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

March 14, 2007

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Years Later



Celebrating women who are making history

March is Women's History Month. Normally it is a time to reflect on the achievements of women pioneers who fought for equality in the work place. This year, however, I am going to focus on today's female servicemembers who are serving alongside their male counterparts, doing the same jobs for the same pay, with the same professionalism. Troopers, who happen to be women, demonstrate daily the best our nation has to offer – courage, compassion, and a keen sense of duty.

Brave women serve in jobs from Afghanistan mountain passes and the skies above Iraq to supply routes connecting Kuwait and Iraq.

Oregon Army National Guard medics Staff Sgt. Jo Turner and Spec. Cheryl Ivanov, not only drive armored humvees for U.S. embedded trainers who accompany Afghan National Army and police on patrols - they also mentor healthcare providers and conduct classes for medics in the Afghan Army. Both earned Combat Medical Badges because of their work under fire in the dangerous mountain pass between Khost and Gardez, while assigned to the 41st Brigade Combat Team.

Spec. Jennifer Beck, 1075th Transportation Company, Nebraska National Guard, was driving a truck in a convoy traveling between Kuwait and Iraq when it came under attack in March 2005. When a rocket propelled grenade hit a vehicle in front of hers, Beck dismounted to render assistance. Under heavy fire, she climbed inside the cab and pulled a wounded Soldier out and away from enemy fire. Then, still under fire, Beck rallied the other drivers and led them out of the kill zone. For her



**Third Army Commanding General
Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb**

gallantry in action and calm leadership under fire, she received the Bronze Star Medal with "V" device.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Lori Hill, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), was piloting her Kiowa Warrior when the lead helicopter came under heavy fire in

Iraq in March, 2006. Hill drew the fire away, simultaneously

providing suppressive fire for the troops engaged with the enemy on the ground. When a rocket-propelled grenade hit her helicopter, Hill continued to provide aerial weapon support until the Soldiers on the ground reached safety. Her helicopter was already losing hydraulic power when it took on machine-gun fire. A round hit Hill in the ankle. With a damaged aircraft and an injury, Hill was able to land at a forward operating base, saving her crew and aircraft. For her actions, she was presented the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester, a military policeman in 617th Military Police Company of the Kentucky Army National Guard, in June, 2005, became the first woman since World War II to receive the Silver Star Medal. Her squad was shadowing a supply convoy when anti-Iraqi fighters ambushed the convoy. Hester led her team through the kill zone and into a flanking position, where she assaulted a trench line with grenades and M203 grenade-launcher rounds. Then, along with her squad leader, she cleared two trenches.

These Soldiers are to be commended for their efforts in saving lives and caring for others above themselves. They also serve as a shining reminder that duty and honor are products of the individual, not of gender.

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Honor those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq

On the cover

Sp. Nicholas Tompkins of the 12th Infantry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, conducts a cordon and search in Kahn Bani Sahd, Iraq, Feb. 6.

Staff Sgt. Stacy L. Pearsall

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Female officer reflects on 30 years of service: **'Be professional, be a human being, and be a lady.'**

Spc. Sarah B. Smith
377th TSC Public Affairs Office

Lt. Col. Amy Blumenthal, support operations plans officer, 377th Theater Support Command (Forward), celebrated her 30-year anniversary with the Army Reserve at Camp Arifjan, recently.

Over the past 30 years, Blumenthal has seen several changes for women, as an enlisted Soldier and as an officer.

"I've learned and seen a lot," said Blumenthal. "It [her military experience] has made me have more confidence in myself. I was a turtle in a shell, and now I'm out of the shell."

In 1979, Blumenthal was accepted into the National Guard Officer Candidate Program.

"This is when I realized, I had to survive in a world of men," she said.

The OCS platoons were organized by alphabetical order and, by chance, Blumenthal was the only woman in her platoon.

Blumenthal recalls how the female barracks was a five-minute walk from the male barracks, which made it difficult when the cadets were given only 10 minutes to

Lt. Col. Amy Blumenthal, support operations plans officer, 377th Theater Support Command (Forward), is on her 30th year in the Army Reserve, while deployed to Camp Arifjan.

change uniforms, which happened often.

"I almost quit when I had the honor of flag detail, and they [the men] changed the uniform on me right before it was time," said Blumenthal.

For a person that wanted no extra attention, she found herself getting picked on and singled out. This didn't stop her; she pushed all the way through the course.

"I did graduate in 1980, and I try to live by the three things they constantly taught throughout the course: respect noncommissioned officers, never forget where you came from, and be professional," Blumenthal said.

Another big change for Blumenthal was the integration of women and men.

"To an extent, I had a hard time with integration," said Blumenthal.

The Army pushed for males and

females to combine the training and move the living quarters closer together.

"The guys are like your brother. I can understand joint training and living in the same building, but at least have separate floors," she said.

"Be professional, be a human being and be a lady. You can still be a Soldier and a lady," Blumenthal said. "You know you've mastered push-ups when you can do them in a skirt," she continued.

It may be difficult to fully capture 30 years of Army Reserve experiences, but Blumenthal knows the only constant in life is change, and how she has reacted to changes is what best defines her.

"We come to work every day and something is different. Things change all the time; all that matters is how they evolve and make it better," said Blumenthal.



Photo by Spc. Sarah B. Smith



An Infantry Bradley Fighting Vehicle from the 3rd Infantry Division, patrols a road near a presidential palace of former Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class David K. Dismukes

Rolling into History

21 days to Baghdad, 4 years later

Sgt. Thomas L. Day Desert Voice Staff Writer

For the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Gen. Tommy Franks, commander of U.S. Central Command, needed one good man to lead his ground forces. Franks decided he would not take ground command for himself, something his Gulf War predecessor, Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, had done for the 1991 invasion of Kuwait.

That man, it was decided, would be worn by Lt. Gen. David McKiernan, the Third Army and Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) commander.

McKiernan was a product of the 1st Armored Division and 1st Cavalry Division [he commanded the 1st Cav. Div. before taking command of Third Army on Sept. 4, 2002]. He was handpicked for the command by Gen. Jack Keane, then the Army's Vice Chief of Staff, with the understanding that McKiernan would be leading Third Army into combat. Keane would supplement McKiernan with the Army's finest field grade and general officers.

Lt. Gen. William Wallace, the V Corps commander, would be McKiernan's top field general. Wallace came with a Class of 1969 West Point ring, a tour in Vietnam under his belt and a reputation as a commander with candor. V Corps

would command some of the Army's most storied divisions: the 3rd Infantry Division, the 82nd Airborne Division and the 101st Airborne Division.

The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force would fall to Lt. Gen. James Conway. The invasion plan called for Conway's 1st MEF to move north along the Tigris River and charge into Baghdad from the east. Wallace's V Corps would pinch the Iraq capital from the west.

It was a force that did not include McKiernan's former outfits, the 1st Armored and 1st Cavalry Divisions, much to his dismay. "Speed kills," Franks told his commanders. McKiernan, according to the *Washington Post's* Thomas E. Hicks, did not buy into the lighter, quicker force his U.S. Central Command boss wanted.

March 19, 2003

The 1991 Gulf War began with more than 35 days of air strikes before the ground offensive, which lasted only 100 hours before Saddam Hussein called retreat. The invasion of Iraq would be different; the ground troops would move into Iraq as the U.S. Navy and Air Force surgically destroyed Saddam's command bases.

On March 19, America's first salvo hit Dora Farms, a compound outside Baghdad where CIA Director George Tenet believed Saddam was meeting with

his government's top officials. At 8:30 a.m., four satellite-guided missiles struck the compound, but Saddam escaped.

For the Third Army Soldiers waiting for combat, the March 19 air raid was the green light. On the morning of March 20, Franks and McKiernan, operating out of Camp Doha, Kuwait, dispatched the invading ground force.

The opening week of combat was beset by punishing dust storms and a surprisingly high will to fight among irregular forces operating in Iraq's southern provinces. But as the American ground campaign trudged along, Iraq's military strength had been decimated division by division by the intense air strikes.

By the time American troops reached towns where they expected fierce resistance from Iraq's Republican Guard, all that remained was burning materiel. Irregular forces, calling themselves the "Fedayeen" [for "Saddam's Men of Sacrifice"] remained a bugaboo for American commanders.

March 26, 2003

Wallace acknowledged in an interview with the *Washington Post's* Rick Atkinson that the "the enemy we're fighting is different from the one we'd waged against." The V Corps commander was stating publicly what McKiernan and his staff already knew. On March 26,



Photo by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson



Photo illustration by Sgt. Chris Jones

The Principals

(Above) Gen. Tommy Franks, U.S. Central Command, commander, visits with the troops of 101st Airborne Division, (Air Assault).

(Top Right) Lt. Gen. David McKiernan [right], commander of the Coalition Forces Land Component Command, talks on the phone in the War Room to his subordinate commanders on the ground forward in Iraq.

(Right) Lt. Gen. James T. Conway [left], the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force commander and Maj. Gen. James N. Mattis, the commander of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Unit consult with one another in Central Iraq, March 30, 2003.



Photo by Sgt. Joseph R. Chenelly

McKiernan, Wallace and Conway met face-to-face to redress the war plan.

Out of the March 26 meeting would come a new role for Wallace's V Corps. The 3rd Inf. Div. would lead the charge to Baghdad. The 101st Abn. Div. would protect the 3rd Infantry's rear, engaging Saddam's Fedayeen forces in An Najaf, Karbala and Al Hillah.

April 5 would mark the beginning of Saddam's "Waterloo" moment.

Thunder Run

Col. David Perkins, 3rd Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team commander, wanted to fell Saddam's regime with one quick strike. Perkins ordered Lt. Col. Eric Schwartz and his Bradley tank battalion to charge directly into Baghdad

at the break of dawn on April 5. Schwartz, according to the *Los Angeles Times'* David Zucchini, asked his brigade commander if he was joking.

"No," Perkins told Schwartz. "I need you to do this."

Schwartz would lead 3rd Inf. Div. into the Saddam International Airport. On April 7, 3rd Inf. Div. would take the Central Baghdad regime district, what Carl von Clausewitz would call "the culminating point of the offensive." The 1st MEF, true to the original plan, rolled into Baghdad through the eastern approaches across the Diyalah River on April 8. Remnants of resistance remained in Baghdad, but Saddam Hussein no longer held dictatorial power over Baghdad.

For McKiernan, the overthrow of Saddam would mark the end of his tour in Iraq.

Post-war reconstruction duty was swiftly handed to civilian administrator Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Jay Garner [later succeeded by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer] and V Corps, under its new commander, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez.

McKiernan, since promoted to the rank of General, is now the commander of U.S. Army-Europe and 7th Army.

In the four years since, Third Army/U.S. Army Central, commanded by Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb, has operated with a forward team in Kuwait, ensuring forward forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are fully supported.



Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Nicholas Lingo



Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Jessica A. McIver

Seabee Services

(Top left) Petty Officer 3rd Class Joey Sanchez, a steel worker with the Seabees' Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133, uses a metal inert gas welding torch to repair traffic signs at the Alpha Company Yard on Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. The yard is home to hundreds of pieces of machinery used by the Seabees in construction projects throughout Kuwait.

(Top center) Seaman Jon Farewell (left), a builder constructionman with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133 controls the concrete hose, while Petty Officer 3rd Class James Pulfer, a builder with NMCB 26, vibrates air from the mix during construction of a ramp for a post office at Camp Arifjan. NMCB 133 and NMCB 26 are working together on several projects in Kuwait.

(Right) Petty Officer 2nd Class Theodore Bomba, a utilitiesman with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 26, sands wood to be used to renovate pre-fabricated concrete buildings on Camp Arifjan.

(Bottom left) Petty Officer 3rd Class Franklyn Tamarez, a steel worker with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133, uses an oxy-acetylene rig to cut through steel for a project on Camp Arifjan, recently.



Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Jessica A. McIver



Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Nicholas Lingo

Carrying a war

The 39th Transportation Battalion directs support for Iraq theater

Sgt. Thomas L. Day
Desert Voice Staff Writer

The 39th Transportation Battalion, an active duty support unit based in Germany, deployed to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, carries their unit history with their unit crest.

The unit insignia honors the outfit's World War II service in the Pacific theater, commemorating the 39th's support of the Allies in the Burma campaign. A snow-capped mountain recalls the mountain roads the unit traversed to supply forward Allied troops. In the foreground is a palm tree, remembering the more temperate climates the 39th encountered when they moved inland toward central Burma.

The unit motto is scrolled across in black letters: "We'll Carry You."

And the 39th has been doing just that ever since, supplying troops in 13 different campaigns in Vietnam and supporting American troops in Iraq since July of 2006.

Along with 49th Movement Control Battalion, a similar unit who operates in Iraq, the 39th has supplied the entire Iraq theater. "Between us two, we oversee all movement in Iraq," said Command Sgt. Maj. Ishmael Rodriguez, the 39th's top enlisted Soldier.

The 39th has carried more than three million Soldiers and contractors into Iraq since arriving in theater.

Maj. Brian Smith, the highway traffic division chief, and Maj. Robert Rouse, the 39th Movement Control Battalion support operations officer, coordinates the



Photo courtesy of the 39th Transportation Battalion

The 39th Transportation Battalion oversees sustainment pushes, such as the one pictured, into Iraq, supplying food, materiel and whatever else forward troops need at their forward operating base.

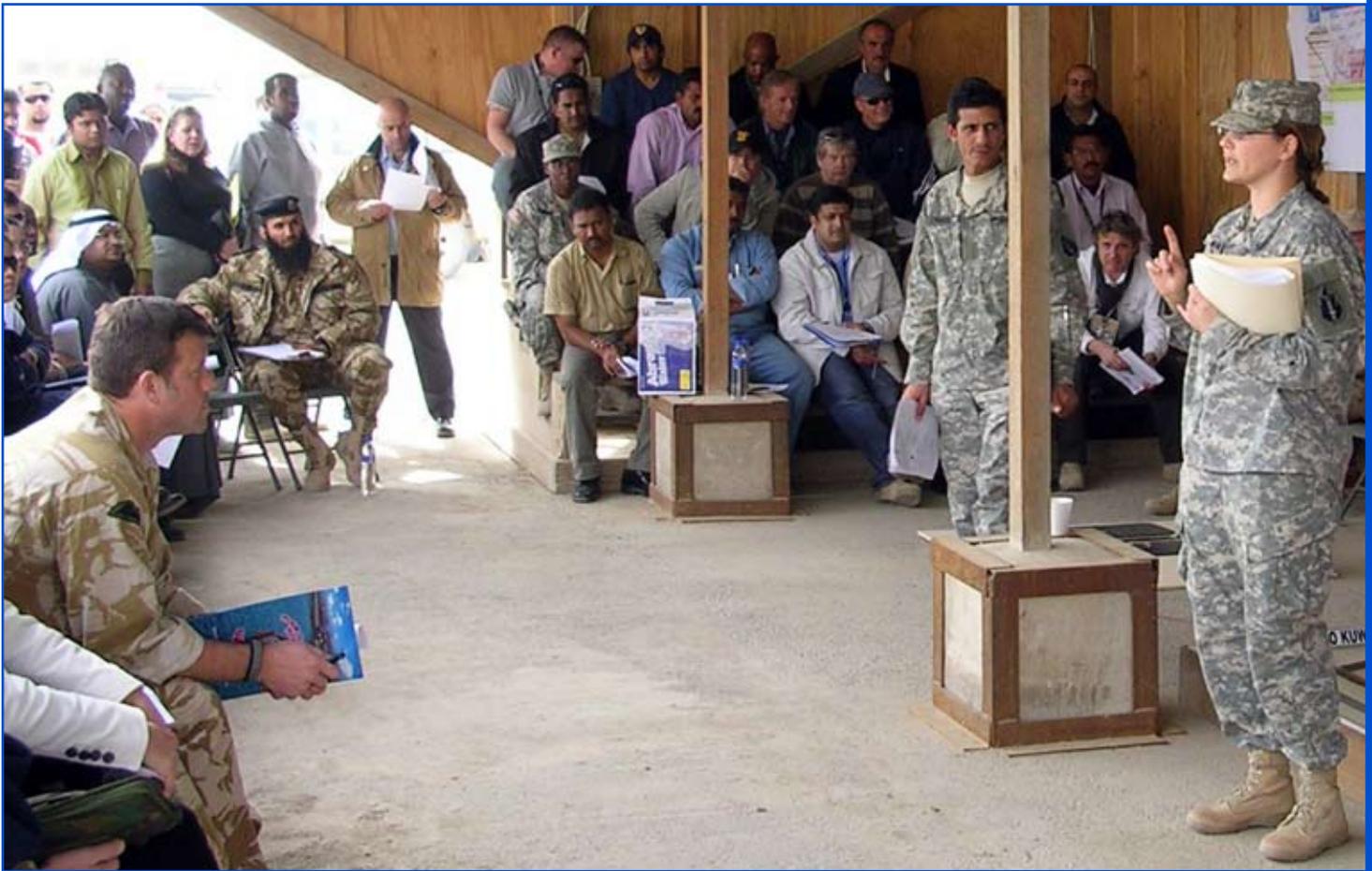


Photo courtesy of the 39th Transportation Battalion

Capt. Rebecca Mann talks with a group of U.S. and coalition Soldiers as well as U.S. Department of Defense contracted truck drivers before a supply convoy.

constant movement of 39th assets into Iraq.

“The main piece of my job is that I’m a contract representative for KBR,” said Rouse, referring to Kellogg, Brown and Root, a Halliburton subsidiary. “They provide a majority, about 90 percent, of the support in theater.”

Approximately 200 contracted employees from KBR work under the 39th Movement Control Battalion, according to Smith. The contractors primarily perform port and administrative duties for the 39th.

“We’re seamless in our organization, the only difference is they wear civilian clothes,” Rouse said. “There’s no us versus them mentality. They are 39th personnel, period.”

Enlisted Soldiers like Pfc. Adam Fultz monitor the massive volume of convoys moving north into Iraq – 30-50 a week, according to Fultz.

“Everything from food, water, construction materials for Multinational Corps-Iraq...we push

fuel up there,” said Fultz, a Springfield, Ohio, native.

Rouse and Smith work in an office at Camp Arifjan, where they sit under a flat-screen television with a map of Kuwait and Iraq. The screen reports where the 39th vehicles are going in what Smith calls “near real time.”

The system is equipped with the Movement Tracking System, which reports convoy status five to 15 minutes after the movement. “It allows us in real time (to know) where convoys are, so we can deconflict movement,” Smith said.

The MTS recently averted a disaster when an accident was reported less than a mile from an American compound in Kuwait. Smith was quickly able to direct the convoy to an alternate route, avoiding “a bigger traffic jam than we already had.”

Soon, with the addition of Blue Force Tracker (BFT), the 39th’s convoy reports will become even faster, reporting convoy movements deep inside Iraq in as fast as three minutes.



Photo by Staff Sgt. James E. Martin

Slovak Republic Land Forces redeploy after mission in Iraq

Staff Sgt. James E. Martin
377th TSC Public Affairs Office

“I am proud because they have done a very good job in Iraq,” said Frantisek Kasicky, Minister of Defence, Slovak Republic.

After more than three years of providing de-mining expertise and the destruction of 600 tons of explosives in Iraq, 120 soldiers from the Slovak Republic were greeted by their minister of defence during a redeployment ceremony in Kuwait, Feb. 25.

The day marked more than one occasion, however, before the Slovak Republic’s flag was lowered at the parade field.

Before the ceremony began, Kasicky met Lt. Col. Soud Al-Howide, representative of the Kuwait military, Jon Liscu, the Slovak Republic’s ambassador to Kuwait, and Maj. Gen. Thomas D. Robinson, 377th Theater Support Command, commanding general.

During the ceremony Capt. Marian Batyka, the liaison officer in Kuwait for the group, was recognized by Robinson with an Army Achievement Medal. Batyka was responsible for the Slovak Republic Land Forces’ needs in Iraq

and their subsequent redeployment from Iraq through Kuwait back to the Slovak Republic.

After this recognition, Maj. Miroslav Gardlo, the contingent commander, called the formation to attention to retire the colors.

Once lowered, the flag was then entrusted to Kasicky.

“This was a good opportunity for bi-lateral cooperation,” said Kasicky. “First thing gained is experience in a [combat] situation. This was not training. Second is language, and third is interoperability.”

Task Force Gator, a subordinate command within the 377th Theater Support Command (Forward), was responsible for the reception, staging and onward movement of the Slovak Republic’s redeployment process.

“They were good to work with, they had a good liaison officer, and it was a good transition from Iraq through Kuwait,” said Robinson.

The Slovak Republic may no longer have a ground presence in Iraq, but will have

five officers in the region and is currently supporting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization with soldiers in Afghanistan.

“The cooperation was very good. It was a good experience,” said Kasicky.

(Above) Soldiers from the Slovak Republic render honors during a redeployment ceremony in Kuwait, Feb. 25.

(Below) Maj. Gen. Thomas D. Robinson, commanding general, 377th Theater Support Command (Forward), thanks Frantisek Kasicky, minister of defence, Slovak Republic, as Maj. Miroslav Gardlo, contingent commander, looks on during a redeployment ceremony in Kuwait.



Photo by Staff Sgt. James E. Martin

Just One Question...

Who do you think will win March Madness?



"I really think Georgetown 'Hoyas' will win it this year. They're currently the #1 seed. The Big East is due to win it."

Maj. Jerry Armstrong
Officer in charge
Deployment/Redeployment
Operations, Strength Management
Division
Brandon, Miss.



"Kansas University 'Jayhawks.' They're ranked #2, and they're one of the youngest teams playing right now."

Master Sgt. Monti Stewart
Theatre clearance NCOIC
377th Theatre Support Command Re-
deployment Operations
Hutchinson, Kan.



"I'll pull for Duke. They've won before, and they usually do pretty well."

Karen Landreth
Help desk administrator
288th Signal Company
Camden, S.C.



"Wisconsin Badgers. Because I know their coach, and the team is actually pretty good."

Sr. Chief Petty Officer Mike Vanderwood
Operations senior chief
Navy Customs Headquarters
Riverside, Calif.



"Virginia. Virginia is still in, right? What about Georgetown? Yeah, I'll go with Georgetown."

Spc. Sherrica Griffin
Supply specialist
HHC, Third Army/U.S. Army Central
Hawkinsville, Ga.

How to submit video for the Camp Arifjan Command Channel

Procedures, requirements for submitting video

➡ Obtain written approval from the CFLCC Public Affairs Officer annotating that the video's content is acceptable for distribution over the government provided command channel.

➡ Drop off the video and written PAO approval at the Building 209 Help Desk for Sgt. 1st Class Samineo Myers.

➡ Inform Sgt. 1st Class Myers on the time schedule that the individual or unit desires the video to be aired (i.e. every hour for two weeks).

➡ Video must be submitted as a Windows media file.

➡ To find out more, call CFLCC PAO at DSN 430-7017

Hometown Hero



Sgt. Edward Pearce
Medical NCOIC
HHC, Third Army/U.S. Army Central
Pearce ensures medical care for the Soldiers in his unit, and directs the medical programs and training.

Pearce talks about why he misses Portland, Ore.

"Mountains, snowboarding, the beach, clean air, the nightlife -- at night it's the Pearl District, great art, clubs, wine-tasting in the street; it's just chill."



OIF + 4

March 20, 2003 –

**To honor the fallen,
visit these Web sites:**

<http://www.militarycity.com/valor/honor.html>

<http://www.ourheroes.org/>

<http://www.fallenpatriotfund.org/>

<http://www.iraqwarheroes.org/>

<http://www.iraqwar-memorial.com/>

All photos courtesy of
Department of Defense

