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

June 20, 2007



500,000th R&R passengers
begin their journey home

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On the cover

500,000th R&R passengers travel home for a much deserved break.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Alex Licea

From the Top

Uniform standards, not options

Once you put on a uniform, you are one of us.

As a Soldier or Department of the Army/Defense civilian, you represent values and traditions cemented by generations of sacrifice and service.

Wear the uniform proudly and correctly. I get irritated whenever I see people wearing

sloppy uniforms failing to meet the standard.

Drilled in basic and tested at employment, both Soldiers and civilians know the standards and where to find the documentation. For Soldiers, it's Army Regulation 670-1. For civilians, it's also in AR 670-1.

Civilians are allowed to wear nametapes and insignia that mark them as government employees. But, civilians are not allowed to wear the American flag or unit patch on the upper arms of the utility uniform.

There are a lot of DA and DOD civilians proudly serving overseas, facing many of the same dangers Soldiers deal with on a regular basis.

I understand your sacrifices and commitment, and I also understand your desire to serve with standard next to your comrades in uniform.

Check out the regulations and make sure you're doing the right thing.

I see similar issues with Soldiers. Make sure your unit patch and American flag are correctly centered on your Velcro pockets. Keep your hair within regulations – both male and female – and ensure your rank and last name are on your patrol caps.

Most of us appreciate the new uniforms,



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

especially since they don't need to be pressed and the boots don't need to be shined. But that's no excuse for going days without washing a uniform when laundry facilities are available.

I understand some of you want to prove how much you can endure, but that doesn't mean the rest of us need to smell you.

Also, there are cleaning kits available for the

desert boots. It doesn't take long to clean them, and you'll have more pride in your appearance.

Recently at Camp Arifjan, I saw a Soldier wearing a civilian shirt with Army physical training shorts.

By relaxing the standards – especially in a combat zone – that Soldier paraded his ignorance for others to see.

He should have been corrected by an NCO as soon as he stepped out of the barracks. Unfortunately, I had to be the one to correct him.

That Soldier could only have made it worse by wearing headphones in uniform.

Get it right. Soldiers are not allowed to mix-and-match uniforms, wear headphones, talk on cell phones while walking or smoke cigarettes outside designated smoking areas.

I challenge all NCOs to keep up the standards and enforce the regulations at all times – both with military and DA/DOD personnel.

Take pride in what you represent on a daily basis and recognize that you set the example. I realize that you're all in a combat zone – and that makes it even more critical not to accept failure.

“Third, Always First”

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Soldiers honored for strides in safety



Courtesy photo

The 377th Theater Support Command Sgt. Maj. Rossie Peters, the 377th Theater Support Commander Maj. Gen. Thomas Robinson, the Third Army and Commander Lt. Gen. R. Steven Whitcomb, and Third Army Command Sgt. Maj. Franklin Ashe, stand with the Department of the Army Exceptional Organization Safety Award, Division level presented to the 377th TSC.

Spc. Wes Landrum Desert Voice staff writer

Several individuals and units in the Third Army/U.S. Army Central Area of Operations were rewarded for their dedication to safety.

“Several of our people received Department of the Army awards for their great strides in safety,” said Col. Will Merrill, Third Army/U.S. Army Central Safety Director. “They distinguished themselves and brought good things to the command.”

Both the U.S. Army Medical Material Center - Southwest Asia and the 377th Theater Support Command claimed the Chief of Staff of the Army Exceptional Organization Award – the USAMMC-SWA for the Battalion Level and the 377th TSC on the Division Level. To qualify for the award, both units had to demonstrate significant improvements, sustained excellence or leadership in accident prevention programs and performance.

The Qatar-based USAMMC-SWA reduced their overall accidents and decreased the number of on-the-job injuries.

The 377th TSC also claimed their award by cutting their fatal accident rate by over 50 percent. The 377th also lowered their accident injury rates as well.

Merrill said the unit constantly pushed convoys north, logging millions of miles on long and oftentimes dangerous supply lines.

The 377th TSC also contributed greatly to the prevention of Army-wide Humvee roll-over accidents and those injuries associated with it. The command constructed the Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer or HEAT and implemented roll-over training as part of the Army Safe Driver Training Program.

To qualify for the Chief of Staff, Army, Individual

Award of Excellence in Safety Award, personnel have to make the most significant contribution to the Army accident prevention effort. The criteria also states that military personnel, through personal emphasis on Privately Owned Vehicles, have to lower their accident rate by 25 percent or more.

Chief Warrant Officer Faaruwq Muhammad, safety officer for the USAMMC-SWA, was able to assist his unit’s leaders in achieving their superior safety record. Through, Muhammad’s assistance, the organization had only eight days of work missed out of a total of a possible 29,930 work days.

Chief Warrant Officer Mark W. Grapin, 63rd Theater Aviation Brigade won his award for his exemplarily service as the safety officer for the brigade. Grapin was one of the people behind the development of the HEAT program.

Chief Warrant Officer James Melby, an aviation safety officer assigned to the ARCENT safety team, said bringing four out of nine possible awards back to Third Army was a testament to the safety standards set by the various safety officers in the area of operations.

“That’s really the pay-off at our level – the visibility that it brings to the safety mission,” Melby said. “That portrays safety in a positive and rewarding light.” Melby, said increased awareness by all led to them winning DA awards.

“Before you go out on a mission, go over the risk composite management,” Melby said. “If something doesn’t click, send the plan back up the chain and bring it to someone’s attention.”

Merrill said the award is not limited to safety officers. Anyone in the Army can be nominated for a safety award.

“Do a good job and take the credit for it. Nominate your individual or nominate your unit. It does not have to be a safety officer that is nominated,” Merrill said.

When you win one of these awards, it means that you or your unit’s safety program is the best one out there.” Melby encouraged all units within the Third Army/U.S. Army Central area of operations to reward their Soldiers for a safety job well done.

“AR 35-10 makes provision for small unit safety award programs,” Melby said. “You can also check in AR 672-74 for the criteria on awards.”

Merrill said units within the Third Army area of operations need to send in unit and individual nominations to the Camp Arifjan Safety Office by Oct. 31. The safety officer said they will take other things into account, not just accident prevention.

“We convene a board to look at the award packets. Not only do we look at accidents, but we also look at sexual assaults, alcohol and drug abuse,” he said. “We look at suicide rates and personal injuries as well.”

In the packet, Merrill said units must include why they deserve an award.

“The award’s process is very competitive. You have to show why you’re worthy of the award,” he said. “It’s not quite like getting an Army Achievement Medal; it’s like getting the only Army Achievement Medal. We grade them, tally up the scores and winner takes all. We send the winners up to Big Army for their awards in December.”

The 'Diamond Fi

Trebuchet competition helps artill

Pvt. Christopher Grammer
Desert Voice staff writer

To take a castle requires time and overwhelming numbers, but unless its defenses can be penetrated, numbers will lessen and time will run out as the force collides with solid stone walls.

Trebuchets, engines of war mainly employed in the destruction of masonry walls, were originally used in the 12th century B.C. Accurate and deadly, these early forms of artillery were responsible for the destruction of many a walled city.

At times diseased corpses were launched into the cities to spread disease amongst the residents as an early form of biological warfare.

After the discovery of gunpowder and the invention of the cannon these wooden devices of warfare became obsolete and only employed when gunpowder supplies ran out, such as Hernan Cortes' siege of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan in 1521. Cortes' trebuchet launched its first shot straight up and it land on the trebuchet itself.

For the 2nd Battalion 142 Field Artillery Regiment, trebuchets are a shadow from artillery's past. To get in touch with their roots, crude trebuchets were built and pitted against each other in competition on June 13, at Camp Patriot, Kuwait.

Three batteries under the Third Army/U.S. ARCENT area of operations arrived at the competition to fire three practice shots and three recorded shots. During its first practice shot however, Bravo battery's launching arm split in two as the force of the shot proved too much for it to handle. Two other trebuchets in the competition, however, successfully completed their first practice shots without incident.

Alpha Headquarters batteries completed the subsequent practice shots and were ready to see who engineered the superior siege engine, and who could employ greater skill in launching their rounds.



Photos by Pvt. Christopher Grammer

Bravo team of the 2nd Battalion 142 Field Artillery prepares to offload their trebuchet for the competition held at Camp Patriot, Kuwait on June 13th.

The ammo for the competition were cantaloupes. Not quite as deadly as the 250 pound boulders used in the past but far more efficient for being hurled into the Persian Gulf.

With buoys set up to gauge distance and a crew of Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal personnel in a zodiac to record, the competition.

Headquarters battery fired their first shot a distance of 160

res' get medieval

lery troops get in touch with roots

meters setting the standard for the match. Alpha battery's response of only 58 meters failed to top Headquarters shot, with only 58 meters.

The second shot from headquarters beat their previous shot by five meters achieving a distance of 165 meters. Alpha battery's second shot fell short of Headquarters again but improved its distance by almost 20 meters.

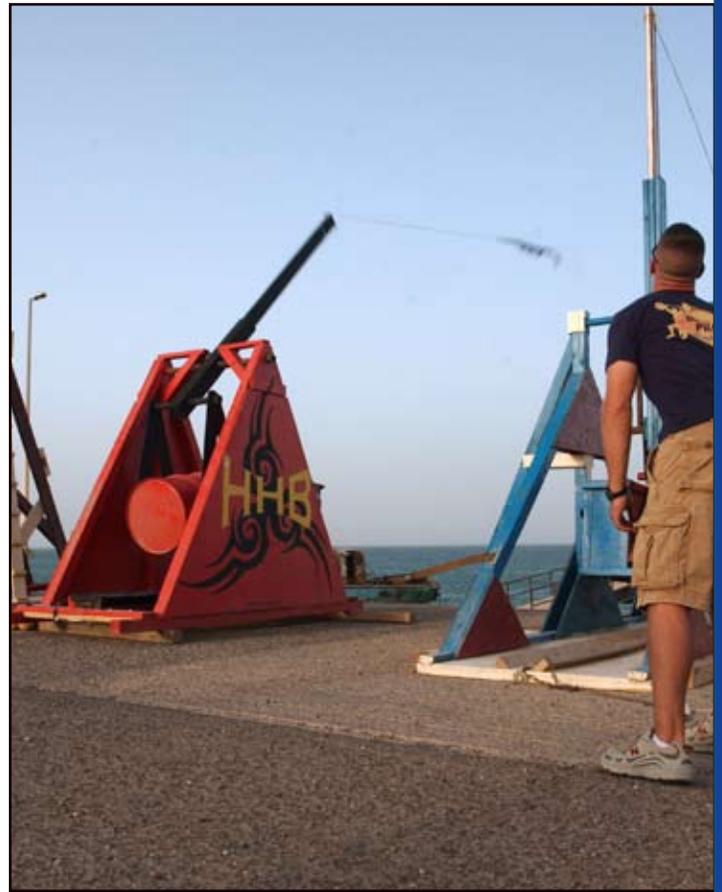
Headquarters final shot failed to gain as much distance as the first two but still went well over 100 meters by reaching a distance of 126 meters. Alpha battery's last valiant attempt to win resulted in only 74 meters, far short of the 165 meter record for the competition set by Headquarters battery.

After the competition ended and the trebuchets retired, a winner was awarded for victory. Lt. Col. Mike D. Merritt, battalion commander of the 2-142 FA awarded the lead builder of Headquarters Battery Sgt. Cody Yancey, with the trophy.

"It feels good representing all of Headquarters and going back to the old days of artillery," Yancey said.

Both teams had been working on their trebuchets for about two months in their spare time.

"It was easy to build," said Spc. David Hickey, one of the builders for Alpha battery. "But getting it to launch the objects



(Above) Sgt. Cody Yancey fires Headquarters battery during the trebuchet competition at Camp Patriot, Kuwait, June 13. Headquarters battery won the competition, and shot a distance of 165 meters, the farthest shot of the competition. (left) Lt. Bryan Holley, the designer for the Alpha battery's trebuchet fires a shot into the Persian Gulf during a competition on June 13, Camp Patriot, Kuwait.

was more difficult."

Both teams felt very positively about the competition and had fun during the event which also featured a barbecue as well as volleyball and horseshoes games. The event, meant to boost morale by providing a little historical fun, was considered an overall success.

"It was awesome," Hickey said. "It gave us something to do with our free time other than sitting around watching movies."

All the teams involved plan on participating in the next competition slated to be held on the 4th of July. Alpha team hopes to improve on the design of their trebuchet to give it more power and give the Headquarters team a much greater challenge.

"Win, lose or draw, we all had a good time," Hickey said.



500,000th R&R



Spc. Giancarlo Casem *Desert Voice* staff writer

An important milestone was reached at the Third Army/U.S. Army Central Life Support Area, Kuwait, June 11.

The 500,000th servicemember from Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom to go through the Rest and Recuperation program was processed and sent on his way back home.

Specialist Alexander Fordyce, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, was given the honor of being the 500,000th Soldier.

"I just thought I was going on vacation," said the 19-year-old from Fayetteville, NC. "I was kind of shocked."

The milestone is a testament to the hard work that is put in by the servicemembers and civilians at LSA and nearby Kuwait City, said Staff Sgt. Domenic Desimone, outbound R&R operations NCOIC, Detachment 1, 444th Adjutant General Bn.

"It is a great deal," he said. "It shows that we have great civilian counterparts in the R&R program that takes care of Soldiers. Without the R&R program, this war would be a lot harder on Soldiers."

Desimone's section is the first phase that servicemembers go through in the R&R program. Service members are in-processed and travel arrangements are made through a local travel service agency.

Servicemembers are afforded the opportunity to fly anywhere, both inside and outside the continental U.S., granted they provide a leave address, Desimone said.

In March 2004, the R&R program appropriated funds to cover the cost of commercial airfares. This move provided servicemembers with a round trip ticket from one of two CONUS gateways to a U.S. leave destination, or with a round trip ticket to an international

leave destination from Kuwait.

After the service members are initially in-processed, they bring their luggage



Photos by Spc. Giancarlo Casem

Staff Sgt. Randy Trowel from the 205th Embedded Tactical Trainer, Fort Riley, Kansas, loads luggage onto a conveyor belt to be uploaded onto a truck at the Third Army/U.S. Army Central Life Support Area.

passengers begin their journey home



U.S. servicemembers pose for a group photo to commemorate the 500,000th R&R Passenger at the Third Army/U.S. Army Central Life Support Area, June 11.

through a customs check in a different tent. Here fellow service members from a Navy customs detail personally check each passenger's belongings for unauthorized items such as live rounds and produce. The luggage is then loaded into a waiting truck.

After the passengers have received their tickets, they are then loaded onto the bus and sent on their way to Kuwait International Airport.

Desimone said they try to keep the process as simple as possible to make their operations run smoothly for the passengers.

The hard work that his section does during long 12-hour days was rewarded during a ceremony at Liberty Hall in LSA.

Major General Thomas Robinson, 377th Theater Support Group (Forward), commander, was present to thank the 444th AG Soldiers for their hard work. He also presented awards to the civilian personnel who keep the program operational.

Even though the spotlight may have been on the 500,000th passenger, the

importance of the R&R program was also highlighted.

"R&R is important, it gives you mental break from stresses of combat, to get back to what's normal to you, especially for younger Soldiers. They've never been away from home, some of them just got out of basic training," Desimone said.

"It's not something you're used to."

For Capt. Kelly Goodrich, Det. C, 38th Personnel Support Bn., her choice to go on leave later during her deployment was for the benefit of her Soldiers and also coincide with a family reunion.

"R&R is very important. There is a lot of stress that goes in Iraq," she said. "I am a company commander and I see my Soldiers day in and day out. Between the combat

and personal issues at home, they need a break."

"If we didn't have that break, we'd lose morale and the mission wouldn't be as effective," Goodrich said.

"That break raises their morale and gets them back up to combat readiness to continue with our mission."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Alex Licea

Soldiers assigned to Fort McPherson based units along with USO and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport employees cut a cake commemorating the 500,000th passenger of the R&R program June 12.

Feeding Freed

Outback Steakhou

Spc. Wes Landrum
Desert Voice Staff writer

Camp Buehring, Kuwait, was abuzz with the sounds and smells of steaks grilling as Feeding Freedom V kicked off at the northern Kuwait camp, June 10.

Feeding Freedom is a joint endeavor between Outback Steakhouse and Carrabba's Italian Grill to feed servicemembers stationed in the 3rd Army/U.S. Army Central Area of Operations.

More than 20,000 steaks were flown from the United States to servicemembers in the Middle East – 7,000 of which were delivered to the warriors at Camp Buehring.

"It's our way of saying thanks for everything everybody's done and thanking them for the sacrifices they make," said Jay Smith, Research and Development for Carrabba's Italian Grill. "If we can help spread joy to the troops, then that's what we're here for."

Servicemembers seemed to be more than thrilled to see the entrees waiting for them as they went through the serving lines during the noon meal. Some camped out as early as two hours before the dining facility doors opened to ensure they were one of the first to get to the juicy steaks, bloomin' onions, marsala, calamari, and potatoes among other dishes.

For the restaurant personnel to come over and serve the servicemembers in



Photo by Sgt. Jacob A. McDonald

Lisa Ross, a volunteer with Feeding Freedom V, carries a tray of Outback Steakhouse's Blooming Onions into the Dining Facility at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, June 10, 2007. The 22 volunteers are serving 24,000 steaks and other food donated by Outback and Carrabba's Italian Grill to servicemembers in Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq.

this manner was the ultimate form of selfless service, said Sgt. 1st Class Billy Maloney, D Company, 2nd Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment.

"Except for when we go on R and R, we won't have this kind of food for 15 to 18 months," he said. "This is the last taste of home we'll have."

Command Sgt. Maj. Randall Kintz, Command Sergeant Major of Camp Buehring, said a lot of preparation went into making the event happen and everyone pitched in.

"Some units built the grills. Some transported the food from the airport back to the camp," Kintz said. "People from other units and other services are here cooking the steaks. It took a lot of logistical fortitude to make this come together like it did."

Selection for this joint venture was a tough process, Smith said. Of all who volunteered for Feeding Freedom V, only 22 were selected. Smith explained that the final decision came directly from the top.

"(The offer to come over and serve the troops) is thrown out to all the employees of Outback and Carrabba's," Smith said. "The people are then selected by the joint-venture partners – presidents, vice presidents, and directors of training. Everybody we have over here today is hand selected because they are the best at what they do."

Josh Upton, a national food technician with Carrabba's, said people from every Outback and Carrabba's in the world volunteer for this duty.

"They believe this is a good cause and

om V

se serves up morale



Photo by Spc. Wes Landrum

(Above) Command Sgt. Maj. Randall Kintz, Camp Buehring's command sergeant major, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Kenneth Honeywood, and Command Sgt. Maj. Alan Feaster, 3rd Battalion, 297th Inf. Regt., take turns flipping steaks at Feeding Freedom V at Camp Buehring, Kuwait June 10. (Right) "Mr. Bloomin' Onion" prepares a bloomin' onion to serve to servicemembers during a joint endeavor by Outback Steakhouse and Carrabbas Italian Grill to give servicemembers a taste of home before departing north to Iraq.

something they will be able to talk about for a long time," he said.

Lisa Ross, an Outback Restaurant employee from Jacksonville, Fla., said she was e-mailing people every couple of months to see what she could do to be selected as a participant in this year's salute to the troops. She said, so far, the trip has been a humbling experience.

"I have a lot of respect for people who are willing to come over here," Ross said. "We have people who will come into our restaurant and our steaks will be

their first meal since they came home. We'll come out and sing a song to them, usually 'Jolly, Good Fellow,' and the appreciation that they have for us is almost tragic."

Ross said the servicemembers gush with appreciation.

"They say thank you to us and I was thinking 'I just sang a song and you are over there risking your life, with a brand new baby that you just got to see for the first time last week and you're thanking me,'" she said.

While there are no family members here at the northern Kuwait camp, the servicemembers were still reminded of home and were appreciative of it. "To come out here and give up their time just to give us a taste of home is outstanding," Maloney said between bites of steak.

The Feeding Freedom tour will continue at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Feeding Freedom V ends June 19.

Kintz said there's a lot of thanks to go around.

"Kudos to Outback and Carrabba's for putting this on for the troops here," he said. "And kudos to 3rd Army for supporting it."



Photo by Spc. Wes Landrum

Camp Patriot Coast Guardsman

lend support to Third Army/USARCENT

Sgt. Chris Jones
Desert Voice staff writer

Patrol Forces Southwest Asia is a joint mission, designed to protect Iraq's oil platforms on the Persian Gulf. The Coast Guard and Navy work together to patrol the platforms for a few days, then return to port – either in Bahrain or Kuwait – to resupply, refuel, or repair any damaged equipment.

For most of the Coast Guardsman assigned to this mission, they will stay on one cutter for year-long deployment, working with the same crew the entire time.

But for Lt. Matthew Chong, the officer in charge of the Camp Patriot element of Patrol Forces Southwest Asia, or PATFORSWA, has spent several months on the Persian Gulf in his year-long deployment, in support of Third Army/U.S. Army Central.

Normally, Chong would be in command of one cutter for the entire deployment. But for Coast Guardsman assigned to Camp Patriot, the job means staying flexible, and being ready to sail with any cutter at any time.

Coast Guardsman at Camp Patriot contribute to PATFORSWA by performing support tasks, such as restocking docked cutters with food, water, fuel, supplies. They also help repair broken parts, so the cutters can safely return to their mission in the Persian Gulf.

But the part of the job which allowed Chong to temporarily command several cutters is that Coast Guardsman at Camp Patriot are also available to join the crew

of any cutter that docks. Therefore, when several cutter commanders returned home on leave, Chong stepped in to fill the void. His executive officer, Lt. j.g. Peter Hahn, did the same on several occasions, acting as the chief boarding officer on the cutters.

"It's a job where you have to be diverse," said Chong.

The opportunity to take leading roles on cutters in the Persian Gulf in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Coast Guardsman.

"Compared to my counterparts back in the States," said Hahn, a native of

Jacksonville, N.C. "I definitely have the upper-hand in terms of experience.

Chong recalls the first cutter he took command of during the deployment. One of his Coast Guardsman spotted a sinking boat, and Chong hurried to the scene. The weather was rough, he said, so he called in air support and two Navy ships to help out.

The boat would end up sinking, but three of the four men aboard – Iraqi fishermen – were saved. The fourth drowned.

"I felt like I got to do a really cool mission," he said of the event. "I got to help save the lives of three Iraqis."



Photo by Sgt. Christopher Jones

A coastguardsman at Camp Patriot works with his team to secure their boat by tying up to the dock. The Coast Guard working with Third Army/ U.S. ARCENT patrol and protect potential targets in the Persian Gulf.

232nd Army Birthday



Photo by Spc. Giancarlo Casem

(Above) Servicemembers, Department of Defense civilians and contractors file past awards, after the Third Army/U.S. Army Central's Army Birthday 5K Run/Walk at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, June 14. (Below) Decorating contestants fix their cakes during the Cake Decorating Contest Thursday night at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.



Photo by Spc. Wes Landrum

Just One Question...

"Why are you proud to be a soldier in today's Army?"



"I'm grateful for what the army has done for my family, ever since I joined my whole life has changed."

Sgt. 1st Class Steven M. ChowGuin,
Bayamon, Puerto Rico
Foot service operations sergeant
1st Theater Support Command



"Because my grandfather and 8 of his brothers served before me, it's a family tradition."

Pfc. Bryce Nusink
Spanish Fork, Utah
Vehicle Operator
513th Transportation Company



"I'm proud to be carrying on a tradition within my family of serving in the armed forces to defend liberty and the American way of life"

Maj. Bradley Foster
Plymouth, Mich.
USARCENT facility manager
USARCENT Special Troops Battalion



"Taking part in history and representing my family."

Staff Sgt. Roger Murphy
Georgetown, Ohio
Light wheel vehicle mechanic
10th Transportation Battalion



"I like being a part of the team and having the opportunity to help other people."

Capt. Kevin Harris
Terre Haute, Ind.
quartermaster officer
1st Theater Support Command

Hometown Hero

Airman 1st Class Patrick Gorman

886th Expeditionary Security Forces

Gorman maintains security for the flightline at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. He also conducts patrols around the camp.

Gorman reveals what he misses most about his home in White Plains, N.Y.

"I miss the authentic Italian food. It's not fast food or chow hall food. It's home-made.."





Camp Arifjan celebrates the Army's 232nd birthday

Photos by Spc. Giancarlo Casem

Top Finishers Army Birthday 5k Run/Walk at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait

Male

Walk, 39- : Mark Thomas, 39.43
 Run, 50+ : Gary Glover, 22.41
 Run, 40-49 : Sean O'Donnel,
 16.23 (Overall Winner, Male)
 Run, 30-39, Michael Diaz, 18.25
 Run, 29- : Robert Unger, 18.47

Female

Walk, 40+ : Susan Soisson,
 35.12
 Walk, 39- : Erica Polite, 38.38
 Run, 50+ : Lynn Bergren, 25.26
 Run, 40-49 : Brenda Walton,
 20.27 (Overall Winner, Female)
 Run, 30-39, Rachel
 Rosenbaum, 20.57
 Run, 29- : Susan Hutin, 22.04

(Above) Runners run past the starting line to kick-off the Third Army/U.S. Army Central's Army Birthday 5K Run/Walk at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, June 14. (Right) Petty Officer 1st Class Brenda Walton, Navy Law and Order Detachment, crosses the finish line. (Below) Spc. Ryan Millican, 2nd Bn., 132nd FA, cuts the ceremonial Army Birthday Cake at the Third Army/U.S. Army Central Oasis dining facility.

