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

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Train Station

**Soldiers roll into Camp Buehring,
train for urban combat in Iraq**

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Soldiers from 7th Cavalry Regiment clear a hallway during training at Camp Buehring.

Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day

Situational awareness on the road: Stay alert, stay alive

Ensuring vehicle safety and accident avoidance are the responsibilities of every Soldier – particularly NCOs who set the example for junior Soldiers to follow.

We've all seen the crumpled vehicles involved in life-threatening accidents on the sides of Kuwaiti roads as we travel between camps. By keeping your speed to the legal limits posted and maintaining situational awareness, we can all get to our destinations

safely and complete our missions successfully.

It all starts with the leaders. Make sure your Soldiers know how to navigate along the highways, drive the vehicles needed and call for assistance in emergency situations.

Remember, they trust your guidance to get them home safely. Letting the standards slide means letting the risk increase for them to become a statistic.

Soldiers need to be particularly vigilant during the prayer times when many drivers pull off the roads to pray – and they don't always use turn signals or other considerations typically seen in America.

Don't let your Soldiers get distracted by the radio, cell phones or

conversation. Many times, I have seen individuals running, or even walking, across the highways.



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

When driving through Kuwait, try to stay in the middle lanes of traffic – avoid the right-hand lane that often has rough pavement due to high traffic of convoys and the left-hand lane that has vehicles traveling at more than 120 kilometers per hour.

Give your incoming Soldiers extra training when they arrive in country by taking them on a tour of

all the camps – show them the hazards to watch out for instead of putting them at risk unnecessarily.

It's the responsibility of all Soldiers to train each other. Junior Soldiers who are often the drivers should share pertinent information with each other, in addition to the briefings and instruction given by their NCOs.

It's hard enough to tell parents that their Soldier died defending our country – I don't want to tell them that their son or daughter died due to negligence.

Keep our Soldiers safe – keep yourself safe. By upholding the standards and making sure they're executed 100 percent of the time, we'll have a greater chance of returning home to our families.



'Gators' truck 'rodeo' ropes driver training

Capt. Mike Wallace
377th TSC PAO (Forward)

Task Force Gator Soldiers completed a Truck Rodeo, a course that instills awareness of harsh desert driving conditions, on Camp Virginia, recently.

This course is usually reserved for Task Force Gator's training of international coalition forces that are supporting the efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The rodeo was the project of 1st Lt. Doug Iverson, a platoon leader with Task Force Gator, who was looking for training for his Soldiers because he saw the need due to the harsh desert conditions.

"My plan was to have a 'rodeo' with tactical vehicles," said Iverson.

The course consists of basic obstacles requiring technical driving with no time limit. After briefing the operations order and assessing the risk, the participants manned their vehicles and moved to the desert location where the rodeo was conducted.



Photo by 1st Lt. Doug Iverson

Pfc. Christopher Walker watches as one of the rodeo participants try to navigate over a cone in a gully. Points would have been deducted if the cone was knocked over.

Vehicles had to circumvent many obstacles — driving over gullies, over rough terrain and around marked boundaries — all designed to familiarize desert terrain to the drivers.

"The Gators have facilitated training for numerous coalition soldiers on this challenging desert course," said Lt. Col. Larry Hannan, TF Gator commander.

The event was supposed to be a bonding event, but it also stressed the

trainers as they watched their Soldiers conduct the runs.

The first couple of runs through the obstacle course were rough because the sand was stiff which increased the risk. As the event progressed, things began to calm down and participants started to ease into proper vehicle handling procedures.

According to participant Sgt. Michael Jarvis, the Soldiers all enjoyed the challenge put to them.

"The training event was a great bonding experience for the platoon. We all had fun and were able to forget about some of the hardships of being here for a little bit. Overall, the event was greatly organized and planned."

The prize for the best vehicle operators was a phone card to call home — given to the two tied winners, Sgt. Peter Brown and Spc. Corey Porter. Both Soldiers admitted the event had a second unintended outcome—learning the capabilities of the humvee on sand, hills and shallow slopes to see its capabilities in the desert climate.

"The sand is a whole different animal than driving on a smooth road," said Sgt. 1st Class John Kuchera, the operations sergeant for Task Force Gator. "Now our Soldiers have a better understanding of equipment abilities and how that works into planning for missions in the future."



Photo by 1st Lt. Doug Iverson

Sgt. 1st Class Jon Kuchera and Lt. Col. Lawrence Hannan navigate around a cone that forces them onto rough rocks.

730th Quartermaster coalition troops on Ca



Photo by Spc. Debrah A. Robertson

Lubricants unit, and that is exactly how they function in the machine that is Camp Virginia—the grease that keeps the wheels moving.

Besides meeting the basic needs of U.S. troops, the 730th is also a liaison between the Coalition forces that cycle through Camp Virginia and their life support on the camp, said Sgt. 1st Class Raphael Hall, Coalition NCO-in-charge for Camp Virginia. They assure the allied forces are supplied with the same conveniences and necessities that are afforded U.S. troops.

The Soldiers of the 730th “logistically support the U.S. and Coalition forces coming from Iraq,” said Wright, a Gibsonville, N.C. native.

Not only is the battalion in charge of the camp’s basic life essentials such as the dining facilities, the tents, the showers and even the portable latrines, the 730th also creates and manages the camp’s budget and its contracts.

“It’s a great responsibility, overseeing all of it,” said 2nd Lt. Rob Stangel, a detachment commander of the 730th, “but we have a lot of people working for us and with us to make it easier.”

“Someone has to check to make sure things get done, that contracts get filled,” said Stangel, a Osage, Iowa, native.

By monitoring funding, the 730th “makes sure the government gets what it pays for,” he continued.

“We make sure taxpayers’ money is spent wisely,” added

Spc. Debrah A. Robertson *Desert Voice* Assistant Editor

When a Soldier is tired and dirty after a long day of training with Third Army/U.S. Army Central, he can take a hot shower and fall asleep in his climate-controlled tent. When a Marine is hungry after traveling halfway around the world to get to the deserts of the Middle East, she can rest assured that there is a warm

meal awaiting at Camp Virginia, Kuwait.

The 730th Quartermaster Battalion’s Headquarters and Headquarters Detachments are the command and control element on this desert location and are assigned to the Area Support Group-Kuwait, Third Army/U.S. Army Central, said Maj. Bob Wright, 730th executive officer.

The 730th, based out of Asheville, N.C., is a Petroleum, Oil and

supports U.S., Camp Virginia

Capt. Ruth Cresenzo, the battalion's contract office representative and Saxapahaw, N.C., native.

Not only does the 730th act as the camp's grease to keep everything functioning, they also act as the glue.

Tracking the number of boots on the ground helps the rest of the camp prepare for the number of Coalition forces on the camp at any given time, said Hall, a Gate, N.C.,

native.

"It's important for camp accountability and (dining facility) purposes," said Hall on the daily strength report.

The 730th assures that the Coalition forces receive the same amenities as their U.S. counterparts.

All the troops that cycle through the camp are "greased" by the 730th Quartermaster Battalion.

(Far left) Staff Sgt. Larry Abram, noncommissioned officer in charge of the 730th Quartermaster Battalion's contracting office, lowers the legs of a portable light fixture at Camp Virginia.

(Bottom) Staff Sgt. Larry Abram, a Tillery, N.C., native, discusses how to operate a lighting fixture to a contracted worker who will be working at night to set up tents for incoming troops on camp. The 730th oversees everything on the camp from the portable light fixtures to the tents to assuring that the contracted worker complete their assigned tasks.



Photo by Spc. Debrah A. Robertson



Filipino American

Spc. Noli Batac stands before the flag of his new home, the state of Alaska, where he has lived since 2001.

Alaska Guard Soldier seeks citizenship while deployed

Sgt. Thomas L. Day
Desert Voice Staff Writer

Spc. Noli Batac was clearly paying attention in his history class.

“The Americans freed us from the Spanish. The Spanish occupied us for 500 years,” he said about America’s 50-year presence in the Philippines. The Treaty of Paris of 1898 awarded the United States colonial control over the Philippines – offering the country independence after World War II.

Batac celebrates America’s victory in the Spanish-American war of 1898 – for his native country and his new country, the country he serves in Camp Buehring, Kuwait, as an American Soldier.

While in Kuwait, Batac has pride in the American flag attached to the right shoulder of his uniform, but is still working on becoming a citizen of his new home. He hopes his service, in support of Third Army/U.S. Army Central, will help him in the process of gaining citizenship.

In May of 2001, Batac emigrated from Manila, Philippines to Juneau, Alaska, joining his father in the Alaska capital after years of official petitions to get Noli in the States. He spoke fluent English and soon found a job as a janitor, then as a grocery stocker, before approaching an Alaska National Guard recruiter.

“I asked about engineering because I have a degree from a Filipino college in civil engineering technology,” Batac recalled. “There were no slots for engineering technician, so the sergeant asked me if I was a church guy.”

Noli was 32 at the time he enlisted into the Alaska National Guard, signing up as a chaplain’s assistant. He was more than a decade older than most of his other classmates at basic training.

“There was a lot of whining and cursing from the younger Soldiers,” he said of basic training. “Chaplain Assistant School was different. There wasn’t any profanity.”

Shortly after completing his initial military training, Batac

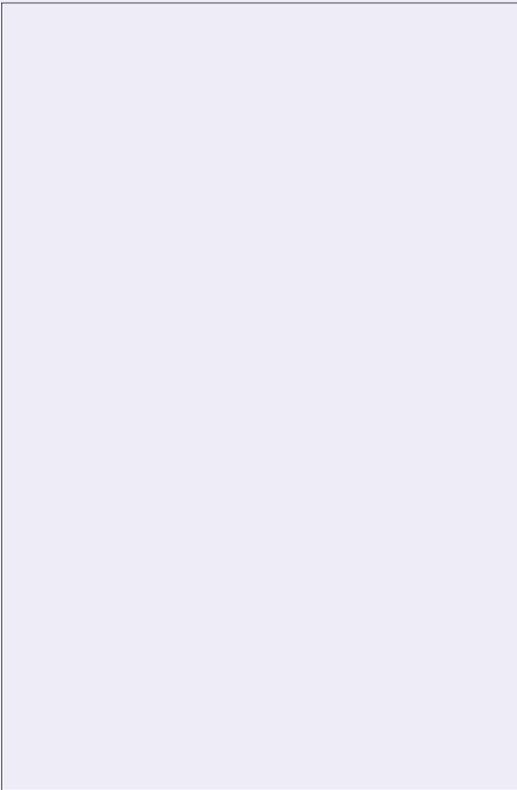


Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day

Batac, an assistant for Chap. (1st Lt.) Kirk Thorsteinson, has been with the 297th Infantry Regiment Unit Ministry Team since the beginning of his enlistment.

found a job in the civilian sector that better suited his skills. Since 2002, Batac has been doing in his civilian career what he originally intended to do for the Army: he’s a materials technician for R and M Engineering Ltd., a British-owned offshore drilling company.

He also returned to the Philippines to marry his girlfriend, Monica. “We now have two children – my boy is 5 years old and my girl is 2.”

Batac is now deployed with 3rd Battalion of the 297th Infantry Regiment [a unit that calls themselves the “Arctic Warriors”]. The Batacs had spent the first four years of their marriage separated by the Pacific Ocean; now they are separated by an entire continent. It’s a division Noli hopes to end when he redeploys back to Alaska.

“Since I’ve been in Juneau, I see my family once a year,” he said.

“I go back to the Philippines at Christmas time and return to Juneau in February. It’s really hard because you never see the transitions all children go through – how they first walk, when they first start speaking.

“But the hardest part is when I first arrive there. My kids don’t want to come to me.”

His most recent application for citizenship, submitted in 2005, was rejected. He plans on reapplying once he returns home.

His Army family, however, remains within arms reach. Batac’s chaplain, 1st Lt. Kirk Thorsteinson, is effusive when talking about his assistant. “From all the chaplain’s assistants I’ve had, he’s the best one.”

The Arctic Warriors are a tight group. Nearly everyone in the unit hails from Juneau, a town of just more than 30,000 people, according to the 2000 U.S. census.

Batac is hardly the lone Filipino Soldier in the 297th Infantry ranks, with a large population of Philippine immigrants populating southeast Alaska. “Some of the Filipino guys jokingly refer to it as the Philippine Army,” Staff Sgt. Mac Metcalfe, the unit historian, said.



Surrounded: Camp Buehring trainer prepares troops for urban combat

Sgt. Thomas L. Day
Desert Voice Staff Writer

Camp Buehring's Kuwait Armed Forces Training Center, also known as the "Training Village," is where Soldiers can make a mistake without deadly repercussions. It's up to people like DJ Robinson to make sure

they learn from their mistakes before taking to the battlefields of Iraq.

Robinson, a Department of Defense contractor with Orlando-based General Dynamics Information Systems and Technology, holds the controls to the Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) system, which Third

Army/U.S. Army Central uses to train troops who are headed to Iraq for urban combat. The Cleveland native triggers the obstacles with a joystick and a touch-screen.

"It's meant to create the same type of scenario that they would face up north," Robinson said. He brings in various noises to



Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day



DJ Robinson, a Military Operations in Urban Terrain trainer system operator, triggers the MOUT system's obstacles from the mainframe computer.



A team with 5th Bn., 7th Cavalry Regiment, preparing to move north to Iraq, simulates clearing a room on the MOUT training system. Throughout the exercise, the team was being monitored by cameras feeding live images back to Robinson.

Photo by Sgt. Thomas L. Day

ng's MOUT an combat

throw the Soldiers off-kilter, and he does this by simply touching the option on the screen labeled, "Don't Shoot!," "Bomb!," and other commands. He can trigger the voices to speak in English and Arabic.

"We give them the full gamut of what they run into," he said.

Closer examination of the MOUT trainer reveals a set of cameras, placed like security

cameras at a bank.

"Everything the Soldiers do down range, inside and outside the town, is monitored by these cameras."

And everything monitored by the cameras is monitored by the unit commanders, seated inside a room with a flat-screen television. The MOUT trainer feeds real-time images of the exercise from up to two dozen angles.

"They get to see what each squad is doing," Robinson said.

Staff Sgt. William Glander of Berkshire, Mass., a section leader entering his second tour in Iraq, said he had "been trying to get my guys in for training like this for a year now."

Of added virtue to leaders like Glander is what the MOUT trainer system can do after the exercise. After the unit is finished, the staff burns a DVD with every camera angle covering their movements.

Like a football coach and game film, leaders can sit down with their Soldiers and go over the exercise with a DVD recording of the training, "so they know what exactly their leaders are talking about," Glander said.



Fire prevention: A history of safety, a future with purpose

Photo illustration by Spc. Debrah A. Robertson

Charles A. Coffman
ASG-KU Fire Department,
CSA Fire Inspector

The Fire Prevention Office is composed of Department of Defense fire protection veterans who work to ensure people and property are safe from fire.

DoD facilities, such as those of Third Army/U.S. Army Central, are usually the envy of the rest of the nation. The excellent safety record and the low amount of actual fires on any given DoD installation is relatively small compared to the civilian sector.

This excellent record is due in part to our fire prevention pioneers.

In the days when DoD developed its own standards, it was the sheer tenacity of fire prevention personnel that made sure facilities included the features necessary to protect people and property.

It was fire prevention personnel that advocated for and finally achieved the adoption of national consensus standards, such as the National Fire Protection Association, for use in DoD facilities. Now, such safety measures are considered routine practice.

Fire prevention personnel were also re-

sponsible for the development of fire safety standards that we use to ensure the safety of military personnel and property. They also made sure water distribution systems were properly designed, sprinkler systems are installed and function and design deficiencies are corrected.

“Fire prevention personnel were also responsible for the development of fire safety standards that we use to ensure the safety of military personnel and property.”

ASG-Kuwait Fire Prevention Office

Today’s fire prevention personnel take their tasks seriously. The ASG-Kuwait Fire Prevention Program is comprehensive enough to include everything that affects the fire safety of people and property as well as educating supervisors and leaders.

Fire prevention is the first line of defense against a fire. Fire prevention programs focus on preventing the fire. That is not to say that all fires will be prevented, but the Fire Prevention Office’s job is to prevent

anything they know to be a fire hazard. Once they find something deemed a danger, they make sure it is corrected.

Although fires are not always burning, people are always exposed to the hazards and situations that cause fires.

Kuwait represents a unique challenge to the fire prevention mission. The Fire Prevention Office needs help to continue the downward trend of fires on Kuwait installations.

In order to accomplish this task, the Fire Prevention Office trains and educates the base population. They train facility managers, fire wardens and section supervisors to help identify problem areas and escort the fire prevention personnel during fire prevention visits.

If a fire does occur, everyone needs to know about it and what to do to prevent it from happening again. If there is an identified problem, hazard, practice or deficiency everyone needs to know about that as well. Fire prevention is the first mission of the fire organization and, with the help of servicemembers and “Soldiers in Slacks,” they will make 2007 as fire safe as possible.

ASG-Kuwait Tax Center

Open Jan. 30- April 20

Location: Camp Arifjan, Zone 6, Building 1490 (adjacent to post office)

Operating Hours: 9 a.m.- 5 p.m.
Monday, Friday, Saturday; 9 a.m. -9 p.m.
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Sunday

Clients: Servicemembers and their family members, DoD civilians, military retirees

Services: Federal and State income tax return preparation and e-filing; IRS publications and forms

POCs: Mary Kay Marlowe: 430-5258 and Sgt. 1st Class Shielda Groce: 430-5258

Why is celebrating Black History Month important?



“It’s the foundation of everything. A chance to learn American history.”

Pvt. Nicholas Adams
Armorman
233 Transportation Company
Detroit, Mich.



“To inform everyone of the contribution of blacks in America throughout history.”

Sgt. 1st Class Donald Hartley
Maintenance supervisor
596th Maintenance Company
Alexandria, Ohio



“It’s part of America’s greatest history and a part of African-American culture. It symbolizes the freedom of not only African-Americans, but all the American people.”

Sgt. Preston Millbrooks
Vehicle Operator
96th Transportation Company
Memphis, Tenn.



“For us African Americans, it shows us how far we’ve come.”

Chief Petty Officer James Robinson
Information Technician
EMF-Kuwait



“We had a lot of African-American heroes in the past that we should not forget.”

Staff Sgt. Michael Smith
Platoon sergeant
336th Transportation Group
Chicago, Ill.



Sgt. Cherica Taylor, Third Army/ U.S. Army Central operations

Taylor works for the Third Army/ U.S. Army Central aviation operations office.

Taylor talks about what she misses about her hometown of Midlothian, Va.

“My favorite restaurant, Darryl’s. They have the best dessert ever, the ‘Sensational Seven’ -- seven different kids of chocolate in one cake.”

Ending the cycle: A chaplain reflects on a childhood memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Col. (Chap.) Frank E. Wismer III
377th TSC Chaplain

Today, as I share these thoughts with you, our nation is entering Black History Month. Every year at this time, I am reminded of an event that occurred in my life when I was a teenager in the early '60s.

I was raised by a father who was what I would call intolerant of other races. My mother's parents, who also lived with our family, were similarly intolerant, but they were much more subtle. Juxtaposed to my father and mother's parents was my mother. My mother worked as a paid professional for the Girl Scouts of America in Philadelphia. And she worked in some of the most depressed neighborhoods of the city.

One Saturday, my mother held a meeting at our home in the Philadelphia suburbs for the women with whom she worked. I remember a dozen or more women, all of whom were black, gathered in our home. For my mother, these women were her friends, colleagues and guests in our home. Nothing else mattered to her.

Looking back upon this event, I can only begin to imagine the conversations that must have taken place in our neighborhood that day! I can only begin to imagine what my grandparents talked about that evening before going to bed! I am convinced that the meeting my mother held that day did not meet with the approval of our neighbors, her parents, or my father.

The early 1960s were the days of one phone per household and our home was no exception. We had a wall phone hanging in the kitchen at the top of the stairs from

the recreation room. I heard the phone ring during my mother's meeting and I ran upstairs to answer it. When I picked up the receiver, the kindly voice at the other end said, "Hi, this is Marty, may I speak with 'so and so?'" This was someone calling for one of the women attending the meeting at our house. I asked the person calling to wait for a moment while I went into the living room to inform my mother about the call.

After my mother's meeting was over and all the women had gone home, my mother asked me, "Frank, do you know who it was that called the house today?" I didn't have a clue. Then she said, "That was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr!" I have always remembered that occasion as the day Martin Luther King, Jr. called our home. That phone call tells me everything I ever need to know about my mother's values and ideals.

One of the things that I decided when I became a parent was to end the cycle of intolerance in my family. I determined, as much as possible, not to pass on to my children the intolerance with which I had grown up.

I believe that most of us who are parents want to bestow upon our children a better life than we experienced. So, what is it that we want to pass on to our children? And what is the cycle of sickness or "disease" that we must not pass on to our children if they are to grow up to be well-adjusted, healthy adults? In other words, what do we need to do in our generation to make the world a better place for those who will follow us?