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

March 28, 2007

Sky Support

**2515th Naval Air
Ambulance Detachment
taking on new, dry mission**

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On the cover

A 2515th Naval Air Ambulance Detachment pilot peers out of a MH-60 Sierra Nighthawk helicopter.

Photo provided by the 2515th NAAD

Support our wounded Warriors

To assist every wounded warrior, the acting Secretary of the Army has directed the establishment of the "Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline" (1-800-984-8523) 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. EDT Monday through Friday.

The purpose of the hotline is to provide wounded Soldiers and their families

with a way to seek help to resolve their medically related issues and to provide an information channel of Soldier medical-related issues directly to senior Army leadership so they can improve the way the Army provides support.

Soldiers continue to be at the forefront of our nation's fight against terror.

Our warriors operate in one of the harshest environments on Earth and excel in a multitude of different missions.

Our business is extremely dangerous and casualties occur.

We will support each and every Soldier injured during this

conflict by providing leadership, family support and assisting the medical community in the delivery of quality healthcare.

I charge our chain of command, and the acting Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of the Army have charged each leader to address and act upon and follow



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

up every concern with a closure report.

Taking care of our wounded Soldiers is not solely a medical issue.

Each one of us has a responsibility and obligation to listen to concerns voiced by those going through the medical process and act upon those concerns.

They deserve nothing less.

I know each and every one of you will continue to be committed to ensuring our wounded warriors and family members receive the compassionate care they deserve.

"Patton's Own"

DV
Desert Voice
Magazine

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Pingpong champ heats up Virginia

Spc. Debrah A. Ledesma
Desert Voice Editor

"I hadn't played in 15 or 16 years," said Staff Sgt. William Britt, a pad manager with the 730th Quartermaster Bn.

Pingpong may not be Britt's life, but when he deployed nine months ago to Camp Virginia, Kuwait, in support of Third Army/U.S. Army Central, it definitely became a big part of it.

Britt began playing the sport in college more than decade ago. His competitive spirit drove him to try to beat a fellow student who was quite talented at pingpong, said Britt, a Durham, N.C., native.

"I gotta beat this guy," he remembers thinking.

After playing his entire college career, he began to enjoy it, and eventually he did defeat his previously unbeatable competition his junior year.

Now, nearly 16 years later, and 16 years of absenteeism from pingpong,

Britt came back to the sport he loves.

"When I mobilized, there was a little recreation center at Fort Dixon, N.J., with a pingpong table," said Britt.

Picking up the paddle again was a natural for Britt. Soon he was playing better than ever before and was quickly becoming a winning force in his unit.

"He does some crazy stuff," said Spc. Matt Taylor, the 730th's Morale, Welfare and Recreation representative, of Britt's pingpong moves.

"The way he spins the ball," said Taylor shaking his head. "He talks you out of your game. He talks trash the whole game."

Intimidated by Britt's playing ability and dying to beat him, the Soldiers of the 730th are always looking for someone better than "Boochie," as Britt is affectionately nicknamed.

"When we get new guys at the MWR, we say 'you got anyone who can play,'" said Taylor. "If they do, we go get 'Boochie.' People from all over the camp come to watch."

"He doesn't just win," said Taylor, "the other guy barely gets four points."

A little friendly competition is just what the 730th Quartermaster Bn. promises from their pingpong champ. Working with coalition forces adds a new element of fun to the game. Britt

challenges his coalition counterparts often, and coalition troops are always trying to find their best to beat the champ.

"Almost all the countries [that] move through here have someone who plays pingpong," said Taylor.

"Everyone comes with their own paddle in a case," said Britt. "I play with whatever they have — rubber coming off the paddle."

"I'll be asleep and get a phone call. 'We got a guy over here we think you can't beat,'" said Britt of his unusual wake-up calls.

Defeating the other servicemember, Britt will say, "You brought me over here for this?"

Several weeks ago, Britt finally met his match. During a tournament, South Korea brought their pingpong champ, a young soldier who taught the sport before joining the army.

"It was standing room only. It was intimidating. I was nervous," said Britt. "It was best two out of three. The first one, I won. The last two, he won."

Now the 730th Quartermaster Bn. hopes to triumph against Britt with one of their fellow unit members.

"Capt. Brian Alkire studies styles online," laughed Britt.

"I've been trying to beat him since we got here," said Alkire, 730th Quartermaster Bn.'s MWR officer. "It's not just me. Everyone's trying to beat him."

"I'm his arch enemy only by my desire to beat him, not my skill level."

Both cheering Britt on and hoping to defeat him themselves, the Soldiers of the 730th Quartermaster Bn. continue to seek out challengers.

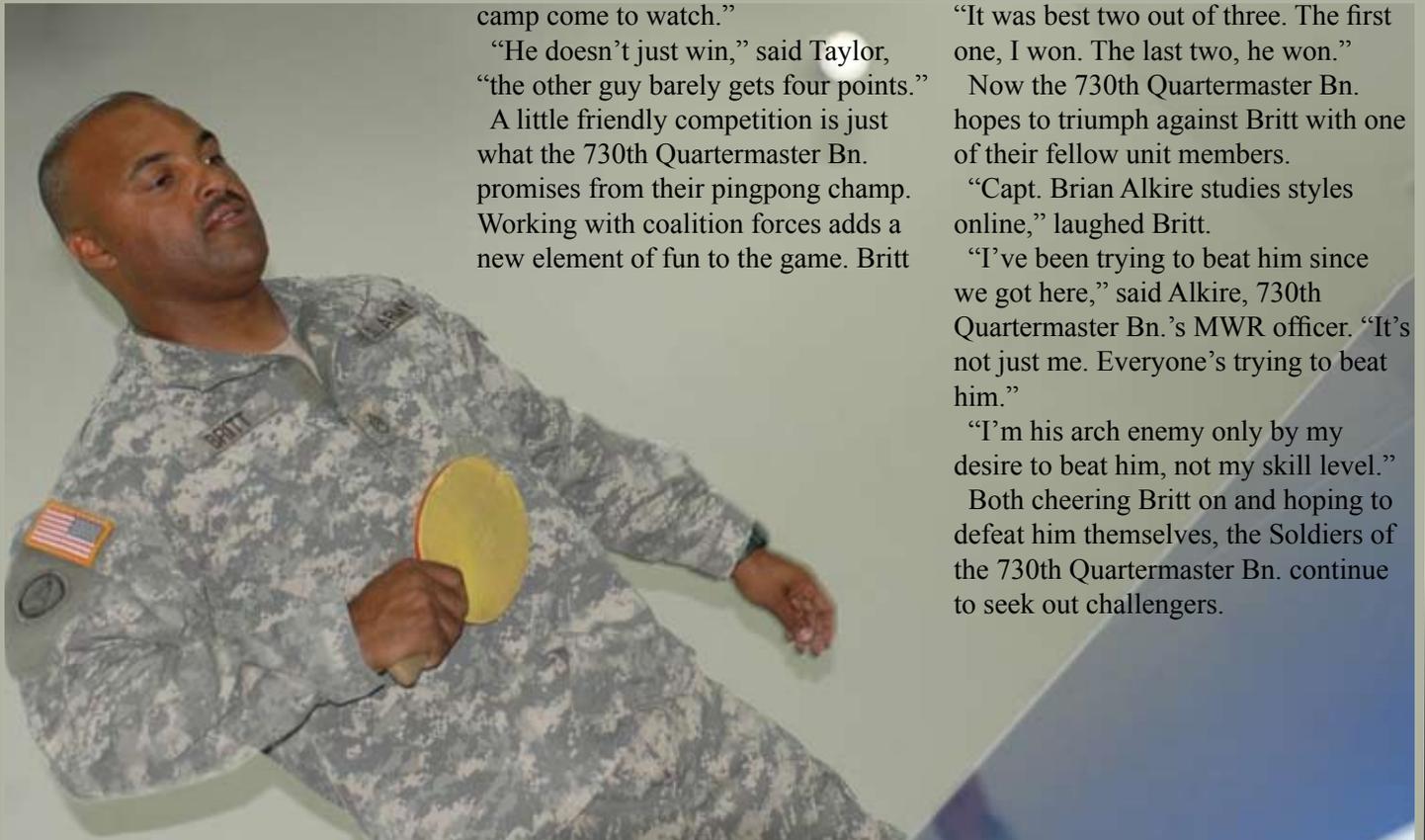


Photo by Spc. Debrah A. Ledesma

Staff Sgt. William Britt, a pad manager with the 730th Quartermaster Battalion, returns a serve during a ping-pong match. Britt's ping pong skills have made him a legend at Camp Virginia, Kuwait.

SKY SU



Sgt. Thomas L. Day *Desert Voice Staff Writer*

One U.S. Navy unit has “docked” at Camp Buehring, Kuwait’s Udairi Army Airfield. This deployment has been a first for the 2515th Naval Air Ambulance Detachment.

“This is a pretty unique mission for the Navy, just in the fact that we’re working for the Army,” said Lt. Luke Riddle, a medical evacuation pilot from Lexington, Ky. “We do a lot of search and rescue from ships – we typically don’t do it on land.”

The unit is comprised of two different squadrons from the Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 21 and the HSCS 23, both based in San Diego. Their primary mission is to provide

on-call medical support for Kuwait and the southern and western portions of Iraq. When a medical emergency is called into the 2515th NAAD, a team scurries to the nearest MH-60 Sierra Nighthawk helicopter and moves to the injury site.

“Pretty much wherever they call us, we go,” Riddle said.

And they have been called more than 80 times since arriving in theater. Each flight carries a team of medical personnel equipped for any scenario.

They don’t take their time.

“Our goal is no more than 15 minutes [to fly out of the airfield],” said Chief Petty Officer Jason Owen. Usually the team takes to the skies before the 10-minute mark, Owen added.

“Normally it’s all about the pilots, but now it’s about the guys in the back,” Riddle said,

Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day

REPORT

2515th Naval Air Ambulance Detachment takes on medical missions



calling himself a “bus driver” for the medics.

The 2515th NAAD mechanics keep the Nighthawks in the sky, which is no short order in the intense Kuwait environment. The unit has six

Nighthawk helicopters, upkeeping the aircrafts through punishing heat and the constant abrasion from the desert sand.

“To date, we’re up to 18 rotor replacements due to sand

erosion,” said Chief Petty Officer John Kaldowski of Barstow, Calif. The sand, he added, has also forced them to change 24 windshields. “We could do a six-month deployment and never change one.”

The unit – pilots, medics and mechanics – trained with the Army at Fort Irwin, Calif., prior to deploying to Kuwait last fall.

“Increasingly, our mission is in Iraq,” Riddle said. “It took a while for the Army to trust us...we’ve been able to take many missions that the Army has been unable to take because of the added capabilities of the Navy.”



(Left) Petty Officer First Class Gustavo Araicasalas and another 2515th Navy Air Ambulance Detachment Sailor do some maintenance checks on an MH-60 Sierra Nighthawk.

Watermark Photo by
Petty Officer 2nd Class Jason Lessley

Soldiers succeed with unex



Staff Sgt. Tony Hays, a 50-year-old military police intelligence officer and Texas cop, Capt. Edie Alcorn, a 29-year-old anti-terrorism officer and physics high school teacher, and Spc. Raymond Henry, a 26-year-old supply specialist and college student, are some of the nearly 6,000 Individual Ready Reserve Soldiers called up from their civilian lives to rejoin the active-duty Army fighting overseas since the Iraq war began in 2003.

Teachers, cops and college students answer the Army's call to duty in Kuwait

Sgt. Sarah Scully
Desert Voice staff writer

The day before she started teaching high school physics classes, she pulled into her driveway and saw a manila envelope wedged in her door.

She didn't have to look inside to know what it contained.

Capt. Edie Alcorn, a 29-year-old West Point graduate, military policeman and physics teacher, had dreaded receiving the notice the Army sent her Sept. 2, 2006.

She joined thousands of other Soldiers hoping to get through the last remaining years on their original eight-year contracts, only to receive orders and a summons to leave behind the civilian life they'd created and rejoin the active-duty Army overseas in combat.

"I knew it was possible, but I always hoped I wouldn't get

called," said Alcorn, now an anti-terrorism officer deployed at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait supporting Third Army/U.S. Army Central.

The Army has called up nearly 6,000 of the more than 100,000 Soldiers enrolled in the Individual Ready Reserve since America invaded Iraq four years ago.

Many Soldiers serve three-to-five years on active duty before either joining the IRR, National Guard or Army Reserve.

Although displaced from their lives, Alcorn and other Soldiers recognize their commitment to serve. They volunteered to sign the eight-year contract.

But it's still difficult for many of them to walk away and start living a former chapter of their lives.

"I had to walk out on 150 kids," said Alcorn, an Iraqi war veteran who had to stand in front of her class and tell the students she was

about to serve in a combat zone once again.

At first angry and resentful, she quickly felt the support and appreciation from her students at Centreville High School in Clifton, Va., a suburb of Washington, D.C.

"One of them yelled out, 'Go get 'em Miss Alcorn.' A couple of them said, 'We're proud of you,'" said Alcorn, who reacted with tears to their encouragement.

"And then the whole class started clapping," she said. "It was really sweet and overwhelming – that was the first moment I felt proud of what I was doing."

Stories like hers are common among Soldiers who thought they had fulfilled their commitment to the Army, particularly those who had already served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As a college student pursuing a computer engineering degree, Spc.

Expected return to Army life

Raymond Henry thought his Army career was in the past.

But right before Christmas 2005, he received the manila envelope mandating a report date in about 30 days.

"I opened it, and it didn't hit me at first," said 26-year-old Henry, a resident of Bronx, N.Y.

"I didn't want to believe it – we were pretty emotional around that time."

As a supply specialist, Henry now helps monitor containers and supplies coming through Camp Arifjan.

For 545 days, his life has taken a different path than he originally intended.

"I feel like I just got my life put on hold for 18 months," said Henry, who plans to continue

his degree and get married to his fiancée once he gets home.

Henry's family migrated to America from Jamaica when he was a child to pursue better opportunities, and in November 2006 he became an American citizen while deployed.

"I'm proud of the uniform – I'm a Soldier, and this is what I do," said Henry.

"I just never thought there was a need to call us back."

For 50-year-old Staff Sgt. Tony Hays, he fell back on his faith and family to make peace with the new direction in his life.

"When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade – otherwise, it's going to be a very sour

experience," said Hays, a police officer from Tyler, Texas, who originally disliked getting the summons but re-enlisted this month to finish up his 20-year military career.

A veteran of the Cold War, Grenada, Desert Shield, Desert Storm and Iraq, he said he wanted to fulfill his obligation to the Army and extended for another year at Camp Arifjan as a military police intelligence officer.

After the 1991 invasion of Kuwait

Code of Military Justice actions, which can include prison time and a dishonorable discharge.

"If I refused to answer that letter, I wouldn't have been able to look myself in the face," said Hays.

"Everything happens for a reason – you just have to go with the flow."

But individuals such as Alcorn worry they won't be able to get back into the flow started after serving their initial commitment, a problem reported by many Desert Storm IRR veterans.

"When I got out, everything fell into place and I feel like just to get back where I was could take five-to-10 years," said Alcorn. "All those things I had when I left are not guaranteed when I get back."

"I kind of feel like my life was taken away from me."

With President George W. Bush's initiative to send 30,000 additional troops to fight the Global War on Terror, IRR Soldiers still have a chance of getting called back to active duty.

Alcorn said she understands using the IRR if the Soldiers-turned-civilians are crucial to win stability in the Middle East, but she also had an important job serving America's children.

"I think I was serving a purpose for our country in the classroom – and I don't think one calling is greater than the other," said Alcorn. Still, "I think about the magnitude of what we're doing right now, and that's what makes me think I'm needed here."

"The whole class started clapping. It was really sweet and overwhelming - that was the first moment I felt proud of what I was doing."

**- Capt. Edie Alcorn
Anti-terrorism officer,
High school physics teacher**

by Iraq where more than 20,000 IRR Soldiers served, Hays decided to take the \$7,000 a year to get out of the active Army and stay in the IRR when former President Bill Clinton moved to downsize the military.

"By doing that, that's how they were able to hook out and reach me," said Hays, a father of two college students who always knew he could receive a letter at any time.

"In case I was ever called back, I kept three uniforms ready."

When Hays reported for duty, he heard of several Americans who had refused to answer their summons – a problem the Army has addressed by initiating Uniform

Civilians continue ser



Photo by Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.

Former Soldier, Marine, proud of military service

Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.
Third Army/U.S. ARCENT PAO

The reasons they continue to show pride in serving the United States long after their time in uniform has passed are as varied as how they choose to express their prolonged commitment.

Though no longer officially obligated to support the armed forces following successful enlistments, many veterans

filling civilian roles at Camp Arifjan do so enthusiastically, creating a contagious atmosphere of camaraderie and unity with the active military counterparts they help in support of Third Army/U.S. Army Central.

In many cases, the desire to rejoin the brand of comradeship unique to the military is looked upon as a valuable bonus for veterans pursuing a particular line of

employment.

“I decided to travel abroad to Kuwait and work, because besides the financial benefits, I saw it as another opportunity to serve and be a part of the military family again,” said Leroy “Tank” Abrams, a security force officer for the Combat Support Associates corporation.

“I could have taken a position within the [United States],

Serving among troops

During a recent visit to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, Maj. Gen. George J. Flynn (left) and Marine Central Commander Lt. Gen. James Mattis (right) take time out to greet and spend time with former Marine Staff Sgt. Leroy "Tank" Abrams.

A native of Mobile, Ala., Abrams, a security force officer for the Combat Support Associates corporation, is known among the service-members who frequently cross his path as a supporter of the military.

but I love being in a military environment," he said.

A retired Marine staff sergeant with additional service in the Army, the 52 year-old from Mobile, Ala., is known amongst the military personnel who frequently travel through his security zone as a motivated proponent of all the military services — especially his beloved Corps.

"It's inspirational to come across someone with the type of motivation that [Abrams] has," said Marine Lt. Col. James Blair, requirements chief, Central Command Deployment Distribution Operations Center. "I have nothing but the highest level of respect for those who continue to serve the military as civilians, especially since their service is optional."

"The military is like a brotherhood," said Abrams, as he reminisced on his own military

experiences. "I've been a Marine my whole life, and I'm proud of [today's Marines] for continuing to stay motivated and sticking together after all these years."

Likewise, retired Army Sgt. Maj. Bennett Estephanepowell, support operations specialist, 401st Army Field Support Brigade, takes satisfaction in providing support for some of the very Soldiers he once led as the staff sergeant major of the unit.

"Based on my experience and ability to provide support for the Soldiers on the front lines, I had all the incentive I needed to come here and give them the sustainment they need in theater," said the native of Fayetteville, N. C.

"Being given a second opportunity to support the Soldiers fighting the Global War on Terror is a big honor for me."

According to Capt. Christopher Feuerstein, an Army prepositioned stock analyst, 401st Army Field Support Brigade, the experience, wisdom and enthusiasm brought to the table by many of the proud military veterans help boost morale and forge new friendships.

"It's really nice to have [Estephanepowell] around keeping me on the right path and giving me advice," said the Indianapolis native. "He's great to work with and I don't think everyone realizes how valuable having our veterans here truly is."

There is little doubt, however, that spending time with the men and women of today's military is extremely valuable to the veterans who choose to serve in a civilian capacity.

"Being back in [the Middle East] theater and seeing young Soldiers preparing for battle and seeing how well-trained they are really makes me feel very proud," said Estephanepowell. "That's why whenever a Soldier comes to me with a problem, I automatically stop what I'm doing and make sure I'm going the extra mile to give them the support they need

or to give them a pat on the back."

"I loved teaching Marines from all walks of life when I was in the Corps and I enjoy serving with them now because they still maintain the motivation and esprit de corps that was present during my time," said Abrams. "They make me proud to be a part of the saying, 'Once a Marine, always a Marine.'"

"I have nothing but the highest level of respect for those who continue to serve the military as civilians, especially since their service is optional."

--Marine Lt. Col. James Blair,
Central Command Deployment
Distribution Operations Center



Violet Kelly, a Morale, Welfare and Recreations director at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, demonstrates one of the many displays she is creating for Women's History Month at the Oasis. Kelly enjoys decorating the Oasis Community Center for the troops.

Photo by Spc. Debrah A. Ledesma

Lending a hand

Military wife, mother devotes her life to the troops

Spc. Debrah A. Ledesma
Desert Voice Editor

“Welcome to ‘Big Momma’s’ house,” says Violet Kelly, as troops flood through the doors of the Oasis Community Center at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

Kelly has been at the Oasis for nearly 18 months working as a recreational leader, but she has worked with the military’s Morale, Welfare and Recreation program for close to 25 years.

Joining the military family with her husband, now a retired Navy Sailor, Kelley began helping the community right away. Working with youth groups was very important to her.

But Kelly, a Fresno, Calif., native, holds a special place in her heart for servicemembers.

“The troops made me want to do this,” said Kelly of her work at Camp Buehring. “My daughter’s in the military, and my

husband’s retired. I’ve been around troops all my life.”

Kelly, who earned the nickname “Big Momma” because of her mothering of the troops, is often a confidante to those who need someone to vent to and relax.

“I enjoy talking to the troops,” she says. “I enjoy listening to them.”

If a servicemember has a problem and needs help, Kelly refers them to the proper personnel or agencies if they desire assistance.

When Soldiers come to the Oasis they are happy to see “Big Momma,” said Benny Barreto, a recreation associate at the Oasis.

“When [troops] enter [the Oasis], they are happy,” said Salvador Ratos, also a recreation associate at the Oasis. “She says, ‘This is ‘Big Momma’s’ house. I’m here to take care of troops.’”

But it’s not just troops Kelly wants to help.

Traveling all over the world, she has

made helping others her priority in life.

“Our lives are built around helping others,” said Kelly of her and her family’s adventures.

One of the families that appreciate the Kellys’ charity and kindness lives in Sri Lanka. The Kelly family has donated enough to the family to help them build a new home and send their daughter to school. Learning life lessons from one another and exchanging letters and cards often, has bonded the two families. The Kellys were able to visit the family during a recent trip to Sri Lanka.

Kelly lives for the memories she builds, not material possessions.

“You can’t take material things with you when you leave this world,” said Kelly.

Donating her time and love to the troops is what Kelly continues to do at Buehring.

“If I make one person happy before they go up north to Iraq, I’ve done my job,” she said, “and when I’m tired, I’ll go home.”

Fire Prevention Corner

As the weather in Kuwait becomes drier and hotter, the potential for fires throughout the area of operation increases exponentially. The Area Support Group-Kuwait Fire Prevention office offers these fire-safety tips and requirements to ensure that your work and living areas are as fire safe as possible.

- Only smoke in designated areas and dispose of your smoking materials in an approved butt can.
- Do not overload electrical circuits. Ensure that all high amperage items like refrigerators, microwaves and coffee pots are plugged directly into a wall outlet. Avoid “daisy chaining” surge protectors together in order to gain additional outlets or extra length.
- Use only UL or CE rated and listed transformers. Avoid using “hand me down” electrical equipment that may have come from suspect sources. Check first to see if your electrical device automatically converts. Many laptops and other similar devices automatically convert to the 240 system. This can be checked on the devices itself or on its power supply pack. Be sure to read the manufacturer’s instructions to see if your device will automatically convert or is 110 only.
- Open flame devices such as candles or incense are prohibited on ASG installations.
- When planning a barbeque, please ensure that you obtain a permit the day of your barbeque from the Fire Prevention office at Camp Arifjan or the respective fire station at the desert camps.
- Always call 911 or the emergency number designated for your camp fire department, if you smell smoke or notice a fire of any size.
- Have your facility manager and safety officer attend the Fire Prevention Facility Manager/Fire Warden training held every Friday at the Main Camp Arifjan Fire Station (Building 316)
- Ensure that your fire extinguishers are serviceable. At the desert camps, please see your local command cell for a replacement.
- As we switch over to air conditioning, please be mindful of your electrical output while you are using your air conditioner. Limit your electrical output during peak air conditioner use times.

Just One Question...

What song can brighten up your day?



“Coming Home.”

Sgt. Daniel Bennett
Section Leader
949th Medical Detachment
Eldora, Iowa



“The Cha-Cha Slide’... it’s a long story.”

1st Lt. Chris Scogin
Assistant S-2
3-1st Cavalry Regiment
San Antonio



“Anything from System of a Down.”

Spc. Lance Stover
Driver
96th Transportation Company
Tuscon, Ariz.



“Leaving on a Jet Plane’ (by John Denver).”

Staff Sgt. John Thornbro
CFLCC C4
Director of Mobility for Service
Milton, Kan.



“It’s Not Unusual’ by Tom Jones.”

Juliana Wilder
MWR Supervisor
Camp Arifjan Zone 6
Tampa, Fla.

Hometown Hero



Staff Sgt. Jamie Hall
Assistant Convoy Commander
70th Medium Truck Detachment

Hall is the second in command during the 70th MTD convoys. He “makes sure everybody has what they need.”

Hall talks about why he misses Dover, Del.

“My wife and kids, fishing, race weekends twice a year (at Dover International Speedway)...I get in for free.”



SHIPSHAPE

Photos by Staff Sgt. Patrick N. Moes

One Soldier digs deep into greasy grime in his mission to help keep Army ships clean and running smoothly

Spc. Jonathan Reid, a Newport News, Va., native assigned to Third Army/ U.S. Army Central's 411th Transportation Detachment under Area Support Group - Kuwait is responsible for maintaining a vessel. The watercraft engineer gets dirty to keep the vessel clean.

