Stars, and Air Medals," said Sgt. Katrina Cannon, a personnel services specialist with the 3rd Personnel Command tasked to work in the 377th TSC award section. Cannon added that higher awards are processed directly by the Coalition Forces Land Component Command in its award section at Camp Doha, Kuwait.

Each morning Cannon checks for recent awards that have come in, on pressing issues and whether the 377th commander, Brig. Gen. Michael Diamond, has approved new awards.

"If he has, we have to prepare a certificate for his signature," Cannon said. "After the commander has signed, we make copies to give to the MSC (major subordinate command) to present to the soldier."

Cannon explained that the award section works with MSCs, such as the 800th Military Police Brigade, the 143rd Transportation Command, and the 3rd PERSCOM, rather than company-level units.

In 2003, more than 3,000 awards were given. Already in 2004, as units are preparing to redeploy after their year in theater, nearly 1,000 have been awarded. That would be a pace of more than 10,000 a year, but Cannon doubts that will happen.

"Its going to slow down once the surge (of returning troops) is over," Cannon said.

1st Lt. Jovon Perry, leader of the 461st Personnel

Services Battalion Detachment 2, has led the awards section since Aug. 1.

"My job is to make sure the awards process moves consistently, accurately, and in a timely manner," Perry said.

Awarding soldiers a medal is a military tradition with a lot of practice behind it. So of course, the Army has a reference for guidance.

"We use AR 600-8-22 Military Awards when there's a question," Perry said. "We enforce the standard and refer units to the regulation when in doubt."

There is no course for working in the awards section; learning the regulation is an on-the-job assignment.



**The Awards section: From left to right, Sgt. Katrina Cannon, Sgt. Felica Wallace, 1st Lt. Jovon Perry, Spc. Tamiko Wright, Sgt. 1st Class Judy Hoffmeister.**

"I was trained how to do it, and pretty quickly," Perry said. "(The previous section leader) trained me in about a week, and then I took over."

Aside from the paperwork processing, the awards section answers a lot of questions people have about awards.

"People want to know if they qualify for an award, or they ask about the correct format for submitting," Cannon explained. "We get questions about reconsidering when an award is downgraded. Some people will try to resubmit when they're downgraded (to a lesser award). Some will even get irate when they find out they were downgraded or they don't meet

the prerequisites for an award."

Awards are considered through a board of senior representatives from each of the MSCs under the 377th TSC.

"The awards board reads each narrative and, based upon the narrative and the intermediate authority's comments, it either approves, downgrades, or requests a rewrite," Cannon said. The intermediate authority is a representative from the soldier's unit that makes a recommendation on the soldier for an award.

Once the board is over, Perry tallies results and prepares notes for the (*See AWARDS, p. 4*)



## Spotlight

# Moonlighting soldiers teach college courses in OIF

By Staff Sgt. Nate Orme

Public Affairs NCO for the 3rd Personnel Command

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait (Feb. 17, 2004) - Some soldiers have discovered they don't need to put college plans off until after their Operation Iraqi Freedom deployment. What's more, their teachers are also soldiers, often credentialed "in the field" as college professors by major universities.

Soldiers with a master's degree can teach undergraduate courses after they have been accredited to teach, said Capt. Michael Malone, adjutant for the 368th Engineers Combat Battalion, a Reserve unit from Londonderry, N.H.

College has had to be put on hold for most soldiers deployed for OIF. Although the Camp Doha education center offered courses, usually taught by civilian instructors, most soldiers couldn't get there.

Malone, a software expert from San Jose, Calif., researched how to get classes running for soldiers stationed at Camp Arifjan and found out about the teaching program.

"I called the Camp Doha education center and found out what it would take to teach. Basically, it took a master's degree and filling out a form, which was sent to a satellite branch of the University of Maryland in Germany for accreditation," Malone explained.

When home in the Silicon Valley, Malone is the vice president of software integration for Star Technologies Inc.

Malone also needed to find a place to teach. Since he was in an engineering unit, it wasn't hard to find some soldier craftsmen to put together some tables and benches out of plywood. After a tent was procured, all that was left was to set up some classes and get soldiers signed up.

"We worked with the University of Maryland to set up registration in the community center," Malone said. "The first semester it was 99% our battalion. We had about 100 students. This semester we posted flyer and got about 200."

"We're putting on ten classes this quarter. We've also recruited other teachers," Malone stated. "Capt. DeFeo is teaching a course on ethics and criminal justice this semester."

Capt. James DeFeo, an intelligence officer with the 368th Engineers, is a police officer in his civilian career and has a master's degree in criminal justice.

Most classes are worth three credit hours. They last eight weeks, and classes are held twice a week for three hours each. Classes are also being set up at other bases, such as Camp Udairi (*See TEACH, p. 4*)



**Capt. Michael Malone during a class for Windows XP, which he teaches in Truckville, on Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.**

## Soldier Talk

**What is something that you DO NOT miss from home while deployed in OIF?**



**I don't miss the cold weather. I work outdoors in NYC and it's freezing there right now.**

Spc. John Rivera  
719th Trans Co.



**Traffic. I do alarm installation in NYC and I have to leave extra early to beat rush-hour traffic.**

Spc. John Bulerin  
719th Trans Co.



**Traffic laws. We weren't supposed to stop during convoys in Iraq.**

Spc. Josh Blitz  
1168th Trans Co.



**I don't miss rowdy drinkers when they want to hug or smoke in your face.**

Staff Sgt. Brenda Smith  
114th ASG



**My civilian job. It was hard work.**

Private 2nd Class Candace Jones  
114th ASG



**My neighbor's meth lab. They're a bunch of junkies.**

Spc. Adam Bugbee  
1168th Trans Co.

# News Briefs

## Wind and Sand

By Lt. Col. Robert Johnson, CFLCC Public Affairs

You're not in Kansas any more, Dorothy. Serving in the Middle East can be hard on the body. The environment in Kuwait and Iraq is among the toughest in the world with summer temperatures soaring above 125 degrees Fahrenheit baking exposed skin and making even the simplest of tasks a heat stroke risk. In the winter, wet, cold days can chill the body to the bone resulting in hypothermia problems and the wet, moist air creates the ideal environment for mold, spores and funguses to grow on everything and everyone.

The good news of spring is that temperatures can stay tolerable and the rains have ceased. The bad news is that the spring brings winds with sand and dust storms. Severe sandstorms are common throughout Iraq and Kuwait with visibility reduced to zero for long durations of the day. The sand storms can last for an hour or a day.

With all that blowing dirt, it is impossible to keep it out of your uniform, off your skin and out of your eyes and lungs. According to the U.S. Army Center of Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, the sand and dust can cause health problems from mild to chronic to severe to downright deadly.

The desert air can dry out nasal passages and the throat. Without the natural protective layer of moisture, dirt and other foreign material can invade these areas resulting in coughing, nosebleeds and wheezing. On the skin, the dry air causes chapped and cracked fingers and hands, reducing manual dexterity. The areas of the body that collect sand and dust, such as the ears, armpits, groin, knees and feet, are likely to experience chafing, abrasion and, possibly, infections.

In addition to the sand and dirt, high winds can also turn loose objects such as empty water bottles and tent pegs into mini-missiles bent on destruction.

The most likely problem for most is vision. The fine dust and sand can find its way past the most elaborate defense measures a G.I. throws together. Reduced visibility due to the "brown fog" can produce tragic results to the cavalier driver.

And the poor Soldier who attempts to wear contact lens during these frequent blowing storms is in for a rough day, not to mention violating Army Regulations.

As in many medical conditions, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. With preventive and early care, most Soldiers can avoid the respiratory and optical health problems from the dust.

First, for the driver in a sand storm, slow down. Blowing sand can reduce your yellow brick road to a brown path in a matter of minutes. Visibility is reduced and driving conditions are similar to a winter snowstorm in the states. The "brown fog" can decrease your ability to see what is ahead in the road. Second, turn your lights on. Make it easier for other drivers to see you.

For your personal health, the following tips from the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine can help you survive the rigors of the



**Going native: Sandstorms can call for rather indigenous looking apparel to be worn during windy days at Camp Arifjan.**

Kuwaiti spring sand storms.

Take a shower daily. If in field conditions, take a daily sponge bath using approved water sources.

Wash your face and eyelids several times per day to reduce the dust buildup.

Keep two pairs of glasses and a copy of your prescription with you. The blowing sand can etch the glass on the hardest of lens. Don't wear contact lenses. The sand will cling to the lens and may easily damage your eye. AR 40-63 prohibits contact lens wear while deployed.

Breathe through a wet cloth or coat the nostrils with a small amount of petroleum jelly to keep the membranes from drying out. Protect your lips with lip balm.

Wear goggles to protect your eyes whenever possible during sandstorms.

Use a moisturizing lotion to protect the hands and skin. Apply the lotion out of the wind to prevent abrasion.

With a little common sense and some preventive measures, you can keep yourself safe and sound from the perils of the Kuwait-Iraq weather without the need for ruby-red slippers.

### Bon Temps

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**(AWARDS, from p. 1)** commander with the board's recommendations. "The commander looks at the board's minutes, and sometimes he concurs, and sometimes he does not," said Cannon. "Sometimes people don't understand the board is not the approving authority, the general is."

There are six soldiers in the award section who work about 12-hour days, six days a week, which includes two hours each day for physical training and an hour for lunch, stated Perry. He said the awards process wouldn't be possible without his outstanding staff.

"We have two outstanding NCOs that set the standard for the section and an NCOIC that made a huge difference by getting things more organized," Perry said.

The section often attends award ceremonies, especially when the 377th commander is present and several soldiers are being awarded at once.

"It makes it more rewarding to see the final outcome," said Sgt. 1st Class Judy Hoffmeister, the awards section NCO-in-charge. "Some of the narratives are pretty breathtaking. It's nice to see a face that goes along with the story."

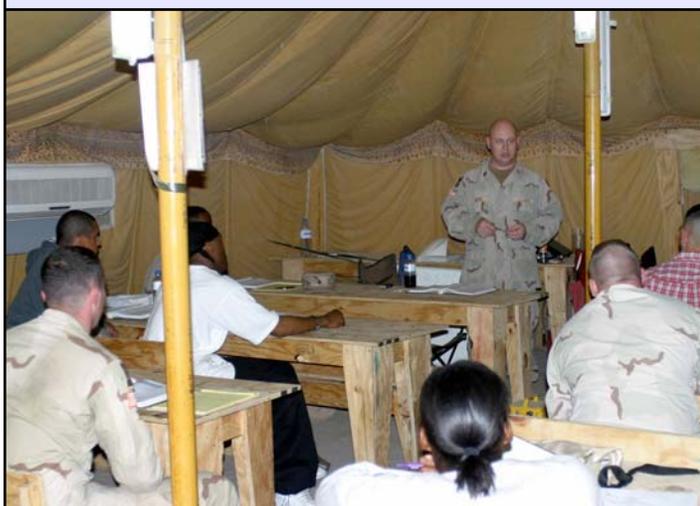


**Sgt. Travis Duarte is congratulated by Col. Donald Kennedy, the commander of the 3rd Personnel Command, during Duarte's Bronze Star with Valor award ceremony at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Duarte was riding in a small convoy reconnoitering a new route for postal delivery to a camp near Babylon when the convoy was ambushed. Duarte's actions using his squad automatic weapon to lay down suppressive fire when his fellow soldiers were in an unprotected location very likely saved their lives, as did their subsequent actions likely saved Duarte's. Duarte, Capt. Juan David Pena and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Meyerhoff are the first soldiers in the history of 3rd Personnel Command and its subunits to receive the Bronze Star for Valor. Duarte is with the 342th AG Postal Company, Rome, Ga., while Pena and Meyerhoff are both with the 461st Personnel Services Battalion, Decatur, Ga. Meyerhoff also received the Purple Heart for injuries sustained in the ambush.**

**(TEACH, from p. 2)** recently, near the border with Iraq.

In addition to filling the night hours and broadening the mind, teachers are also paid by universities for their work, as long as it is not in conflict with duty hours.

"I was interested in taking care of soldiers, that is why I do it," Malone said. "We were mobilized in October (2002), but didn't go. Then we were again in January (2003), but didn't get here until April. We thought we'd be going home last August. Each time, people had to cancel classes they were enrolled in."



**Capt. James DeFeo teaches Ethics and Criminal Justice to students in a tent in Truckville, Camp Arifjan, during off-duty hours at night.**

Malone, who is teaching courses in computers that can be also used to prepare for commercial certifications, is looking into procuring ways for troops to take certification exams. He has found a testing location in Kuwait City, and is looking into the possibility of getting a testing center on base.

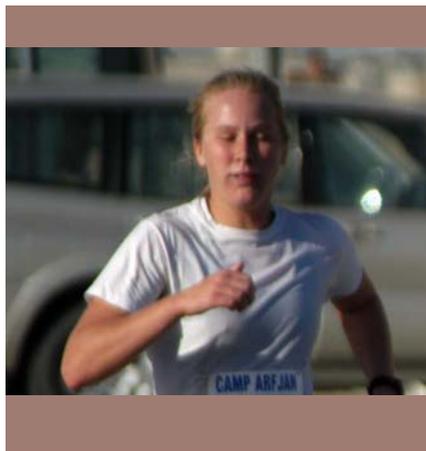
Soldiers with bachelor's degrees can also become teachers. Central Texas College is accepting applications for FAST and ASEP course instructors. These courses are to help soldiers raise their GT score for new career opportunities and better their management skills. Applications can be picked up at the education center.

People interested in attending classes can register at the education center on camp. The next registration time is tentatively scheduled for March 15-26 for classes that start in late March. University representatives will be stopping through camps during the sign-up time.



**The Arifjan Basketball Championship, February 20, 2004, featured the Half Pints (left) versus the Game (right) in a b-ball battle of wills to see who would be the champs and would come in first among losers. It was a tight game up until the last minute, when a flurry of fouls widened the point spread, giving the Half Pints a 59 to 50 victory.**





"Escape from Arifjan" half-marathon  
21 February 2004



Soldiers wait anxiously as times are posted Saturday after the "Escape from Arifjan" half-marathon at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

Almost 300 military personnel and civilians participated in the "Escape from Arifjan" half-marathon February 21, 2004. While it is still in doubt whether anyone actually escaped, winners were declared nevertheless. The 1st place winner in the men's category was Lt. Col. Craig Hymes, who also won the 40-49 age group with a time of 1:23:20, and the 1st place winner in the women's category was 2nd Lt. Rachael Mandell, time 1:44:15, who each won trophies (pictured above). Everyone else received free T-shirts and sore muscles.