

DV

November 22, 2006

Desert Voice Magazine

Serving U.S. and Coalition Forces in Kuwait

Sgt. Melinda Hooper

The Arkansas Angler

**Army National Guardsman, member of
the National Guard Fishing Team**

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On the cover

Sgt. Melinda Hooper casts a hook into the dry Kuwaiti desert. The Army National Guard fishing team member has taken a one-year break from fishing to serve in Kuwait.

Photo by Spc. Debrah Robertson

Take Time to Be Thankful

This is the time of year for Thanksgiving.

As we go about our important daily tasks, I ask that each of us think about the true meaning of Thanksgiving.

We, as Americans, often take our freedoms and blessings for granted. For many of us, it is all we have known. Being deployed in Southwest Asia provides a different perspective of different cultures.

What are some of these blessings we have?

We have a representative government that acts for the common good.

We may worship as we want/ when we want.

The rule of law prevails.

We have freedom of speech.

We can pursue happiness – which is defined by the individual – not the state.

We can make many choices with our lives. We have more than one or two options for how we live.

We can live the American Dream.

My hope is that Iraq will be able to share these ideals and that all Iraqis may be free to

pursue their dreams.

Take the time to thank your fellow Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Coast Guardsmen, and Marines for what they do each day

to help make Thanksgiving Day possible for Americans. Thank them for making it a possibility for Iraqis and Afghanis. Thank your families for their support of your efforts.

I thank each of you for the

sacrifices you make each day to serve and support our missions

in Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar, Djibouti, Afghanistan, and Bahrain. Each of you is making a difference as we support the establishment of stable democratic governments in the area. These governments will allow their citizens to enjoy the freedoms that we as Americans have fought and died for more than 200 years.

I am honored to celebrate Thanksgiving with you here as we protect and defend our Nation in the Global War on Terrorism.

Can Do! Anytime! Anywhere!



Maj. Gen. Thomas D. Robinson
Commanding General
377th Theater Support Command

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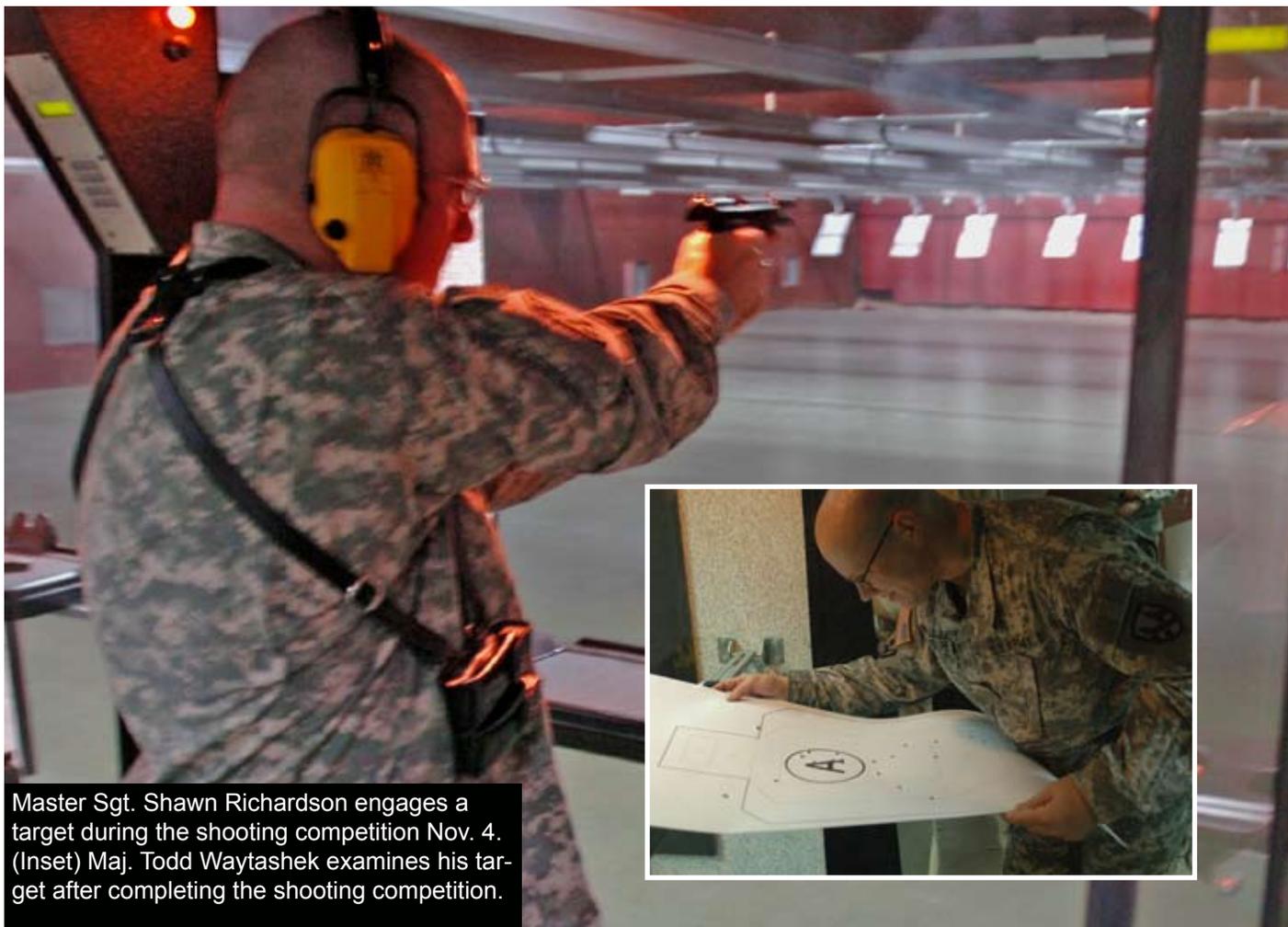
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Master Sgt. Shawn Richardson engages a target during the shooting competition Nov. 4. (Inset) Maj. Todd Waytashek examines his target after completing the shooting competition.

Services face off in marksmanship competition

Story and Photos by

Staff Sgt. Patrick N. Moes

Desert Voice Editor

Amid repeated M9 rounds being shot toward targets at a local shooting range, and an occasional pause for a chai tea, servicemembers from Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, had the opportunity to hone their skills while enjoying a bit of inter-service competition Nov. 4.

With approximately 20 servicemembers from the Air Force, Army, Navy and Marines participating in the competition, the overall theme remained constant – friendly competition.

“It’s cool to get the inter-service rivalry goin’ on,” said Air Force Senior Airman Nathaniel Fiet. The Cleveland, Ohio, native jokingly added the Air Force was the best.

“It was good to get out and shoot at a competitive range,” said Third Army/ U.S. Army Central Surgeon staff member Maj. Henry Holliday.

The friendly rivalry started when the range safeties gave the go ahead to begin the competition. With two magazines and a target moving away from them, the

servicemembers were tasked with the challenge of placing rounds in a circle approximately seven inches wide.

“It was definitely challenging,” said Holliday. “It was a real reality check.”

Although this was a “friendly” competition, the servicemembers did receive valuable lessons from their instructors. The instructors reinforced the basics of marksmanship while encouraging the servicemembers to try what they were being taught.

“It’s good to get out and learn different shooting techniques,” said Fiet.

Training worked as the backdrop for the opportunity to experience a different side of Kuwait. The servicemembers had the chance to relax a little with a 3-story spiral staircase and a café inside the indoor range.

The range was hosted by Ahmad E. Al-Saleem, a retired Brig. Gen. in the Kuwaiti army. Saleem said he had been trying to arrange a competition with the servicemembers for awhile and extended an invitation to all Americans to compete.



Sgt. Melinda Hooper, a flight operations specialist with the Arkansas National Guard's 114th Aviation Regiment, in Little Rock also knows a few things about fishing. (Inset) Hooper's Camp Buehring barracks room is adorned with images of her favorite fish.

'Our fishing sergeant'

Arkansas Guardsman takes a break from her second job for year-long deployment

Story and Photos by
Spc. Debrah A. Robertson
Desert Voice Staff Writer

Waves rock her boat and the light gleams off the water. She hums a tune to herself. This is her idea of a perfect day. She casts her line and reels it back with a sense of peace in her mind. There is nowhere she would rather be.

Then she feels a bite. "Oh, it's a fish," she thinks.

Then reality sets in. She's still in the desert. There is no boat and there is no water, not even a puddle.

"I was casting the other night, and I hit a rock," said Sgt. Melinda Hooper, a flight operations specialist with the 114th Aviation Regiment of the Arkansas National Guard, supporting Third Army/U.S. Army Central.

Forgetting where she was for a moment, she thought she had caught one.

"It felt like a fish biting, and I almost jerked. I had to stop myself," she said.

Deployed to Kuwait, Hooper is on the Army National Guard's fishing team. When not working at Camp Buehring's airfield, she spends her afternoons casting into the desert.

With an optimism that astonishes her fellow Soldiers, Hooper is happy to serve the Army even if that means fishing for rocks until her redeployment.

"She's our fishing sergeant," said Lt. Col. Karen Gattis, the 114th Aviation Reg. operations officer, with a smile.

Known to many of her fellow Soldiers as a great source of a good fishing story, Hooper often carries her

fishing pole to work with her.

Her pole has become a topic of many conversations, said Sgt. Joshua Schmidt, an aviation operations specialist with the 114th.

“Everyone has their fishing story,” said Hooper.

“My whole family fishes,” she said.

Her parents bass fish professionally and her big brother is on the Bass Fishing League All-American, she said.

“I’m living through him right now,” said Hooper. “[My family’s] accomplishments keep me going.”

Although, the Guard takes Hooper away from her favorite sport, her drive to join was strong.

After a huge ice storm hit her small hometown of Ben Lomond, Ark., one December, the Army National Guard swept in to save her community.

Hooper knew she wanted to be a Guardsman after seeing the Soldiers save her community from 13 days of isolation and near disaster. Joining the Guard allowed Hooper to serve not only her country, but her community as well.

Putting her fishing tour on hold, Hooper came to the Udairi Airfield in Buehring to help with airfield operations.

“You have to support each other,” said Hooper of her fellow Soldiers. “Everyone has their role. When I got the call to serve [in Kuwait] I knew I couldn’t leave them.”

Everyone who serves has put aside their dreams for a while, said Hooper.

“My dreams and goals will be there when I get back,” she said. “I look left and I look right and see



Deployed to the desert of Kuwait, Hooper has had to make due with an occasional cast into dry sand.

that we’re all in this together.”

Until she does go home next year, Hooper surrounds herself with what she loves – family and fishing. She covers her walls with photos of her family and posters of her favorite fish.

“You have to remember what’s important, what you’re going home to,” she said.

Hooper’s love for fishing runs deep; she finds peace on the water.

“I feel like God is speaking to me on the water,” she said. “When I was little, my parents would take me [fishing]. I don’t remember not holding a fishing pole.”

Serving in the National Guard’s fishing team and in the Army have

similarities for Hooper.

“We share a passion,” said Hooper. “People in the Guard share a passion for their country and people on the fishing team share a passion for fishing.”

Both groups lean on one another for support, she said.

“You’ve got to have that teammate and that support system,” said Hooper.

“I’ve learned so much in the Guard,” she said. “I’ve learned that I can achieve anything I put my mind to. It gave me the confidence to follow through in college, fishing and life.”

Until she’s back on the water, Hooper can be found serving her country in Kuwait and “catching sand bass.”

Soldiers receive basic medical tra

Stories and photos by

Sgt. Cheryl Cox

1st Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs,
1st Cavalry Division

As Soldiers from 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division prepare to head north to Camp Taji, Iraq, they attend several classes to prepare them for the challenges that lay before them in the coming year.

One class that prepares them for the worst possible situation is the Medical Combat Skills Trainer course. "Everything I teach is taught using only the

first aid pouch," said Brent Cloud, a former Special Forces medic, who currently resides in Fayetteville, N.C., when not teaching this course.

During the three-hour class, Cloud teaches Soldiers to rely on their hands and legs to manage wounds before applying bandages and other devices to the injured Soldier's wounds.

"On the battlefield there are three main things that kill Soldiers – hemorrhage, airway compromise and tension pneumothorax (too much air in the chest cavity)," explained Cloud. "If the Soldiers on-site can manage these three areas the injured Soldier has a better chance at surviving his injuries and making it home alive."

While this sounds like a class for medics, it isn't. This class is designed for every Soldier.

When Soldiers are preparing for deployment, they are given a rapid fielding issue which includes a first aid kit. Inside the first aid kit are bandages, a tourniquet and other immediate care supplies. If used properly, these items can manage a Soldier's wounds until a medic is available to provide more advanced field care.

"Before I came to this class, I had no idea how to do any of this – I do x-rays. I thought this would be about managing bleeding and basic first aid like what is taught in basic training. I had no idea that it would be this in depth," explained Pfc. Robert Guinther, an x-ray technologist with Company C, 115th Brigade Support Battalion and a San Antonio, Texas, native. "Now, if I see a patient with severe wounds, I know where to start in treating them and saving their life."

One of the most important parts to the class is the hands-on training. Many times when classes are given in the military the instructors will use PowerPoint slides and expect the Soldiers to understand what is being taught, Cloud explained. In this class, the Soldiers take what is taught and use it during the hands-on portion of the class.

"There is a lot of hands-on in this class and you can actually see the mannequins breathe once you introduce an airway," said 1st Sgt. Robert Toussant, the first sergeant for Company C, 115th BSB and a native of Maximo, Ohio. "I have a medical company and this takes them back to the basics and will save a lot of lives. In combat, you only have seconds to react and the better prepared for trauma situations and critical wound care, the better their chances are for saving their buddies lives."

Not only does a Soldier have only seconds to react, but the first 60 seconds are the most critical in saving a fellow Soldier's life on the battlefield.



Staff Sgt. Lori Naifeh, a medic with Co. C, 115th Brigade Support Battalion and a native of Fort Madison, Iowa, places an airway in the neck of a mannequin with no other viable airway during the hands-on portion of the Medical Combat Skills Trainer course at Camp Buehring, Kuwait Nov. 5. Since the tube can move with breathing and tape does not stick very well around blood, Naifeh is using a safety pin to secure the tube to the neck.

Training for wounded Soldiers

Practice makes perfect

1st Cavalry Soldiers learn MEDEVAC skills too

Walking down a dirt road with nothing but desert as far as the eye can see, Soldiers proceed toward the only buildings in the area. Upon arrival, a sniper pops up and hits three of the patrolling troops causing the other Soldiers to evaluate their injuries and call for a medical evacuation.

This was the scenario when Soldiers from 7th Cavalry Regiment conducted medical evacuation training Nov. 6 before heading north to Iraq.

Once the call for the nine-line (medical evacuation) was made, the Soldiers had to get the injured Soldiers to the specified landing zone for the helicopters and ensure it was marked for the medical team that would soon be in route.

“We are using the same equipment that will be used once we get to Iraq,” said Johns. “We want them to know exactly what to do when we get there and not have the first time they encounter this type of scenario with real aircraft be the real thing.”

Even though the unit has trained on MEDEVAC procedures and scenarios prior to deploying, it had always been with simulated aircraft.

“These are skills that they will definitely put to use during our year in Iraq. We don’t want to have to use these skills, but if needed I want to know that my Soldiers know how to do it right,” explained Command Sgt. Maj. David Clemmons, the Gary Owen Squadron command sergeant major.

At the end of the day, the Soldiers understood the purpose of the training they received.

“Being alert is always important, but I learned that I need to be even more alert,” explained Pfc. Alan Cruz, a medic with the unit. “I also learned the importance of keeping the injured Soldiers separate from the Soldiers who didn’t make it. It lowers the chance of shock and gives the other Soldiers a better chance of making it home.”

After several times through, with similar but different scenarios, the Soldiers had the beginnings of muscle memory for these procedures.

“Muscle memory is very important here,” explained Johns. “When you’re under stress, you resort to your basic skills and muscle memory. If you train the same way every time you train, you will do it the same way when the time comes to do it for real.”

Staff Sgt. Arnulfo Padilla, from Troop C, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, is strapped down to a litter to be MEDEVACed from a training area during training Nov. 6.





Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day

Capt. Sherry Hedrick, a 101st Airborne Division physicians assistant and Red Cross, W.V., native, ensures her bag is locked and secured for the trip home to Fort Campbell, Ky.

Getting them home, quicker

Sgt. Thomas L. Day
Desert Voice Staff Writer

How Third Army/U.S. Army Central made the redeployment process an overnight affair

The last 101st Airborne Division units are redeploying from their second Iraq tour in three years. In 2004, the “Screaming Eagles” came home after week-long convoys through Iraq and several weeks in Kuwait waiting for flights back to Fort Campbell, Ky.

Since then, Third Army/U.S. Army Central has made the process quite a bit shorter.

“We schedule their airlift (back to the States) 12 to 48 hours after

they land (in Kuwait),” said Air Force Capt. David Magoc, a planner with the Joint Operations Planning Execution System. The process is called “Single Ticket Express.”

Soldiers from a support battalion of 101st Airborne Division can confirm that Magoc is good to his word. On November 12, the Brigade Troops Battalion of the 506th Regimental Combat Team was handing over their mission in East Baghdad. On November 13, they were boarding a

plane in Kuwait.

By midweek, the battle-hardened battalion was back home.

Magoc, in what he calls “end-to-end planning,” coordinated the redeployment process for the 506th out of the Iraq theater and scheduled a quick flight home with the 506th operations office. “They outline what they want and we make it happen,” Magoc said.

For Soldiers returning from their second tour in Iraq – of which there

are many in the 506th – the change is noticeable and agreeable.

The 506th Infantry Regiment – the same regiment profiled in the HBO miniseries “Band of Brothers” – was redesignated shortly before the 101st returned to Iraq in November of 2005. Many of its Soldiers reenlisted to be assigned to the historical unit.

“They do backwards planning to get you down there,” said Sgt. 1st Class George Gadberry, a 506th Regimental Combat Team operations planner. “They get you a flight back to the States.”

Gadberry was with the 82nd Airborne Division



Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day

Spc. Trabonte Edison (left), Sgt. Matthew Howard (center) and Spc. Shaughn Ford celebrate their final moments in Kuwait before flying home to Campbell Army Airfield, Fort Campbell, Ky.

during the 2003 invasion of Iraq and redeployed later that year. “We got it more streamlined now.”

Also noticeable by the second-time Iraq veterans: “We didn’t have to go to the washracks,” said Sgt. Tiffany Biffle, who was in Mosul with the 101st in 2003.

As units leave Iraq, most of the equipment stays in theater, keeping vehicles off the roads and away from the Camp Arifjan washracks, where the 101st Soldiers recalled long, cold, wet days in the winter of 2004.

The Single Ticket Express allows more time for units to focus on Relief in Place/Transfer of Authority, and less time preparing their flight out of Iraq.



Photo by Spc. Debrah A. Robertson

Two 101st Airborne Division “Screaming Eagles” load onto a bus destined for a Kuwait air base, where they flew home after a year-long tour in East Baghdad.



It's not the 100-meter sprint

Arifjan test track ensures vehicles perform when they need to

Story and photos by

Spc. Debrah Robertson
Desert Voice Staff Writer

Seventy tons of steel plow down a paved road. The M1A1 Abrams tank's treads pull it forward with surprising ease and it takes the next curve like a track star on the final turn to the finish line.

This is not a scene out of Baghdad. This is a typical sight at the Army Field Support Battalion-Kuwait Test Track at Camp Arifjan, supporting Third Army/U.S. Army Central.

The battalion uses the test track, built in January, to test drive an assortment of vehicles for the Army Materiel Command.

"Every man and woman that serves our country deserves the best piece of equipment," said Sgt. 1st Class Cornelius Parson, an AFS Battalion M1A1 systems maintainer. "I feel great knowing I make a difference keeping units' combat readiness up to strength so that they can accomplish the mission in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Built by the Corps of Engineers, the track hosts the largest tank built today, the Abrams.

"It is important to test tanks on the track for safety and control measures," said Parson.

Capable of smashing through city rubble and destroying the enemy, the maintainers treat the Abrams like a delicate piece of equipment on the track, with every maintenance issue addressed.

If there is a maintenance problem, such as a tread breaking, then it is safer for it to occur on the designated track, said Parson. It also helps to have the vehicle in an isolated area so that the maintainers easily spot leaks along the track.

If the tank test track was not available

to the tank maintainers, they would have to lay a course out in the desert, said Parson.

Using the circular track allows for an unlimited distance, whereas a course marked in the desert would require the operator to drive back and forth because it is too difficult to mark a circular course in the desert, he said.

After the contractors at AMC repair a vehicle, the maintainers quality assure it. "We are strict on our checks," said Sgt. 1st Class Dale Green, an Abrams maintainer with the AFS Battalion.

The maintainers ensure it meets 10 crew level maintenance and 20 mechanic level maintenance standards.

Once the maintainers are out on the track testing tanks, they guarantee the engine has 100 percent horsepower and the suspension works like it should, said Sgt. 1st Class David Moore, also an Abrams maintainer

with the AFS Battalion.

The maintainers also quality assure the brake systems. It is important that such vital systems work properly, he said.

Fire controls and the nuclear, biological and chemical systems can save the lives of the tankers who will operate the Abrams in combat, said Moore. These safety controls are vital to both the tank and the tanker.

What may seem like a small problem to a civilian in his privately owned vehicle, can mean the difference in making it home alive to a Soldier or Marine in battle.

Running out of gas in the streets of Baghdad is not a viable option.

"We assure the tank will get the proper fuel mileage [for the war fighter]," said Parson, "and the vehicle will be able to perform the mission."

"After all that, the tanks are ready to move up north," said Moore.



Sgt. 1st Class Cornelius Parson, an AFS Battalion M1A1 systems maintainer, examines the treads of an M1A1 Abrams tank prior to its test on the Army Field Support Battalion-Kuwait Test Track at Camp Arifjan.

Discussing the future

Civil affairs personnel pave path forward

Capt. Mike Wallace
377th Theater Support Command Public Affairs Officer

Military and civilian forces interested in civil affairs and rebuilding Iraq attended an unprecedented meeting during the first week of November at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. The 377th Theater Support Command sponsored a three-day event, making it possible for numerous nations to exchange ideas where efforts should be placed to improve the lives of Iraqi citizens.

Maj. Gen. Thomas Robinson, the 377th TSC Commander, hosted the three-day symposium.

The first part of the three-part symposium consisted of lectures by the civil affairs people representing several coalition nations. It provided a free-flow of information and afforded attendees the opportunity to exchange ideas to improve civil and military conditions in Iraq.

The second part of the symposium, attended by almost 200 Soldiers, was a lecture given by the Iraqi ambassador to Kuwait, Hamid R. Al Sharifi, who spoke about the changes that have occurred in his country, and what plans and projects the government has to improve human conditions in his homeland.

The last part of the symposium consisted of 'round-table' talks where all attendees built upon the ideas from each other and forged plans for future operations. A verbal end of course critique was conducted in order to formulate future events.

"The symposium broke new ground in several respects," said Lt. Col. Kyle F. Runte, the Director of International Military Affairs.

The symposium had operational commands represented in a forum. Additionally, participation from the civil affairs attendees allowed the operators in the area of operation to conduct much-needed personal coordination with other people and units.

Runte points out that the ability to have representation from the host nation's Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Interior in Kuwait, was strategically important. It sent a strong signal of support to the national representation of Iraq.

"A definite highlight was Ambassador Al Sharifi's candid presentation that provided insight that only a member of the affected population could provide," Runte noted about the highest ranking Iraqi official to address a military audience in the State of Kuwait.

The event was so successful that it will be adopted by Third Army/U.S. Army Central for future symposiums.

Just One Question...

What is your favorite Thanksgiving tradition?



"Gluttony and football."

Cmdr. Simon Cole
Chief Staff Officer
Navy Expeditionary Logistic
Support Group
Fair Haven, N.J.



"Back home we eat turkey, ham and hot water cornbread, and we watch the Dallas Cowboys."

Sgt. Patrick Lacy
Human Resource Specialist
HHC, 3rd PERSCOM
Toledo, Ohio



"Going to the movies after Thanksgiving."

Petty Officer 2nd Class
Alicia Mitchell
Administrative Specialist
Navy Expeditionary
Logistic Support Group
Charleston, S.C.



"Cooking and having the family for the holiday."

Sgt. 1st Class Ginger Kusek
Human Resource Specialist
HHC, 3rd PERSCOM
Schenectady N.Y.



"Sitting around the table eating a good soul food dinner with family and friends."

Sgt. Tresha Jeter
Command Group Assistant
13th Finance Group
Spartanburg, S.C.

Hometown Hero

Senior Chief Albert Diaz
Administrative Officer, Navy
Logistic Support Group

Diaz said he works to ensure his fellow servicemembers' paperwork and record entries are completed and accurate.

Talks about what he misses about his hometown, Jacksonville, Fla.

"I miss everything we Americans are here to protect, but the one thing would be walking my little doggy, Mr. Vegas, around the neighborhood."





Photos courtesy of the 11th PAD

Happy *Thanksgiving*

Check your MWR events calander for holiday events at your camp

