



Steel Sentinel

Issue 5 for, and about soldiers of Task Force Iron Steel Feb. 23, 2004 OLD IRONSIDES

Remembered

Paratrooper killed in accident, first death for newly formed DCT

CAMP STEEL FALCON, Iraq - With each volley of the 21-gun salute, small nearly unnoticeable tears would instantaneously appear from the eyes of numerous paratroopers of 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, from Fort Bragg, N.C., as their bodies slightly jolted from the unexpected loud shots.

That fallen comrade, Pvt. Bryan Spry, 19, from Chestertown, Maryland, was killed during a vehicle accident on Feb. 14. Several hundred paratroopers and Soldiers assigned to the 1st Armored Division Artillery Combat Team (DCT) attended the emotional memorial service for the first Soldier killed in the newly formed DCT.

Although Spry had only recently been assigned to the battalion after graduating from airborne school only weeks before being deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, he had one battle buddy that was no stranger.

According to his long-time Army battle buddy, Spry had the best of both worlds - being paratrooper and having a loving family.

"He had the heart of a soldier and the heart of a family man," said Pfc. Brandon Hubbard, D Company, 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Fort Bragg, N.C. "He loved his family more than anything and his brother was his best friend. Most of all he loved the Army and what it made him."

Hubbard and Spry went through basic training together, and he described it as, "Learning the ropes of their lives." While going through advanced individual training together, they both learned a new life as an infantryman.

"I was also with him through Airborne School -- finally calling ourselves Paratroopers," he said. "We showed up at the replacement company on the same day and did the long boring in-processing together. Finally, we came to Delta Company together, where we now call home."

Spending nearly every waking hour together, Hubbard said Spry grew on him just like everybody else who knew him for the person he was.

"He was always focused and curious about his job and what he was doing," he said. "All in all, he died doing what he loved to do. It didn't matter that his job was driving. He loved it and never complained one time about it. He wanted to be here, and he would want us to finish our jobs and go home."

Another friend, Pfc. Joseph Bastanzi, described Spry as a great friend and a brother who loved the infantry. "What can I say about him?" he asked the quiet Soldiers in attendance. "He was the epitome of a private who had a curious ambition of life. He was eager to learn everything. Not a day went by without 10 million questions and a dip in his lip."

Although Bastanzi didn't know Spry for long, he said they shared the common bond between gunner and driver.

"When he first got to the unit I asked him what were his goals while in the Army, and all that he said was, 'I'm just glad to be here,'" Bastanzi said. "He loved his country and would do anything to protect it."

Commonly known to fellow paratroopers as, "Bulldog", Spry was known as a "family kind of guy," who had a brother who is an all-American baseball player.

"He came from a family of very strong morals and he lived by them everyday," he said. "Pain fades over time, but your memory never will. Get it done Spry. Watch over us."

Spry wholeheartedly embraced the paratrooper warrior ethos and wanted to learn all he could, said Chaplain (1st Lt.) Sean Moore, battalion chaplain.

"He once woke his roommate up at three o'clock in the morning just to ask him a technical question related to the mission," he said. "He simply did not want to fall asleep and forget to ask in the morning. He wanted to be here performing alongside of you all, and in retrospect he performed superbly."



Story and photos
by Staff Sgt. Mark Bell

(Clockwise from above) Three paratroopers from the seven-Soldier firing squad stand ready to memorialize Pfc. Bryan Spry with a 21-gun salute. Pvt. Kyle Servedio, 21, B Company, 2-504th PIR, holds his bugle after he finished playing taps during the ceremony. Paratroopers salute during a moment of silence. The dog tags, weapon and helmet of Pfc. Bryan Spry.

Preston delivers first 'sergeant's time' message

By Spc. Lorie Jewell
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — In his first few weeks as the Army's top enlisted Soldier, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Ken Preston said he's getting a crash course on the 'big picture' Army while zeroing in on key issues he'll focus on.

"Right now, I need to understand a little bit of everything across the board," Preston said during his first "Sergeant's Time" interview as sergeant major of the Army with Soldiers Radio and Television. "The Army staff is doing a wonderful job in getting me smart. Once they finish, I'll really start focusing on a couple things I can make a difference on over the course of the next three or four years."

Safety is one of those issues. With a mandate from the secretary of Defense to reduce the accident rate by 50 percent, Preston plans to spearhead plenty of dialogue about the subject. So far this quarter, 79 Soldiers have died in accidents — 20 more



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Ken Preston

than the first quarter of fiscal year 2003, Preston said. From fiscal years 2001 to 2003, the number of accidental deaths in the Army jumped from 168 to 255, according to the U.S. Army Safety Center at Fort Rucker, Ala.

"It's about not becoming complacent," Preston said. "It's ensuring Soldiers out there follow procedures established in policies, regulations, operating manuals."

Sergeants have a responsibility for enforcing the standards, for making sure Soldiers aren't taking short cuts or taking things for granted, he added. Preston acknowledged that the current fast-paced operations tempo plays a role in the accident rate, but stressed he believes awareness can make a difference.

"We have 325,000 soldiers in more than 120 countries across world, and eight divisions in transition. The operations tempo is much higher, but nevertheless when a soldier dies because of accident, particularly when it could be prevented, it's a tragedy," Preston said. "I really think that the more we focus on it and the more we talk about it, even with the current pace of operations, we can reduce the rate."

The Army's most pressing priority at the moment is the global war on terrorism and upcoming troop movements into and out of theaters, Preston said. But leaders are also focused on concurrent goals, such as transitioning from a current to future force that remains relevant and ready, he added.

"As the Army changes and evolves, so must other things," Preston said. "One of the things I want to look at is the future of the non-commissioned officer education system. It needs to evolve to take into consideration the modern battlefield we're currently on."

The Army's current design and organization was for the cold war-era fight, for a time when the good guys were at one end of the battlefield, the bad guys at the other, and they met in the middle for a "clash of the Titans" type battle, Preston explained.

"It is truly now a 360-degree battlefield," he said.

Training centers like NTC in California and JRTC in Louisiana are evolving to incorporate the lessons Soldiers are learning in Afghanistan and Iraq, Preston added. Emphasizing the Warrior's Ethos is another way of mentally preparing Soldiers for the new battlefield.

"The Warrior's Ethos is what quantifies what Soldiers are about today," Preston said. "If you look at what's going on in Iraq, all Soldiers there are warriors. The mentality that every Soldier is a rifleman first is so, so important."

Balancing the force is another way of better preparing for the new battlefield. Preston said the Army's 100 artillery battalions were designed, again, for the cold war era. That number will be pared down, while other units in heavy demand — military police, for instance — will be increased. The current 33 brigade combat teams will be refigured into 48 brigade units of action, he said.

Such changes will not only make the Army more modular and better able to quickly deploy, but will offer Soldiers more predictability in when they'll deploy, Preston said.

"They want to know what Soldiers think when the rubber meets the road," he said.

Preston believes morale is high across the Army. When he talks to Soldiers there, he shares his belief that a year from now, they will all be proud of their accomplishments in Iraq.

Commentary: Safety lesson in a flash

By Chief Warrant Officer Michael Licholat

KOREA -- In the spirit of accident prevention, sometimes we have to step up to the plate and take one for the team. Here's my humbling story, shared with a bit of humor.

There I was, five minutes away from delivering a briefing for a complicated air assault mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. I had only one chance to make a good first impression in front of our coalition brethren, so I was determined to put my best foot forward.

I rehearsed the mission briefing twice and spent considerable effort ensuring the briefing area was set up to my exacting specifications. I aligned all the benches, marked and posted all the charts and maps, and placed the manual pointer within arm's reach in case the laser pointer failed. With my notes at hand and the backup butcher posters and imagery, I was confident I could ace this brief even if the Proxima projector failed.

The projector had been warming up for a few minutes when I noticed there was some dust on the lens. Well, I wasn't going to stand for having a few specks casting shadows on my briefing! So, I went to the supply locker that our company S-4 dutifully kept stocked with administration supplies and got a can of com-

pressed air to shoo away the offending motes.

We'd bought cases of the stuff before we deployed to blow the dirt and dust out of the cooling fans and circuit boards of our mission planning computers. We'd gone through our canned air like wildfire and were out of the "good stuff" we'd purchased back in the "Yoo Ess of Ay." However, our resourceful S-4 had replaced those with some canned air he'd bought in theater. I think it was from Italy, or somewhere else in Europe. Not being multilingual, I wasn't able to read the label.

I wasn't going to be bothered by that. I took the little plastic tube that came with the can and stuck it into the spray nozzle. I was thinking pleasant thoughts about how clear my presentation was going to be as I pointed the tube at the projector's lens. Those were my last pleasant thoughts.

I pushed down on the spray nozzle when suddenly there was a low-pitched boom. I was instantly engulfed in a ball of flame that one eyewitness conservatively estimated to be a good 6 feet in diameter. All the hair on my right arm was burned off, and the hair on my face was singed. Stunned, I dropped the can. The valve popped shut and the fire went out as quickly as it appeared.

After performing a quick assessment of

my injuries, I left the briefing area for the tent where I slept, seeking a mirror so I could look for any additional damage. As I made my way out of the briefing tent amidst the arriving briefing attendants, the prominent comment was, "What is that smell?"

At my tent, my worst fears were confirmed—my moustache was now much shorter (but in direct compliance with AR 670-11), my eyelashes were almost gone, and my eyebrow hairs were all curled up. Luckily, I'm what you'd call a "folically challenged" individual, so I didn't have anything on top to worry about.

A quick time hack revealed less than five minutes until briefing kick-off. I quickly washed up, used a pair of scissors to trim the burnt ends off my moustache and eyebrows, and then returned to the podium with a couple of minutes to spare.

Now I don't recommend this to anyone, but if you want to be calm when delivering a mission briefing, seek the feeling of euphoria that comes with no longer being a human torch. Usually the mission briefing is the least hazardous element of the mission and the execution phase is fraught with peril. Sadly, I had just proved otherwise!

So, how can you avoid having this happen to you? Most, if not all, of the canned air sold

in America is non-flammable and has warning labels to keep you from misusing the product. However, since we'd used up the "good stuff" we'd brought with us, the S-4—who is habitually browbeaten to keep the cupboards from becoming bare—replaced it with whatever was closest at hand. You know, the "You want canned air? I'll get you canned air!" approach.

Unfortunately, the S-4 couldn't read the label either. That's something to bear in mind if you're buying commercial off-the-shelf, or COTS items in countries that lack the consumer protection guidelines we have in America.

In the end, the fault lay squarely on my shoulders. I took an aerosol can of unknown origin and sprayed it onto a projector containing a very hot light bulb, which provided a source of ignition. Furthermore, despite the fact that the can had a picture of a cat and a dog on it (I still don't know what that's all about), the back of the label had the word "Peligroso!" printed on it. I'm pretty sure that means danger.

In the end, I got lucky and avoided a serious burn by the hair of my chinny, chin ...uh oh ... those chin hairs are gone now. In the spirit of brotherhood, my comrades later hung a sign over my desk extolling my new nickname: "Flash! Do you mind if I smoke?"

Street Talk: What's the biggest safety violation you've seen on the FOB?

Street Talk:



"Drivers who drive carelessly when there are pedestrian Soldiers around."

Spc. Josh Robinson, 22
HHS, 1-94 FA



"I constantly see Iraqis walking around the FOB without their escorts."

Spc. Rachel Puza, 22
E. Co. 123rd MSB



"Interpreters being able to leave unsupervised with unknown information about our FOB."

Spc. Jason Bochert, 31
2-504th PIR



"Improper clearing procedures in the barrels coming back on the FOB."

Spc. Nathan Bastien, 20
HHB DIVARTY

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"Baghdad Now" in Baghdad, now



Maj. John A. Grench, PSYOP operations officer for 1st Armored Division and detachment commander with the 315th Psychological Operations Unit, an Army Reserve unit from San Jose, Calif., displays the "Next Generation" poster on the wall of a local business. The poster shows members of the new Iraqi security forces.

PSYOP makes connections with local communities, delivers truth

Story and photo by Spc. Chad Wilkerson
372nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq - That is why U.S. Army Psychological Operation teams are hitting the streets with truthful information to combat the fear and misinformation being spread by our enemies.

Soldiers from the 315th Psychological Operation Unit from San Jose, Calif., part of the 1st Armored Division Artillery Combat Team, are pushing out into the communities and getting face-to-face with local Iraqis to make sure that the Iraq people hear and see the truth about what is happening in their country.

"Today, we went out and distributed copies of 'Baghdad Now' and the new, 'Next Generation' posters," said Maj. John A. Grench, PSYOP operations officer for 1st Armored Division and detachment commander with the 315th. "It is important to inform the Iraqi people of the Coalition forces' intentions and what we are doing by distributing informative products and through face-to-face communication."

The PSYOP team reaches the public through several channels. One way is through the "Baghdad Now" an Army PSYOP Arabic/English newspaper publication written by Iraqi and U.S. Army journalists. This paper highlights the accomplishments of Coalition and Iraqi personnel in the rebuilding of the country, said Grench.

Psyops' newest communication tools are "Next Generation" posters.

The "Next Generation" posters show representatives from the new and improved Iraqi security forces: Iraqi Police Services, Force Protection Services, Iraqi Civil Defense Corps and the new Iraqi Army. Grench and his team hung the posters in local shops and businesses hoping Iraqis see that they are as much a part of the security

of their nation as the Coalition, he said.

PSYOP teams use the posters and newspapers as tools to break the language barriers and quickly spread vital, accurate information to the Iraqi public, but Grench said nothing is quite like personal contact.

"Building bridges' is one of the primary goals for Psyops," he said. "By talking to people and gaining perspective in a local area, it allows us to build a picture of the overall perception in a region. After identifying the problems, concerns and misinformation, we can come back and begin to address them."

Even with so much misinformation being spread throughout Iraqi communities, Grench noted that the overall attitude of Iraqis toward Coalition personnel is very positive.

"Most feel good about U.S. forces," he said. "There is only a small percentage out there who are somewhat put off by Soldiers, but that is mainly because they do not know how to react to us. Those people have had very little contact with U.S. forces and quickly latch onto anything they hear because they do not know the truth. That is why we are here - to make sure they hear the whole truth."

With a circulation of more than 750,000 copies, "Baghdad Now" is reaching more Iraqis now than ever before. Distribution of the papers keeps Psyops forces busy in the streets of the city but also allows them ample time to make contact with the people and learn all about them.

"I was happy to participate in the liberation of Iraq and now I am happy to participate in its rebuilding," Grench said. "If there is one thing I have learned it is these people are no different from our own people. We have the same problems, troubles, worries and fears. Over time, with our facilitation, they will learn to help themselves and take advantages of the opportunities they have never had before."

Remember OPSEC over email, casual conversations

By 1st Lt. Maggie Christie
DCT Assistant Intelligence Officer

Sun tzu once said, "The general is skillful in attack whose opponent does not know what to defend; and he is skillful in defense whose opponent does not know what to attack." The principals of operational security have been important in war for over 2000 years. We do not want to provide an adversary with information that will allow him to successfully plan, and conduct, an attack against our personnel, our buildings, our information systems, our aircraft, or facilities.

Good operational security involves not mentioning information such as unit locations, movement plans, schedules, and very important persons itineraries over unsecured radios, cellular telephones, and non-secret e-mail.

As you prepare to re-deploy, you need to know that a lot of people want to know everything about what you've done for your country in the global war on terrorism and specifically your participation in Iraq. Not all of these people are adversaries. However, you cannot control where information goes once the media, family members, friends or associates know it. The sensitive information you have could have the following effects if the wrong people become aware of it:

- The information that you know about our tactics techniques and procedures and or our vulnerabilities could have a fatal effect on soldier's replacing you here. Take care of the army buddy's that you leave behind here and keep this information to yourself!
 - As you redeploy, your convoy can be targeted for ambush if you told somebody when you're moving out.
 - Your billeting area in the rear can be attacked if you told somebody where your unit would be staying.
 - The plane that you leave theater on can be shot down as you're taking off, at refueling points, or landing back at your duty station if you told somebody the plane's flight schedule.
- Be careful when you talk about military operations and consider whether the information you are talking about can be used against yourself or other soldiers.

CHAPPY'S CULTURAL CORNER: Basic Cultural Arabian Attitude

All Arabs share the same basic beliefs and values, which cross national or social class boundaries.

Social attitudes have remained relatively constant because Arab society is more conservative and demands conformity from its members.

Even the traditions of non-Muslim Arabs are greatly influenced by Islam.

Everyone believes in God, acknowledges His power, and has a religious affiliation.

Humans cannot control all events; some things depend on God (i.e., fate).

Piety is one of the most admirable characteristics in a person.

Religious tenets should not be subjected to liberal interpretations or modifications that can threaten established beliefs and practices.

Arab families are often large and

play a significantly important role in the life of the individual. The family is the basic unit of society and is very strong and close-knit.

Family honor is one of the highest values in Arab society.

Misbehavior by women can do more damage to family honor than misbehavior by men.

Clearly defined patterns of behavior have been developed to protect women and help them avoid situations that may give rise to false impressions or unfounded gossip.

The public display of intimacy between men and women is strictly forbidden by the Arab social code, including holding hands or linking arms, or any gesture of affection. Such actions, even between husband and wife, are highly embarrassing to Arab observers.

Next week: Friendship & Professional Relationship

U.S. flag insignia to be worn by all

By Sgt. 1st Class Marcia Triggs

WASHINGTON -- All Soldiers can now wear the U.S. flag insignia on the right shoulder of their utility uniform, as a continued reminder that the Army is engaged in a war at home and abroad.

"The flag has been around for years to identify deploying troops. Now based on the Army's joint expeditionary mindset, the flag represents our commitment to fight the war on terror for the foreseeable future," said Sgt. Maj. Walter Morales, the uniform policy chief for G1.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker approved the uniform item Feb. 11, and all Soldiers have until Oct. 1, 2005 to get the insignia sewn on their uniforms.

A message on the uniform policy went out to the force Feb. 14, announcing "the current policy of deployed Soldiers wearing the U.S. flag on utility uniforms is expanded to include all Soldiers throughout the force regardless of deployment status."

Currently there are not enough flags in the inventory, which is why Soldiers have a substantial amount of time to get the flags sewn on, Morales said. Deploying troops have the priority. Everyone else will have to wait until the Defense Logistics Agency has more in stock, he said. An estimated 30 million flags need to be produced, he added.

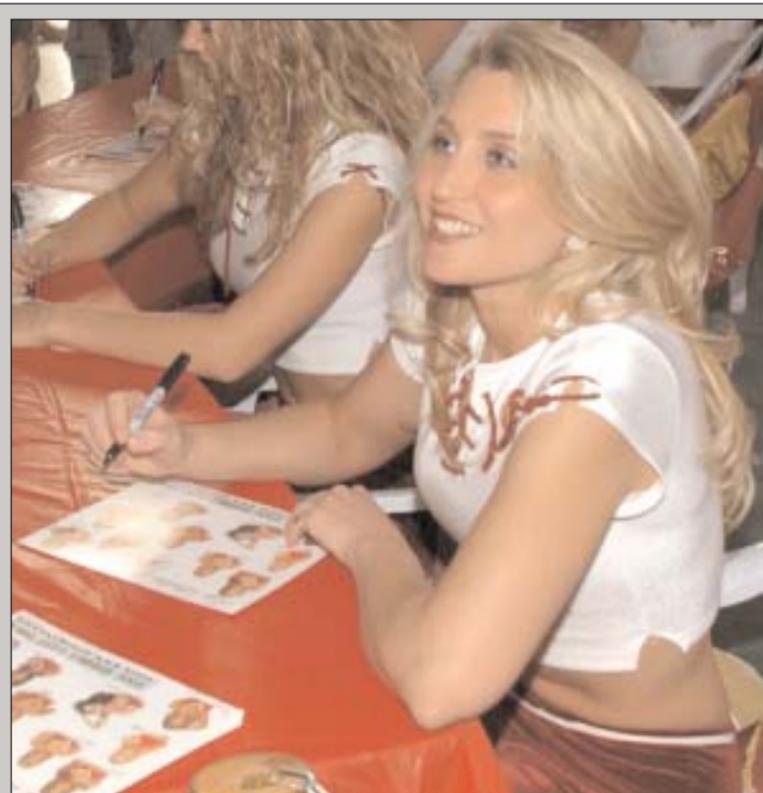
Enlisted Soldiers will not have to purchase the flags. They will be issued five flags from their assigned unit, and commanders will make arrangements for getting the insignia sewn on, Morales said. However, if Soldiers purchase the flags on their own, they will not be reimbursed, he added.

When purchasing the flag, the only ones authorized for wear on the uniform is the reverse field flag in red, white and blue. Subdued flags and those in other colors are in violation of U.S. code, Morales said. Individuals should comply with Army Regulation 670-1, Wear and Appearance of the Army Uniform and Insignia.

The regulation still states that Soldiers are not authorized to wear the full-color cloth U.S. flag replica upon their return to home station. However, the latest change will be added to the regulation when it is revised sometime this year, Morales said.

Nothing has changed regarding the placement of the flag, Morales said. It is sewn 1/2 inch below the shoulder seam. If a combat patch is also placed on the right shoulder, the flag is sewn 1/8 inch below the combat patch.

"The flag is worn on the right shoulder to give the effect of the flag flying in the breeze as the wearer moves forward," Morales said. "This will serve as a vivid reminder that our nation is at war."



A Washington Redskins cheerleader takes time to sign autographs during a recent visit to Camp Steel Falcon on Tuesday at the gym.

FOX



NBC Reconnaissance System vehicles keep the 69th Chemical Company rolling out after mission, after mission, after mission, after....

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Mark Bell
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



A M93A1 NBC Reconnaissance System (NBCRS), more commonly known as the Fox, is used to operated a checkpoint near the airport.

Submitted photo

CAMP STEEL FALCON, Iraq - American dictionaries defines versatility as, "the ability to do many things," but between the lines, and in fine print, is the 69th Chemical Company's Reconnaissance (RECON) Platoon defines the word and more.

Besides their doctrinal mission to seek out and detect nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) threats against coalition forces and Iraqi residents in and around Baghdad, the 13 Soldiers assigned to operate the Army's M93A1 NBC Reconnaissance System (NBCRS), commonly known as the Fox, have been busy supporting the 1st Armored Division Artillery Combat Team (DCT) in ways that are not always expected.

From operating temporary checkpoints, traveling on recon patrols or providing convoy security, the Fox teams have been tirelessly operating 24-hours-a-day supporting missions in the large southern Baghdad sector.

"Flexibility means being able to adapt and change at moments notice," Sgt. Tanya Jackson, 32, from Washington D.C., a squad leader assigned to operate the large six-wheel light-armored vehicle. "The recon platoon and its Foxes have been more than flexible through out this deployment. We have done everything from zone patrols to route improvised explosive device (IED) clearance."

Weighing more than 19 tons and armed with a M240E1 crew-served automatic weapons system, the German-made vehicle demands attention on the crowded highways and densely populated neighborhoods of Iraq's largest city of 5.5 million people.

The Fox is a prime platform for supporting numerous, unique DIVARTY Combat Team missions supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, because of its size, armor, and agility.

No one knows more about its importance than Staff Sgt. Kristine Chewning, 30, from Oak Hill, Fla. Because of the vehicle's distinctive design and armor, her three-Soldier crew was able to survive a direct hit from a rocket-propelled grenade designed to penetrate light armor.

"My patrol never expected or thought anything would ever hit our vehicles," Chewning said about that particular nighttime patrol. "Everything was going very well until we got attacked."

With the convoy under attack, Chewning had to make life-or-death choices that affect her crewmembers. "I had to assess the situation and get the area secured," she said.

With her gunner injured from shrapnel from the initial impact of the round hitting the armor, the Fox crew was able to regain control of the situation, but Chewning will never be the same.

"It quickly changed my idea about terrorism, security and patrol operations we do and the training for combat operations but doesn't qualify you as an expert."

Although the vehicle's minor damage has been repaired and her Soldier's wounds have long healed, Chewning said she is, now more than ever, focused on the mission.

With an increasing number of patrol and security missions under her belt, she said the attack only made her a better Soldier and leader.

"We can train for combat operations, but once you've become involved in a situation like that you don't look at training the same," she said. "That night, my main concern was evacuating my Soldier injured in the attack and getting her immediate medical attention. This is one thing that keeps my mind focused. There is too much in life to loose, and I'm not about to let some terrorist kill my team."

As most of the recon Soldiers arrived at the unit fresh out of advanced individual training before deploying Iraq, that intensive, realistic training they undergo between missions has made Chewning and other non-commissioned officer's job a little more challenging.

Even with an additional six-week course to learn to operate the Fox vehicle, Chewning said the schools can't teach everything there is to know about the sophisticated mobile laboratory. On-the-job training in theatre is the key to developing a successful team.

"These Soldiers learned quickly. I believe they are now are subject-matter experts," She said. "I want these guys to feel even though they never have gotten to go on an actual chemical mission, they are super heroes for our country."

Chewning said her Soldiers now know a lot more about the quick reaction force (QRF) and patrols. "They are not afraid of firing their weapons if we're being attacked."

They are ready to take the offensive, she said.



Spc. Lamar Pitmon, 24, from Chaattanooga, Tenn., a Fox operator assigned to the 69th Chemical Company, 1st Armored Division Artillery Combat Team prepares a marker report.

Soldiers assigned to operate the Fox said the platform is a battlefield multiplier because it helps protect the Soldier while in combat by finding possible chemical, biological or nuclear contamination, said Jackson. "We are able to 'clean' areas so troops can go through an area without the worry of being contaminated," said Jackson.

Rumored to work only in NBC rooms cleaning masks and inventorying chemical detection kits, the recon teams assigned to Camp Steel Falcon's 69th Chemical Company, shatter any theories that the chemical operation specialists don't do anything but hide behind locked doors.

"The biggest myth is that chemical Soldiers don't do any work," said Sgt. Daniel Johnson, 26, from Arlington, Va. "A chemical Soldier has to be versatile Soldier by nature. By being able to go to any type of unit, he or she must often learn that unit's mission as well as maintaining knowledge of our unique skills."

Unlike other vehicle operators throughout the forward operating base and 1st Armored Division, these Soldiers must repair their own vehicles.

Without the help of unit or DCT mechanics, the Fox operators spend their remaining free time servicing their vehicles. From repairing axles to removing engines, the small platoon

must also routinely change hats and be a mechanics for a day.

"It's how we make our money," said Staff Sgt. Manuel Rodriguez, 27, from Bronx, N.Y., a "Master" Fox operator. "It's about being more knowledgeable about the deployment of NBC reconnaissance assets. Without proper maintenance, we can't have that asset available to the commander."

Rodriguez said that proper maintenance is the common denominator for safety and success. Teams have operated their six Fox vehicles without mishap from remote desert environments to the tight urban streets for the past 10 months.

"The reason we have stayed accident free during this deployment is due to our intensive training," said Rodriguez. "Every squad leader takes a new Soldier and ensures that Soldier is well trained before going on the road."

With the enormous and awkward size of the vehicle, Rodriguez said teaching the importance of depth perception is the key element to operating the vehicle. "The Fox is very maneuverable, but not knowing its dimensions and road capabilities can be very dangerous."

Whether they are patrolling some of the most dangerous streets in Baghdad, or hunting chemical warheads, the versatility of the recon platoon accurately displays the basic concept of the American warrior - flexibility.

TECH NOTE:

M93A1 NBC Reconnaissance System (NBCRS)

The FOX is a rolling, and in some cases, floating laboratory that has the ability to take air, water, and ground samples and immediately analyzes them for signs of weapons of mass destruction or possible innocent contamination from other sources.

Its intended purpose is to improve the survivability and mobility of the Army ground forces by providing increased situational awareness and information superiority to combat maneuver elements.

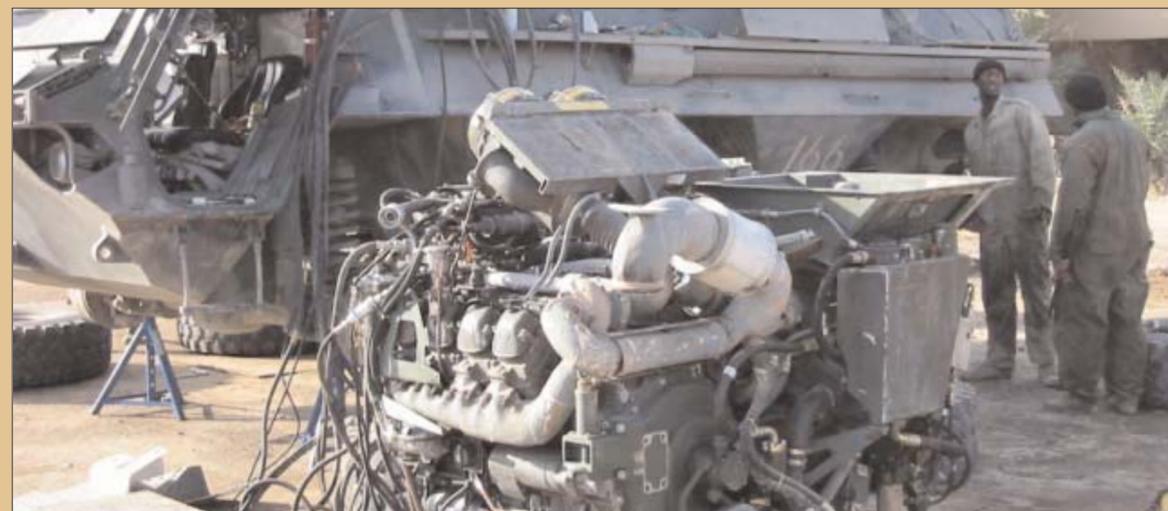
Equipped with a fully-automated nuclear and chemical detection system for immediate analysis and warning of contamination, the Fox collect soil, water, and vegetation samples for later analysis, mark areas of contamination, and transmit, in real time, NBC information to unit commanders in the area of operations.

Hazards to the crew are minimized by the vehicle's collective protection and positive over-pressure system. The automated features of the (M93A1) reduce the crew requirements to three soldiers.

The three-man NBCRS crew accomplishes these missions by using a sophisticated suite of nuclear and chemical alarms and detectors that have been integrated within the vehicle chassis. The on-board (M21) Remote Sensing Chemical Agent Alarm allows the crew to detect chemical agent clouds as far as 5 kilometers away. The crew can perform chemical and radiological reconnaissance operations while operating in a chemical-free environment inside the vehicle, even while the vehicle is operating in a contaminated area. During normal Fox operations, there is no need for the crew to wear chemical protective gear or masks.



Spc. John Cilla, 21, from Spring Hill Fla., a Fox operator, with the 69th Chemical Company, loads M250 infrared smoke grenades into the Fox grenade launcher before a recent patrol in southern Baghdad.



Fox operators with the 69th Chemical Company, 1st Armored Division Artillery Combat Team (DCT) remove the enormous 2,600-pound, 320-horsepower diesel engine during a scheduled maintenance for the vehicle. Operators repair their own Fox vehicles.

Submitted photo

Task Force 1st Armored Division celebrates completion of three major projects for community

By Mark S. Rickert
372nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq (Feb. 12, 2004 – In the western region of Abu Ghraib, the community has plenty to celebrate. In less than two months, their water is safer to drink, the condition of the mosque is better, and residents now have a medical clinic close at hand.

During a ribbon cutting ceremony the 414th Civil Affairs Battalion, an Army Reserves unit based in Utica, N.Y., gathered with the residents of a small community within the Abu Ghraib neighborhood district to celebrate the completion of a medical clinic, the restoration of a mosque and a new water system Jan 24.

Now that the Abala Medical Clinic is open to the public, it will provide primary medical treatment for the area. Until now, the people there traveled 10 miles for the nearest hospital—a long distance for a people with little transportation, said Sgt. Amy Fish, a member of the direct support team for the 414th.

"We're proud to open the medical clinic here because it is providing medical service for an under-served population," said Col. John Huntley, commander of the 414th.

While contractors started rebuilding the clinic, the civil affairs team also acquired funds to repair the mosque next door. According to Staff Sgt. Louis Poliselli, leader of the 414th direct support team, backing this second project supported the coalition forces' overall goal of winning the hearts and minds of the people.

"This shows that we're working with religious leaders," said Poliselli. "It doesn't matter if they are Christian or Muslim, we want to help everybody out."

"They see that we're willing to do anything we can to help rebuild the country," said Fish. "This means a lot to the people here."

As the funds for the two projects came in, the civil affairs team went a step further and obtained enough money to reroute the community's drinking water. According to Fish, the people in the area drew from wells with a high concentration of sulfur. This made the drinking water unsafe to consume.

"Now we've tapped into a mainline that is hooked to a purification system," said Fish. "From the mainline, we ran drinking-water pipes to the schools in this area, as well as the medical center and the mosque."

Now, as the residents of the community



Sgt. Amy Fish (right), a member of the direct support team of the 414th Civil Affairs Battalion, based in Utica, N.Y., and local Abu Ghraib community officials cut the ribbon at the grand opening of the Abala Medical Clinic west of Baghdad Jan 24.

celebrate this step toward better living conditions, the civil affairs soldiers also celebrate the progress they've made. As Huntley said, it's only a small step toward a promising future for Iraq.

"We are in the business of pulling together

infrastructure," said Huntley. "It's going to help the county carry on by itself after we leave. So we're very interested in setting the stage for success. It's just a start, but we're going to use this as a spring board to continue progress here."



461st PSB Soldiers move the mail via conveyor belts for further processing to camp destinations in Iraq.

Soldiers hand over Baghdad mail operations to contractors

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Nate Orme
3rd Personnel Command

BAGHDAD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, Iraq -After enduring months of intense heat, long hours, dust, pigeon guano, and Spartan living conditions since their arrival in May, Army postal units have nearly completed turnover of military postal operations to contractors.

The turnover began in October, when the first KBR postal workers began to arrive, said Lt. Col Steven Heggen, commander of the 461st Personnel Services Battalion, a Reserve unit from Decatur, Ga.

Once, the Joint Military Mail Terminal was manned exclusively with soldiers from the 461st PSB and its down-trace units from the Guard, Reserve and Active Army, numbering about 300. Now, but for a handful of postal unit soldiers, the terminal is nearly all staffed by KBR employees. Heggen said the handoff was necessary partly because the Army does not have the number of postal units to support continued operations.

To date, the cavernous terminal has processed over 90 million pounds of mail, distributed in over 1,100 mail convoys to a dozen points throughout Iraq, Heggen said. Mail convoys, consisting of one to 12 tractor trailers each hauling two 20-foot or one 40-foot mail-filled metal containers, go out daily. Each convoy is escorted by military "gun trucks"—two or three 5-ton trucks outfitted with gun turrets mounted with a machine gun, usually a 50-caliber. KBR employees drive the tractor-trailers as they have done since the first mail trucks entered Iraq in May, while transportation unit soldiers operate the gun trucks.

Beginning in May, postal soldiers armed with M-16 assault rifles also handled the escort details, riding "shot-gun" with KBR drivers. In July, transportation units picked up the escort detail.

The mail operation has not been without the ultimate sacrifice. Two KBR employees, Fred Bryant and Vernon Gaston, were killed in separate hostile incidents. A transportation unit soldier, Spc. Darryl Dent, from the D.C.

National Guard, was killed while on security escort duty. Another soldier, Spc. Frances Vega, with the 151st Postal Company, was killed in the crash of a helicopter, probably downed under attack. Soldiers have received medals for valor and the Purple Heart for performance under fire. Death was also averted when a DHL plane delivering mail managed to land safely after being struck by a missile.

The giant mail terminal building was originally found in decrepit condition, as it had not been used for over a decade except by a small division of pigeons which had covered the floor with their droppings. All that along with mounds of dust were swept away, Army engineers came and modified parts of the structure, and tons of debris was hauled out before operations began, Heggen said. The building, which appears to have once been an Iraqi Airlines cargo storage facility, was chosen because of its all-important loading docks and large covered area.

Opened to relieve the load on the JMMT in Kuwait, which now supports camps only in Kuwait, the terminal in Baghdad supported almost all the Army and Air Force post offices in Iraq, until mail began to be flown directly to other points, namely Mosul and Kirkuk.

For the first month, everything from electricity and water to hot meals were in scarce supply for the postal soldiers. MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) made up two of three meals a day, while a small chow tent served hot meals once a day. Sleeping arrangements were wherever they could be found. Some soldiers set up in the office areas of the building, some in spare mail containers, and still others in an 8-story building half a mile away dubbed the "crack house" due to its degenerated condition.

Despite the long hours, there remains a positive energy and pride felt among the soldiers, who are almost boastful of the hardships they endured over the long, hot summer. Their sentiments invoke the esprit de corps of WWII, when the United States, awakened by encroaching evil, rallied out of its Depression to emerge victor and benefactor to the world.

'Original Dustoff' still flying high in Iraq

FOB WARHORSE, BAQUBAH, Iraq – A call comes in on the medical evacuation frequency with a "nine-line MedEvac" request from a highway in central Iraq.

An improvised explosive device has disabled a vehicle convoy and wounded Soldiers need to be moved to a hospital. Within 10 minutes, a helicopter carrying a combat medical team onboard is in the air and en route to the site at speeds approaching 200 miles per hour.

With roots that can be traced back to MedEvac crews that served in Vietnam, the 57th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), known as the "Original Dustoff," relies on teamwork and commitment to deliver high-speed medical evacuations in the Task Force Ironhorse area of operations.

"If we don't get there on time, people could die," said Warrant Officer Thomas Schurr, a pilot from Palmdale, Calif. "Once we receive the nine-line we only have 10 minutes to be up in the air and on the way."

"If the medic says 'this guy is critical,' we pull the guts out of the aircraft to get the patient to the hospital," said Chief Warrant Officer Kevin Herrick, a Panhandle, Texas resident, and another pilot in the air ambulance company.

Placing medics on helicopters to treat casualties during the critical hour following the injury known as the "golden hour" was the original concept of MedEvac during the Vietnam War.

"The difference between casualty evacuation and MedEvac is with CasEvac you get a ride, but no treatment," said 1st Lt. Samuel Fricks, the commander of Bravo Forward Support Team, which supports the 2nd Brigade Combat Team.

"With MedEvac a highly trained team of medical specialists provides continuous medical treatment while en route to the forward surgical team or combat support hospital."

Loss of life, limb or eyesight is the guide as to when a MedEvac flight is warranted. That guideline applies to both Coalition forces and enemy troops.

"A hard part of my job is to keep the enemy alive," said Staff Sgt. Michael Lombardo, a medic from Columbus, Ohio.

"Under the Geneva Convention, we still treat enemy Soldiers like we hope they would treat our guys. I look at it as keeping them alive so they can be interrogated."

The highest-priority job of the medic after picking up patients is to keep them alive, stabilize the patient, stop the bleeding, and provide continuous medical treatment, said Lombardo. Patient care en route is one of the keys to preventing a casualty from becoming a fatality.

"The theater has seen over 2,000 wounded patients and about (500) deaths," said the Morrow, Ga., native about the number of casualties transported on MedEvac aircraft in theater. "MedEvac has a lot to do with keeping the numbers low."

The result is about 83 percent of those picked up survive. Much of that is due to the immediate treatment provided by the in-flight medics, Lombardo said.

The 57th MedEvac, part of the 18th Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, N.C., is easily distinguished from other MedEvac companies by the red cross on a white circle found on the nose of their aircraft, has flown over 600 hours and carried more than 100 patients in the 4th Infantry Division's area of operations.

"The white circle behind the red cross is the signature of our unit," said Fricks, explaining the unique logo of the "Original Dustoff" unit. "We are proud of it and it distinguishes us from everybody else."

Whether it is the 57th MedEvac or another unit delivering the high-speed medical care, the highly trained team of medics and flight crew are pivotal in maintaining life during the "golden hour."

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New vehicles helping against IEDs

By Cpl. Joe Niesen
350th MPAD

FOB RIDGWAY, Iraq -- The U.S. Army has a few new weapons to use in its war against the threat of Improvised Explosive Devices on Iraq's roadways.

The Husky, Meerkat, Buffalo, and RG-31 armored car are now being used by soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division's Task Force Pathfinder. The unit comprises soldiers from a number of active Army, Reserve, and National Guard units attached to the 82nd.

The soldiers, many of whom had never seen the equipment prior to the training they received in theater, have quickly grown fond of the vehicles which were designed both in the United States and South Africa.

"All of our training has been off-the-cuff," said Capt. Michael Biankowski, commander, A Company, 27th Engineers and Task Force Pathfinder.

The soldiers of Pathfinder had to learn everything about the vehicles in theater. The mechanics had to learn how to repair them, the operators how to drive them, and commanders how to use them. For operators, the driving is the easy part; it's learning to operate and interpret the data collected by the sensors while driving that is the challenge.

"Probably the hardest part is the multitasking involved. You have to drive, listen and watch both the screen and the road around you as you drive," said Cpl. Robert Scott, a vehicle operator on the Husky detection vehicle.

The vehicles, primarily designed to detect buried mines, have been searching the roadways for IEDs and other threats to soldiers on convoys and patrols. So far, the equipment has proven effective for a number of reasons, chiefly the detection abilities of the Husky and Meerkat vehicles.

"We've found at least six IEDs in the short time that we have had the vehicles," said 1st Lt. David Moore, a platoon leader with A Company, 27th Engineers, assigned to the Task Force.

Another reason the soldiers in Task Force Pathfinder have taken to the vehicles is the fact that each is heavily armored and designed to resist blasts from both mines and IEDs.

"These vehicles are designed to take a blast," said Pfc. Lester Rhodes, a combat engineer and operator of the RG-31 armored car. "The safety given by these vehicles allows us to



Pfc. Lester Rhodes, an RG-31 armored car operator with Task Force 'Pathfinder,' compares the vehicle to an 'Armored Cadillac'. The RG-31 serves as a security and medical vehicle.

focus more energy on finding the rounds. Plus, it (the RG-31) is comfortable, like riding in an armored Cadillac."

The Task Force, since acquiring the equipment, has attempted to support the entire division's area of responsibility. The vehicles will be handed over to replacing units and remain in theater as long as the threat of IEDs exists.

However, many of the soldiers assigned to Pathfinder said they are hopeful that the equipment will be standard issue for engineering units.

"At first, I thought that it was just another Army toy," said Scott. "After taking them out on missions and finding IEDs, they definitely do the job. They are the best pieces of equipment out there."

A few of the vehicles have already been sent to the combat engineer school at Fort Leonardwood, Mo., where soldiers are now being trained, according to Biankowski.

The team will continue to provide support to units in the area and prepare to train its replacements. The awkward-looking vehicles will visit various bases and attempt to ensure that at least the routes they cover will be free of IEDs, and soldiers can feel a little safer as they continue to traverse and patrol Iraq's dangerous roads.

"Every round we find is one less that could injure or kill a Soldier," said Sgt. 1st Class Martin Humphreys, a Pathfinder platoon sergeant. "So I'm glad we have this equipment."



Families applaud their soldiers at the end of a deployment ceremony for the 30th Enhanced Separate Brigade at the Crown Center in Fayetteville, N.C. The brigade is going to Iraq in the coming weeks. (Photo by Jim Garamone)

Deploying unit shows differences between Active, Reserve Soldiers

Story and photo by Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. -- It is different when a National Guard unit deploys.

The "total force" includes active duty and reserve component service members. And while the missions that like units go on are identical, there are differences in the way active duty and reserve components deploy. These differences were apparent at the Feb. 12 deployment ceremony for the 30th Heavy Separate Brigade. The unit is the first National Guard combat brigade to deploy since the end of World War II.

Families applaud their soldiers at the end of a deployment ceremony for the 30th Enhanced Separate Brigade at the Crown Center in Fayetteville, N.C. The brigade is going to Iraq in the coming weeks.

The brigade will deploy in the next few weeks, and includes units from New York, Minnesota, Maryland, California, West Virginia and Illinois. The core of the brigade is the 3,500 members of the Old Hickory brigade based in Clinton, N.C. The unit will serve with the 1st Infantry Division, and relieve the 4th Infantry Division in Iraq.

While the Guard and reserves have been stalwarts in the war of terror, most of the units deployed have been in the combat service and combat service support areas. But that doesn't mean some combat units have not deployed. The Florida National Guard sent combat units to the Middle East last year, and the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve have had squadrons providing air support to coalition troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. More than 188,000 reserve component service members are serving on active duty today.

The first difference between active and reserve component forces that a person notices is in age. The 30th looks a bit older than the typical active duty unit. The infantrymen and armor crewman average three to four years older than their counterparts on active duty, officials said. Many served on active duty and transferred to the Guard following that service. Some of the soldiers in the brigade wear combat patches from the 101st Airborne Division and the 10th Mountain Division.

The age difference is most noticeable in the noncommissioned officer grades. Some platoon sergeants and first sergeants in the unit are approaching 50. "Yeah, we're a little bit gray," said one first sergeant with a smile. "But you know what they say: 'Age and treachery will overcome youth and enthusiasm every day.'"

The first sergeant said the added experience will help in the situations the soldiers probably will confront in Iraq. "I think we will have more patience," he said. "We have more experiences to draw on."

He laughed and said, "Also, most of us have teenagers at home."

But not all. Many families with small children and babies attended the ceremony. One 5-year old boy was dressed in desert camouflage and saluted (with his left hand) during the national anthem. Others held up signs wishing Daddy or Mommy good luck in their mission.

How the families will cope during the yearlong deployment is a concern to the brigade leadership, and that too, is a different from active duty.

On the active duty side, soldiers deploy from a post, and efforts to help the families are concentrated at that base. Even the North Carolina portion of the brigade has soldiers coming from every portion of the state. That concentrated family support effort won't work for the Guard.

"We've come up with Family Support Teams in communities around the state," said Chaplain (Capt.) Steven King, a Protestant chaplain with the brigade. "We're also working with the Big Red One on family matters. The (North Carolina) adjutant general's office is also working with state agencies to provide support during the deployment."

While the dispersion of service members can be viewed as a problem in family support, another aspect of Guard service helps in the situation. In many cases, service in the National Guard is a family matter. Many of the Guardsmen are the third generation of family members serving in the unit. They come from small towns and cities all over the state, and they are rooted in the communities.

"My family has been in North Carolina since the 1700s," said one lieutenant. "I'm related to half the people in town. I guarantee that if something happens to me, there will be 200 people at my house asking what they can do to help."

A Guard official said many of the communities have adopted 30th Brigade companies and are working together to see that families have what they need to make it through the deployment. Civic and veterans organizations also are working to ensure families have what they need.

Worship Services

Saturday 1700	Chapel	Catholic Mass	weekday programs	
Sunday 1000	Chapel	Protestant	Monday Coffee & Donut Group	Thursday Bible Study
Sunday 1300	Chapel	Catholic Mass	Tuesday Bible Study	Friday Praside Team Practice
Sunday 2000	Chapel	Gospel	Wed. Gospel Choir Practice	

all times at 2000

— Messages from the home front: —



Sgt. Jason Wagner,
Sweety, you have no idea how much I've missed you in the past 10 months but I know that you will be home soon. I can't wait! Please remember in your heart and mind that I love you and that I will always be here for you. Hurry home! Big Kiss from your wife, Uschi.

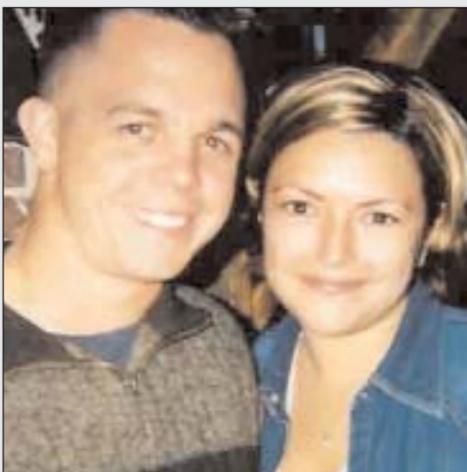
To Lt. Schnedler:

I couldn't be more proud of the soldier you are. I couldn't be more proud of the provider you are. I couldn't be more proud of the father you are. And I couldn't be more blessed and happy for > the husband you are. You are my gift from God. You are my life. The day is coming soon when the separation is over and we can get back to our life we've made for our beautiful family. Hang in there. Continue to be strong...hold your head high and know we're waiting for you. All of my love to you, Angi

**Happy 11th Anniversary!!!
Henry and Angi Schnedler**

Sgt. Robert Kiser,
We miss you and we love you very much. Keep up the good work down range we are very proud of you. You are our hero. Here I am again sitting alone daydreaming about you. With dreams that leave a smile in my heart... I think of you so often. You keep dropping by my mind. I think of you at the oddest times and in the strangest places... How nice it feels to be constantly surprised by beautiful thoughts of you. We will see you soon. The kids will be so happy as I will when you get home...take care and be safe. Love, Your wife, Glenda, Nate and Naisha Kiser

Hi Boobie,
I miss you and can't wait to start our second honeymoon on that deserted island. Please be careful and remember I am and will always be waiting for you with a faithful heart and mind. You're proud wife, Mrs. Gery



messages and photos from the home front can be emailed to mark.e.bell@us.army.mil