DV The Desert Voice

United States Army Central

"Transforming to Full-Spectrum Operations"

June 25, 2008

Crossing Jordan

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Soldiers watch a crowd of Jordanians from the turret of HMWWVs during an exercise at the Peace Operations Training Center in Amman, Jordan. For the full story, see page 6.

Photo by Marine Sgt. Sara A. Carter

Contact us

Comments, questions, suggestions story ideas? Call the Desert Voice editor at 430-6334 or e-mail at desertvoice@arifjan.arcent.army.mil.

Suicide Prevention Information

Know the Facts, not the Myths

Fact: 80 percent of completed suicides had given definite indications of their intentions.
Fact: Suicidal people already have the idea. Talking about it may invite them to ask for help.
Fact: 95 percent are undecided about it. They call for help before or after the attempt.
Fact: Most suicides are carefully planned and thought about for weeks.
Fact: Most are suicidal for only a brief period. Timely intervention may save their lives.
Fact: Most suicidal persons are not mentally ill. Severe emotional distress is not the same as mental illness.
Fact: December has one of the lowest rates. Spring months have the highest.
Fact: Only one in four suicides leave suicide notes.

Know the warning signs

- The breakup of a close relationship
- Witnessing death
- Financial stressors
- A bad evaluation
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Reunion from a long field training or isolated tour
- Leaving old friends and Family
- Being alone with concerns about self or Family
- New military assignments/deployments
- Recent interpersonal losses
- Loss of self-esteem/status
- Humiliation/ridicule
- Rejection (e.g., job, promotion, boy/girlfriend)
- Disciplinary or legal difficulty
- Exposure to suicide of friend or Family member
- Discharge from treatment or from service
- Retirement

Know what to do when you identify a warning sign

1. **Stay calm.**
2. **Send someone for help.**
3. **Do not leave person alone.**
4. **"Buy time" (i.e. identify stressor and reasons for living).**

Suicide prevention is everybody's business, and without your support, we cannot be successful in our efforts to further the Army's suicide prevention efforts.

The Desert Voice

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Safety Corner: Stress management

Story by
Col. Jonathan Fruendt
***USARCENT** Command Surgeon*

Photo by Spc. Karla Rodriguez Maciel

Participating in unit sports is an effective way of relieving stress.

Deployments, redeployments, Permanent Change of Station/Temporary Change of Station, family, finances, Army Physical Fitness Test, relationships … these are just a few of the items that cause Soldiers to wonder when the stress and feelings of overload will stop.

The unfortunate answer is they are not going to stop. For that reason, Soldiers and leaders must learn how to manage stress in their lives. To do that successfully, they must recognize and mitigate those factors that contribute to stress.

We may not be able to fully control all the events and other demands placed upon us, but we can usually choose how we react towards those events and demands. Additionally, we can learn to use several preventive measures to reduce the amount of stress that we encounter every day.

There are many definitions for stress, but in general terms, stress is a state of mental or physical tension that results from any change in our environment, which is termed a stressor. Because most of us perceive them as threats to our well being, stressors typically tax our coping abilities.

We feel stress when we experience positive or negative changes at work or at home, when we're pushed to do something new and uncomfortable, or when something in our lives is not working as expected. Examples of stressors are moving, falling in love, getting married, having a serious illness, losing a job or suffering a financial setback. Soldiers experience the unique stressors of deployment and combat.

Reactions to stress can be positive or negative. Most experts agree that some degree of positive stress is actually good for us because it typically leads to increased alertness, improved memory, a feeling of being "on your toes" and it can certainly stimulate us to perform at peak levels when handling a critical task. Positive stress often leads to feelings of joy and exhilaration when we accomplish a challenging mission. In fact, a brief round of positive stress can leave us feeling refreshed, relaxed and recharged.

However, stress is not healthy when it occurs many times a day, day in and day out. With chronic stress, our bodies cannot fully relax between "threats." We stay tense and poised for the next challenge.

Chronic stress is associated with feelings of anxiety and overload and has been shown to cause serious health and personal consequences. The exhaustion that results from chronic stress can lead to the onset of stress related illness and can also worsen pre-existing medical conditions. Fortunately, we can impact the effect of stress on our lives through the choices we make concerning our behavior and lifestyle.

Typically, we respond to a stressor through a phenomenon known as "fight or flight." In a threatening situation, the human body releases a surge of adrenaline that can cause the heart to beat faster, the blood pressure to rise, breathing to quicken, muscles to tighten, perspiration to increase and the stomach to clench.

All of these reactions are an evolutionary adaptations for peak performance when we are hunting or being hunted. From your own personal experience after a strong fright or a particularly exciting accomplishment, you know your body typically reacts this way to positive and negative stress.

When faced with strong emotion, our mind will choose to accept or resist the stressor and how our mind responds to the stressor determines how our body will respond.

The first step in managing stress is to become aware of the stress we have in our lives. Once we learn to recognize our own stress, we can begin to manage it effectively. Common reactions to stress, including combat and operational stresses consist of physical, psychological and behavioral responses.

Editor's note: This is the first installment in a story series on stress.

Questions and answers about caffeine and energy drinks

By Air Force Lt. Col. Jack Gibbons and Air Force Maj. Matthew Shim

Energy drinks cannot replace your body's need for a good eight hours of sleep.

Energy drinks and other similar caffeinated items often contain excess amounts of sugar and are not substitutes for proper nutrition.

Elite athletes often choose non-caffeinated/low sugar beverages to prevent dehydration.

Energy drinks provide a temporary energy "boost" either from caffeine, herbal supplements (guarana), sugar or any combination of the three. This temporary effect may last a few hours.

Guarana a common ingredient in such energy drinks is an herb (Paullinia cupana) that has stimulant properties similar to caffeine. However, guarana is usually measured as part of the total caffeine content of products.

For most people, moderate doses of caffeine (200-300mg/day or about two cups of coffee/day) aren't harmful. However, people respond differently to the effects of caffeine. Heavy caffeine use (500-600mg/day or about four to six cups of coffee/day) may noticeably affect your health.

You may first experience frequent urination, shaky hands/muscle tremors and sleeplessness followed by a rapid heart rate or pounding heart beat. If necessary, go to the clinic and talk to a provider about any signs or symptoms you may experience.

Remember, as the summer heat increases you will need to drink more water to keep hydrated when consuming items with caffeine.

If you are drinking energy drinks because you're frequently tired, here are three things you can do right now to boost your energy: Get adequate sleep, exercise regularly and eat a healthy balanced diet.

These three things will help to increase your energy now and help you maintain better overall physical and mental fitness in the future.

How much caffeine am I consuming?

Generic black coffee (brew or drip - 8 oz.): 107-145mg

Starbucks Tall black coffee (12 oz.): 250mg

Coca-Cola (12 oz. can): 35mg

Mountain Dew (12 oz. can): 70mg

Mountain Dew Code Red (12 oz. can): 54mg

5-Hour Energy (2 oz. bottle): 130mg

Rip-It Energy Fuel (8 oz. can): 100mg

Red Bull (8.3 oz can): 80mg

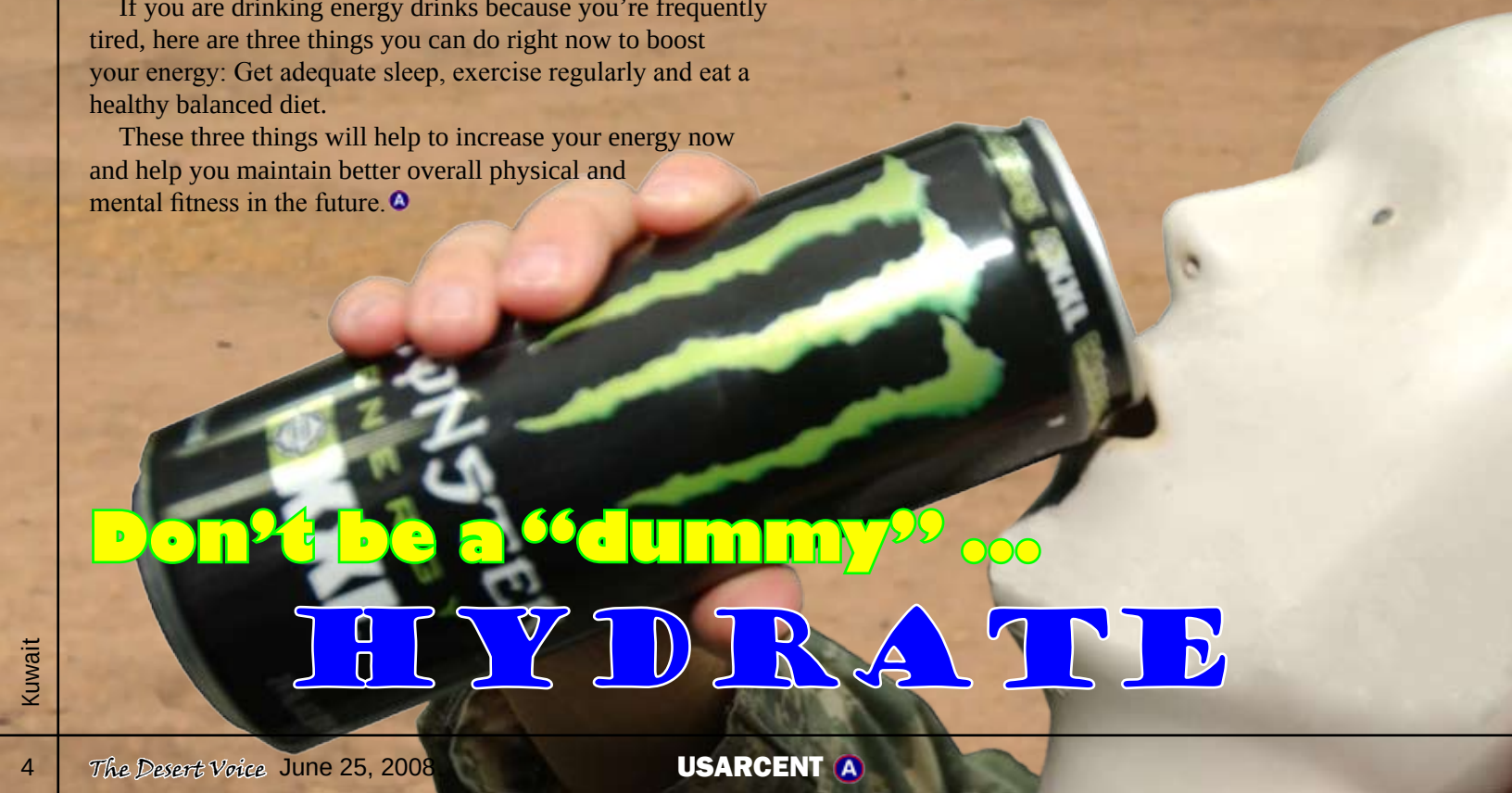
Monster (16 oz. can): 160mg

SoBe No Fear (16 oz. can): 174mg

No-Explode powder (one scoop): 100mg

Stay Alert gum (1 stick): 100mg

Hershey's Milk Chocolate Bar (one 55g bar): 10mg



Don't be a "dummy" ...

HYDRATE

(Above) Honorable Tom Hall, Assistant Secretary of Defense, Reserve Affairs, chats with Staff Sgt. Thomas Taylor, 1st Bn., 134th FA Regt., of Woodville, Ala., about his mission at Camp Patriot, Kuwait, June 13. (Right) Hall addresses National Guard and Reserve Soldiers at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, June 13.

Secretary Hall visits Reserve, National Guard troops in Kuwait

Story and photos by
Spc. Giancarlo Casem
***Desert Voice** editor*

The Honorable Tom Hall, Assistant Secretary of Defense, Reserve Affairs, visited Army Reserve and National Guard Soldiers in Kuwait, June 13.

Hall toured various facilities at Camps Patriot and Arifjan and met with Soldiers from the 37th and 45th Brigade Combat Teams. He was accompanied by Maj. Gen. James Nuttall, deputy director Army National Guard, and Marine Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Stuadt, Reserve affairs senior enlisted advisor.

Hall discussed the onoing change and current state of the Reserve and National Guard with leaders and Soldiers and mentioned that today's Reserve Soldiers are wholly different from those of past decades.

"It's probably been the most dramatic changes in the Guard and Reserve in the last century," Hall said. "Really it's changed from a strategic Reserve … to what we call an operational Reserve."

Hall explained that during and after the Cold War, the Reserve was posturing for a big war. During those years, the Reserve was thought to have time to mobilize and train up. Today however, units may not necessarily have that same amount of time.

"We realized that it's a different world," he said.

According to Hall, today's Guard and Reserve Soldiers are a lot more mobile, better trained and are able to respond more quickly. They are also being better compensated for their sacrifices. He stated that within the past six years, there have been over 160 changes to the law that help benefit National Guardsmen and Reserve Soldiers.

He noted changes to medical care that allow Reserve Soldiers to be covered under Tri-Care. Talks are underway in Congress to change the G.I. Bill, Hall said.

Hall visited troops at Camp Patriot and visited facilities such as the MWR center and the gym. Hall said he was impressed at the amenities afforded the servicemembers stationed there.

After his brief walking tour, he sat down for lunch with Reserve Soldiers. Hall and the members of his party asked the Soldiers at the dining facility questions about their unit's mobilization, training, mission and quality of life in Kuwait.

"I really didn't expect this to happen today," said Pfc. Joe Vanbuskirk, A Battery, 1st Bn., 34th Field Artillery Regt. "It was a privilege to be the one that represents the battalion."

Hall asked Vanbuskirk, a native of Marion, Ohio, about his Family and how they were adjusting to his deployment. Vanbuskirk said it was nice to know someone cared about Soldiers.

Stuadt said the purpose of the conversations was to gauge how the Soldiers felt about the training they received and how pertinent it was to their current mission in Kuwait.

Hall continued with his tour of Kuwait at Camp Arifjan where he received a briefing from the 1st Battalion, 148th Infantry Regiment command staff. Hall was briefed on the battalion's role in the U.S. Army Central area of operation.

After his briefing, Hall met with Soldiers of the battalion during dinner.

After the dinner, Hall addressed the Soldiers and thanked them for their hard work and sacrifices, as well as their Families. He also mentioned some of the changes that the Reserve and Guard components have undergone.

"It is no longer your grandfather's or grandmother's Reserve," Hall said. "The weekend Warrior is dead."

LEARNING FROM ONE A

Center builds bridge between American, Arabic culture

Story and photos by
Marine Sgt. Sara A. Carter
***USARCENT** Public Affairs*

ZARQA, Jordan – Nestled in the hills, far away from the busy city streets of Amman, Soldiers work hand-in-hand with the Jordanian Armed Forces, educating U.S. service members on Arabic culture at the Peace Operations Training Center.

Each year individuals from units throughout the U.S. military services come to Jordan to participate in combined training designed to increase servicemembers' Arabic cultural sensitivity.

"Our close relationship with Jordan allows us to send servicemembers through the POTC, where they're provided realistic and thorough cultural awareness training that is essentially tailored for them," said Lt. Gen. James Lovelace, U.S. Army Central commanding general.

The students are exposed to all elements – male, female and child role players who speak Arabic, desert environment, and even buildings that resemble those found in Iraq – which creates very realistic training, said Maj. Alfredo Ferrer, POTC operations officer, U.S. Army Central.

According to Lt. Col. Alex Williams, USARCENT chief of training, senior leaders usually attend the first week of training and junior leaders attend the last five weeks.

Day one of the training is a tour around Jordan to immerse the students in the culture of the country.

During days two through six, students receive a series of classes in the morning on the Arabic language they will use during the afternoon training. The Situational Training Exercises, or STXs, consist of building searches, mounted patrols, entry control points, counter insurgency operations and counter improvised explosive device training. The students are broken into four groups and rotated through the scenarios. They participate in one STX lane per day. At each training site, the servicemembers are surrounded by Jordanian role players speaking Arabic; the challenge is to communicate with the Jordanians and get through the scenario safely.

On the final day, the U.S. servicemembers participate in a panel discussion with the Jordanians and receive certificates during a closing ceremony.

The training is evolving, said Jordanian Armed Forces Col. Ali Al-Mahasneh, commandant, POTC. The staff updates the training using new lessons learned from Iraq. Almost everything from the original curriculum developed in 2003 has been upgraded as the needs of servicemembers changed.

The instructors, both American and Jordanian, said they receive positive feedback from those who participate in the training. The most common response they hear is, "if I had gotten this training before I went to Iraq, I would have done things differently," or "it wouldn't have been as bad," explained Ferrer.

"I love it when you feel like you are doing something beneficial for everyone," Jordanian Armed Forces Lt. Col. Jamal Momani, POTC course director, said. "We care about the lives of Americans and Iraqis. That is why we do this."

Momani also believes the most important part of the cultural training is learning and practicing the Arabic language. Momani explained the Americans are already trained to be Soldiers, but this training helps them be sensitive to the Arabic culture.

"The mission, in many parts of Iraq, was different in 2003 compared to now," Williams said. "We were knocking down doors in 2003. Now we are transitioning to handing over control to Iraqis. It is less of a combat mission now and there is more of a need to win the minds, hearts and trust of the Iraqis. If you make the attempt to communicate, it goes a long way in building trust."

Soldiers attempt to calm down a group of Jordanian role-players before they search a warehouse during an exercise at the Peace Operations Training Center in Amman, Jordan.

Lt. Col. Hussain Bashabsheh, a Jordanian Armed Forces POTC instructor and officer-in-charge of the entry control point STX lane, believes face-to-face communication and talking to each other like individuals is important.

"Look them in the eye and smile. You will build bridges," he said.

Not only does this type of training allow people to learn about each other's culture, it also helps break down stereotypes.

"Once you communicate, you learn who we are," he explained. "You realize we are alike. Behind the BDU's, you are human."

"We need to talk about things that

NOTHER

bring us together, not apart. We should always focus on the human aspect," Bashabsheh said.

The staff at the POTC has trained approximately 2,800 servicemembers since the start of the program in 2003 and has trained approximately 600 individuals this year. Each weekly group averages between 85 and 100 participants.

All services are welcome to attend the training, which can hold a maximum of 120 students, Williams said, but the target for the training is servicemembers scheduled to deploy to Iraq within the next 12 to 18 months.

"The demand to come to this course was great," Ferrer said. "We had 672 who signed up for the class and 400 on standby."

Because of the popularity of the class, there is talk of expanding the program. It is still being determined how or if it will be lengthened or if more centers will be created in other countries.

"Certainly, we want to leverage fully the POTC program and its capabilities," Lovelace said. "We're considering several courses of action to do this, courses of action that are viable for both the U.S. and the JAF. A decision has not been made and options are still under review."

A Jordanian role player yells at an American roll player acting as a representative from a media organization during an exercise at the Peace Operations Training Center.

Jordan has been part of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission since 1989, Al-Mahasneh said. As the years passed, the peacekeeping mission became broader and from 1992 to 1995 three battalions were utilized for peacekeeping missions. More than 50,000 members of the Jordanian Armed Forces, of all ranks, have participated in these types of missions. Some of these missions include creating field hospitals and other humanitarian missions.

"What we are doing for American Soldiers is what we do for our Soldiers before they do peacekeeping missions," Momani said.

The Jordanian Armed Forces also sends mobile training teams to train Australians, British, Romanians and sometimes, on a case-by-case basis, units in the United States, Al-Mahasneh said.

This unique training environment benefits everyone involved – instructors and students, Americans and Jordanians – it is a learning experience for everyone who works in this training environment.

"Not only do the Americans learn from us," Al-Mahasneh explained, "we learn from them also."

The lesson learned? That we may live in a different cultural environment, speak a different language and look different, but we are all human. Being able to communicate with each other is the key to success, Bashabsheh explained.

"I believe in talking," Bashabsheh said. "Let's make friends, not enemies. Let's give our human side a chance. We can [make] a lot of friends when we focus on the human side."

A Jordanian role-player asks why the American servicemembers took his weapon out of his vehicle during an exercise at the Peace Operations Training Center in Amman, Jordan.

Stop ... Turn ... Shoot!

Story and photos by
Spc. Wes Landrum
***Desert Voice** staff writer*

Twenty Soldiers stood shoulder-to-shoulder, sunlight reflecting off their eye protection. The instructor, facing them, screamed the commands out to them.

"Walk. Stop. Turn. Shoot," he yelled, his voice rising over the sounds of machine gun fire.

"Walk. Stop. Turn. Shoot," the group shouted in unison.

"Move," the instructor yelled.

Slowly, the Soldiers walked toward the instructor, weapons at the ready for anything that may come their way.

Members of the 370th Engineer Company conducted close quarter marksmanship training at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, recently. Sgt. Bryan Mathis, a combat engineer with the 370th, said the training is vital for those Soldiers who may be first responders to possible improvised explosive device sightings.

"We, as route clearers, may sometime have to get on the ground to conduct crowd control when interrogating IEDs," the Albany, Ga., native said. "For us, close quarter marksmanship

Photo illustration by Pfc. Christopher T. Grammer

Camp Buehring

comes in very handy. Knowing how to properly gain a fighting stance and shoot on the move are skills that will help you in a tight situation."

Close quarter marksmanship training consists of firing on a simulated target from 25 meters. Soldiers fire their weapons from several standing positions. After standing and firing, Mathis said groups of Soldiers move in unison and fire at the targets.

"[CQM] gives you confidence in your weapon and your ability to fire at a stationary target or a moving target while standing still or moving on your own," he said.

1st Sgt. Thomas Biggerstaff, 370th Eng. Co., said the company, based in Bamburg, Germany, conducted a lot of close quarter marksmanship at home before deploying. However, the native of Battle Lake, Minn., said, it's good to conduct the training here because it gives the Soldiers on the ground an idea of what it takes to keep their weapon operating at peak efficiency.

"I'm confident of our Soldiers' abilities but there's some issues with the desert environment that you have to be considerate of," Biggerstaff said. "You have to make sure your weapon is free of sand and well oiled."

Training ranges in the U.S. Army Central area of operations in Kuwait allow leaders, like Biggerstaff, the opportunity to conduct a final systems check on his Soldiers and their equipment before moving into Iraq. CQM, unlike some rifle ranges where individuals are alone when they fire, gives Soldiers a chance to fire their weapon as their squad mates are also firing their weapons.

"It gets you gauged with live ammo and gets you to know the personalities and the skills of the Soldiers you're working with," Biggerstaff said.

The Soldiers continue walking in unison until they reach the required destination. They stop and spin around and fire at the rubber silhouettes 25 meters away.

"I have to make sure my weapon is good to go," Mathis said. "It's my baby."

Soldiers pick up ammunition rounds after going through close quarter marksmanship at range near Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

Camp Buehring

(Left) Kuwaitis view the Kuwait Towers in the same regard as the Statue of Liberty.

Photos by Spc. William C. Merrick

Out of the camp, into the city

Story by
Sgt. Tracy Ellingsen
***311th ESC** Public Affairs*

As the group pulled off the freeway and into the city, a hush fell over the bus. The Soldiers sat back and stared in awe at the architecture before them and took a brief respite from the military base they left behind. From somewhere in the back a voice shouted "so there is life outside the gate."

The Morale Welfare and Recreation office offers trips to members of all branches of the military providing a much earned break and an educational experience.

Individuals can contact the MWR tour office directly and will be matched with a unit conducting an organized trip with extra seats available.

Units can sign up for a trip by sending a representative to the MWR trips office to fill out a tour booking form. From there they plan out the trip by choosing from a "menu" of destinations. The options include cultural sites, shopping malls and hotel restaurants.

According to Dina A. Petersen, the MWR tour coordinator, almost all units elect to include a trip to a local mall in their itinerary. With four malls to choose from there is no shortage of shopping for even the most discerning bargain hunter.

Petersen said one of the more popular cultural sites is Kuwait City's Grand Mosque. Before entering the mosque, females must wear an abaya. The wear of the garment, which covers the entire body except the face and hands, is done to show respect and reverence for the mosque.

According to the tour guide, Kuwait's Grand Mosque is the seventh largest in the world and the largest carpeted mosque.

Down the road from the Grand Mosque sit the picturesque Kuwait Towers. The MWR tour book likens them to the Statue of Liberty or the Eiffel Tower in their stature as a cultural icon. The trip to the observation deck in the highest of the trio of towers costs one Kuwaiti dinar (about $3.50 American dollars depending on the exchange rate). Once at the top, patrons are treated to a 360-degree unfettered view of Kuwait City, the nation's largest city.

Female Soldiers wearing traditional abayas tour Kuwait City's Grand Mosque.

The platform rotates around a small coffee shop and gift shop. But the towers aren't just a tourist attraction; the MWR tour book rightly lists them as a cultural site. In the early nineties the towers were partially destroyed by the occupying Iraqi forces. A photographic history of the damage is on display in the tower. The exhibit not only highlights the atrocities committed at the site, but shows the resiliency of the Kuwaiti people to rebuild their cultural icon.

Along with the opportunity to relax and enjoy a day away from the hustle and bustle of military life, servicemembers participating in MWR trips also have certain responsibilities.

As guests in Kuwait, troops must remain respectful of their hosts, said Petersen.

Leaders of MWR trips are required to have attended an Arab Cultural Awareness Training within 90 days of the trip. Classes are held on Fridays from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Zone 1 movie theater at Camp Arifjan.

When attending a trip, servicemembers must dress in a conservative manner. According to the MWR tour book, shirts for both men and women must have sleeves and should not have any writing or graphics on them with the exception of small logos on pockets. Also, pants should be worn on the waist and not any lower.

According to Petersen, one of the issues that causes many servicemembers to be barred from a trip, or to have to change clothes quickly, is exposed tattoos.

Those with tattoos should cover them up with clothing which may include wearing a long sleeve shirt or a shirt with a high collar.

While maintaining a respectful attitude toward the host country, servicemembers can enjoy a much needed, and much deserved, day out on the town, Petersen said.

"Most people say it's just nice to be away from the base," she said.

Officer Collins says:

Never ever leave your CAC unattended. Think OPSEC!

Why I serve:

Sgt. Laura Brannigan
British Kuwait Security Force
J-2

The Belfast, Northern Ireland, native explains why she chose to join the military.

"I was bored every day. I called the military and asked to join up. It's been five great years."

Just One Question ...

"In what ways do you cope with the Kuwaiti weather?"

"I drink plenty of water. I dress comfortably, and most importantly, I stay in the shade."

Staff Sgt. Karlee Walker
408th Contracting Support Brigade
Admin NCO
Clayton, N.C.

"Stay inside as much as possible."

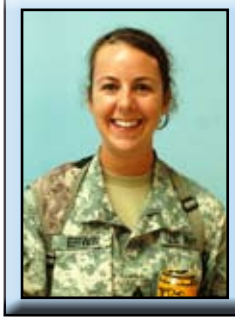
Lt. Cmdr. Keith Boylan
Navy Expedionary Logistics Support Group
Supply officer
Virginia Beach, Va.

"Stay physcially fit, hydrate and eat well-balanced meals."

Maj. George Steffens
401st Army Field Support Bde.
Acquisition and technology officer
San Diego

"I try to stay hydrated, keep plenty of sunscreen on and try not to think about the heat."

Lt. Col. Gwendolyn Lee
USARCENT G-1
PASR Division deputy
Vicksburg, Miss.



"I wear a gatorneck to protect me from the sand and I keep plenty of Q-tips handy to get the sand out of my ears."

Sgt. Amber Erwin
HHC BSB-North
Property book NCO
Columbus, Ohio

What's happening around USARCENT ...

Run!

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Eric Brown

More than 200 U.S. Army Central Soldiers participated in a command fun run led by Lt. Gen. Jim Lovelace, USARCENT commanding general, June 18. The 2.5 mile run was followed by the cutting of a cake celebrating the Army's 233rd birthday.

Congratulations

Courtesy photo

Members of the U.S. Army Central Road Racers team hold a trophy after winning the military team division in the 7th annual Army Hooah 10K race held June 14 in Atlanta. The team qualified to represent USARCENT in the Army Ten Miler in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 5.