

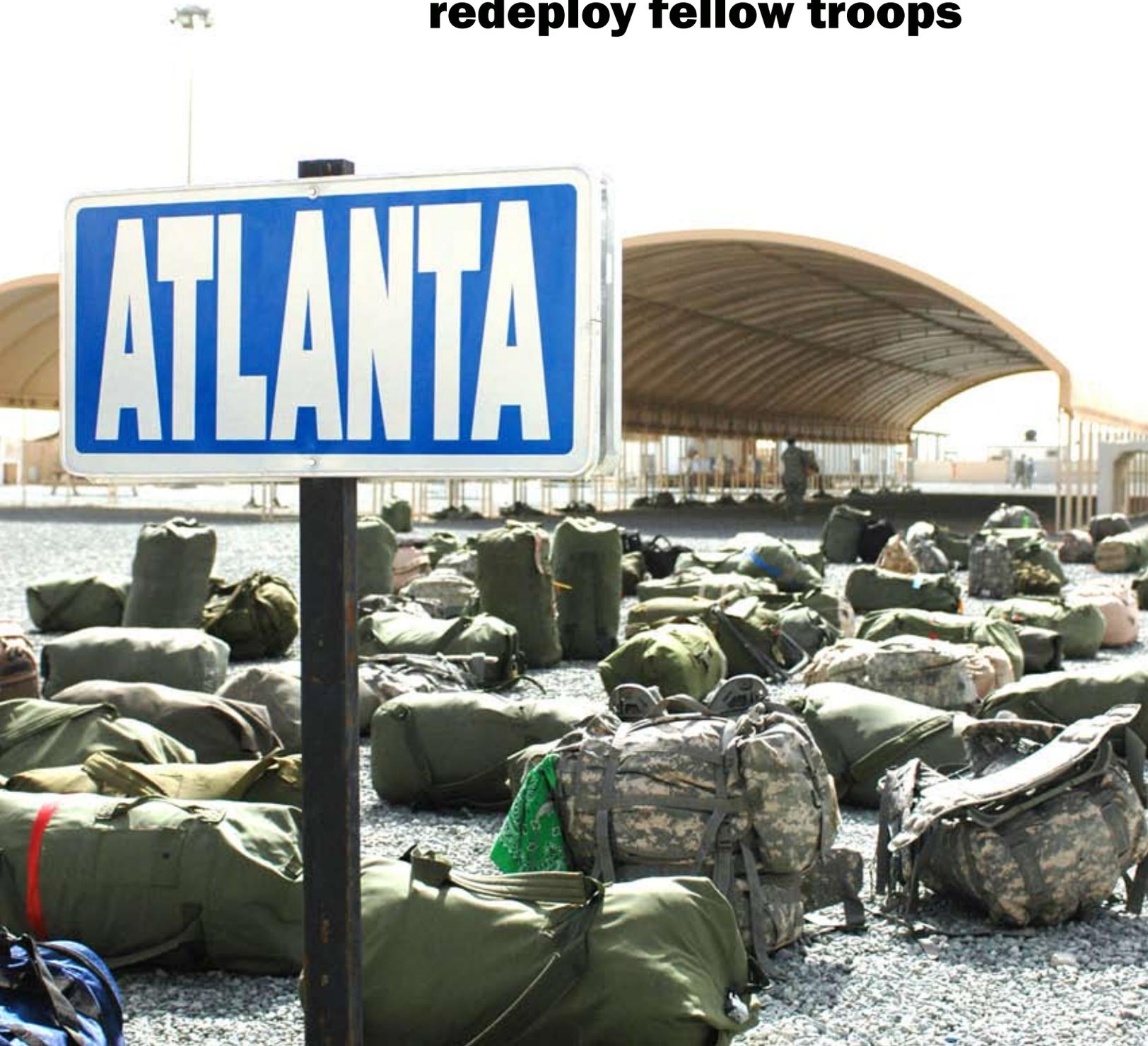
DV

Desert Voice Magazine
Serving U.S. and Coalition Forces in Kuwait

April 4, 2007

Heading home

**U.S. Soldiers help
redeploy fellow troops**



DV Contents

Page 3

Heroism saves lives, earns award

Page 4

26.2 miles: Servicemembers endure Camp Buehring marathon

Page 6

Soldiers help fellow troops home for leave and back into theater

Page 8

Together, naturally: Often separated by missions in Iraq, twin sisters savor moments together in Kuwait

Page 10

Soldier's journey from Atlanta's courts to Kuwait

Page 11

Army Emergency Relief allows Soldiers to help Soldiers

Page 12

Founders' Day: A West Point tradition comes to Camp Arifjan

On the cover

Dress right dress, the baggage of traveling troops awaits transfer to Atlanta.

Photo by Spc. Debrah A. Ledesma

Training to sustain readiness

If we're attacked, can we fight and win?

That's a question all leaders should ask themselves about their Soldiers. Whether they're at a forward operating base in Iraq or at a headquarters company at Camp Arifjan, combat readiness must be a constant priority.

Soldiers have to be

able to attack the enemy

and emerge victorious. By constantly having thorough training – not check-the-block training – on the 39 warrior tasks and nine battle drills, leaders can give Soldiers confidence and abilities to be more effective.

We all owe it to our families and friends to come home alive. And to do that, Soldiers need to have excellent physical fitness, weapons marksmanship, first aid expertise and battle drill knowledge.

These are what Soldiers learn in basic training, and they remain the foundation of every Soldier in the Army. We are all riflemen and warriors first.

These skills are perishable, so it's important to reinforce the training. It's the responsibility of every NCO to improve Soldiers' skills.

Although some of us are serving in Kuwait supporting Third Army/ U.S. Army Central, we're still in a

combat zone and we must remain vigilant.

While also maintaining and improving our warrior skills, Soldiers must take every opportunity possible to improve their job skills.



Command Sgt. Maj. Franklin G. Ashe
Third Army Command Sergeant Major

By practicing all of these

skills, improvement and success can be achieved. Take the opportunity to qualify on other weapons – broaden your knowledge and expertise.

What happens if you have to use a M249 instead of an M16?

Protect yourself and your Soldiers – and improve your credibility – by challenging your capabilities.

By doing these things, you will become a better Soldier and a better leader. The next time you're at work, consider: "If we were attacked right now, would I know what to do?"

It's up to all of you to not only consider the worst-case scenario, but to prepare for it. Keep yourself and your buddy safe by learning those 39 warrior tasks and nine battle drills.

"Third – Always First"



Heroism saves lives, earns award

**Petty Officer 3rd Class
Jessica A. McIver
NMCB 133**

“The accident occurred within just a few minutes as the air was still full of dust,” said Gunnery Sgt. Tom McCarty, military advisor to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133.

At 5:30 a.m. on March 14, five members of NMCB 133 were en route to the Udairi Range in Kuwait for a training exercise when they arrived at the scene of a traffic accident involving two 20-passenger vans and a four-door Nissan truck, which happened only moments before the Seabees’ arrival.

Led by McCarty, NMCB 133 personnel responded immediately with medical care and on-scene organization. And on March 27, they each received an Army Commendation Medal from Col. John Alexander, Area Support Group-Kuwait commander, while deployed to Kuwait in support of Third Army/U.S. Army Central.

McCarty said, “Everywhere you looked, 133 guys were there. They were cutting bandages, hooking up IV’s and bringing in (medical evacuation) choppers to get the seriously injured to the hospital.”

While McCarty ensured emergency services were contacted, Petty Officer 1st Class Charlotte “Doc” Bethea immediately began assessing casualties and creating a Casualty Collection Point.

With assistance from Petty Officer 2nd Class Kelly Caponigro, Bethea began bandaging the injured and administering IVs as needed.

“I was helping ‘Doc’ as best I could with bandages and helping cut clothing away from the injured,” said Caponigro. “We were moving



Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Nicholas Lingo

From left to right, Gunnery Sgt. Tom McCarty, Petty Officer 1st Class Charlotte “Doc” Bethea, Petty Officer 2nd Class Kelly Caponigro, Petty Officer 2nd Class Tyler Morgan and Seaman Recruit Nicholas Condon, all attached to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133, received an Army Commendation Medal on March 27 for their actions from Col. John Alexander, Area Support Group-Kuwait commander.

from body to body so fast.

“I was trying to stay busy so I couldn’t react to what was truly going on.”

The number of casualties was beyond the medical supply capabilities of the five responders, but the Seabees adapted to the situation and assisted as best they could.

Bethea recalls how appreciative the injured were of her efforts.

“I remember one of the men saying, ‘Thank you, Soldier, thank you, Soldier.’ Even with my lack of supplies, he was thankful that I was doing what I could for him,” said Bethea.

When McCarty discovered two

men pinned beneath one of the passenger vans, he worked with Petty Officer 2nd Class Tyler Morgan and Seaman Recruit Nicholas Condon to rescue the men.

Overcoming the language barrier, the rescuers successfully organized the uninjured survivors to lift the van, thus allowing Morgan, Condon and McCarty to pull the two severely injured men to safety.

Reflecting on Seabee readiness and the team effort evident during the rescue, Bethea said, “More than anything else, I am so proud of the Seabees that were there with me.

“They stepped up and did whatever was asked of them without a second thought or hesitation.”



2

Sgt. Chris Jones
Desert Voice Staff Writer

For Spc. James Dillabaugh, qualifying for the Boston Marathon was a lifetime goal - one he accomplished by finishing the Chicago Marathon last year.

He was all set to run the Boston Marathon later this month, but duty called. Two weeks ago, the chaplain's assistant with Third Army/U.S. Army Central deployed to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

Although the Boston Marathon would have to wait, Dillabaugh, a 53rd Transportation Battalion Soldier, learned recently that he could still run a marathon this spring.

At Camp Buehring, March 25, the 2nd Annual Camp Buehring Marathon took place. Dillabaugh finished first in his age group, 20 to 29, and fourth place overall.

Running a 26.2-mile race in the Kuwait desert is no small task, so organizers combated the potentially extreme heat by beginning the race at 4 a.m. and offering water and juice, along with energy bars and fruit, at several checkpoints.

Of the 110 marathon participants, 89 percent completed the race -- compared to the national average of 50 percent, according to Camp Buehring sports coordinator Kevin Marts.

For Dillabaugh, running a marathon in Kuwait wasn't a personal goal nor was it something he had planned to do -- but when he learned about it, he jumped at the opportunity.

"I love the sport of distance running," said Dillabaugh. "It's a morale booster. I love it."

Although the Boston Marathon was what he had trained for, the Camp Buehring Marathon gave him something few others have -- and the T-shirt given out to participants is proof.

"The T-shirt is worth its weight in gold," said Dillabaugh. "I'm in a lot of run clubs back home, and to have one that says 'Kuwait' is unique... more than likely I won't run into someone who has the same T-shirt. I can say I did a marathon in the middle of the desert while deployed."

At the Chicago Marathon, Dillabaugh finished the race in three hours, seven minutes. But due to the high operational tempo, he did not have much time to train for the Camp Buehring Marathon, so he set his goal at four hours. When he finished at three hours, 37 minutes, he saw it as a major success.

As a chaplain's assistant, Dillabaugh uses a faith-based technique that helps him during long runs.

"A lot of times during long runs, I pray," said Dillabaugh. "It seems to really help me."

Dillabaugh realizes that staying physically fit during a deployment is essential to staying motivated. And when the Boston Marathon comes around again, he not only be ready, he will be sporting a T-shirt that perhaps no other runner will have.



6



1



2



miles

Service
Camp

(Left) Faces of the Camp Buehring Marathon. Servicemembers endured the 26.2 mile race March 25.

(Top right) Servicemembers begin the Camp Buehring Marathon.

(Bottom right) Spc. James Dillabaugh rests his hands on his head after completing the Camp Buehring Marathon March 25.

(Below) A servicemembers crosses the finish line of the Camp Buehring Marathon.



Photo by Sgt. Chris Jones



Photo by Sgt. Chris Jones



Photo by Sgt. Chris Jones

Honor Roll

Top finishers

Camp Buehring Marathon

Males

Age 50+

1. Higgins 4:33:45
2. Millsaps 5:07:17

Age 40-49

1. Ernzew 3:56:28
2. Johnston 4:20:24
3. Schooler 4:29:32

Age 30-39

1. Phil Gruwell 3:55:33
2. William Fisher 3:56:12
3. Dexter Ferguson 4:25:48

Age 20-29

1. James Dillabaugh 3:38:05
2. Surye Gurung 3:45:15
3. Mical Bushhouse 3:53:28

Overall winners

1. Joe Adams 2:59:54
2. Paul Norwood 3:15:22
3. Paul Allen 3:28:46

Females

Age 50+

N/A

Age 40-49

N/A

Age 30-39

1. Audrey Gipson 5:17:29

Age 20-29

N/A

Overall winners

1. Ramirez 4:54:13
2. Jenise Smith 4:54:28
3. Holly Ball 4:54:45

Servicemembers endure Camp Buehring Marathon



Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day

Spc. Tristan Aldequer (right) assists a Soldier about to go on leave. Flights regularly leave Kuwait to take troops home on leave and the Soldiers of the 556th Personnel Support Battalion help them through the process.

Soldiers help fellow troops home

Sgt. Thomas L. Day
Desert Voice staff writer

Thousands of servicemembers departed – either for 15-day leave from Iraq or for redeployment – from Kuwait in February. In October, the total was more than 30,000.

With support from the 556th Personnel Services Battalion, the 377th Theater Support Command handles them all. The 377th TSC supports Third Army/U.S. Army Central and oversees every flight coming in and out of theater.

“By the time it’s all said and done, we’re looking at over 800,000 people processing through our area (during a one-year deployment),” said Capt. William Claybrooks.

Claybrooks, a reservist from Nashville, Tenn., based in Pittsburgh, oversees the outbound flights. He has a tracking database on his computer that monitors three flight schedules: troops flying across the Atlantic on leave, those redeploying with their units and individual redeployments, sent home because of health or personal issues.

Individual redeployments fly home on the “Freedom Flights” going either to Fort Dix, N.J., or Fort Bliss, Texas. Units smaller than 50 people leave on the Freedom Flights as well, Claybrooks said.

Usually one Freedom Flight a week leaves Kuwait. Hundreds of passengers can fit on the flight

leaving for Atlanta; less can fit on the aircraft bound for Texas.

The numbers are much higher when the unit processes troops on their way home for leave.

Capt. James Mendoza of Dixon, Calif., a California National Guardsman, has been in Kuwait since February of 2006. His task is to usher every Soldier – “an average of about 450 a day” he said – on trans-Atlantic flights home.

Alshamel Travel and Tourism, a Kuwaiti travel company, schedules leave flights from the desert to the States. Mendoza is the only U.S. servicemember in the Alshamel Travel and Tourism shop.

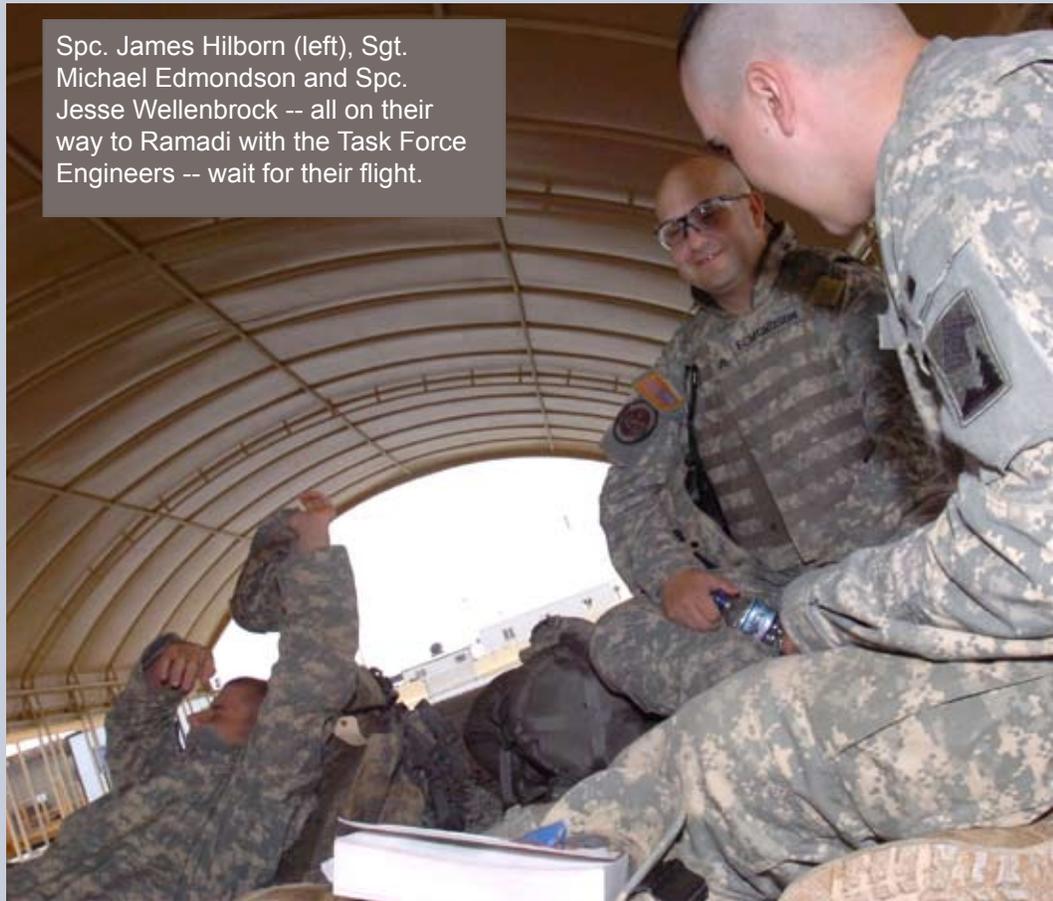
According to Mendoza, 10 million

dollars a month is spent on airfare for mid-tour leave, “and that’s not including (contracting) the aircrafts.”

The unit makes the process as swift as possible. Staff Sgt. Luis Valentin of the 556th Personnel Services Battalion, scans the identification cards, inputting the servicemember into the database. While he is doing that, Spc. Amanda Barron, also of the 556th PSB, grabs a microphone and outlines point-by-point what the hundreds of servicemembers need to do to depart Kuwait as smoothly as possible.

“Our goal is to have people in and out of here within 24 hours,” said Claybrooks. That 24-hour process includes scheduling the itinerary with Al Shamel Travel and Tourism, a thorough customs inspection of luggage, and manifesting the flight.

Not surprisingly, the unit runs a 24-hour-a-day operation.



Spc. James Hilborn (left), Sgt. Michael Edmondson and Spc. Jesse Wellenbrock -- all on their way to Ramadi with the Task Force Engineers -- wait for their flight.

Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day



Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day

Spc. Amanda Barron of the 556th Personnel Services Battalion collects identification cards to input troops into a database before they fly out on leave. The 556th PSB tracks all of the personnel on leave in theater.



(Inset) Twin sisters Sgt. Tasha Gerken, right, and Sgt. Ashley Gerken look through a “Stars and Stripes” newspaper, changing words of the headlines into humorous phrases. It’s a hobby the two picked up while deployed to Kuwait.

(Watermark) The Gerken twins, NCOs with the 217th Transportation Company, walk side-by-side to the motor pool.



TOGETHER,

Often separated twin sisters savor together at Camp

Sgt. Chris Jones
Desert Voice Staff Writer

Sgt. Tasha Gerken is left-handed. It’s an important bit of information if you want any chance of distinguishing her from Sgt. Ashley Gerken, her twin sister.

Of course, through their eyes, there are plenty of differences.

“You wouldn’t want two Tashas,” said Ashley, smiling at her sister.

“It’s better than two Ashleys,” her sister responds.

Deployed to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, the Iowa-born twins are truck drivers in the 217th Transportation Company, supporting Third Army/U.S. Army Central.

Ashley and Tasha are virtually

indistinguishable by appearances, and they have been known to play tricks on members of their unit.

Sometimes Tasha’s squad leader, Staff Sgt. Timmie Wilkins, approaches his Soldier to relay information to her, unaware that Tasha is not really Tasha.

“It’s confusing,” said Wilkins. “I go up and talk to this one [pointing at Ashley], and she’ll just let me go on and on...”

“I have to get the same information twice,” quipped Tasha.

If life seems complicated as one of the Gerken’s squad leader, imagine being a boyfriend.

Ashley recalls a time in high school when a guy she was dating got a little confused.

“Her boyfriend got mixed up after [Ashley] left the room,” said Tasha,

“and he came up to me and starting touching my leg and hugging me. I was like, ‘um, hello?’”

The Gerkens’ Army career began in Manson, Iowa, after their junior year at Manson Northwest Webster High School. At this time, the twins were off to Basic Training. They went to Advanced Individual Training upon graduating the following year.

The Gerkens’ primary mission in theater isn’t actually in Kuwait – the twins drive heavy equipment transporters, distributing cargo to various camps in Iraq.

Dangerous as their job is, their unit ensures the Gerken twins are never in the same convoy while in Iraq.

“What it boils down to is that if something happens [on the road], you don’t want it to happen to both of



NATURALLY

by missions in Iraq,
for every moment
at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait

them,” said Wilkins.

With such a rule in place, the Gerken sisters don’t often get to see each other, even though they are deployed to the same camp. But both Ashley and Tasha say they know it’s for the best, especially with the peace-of-mind it offers their other family members back home.

However, Ashley and Tasha aren’t used to being away from each other; in fact, the first time one went on a mission in Iraq was the longest they had ever been separated.

“Back home, we spend every minute together,” said Ashley. “We spend a lot less time together here because of [the mission].”

And during these times of separation, family members are quick to remind the sisters to not only keep

in touch with family back home, but also with each other. “I’ll get e-mails from mom,” said Ashley, “and she will say, ‘Tasha misses you. E-mail her.’”

But when they do get the chance to be together at Camp Arifjan, they take advantage of it.

“We don’t spend much time away from each other when we’re both here,” said Ashley. “We’re lucky to have family here, and we’re best friends.”

Sibling rivalries may be common, especially among twins, but Ashley and Tasha consider themselves unique since they rarely argue and jealousy is hardly an issue – “except when I get more comments on [the Web site] Myspace,” says Ashley. “[Tasha] gets kind of jealous when that happens.

She’s like, ‘Why did mom leave you a comment and not me?’”

Their friendship is such that whenever the two discuss future plans, the plans normally include each other.

After their redeployment, they plan on settling down in El Paso, Texas, a place they “fell in love with” while being mobilized at nearby Fort Bliss.

They want to buy several acres of property to build a ranch, where they can breed horses.

For their family in northwestern Iowa, El Paso isn’t as close as they would like to be to the twins, but at least they can rest easy, knowing they’ll be in good company.

“We’re so used to being together that we always find a way to hang out,” said Tasha. “It’s just natural for us to be together.”

Trading uniforms, not jobs



Photo by Capt. Gregory Majewski

Lt. Col. Ural Granville, a Judge Advocate General officer and Superior Court Judge from Atlanta, speaks to 335th Theater Signal Command (Provisional) Soldiers at the Zone 1 Chapel at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, during a law of war briefing for Soldiers in a combat zone.

■ From robes to combat boots, a Soldier's transformation

Capt. Gregory Majewski
335th Theater Signal Command

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Ural Glanville recently traded in his black judicial robes for Army camouflage green to provide legal services and counsel to troops serving in the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

As an Army Reserve lieutenant colonel, Glanville is the Staff Judge Advocate for the 335th Signal Command headquartered in East Point, Ga., and is serving in his first overseas deployment in his military career.

"I really enjoy working with Soldiers," said Glanville, who is deployed to Kuwait in support of Third Army/U.S. Army Central. "Whenever you can help a Soldier bring a problem or a legal issue to

resolution, you are adding value to that Soldier and for the unit that he or she serves."

Glanville said both the civilian and military courts have many similarities, with justice being the ultimate goal.

"Both systems provide due process, a right to counsel, everything you expect as outlined in our constitution, only there are some procedural differences on how each is done," said Glanville.

Glanville has been a judge in metro Atlanta for 10 years.

He recently presided over the nationally publicized Lena Dreskel murder trial.

That was the case where 79-year-old Dreskel shot and killed her 85-year-old boyfriend because she thought he was cheating on her.

With his courtroom career on hold,

Glanville is providing valuable counsel for both commanders and troops.

Judge Advocate General's offices are like a full-service law firm.

The JAG officers provide everything from traditional military justice, legal assistance to administrative law.

But when a unit is deployed to a theater of war, a JAG officer must also provide advice on counterinsurgency and contracting.

"I provide the legal analysis and coordination with other staff sections to ensure our commercialization efforts are properly planned, funded and executed," said Glanville.

The Global War on Terror has also brought counterinsurgency efforts to the forefront of a JAG's responsibility.

Glanville said that commanders also rely on JAGs to ensure the law of war is properly followed.

"If we are going to engage in any type of combat operation, JAGs play an important role in providing legal advice to commanders on a wide scope of legal issues," said Glanville.

Brig. Gen. Stuart Dyer commands the 335th Theater Signal Command's (Provisional) operating facility located on Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

Glanville is Dyer's SJA.

He speaks very highly on the importance of having JAG officers like Glanville in theater.

"He's my key legal advisor," said Dyer. "He not only is an advisor to me, but also to every Soldier in the command when it comes to legal matters."

Army Emergency Relief

Army Emergency Relief donation season is upon us. AER is a private nonprofit organization incorporated in 1942 by the Secretary of War and the Army Chief of Staff. AER's sole mission is to help Soldiers and their dependents.

Army Emergency Relief helps the following personnel:

- Soldiers on extended active duty and their dependents.
- Members of the Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve on continuous active duty for more than 30 days and their dependents.
- Soldiers retired from active duty because of longevity or physical disability and their dependents.
- Widows, widowers and orphans of Soldiers who died while on active duty or after they retired.

AER can help with emergency financial needs for:

- Food, rent or utilities
- Emergency transportation and vehicle repair
- Funeral expenses
- Medical/dental expenses
- Personal needs when pay is delayed or stolen
- Give undergraduate-level education scholarships, based primarily on financial need, to children of Soldiers

AER cannot:

- Help pay for nonessentials
- Finance ordinary leave or vacation
- Pay fines or legal expenses
- Help liquidate or consolidate debt
- Assist with house purchase or home improvements
- Help purchase, rent or lease vehicle
- Cover bad checks or pay credit card bills

Assistance is available for you at more than 1,800 locations around the world. All financial assistance provided by these organizations to Soldiers is funded by AER.

For more information, go to the AER Web site at <http://www.aerhq.org/index.asp>.

Just One Question...

What food do you miss?



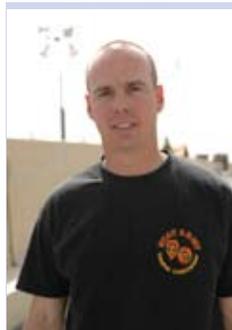
"Breadfruit. It's kind of like a cantaloupe, but it tastes like a potato."

Staff Sgt. Bedinin Joseph
Combined Joint Task Force -82
Transportation Management NCO
Marshall Islands/Pohnpei



"I like the American Grand Slam at Waffle House."

Pvt. Eddie Davis
Welder
227th Infantry Battalion
Charlotte, N.C.



"Nothing. We get everything we need over here. All the dining facilities are very good."

Maj. John Sego
Aide-de-Camp
Multinational Division - North
Eminence, Mo.



"I love Spanish food - you can't get it over here."

Spc. Tricia Thomas
Patient Administration Specialist
399th Combat Support Hospital
Carver, Mass.



"I miss crabs and seafood and candied yams and collard greens."

Pfc. DeAndre Hubbard
Awards Clerk
CFLCC C1
Delhi, La.



Hometown Hero

Staff Sgt. Pam Johnson

Human Resource NCO
CFLCC C4

Johnson helps process personnel actions, NCO evaluation reports and awards for more than 60 Soldiers.

Johnson talks about why she misses Hager City, Wis.

"My family...and I miss the spring, the fresh air and my backyard creek where the little ducks and trout are swimming."



Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day

Military leaders, distinguished guests and a Kuwaiti foreign minister pose for a photograph March 21 at the dining facility on post to commemorate “Founders’ Day” which celebrates the history and traditions of the United States Military Academy. Pictured in the photo (left) Brig. Gen. Stuart Dyer, 335th Theater Signal Command (provisional) commanding general and a 1978 graduate of the academy, U.S. Consul General, Sonny Busa and 1976 graduate of the Academy, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Saleem Al-Sabah, Maj. Gen. Dennis E. Hardy, the Third Army / U.S. Army Central deputy commanding general, Richard LeBaron, American Ambassador to Kuwait, Brig. Gen. Keith L. Thurgood, 377th Theater Support Command deputy commanding general and Lt. Col (Ret.) Darrel Crawford, a 1976 graduate of the academy.

Founders’ Day

A West Point tradition comes to Camp Arifjan

Richard LeBaron, U.S. ambassador to Kuwait, joined top Third Army officers and Kuwait’s top foreign minister March 21 to celebrate Founders’ Day, an annual gathering of United States Military Academy graduates. LeBaron was welcomed by Maj. Gen. Dennis E. Hardy, the Third Army deputy commanding general, and Brig. Gen. Stuart M. Dyer, 335th Theater Signal Command (Provisional) commanding general and 1978 West Point graduate, for the ceremony.

Founders’ Day has been celebrated since 1914, when a group of West Point graduates met at New York’s Waldorf Astoria Hotel. The celebration has since expanded to USMA graduates across the globe every March.

Dyer addressed the attendees and said, “Our alma mater continues to amaze me with the quality of young Army officers that graduate every year; many who are now leading our nation’s sons and daughters on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan.”



Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day

Maj. Brian Vile and other United States Military Academy graduates sing the academy alma mater during the Founders’ Day dinner celebration March 21 at Camp Arifjan.