

DESERT *VOICE*

ARIFJAN COMBAT TEAM
ROLLS THROUGH
TOURNAMENT

Third Army/ARCENT

'Best Warrior'

NCO/Soldier of the Year

• • • •
**THE
DAILY GRIND**
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FIREMAN

• • • •
Toby Keith Sings
at Camp Buehring

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Country music singer, Kellie Pickler, performs for service members and civilians at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, May 26. Her performance is her way of saying thank you to the men and women serving in the armed forces. *PHOTO BY: Sgt. Joshua Holt, Third Army/ARCENT Public Affairs/12th Public Affairs Detachment*



CG's COMMENTS

Lt. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks
Commanding General
Third Army/ARCENT

The entire Third Army/ARCENT team has done tremendous work these past few months in a critical time period for this region.

The 1st Theater Support Command continues to sustain the fight while preparing for the significant reduction in personnel, military equipment, containers and vehicles from Afghanistan. The 335th Signal Command provides dedicated theater level command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence support. The forward Brigade Combat Team, Combat Aviation Brigade, Air Defense Artillery and other rotational forces continue to be ready tonight for known and unanticipated requirements, while shaping the future with our allies. 4th Battlefield Coordination Detachment, as always, has facilitated the synchronization of air and ground operations within our area of responsibility.

ASG Kuwait and Qatar superbly administer the camps here, but also do so much more including supporting Reception, Staging, and Onward Integration. And the Third Army/ARCENT Headquarters forward deployed and at Shaw Air Force Base have continued to act as a HQ should, guiding current and future operations while building a flexible, adaptable approach that enables military means, leveraged by other partners and elements of power, to obtain our objectives and achieve our desired endstate. The entire organization is adapting to meet the demands of changing regional and U.S. domestic requirements in a complex environment.

Many of the 20 countries in our area of responsibility have been, and continue to be affected by the Arab Spring. This revolutionary wave of uprisings and protests has destabilized the region. Some countries, such as Egypt, have made a successful transition to democracy, while others like Syria have yet to re-stabilize. As tensions and volatility lingers, we must remain ready for any eventuality. Meanwhile, we continue to shape the future, including with visits, exchanges, and exercises such as Steppe Eagle in Kazakhstan in September which will build relationships, and improve the participants' operational capabilities and ability to conduct peace support operations as part of internationally sanctioned multinational operations.

We also must continue to sustain the fight as we transition for tomorrow: we are planning for the simultaneous reduction of forces in Afghanistan and the retrograde of equipment there. Successfully accomplishing that mission will be a monumental task, and demands creative solutions to complex problems. I know you are equal to those challenges and will continue to lead the way to victory and to peace.

Sustaining the fight includes sustaining ourselves. September is Suicide Prevention month and suicide is an issue we all need to confront. Every suicide represents a tragic loss to our Army and nation. All Army family members must recognize that reducing the incidence of suicide within our Army requires a holistic approach to improving the physical, mental and spiritual health. By focusing on resiliency and positive life-coping skills, the Army will not only lower suicide rates, but will enhance the quality of life for our entire Army community. Act, Care and Escort, or "ACE" Training helps to focus and to encourage each of us to be ready and willing to help someone who is hurting. ACE training also promotes health, decreases risky behavior, and improves our chances of preventing a suicide in our outfits.

We realize Soldiers, Families, and Civilians face significant demands

on a routine basis. And we want you to know that your leaders, and your country, appreciate all you are doing. You make us proud every day. In September, and throughout the year, let's listen to one another and care for each other- keeping the whole team and everyone on the team strong. Let's make September more than a Suicide Awareness Month – make the month of September the time that we improve our strength, increase our resilience, help each other, and prevent suicides in our formations.

Third-Always First! **A**



CSM's COMMENTS

Command Sgt. Maj.
Stephan Frennier
Senior Enlisted Advisor
Third Army/ARCENT

Readiness is important for the entire Army, but being ready is especially important for Third Army/ARCENT. If you look at the news

and the events taking place in our area of responsibility, any day we could get the call to step up and help those in need. Readiness is a multi-echelon requirement. We must be ready on every level. Soldiers, NCOs, officers, teams, squads, platoons, units all have to be prepared to do their respective jobs at the drop of a hat. One never knows who will be the integral part of an operation. If that person fails everything could be jeopardized. It doesn't matter what rank you hold, if you are a private or a general officer you have to be Ready to Fight Tonight.

We must adhere to standards, so it's important that we all know the standards Third Army /ARCENT holds. In order to do this we must educate ourselves. The Third Army/ARCENT Standards Book is the perfect tool to use to learn of the standards that will help make us successful in our daily operations. Leaders must be knowledgeable of the standards and capable of making tactful and impacting corrections. Good units have standards; great units enforce them.

Since readiness encompasses the total Soldier, an excellent way to gauge individual readiness is with the Comprehensive Fitness Program. It's also known as the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program, but here in ARCENT we refer to it as the Comprehensive Fitness Program because it doesn't just pertain to Soldiers. The Comprehensive Fitness Program pertains to our Department of the Army civilians, contractors and our Families.

Within comprehensive fitness there are five dimensions of strength. They are emotional, physical, social, spiritual and family. Everyone has different strengths in different categories, so we have to do a periodic self-assessment in each of those dimensions to see where we stand and what we can do to be as fit as possible in all five dimensions.

The way we can gauge where we are in the other four dimensions of strength is by taking the Global Assessment Tool. After taking the GAT, the assessment will show you where to focus your efforts. After finding out what areas you may need work in you can take the Comprehensive Resilience Modules. CRMs are evidence-based training modules in each dimension of health.

Knowledge is the key to being ready tonight. The more knowledge you have, the more "Ready" you are to do your job as a professional Soldier. Patton's Own! **A**



(Clockwise from top-right) The Army's 237th birthday cake display; Lt. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks joins Pvt. Tracey Uchau and Maj. Lindsey Smith at the Army birthday cake-cutting ceremony; Servicemembers and civilians of Camp Arifjan, Kuwait prepare to run a 5k in honor of the Army birthday.

Army's 237th Birthday

Story and photos By: **Sgt. Jason C. Daniels**
Third Army/ARCENT PUBLIC AFFAIRS
12th Public Affairs Detachment

The Army's 237th birthday was celebrated at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, June 14, with a cake-cutting ceremony and a 5K run/walk.

More than one-thousand service members and civilians attended the celebration to run the 5K.

The celebration began with reveille and a word from the Third Army/ARCENT commanding general.

"Happy Birthday, Army! 237 years, isn't that amazing?" said Lt. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, Third Army/ARCENT commanding general. "It is a great privilege to be out here to celebrate this day, in honor of the Army's 237th birthday."

During the cake-cutting celebration, Brooks joined the oldest Soldier, Maj. Lindsey Smith, Third Army/ ARCENT International Affairs planner, age 59,

and the youngest Soldier, Pvt. Tracey Uchau Third Army/ARCENT Command Deployed Theater Accountability System clerk, age 19, as they ceremoniously cut the Army's birthday cake.

"It was a great experience to cut the cake with the CG," said Uchau, who expressed that she would also do well in the run.

The 5K run/walk started at 6 a.m. and after 17 minutes and 31 seconds Spc. Bwambale Frank, 59th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Company, 22nd Chemical Battalion, 48th Chemical Brigade, crossed the finish line first.

As each Soldier and civilian completed the 5k run, they received a t-shirt provided by the Morale, Welfare and Recreation and were able to treat themselves to a piece of the Army's birthday cake.

The Army birthday 5K is a great example of how the Army supports

the needs of Soldiers and civilians continuously, with opportunities to build morale and help them maintain physical fitness. **A**





Kuwaiti National Guard counter-terrorism Soldiers move down a hallway during an exercise near Kuwait City, May 16. Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 118th Infantry Regiment played opposing forces during the exercise. The battalion, which belongs to the South Carolina Army National Guard, assumed security-force operations in northern Kuwait in April.

South Carolina Army National Guard Soldiers partner with Kuwaiti National Guard

Story and Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Raymond Drumsta
4th Battalion, 118th Infantry Regiment

KUWAIT CITY, Kuwait — Partnership meant opposition for some United States Army National Guard and Kuwaiti National Guard troops during an exercise here recently.

That's why Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 118th Infantry Regiment became the opposing force, known as the OPFOR, for Kuwaiti National Guard, or KNG, mechanized and counter-terrorism troops, May 16. At a lone building on a desert ridge, eight Soldiers of the battalion's Alpha Company played terrorists, capturing the building as part of the KNG's culminating annual exercise.

Along with recapturing the building, the KNG troops impressed the 4th

Battalion Soldiers.

"They did really well," said Spc. Randall Adkins, of Fort Wayne, Ind. "You can tell they trained hard and really well."

In addition to taking over security-force operations in northern Kuwait in April, the battalion, which belongs to the South Carolina Army National Guard, also assumed a training partnership with the KNG -- one of the region's best led, trained, and equipped military organizations.

By playing OPFOR, the 4th Battalion troops helped validate the KNG's training, including their ability to take down terrorists by fire and maneuver, and treat wounded personnel.

The eight Soldiers worked with the KNG the day before to prepare for the exercise. It was a great opportunity for

the newer troops to experience a different culture and see up close how another army operates, said Sgt. Jeremy Kelly, who led the group.

Kelly said he was excited about the mission, adding that they compared building-entry techniques, like the formation known as the "stack" or "stacking."

"We picked up some things, and we showed them some things," recalled Kelly, who hails from the James Island area of South Carolina. "I feel totally comfortable training with the Kuwaitis."

The real show began the next morning when the South Carolina troops -- incongruously clad in Army Camouflage Uniform trousers, head scarves, and t-shirts -- assaulted the tower gate with two armored humvees, rolled up the ridge,

occupied the building and set up defensive positions.

Not long after that, the 4th Battalion troops found themselves in the crosshairs of a Kuwaiti mechanized Infantry company that surrounded the building and began engaging them with weapons from their Pandar and Panhard armored vehicles.

It was a textbook engagement, said Kelly, who recalled being targeted and quickly outgunned by three of the vehicles.

"They had excellent security around the perimeter," said Pfc. Jamaal Brooks, a gunner and Afghan veteran from Columbia, S.C. "They were aggressive. They knew what they were doing."

Once the OPFOR gun trucks were deemed destroyed, the Kuwaiti armored vehicles quickly moved closer to the building, allowing about a half-dozen

KNG counter-terrorism troops -- dressed in black uniforms and masks -- to slip into the building.

"They had excellent security around the perimeter," said Pfc. Jamaal Brooks, a gunner and Afghan veteran from Columbia, S.C.

Moving swiftly up and down the halls and deftly stacking on doors and corners, the counter-terrorism troops engaged what remained of the faux-terrorists and re-

took the building, suffering one simulated casualty. Just as quickly, Kuwaiti medical troops arrived on the scene to treat and evacuate the casualty.

Adkins said he was surprised at how quickly everything occurred.

"They entered the room with speed and violence of action," he said.

The 4th Battalion anticipates future training events with the KNG. Brooks, for one, is looking forward to training with them again, but he wants to reverse roles next time.

"They did a damn good job, so I'm anxious to get in there and do our thing," he said, smiling. **A**

Sledgehammer Brigade arrives in Kuwait

Story and photo by Sgt. Christopher Johnston
3rd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division Public Affairs

CAMP BUEHRING, Kuwait - Elements of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, arrived in Kuwait to conduct security cooperation, joint exercises and training with partner nations in the region.

The deployment is in accordance with the United States' long standing bilateral defense partnership with Kuwait, promoting security, stability, and the two countries' mutual interests in the region.

Sledgehammer Soldiers will be dedicated to training and fine tuning their mission readiness during their time in Kuwait.

"The adverse climate and terrain offers great opportunities to train in conditions unlike the ones we have back at Fort Benning," said Chief Warrant Officer 2, Mauriese Jones, 3rd HBCT targeting officer.

The Udairi Range and similar sites in Kuwait afford 3rd HBCT the opportunity to conduct live fire exercises and battle simulations which mirror real world combat environments.

"It's all about the mindset," said Pfc. Richard Chae, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 3rd HBCT. "You get out here and you train with that mindset and it will be more like second nature when it actually goes down."

The Sledgehammer Brigade is part of a larger U.S. mission to continue security cooperation efforts with critical regional partners. **A**



Soldiers of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division inventory and inspect gear, June 23, upon their recent arrival to Kuwait. The brigade is deployed to Kuwait for a limited duration for security cooperation, joint training and exercises with their Kuwaiti partners.

Third Army welcomes Egyptian armed forces

Story and Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Tony Spain
Third Army/ARCENT Public Affairs Office

FORT MEADE, Md. - In their continued effort to shape the future, Third Army/ARCENT partnered with leaders of the Egyptian armed forces for an information exchange symposium, June 2-9, at Fort Meade, Md., which focused on the role of civil military operations in the event of a disaster.

“This is a theater security cooperation event, and it was set up as a civil affairs and psychological operations exchange to compare and contrast civil affairs and psychological operations between the two armies,” said Col. Bill Mason, U.S. ARCENT/Third Army chief military civil operations. “So we can learn the way both of us are conducting civil affairs operations and psychological operations and compare and contrast that with both of our systems.”

The nine-day symposium included briefings from a variety of subject matter experts in civil affairs and visits to USAID/Office Foreign Disaster Assistance, Federal Emergency Management Agency in D.C. and the U.S. Army Research Institute at Fort Belvoir, Va.

“We’ve tried to expose them to a variety of events,” said Mason. “They are very interested in the election process going on in their country. So we were able to bring in an expert from George Mason University and the Brookings Institute to talk about polling. We have tried to bring in subject matter experts to discuss things that are going on in their own country.”

The symposium was centered on briefings, but the idea was to make it less like a schoolhouse learning environment and more of an open forum of shared experiences between the two groups.

“It’s been a very open discussion,” said Lt. Col. Bert Robbins, an operations officer, Third Army/ARCENT. “That was our intent. It’s been very clear from the beginning that it really wasn’t a class. There are presentations with the intent of generating discussions. We want to know how they do it. They want to know how we do it. They were very comfortable and willing to discuss questions even if it took 15-20 minutes longer. That was pretty impressive because so many people often don’t like to talk, but in this case they were

very comfortable and definitely willing to talk.”

The five members of the Egyptian military, led by Egyptian Navy Commodore Alaa Eldin Mokhtar Abouzeid, Egypt’s deputy chief of civil affairs and psychological operations, said they were pleased with the information and discussion, but it’s the relationship between the two countries that is important.

“It’s not only the information, but it’s also the atmosphere that is going to help us back home,” Abouzeid said. “The atmosphere can be much more important than the topics. It’s that good relationship that is going to help each country share and become better and just try to help each other for a peaceful world at the end. You cannot have any bi-lateral training work unless you have a good relationship.”

Mason said the conference is a very good opportunity to shape the environment, to build a partnership and

relationship with Egypt and communicate with each other on how we provide disaster response and humanitarian assistance.

“Events like this are so important to build partnerships, to build relationships. You never know when they may come to our aid, or we may go to their aid or we may work together in the region to help another country,” said Mason. “Relationships are so important. You can’t build good relationships over the telephone or on the internet. So it is important that we actually meet with the Egyptians somewhere, whether it is in their own country or in our country.”

Abouzeid expressed he hopes that this is the beginning of a relationship between the two nations.

“I’m honored and pleased to be here and hope that this is the beginning of the spectrum of training and information we will continue to share,” he said. **A**



Col. Bill Mason, chief of civil-military operations for Third Army/ARCENT, explains the Army's structure to Egyptian army Lt. Col. Essam Abdalla Sayed Ahmed Abdelfattah during a briefing at the U.S. Army Research Institute, June 6, at Fort Belvoir, Va. The briefing was part of the 2012 Egypt-United States Military Information Exchange, an event supported by ARCENT, the 352nd Civil Affairs Command and the 2nd Psychological Operations Group, that brought together civil affairs and military information support operations personnel from the two nations to discuss civil support and disaster response.



(Left) Medal winners from the Arifjan Combat Club achieved two gold medals, two silver medals and two bronze medals in the Desert Warrior Open Combatives Tournament at Camp Arifjan June 30, 2012. Over 60 fighters participated in six different weight classes at the Desert Warrior Open Combatives Tournament.



Arifjan Combat Team rolls through tournament

Story and Photos by Spc. Alexander Neely
Third Army/ARCENT PUBLIC AFFAIRS
12th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait - Members of the Arifjan Combat Team stretched in the corner of a gym, just a few feet away from the fight mats and minutes away from the first round of the Desert Warrior Open Combatives Tournament. The thick air of stale sweat and heat only added to the palpable tension between the four walls – the kind of atmosphere one would seemingly avoid. However, members of the ACT recreate this intensity three-times a week, making June 30 the perfect opportunity to showcase their skills.

Of the 10 members that participated from the ACT, six medaled in five of the six different weight classes at the Desert Warrior Open Combatives Tournament June 30.

“This being my first tournament, I came here looking to win one or two matches, and I got to the finals,” said Sgt. David Salazar of 127th Maintenance Company, who won a silver medal in the cruiserweight division. “I can’t thank my teammates enough. I have been to a few classes and they have taught me a lot.”

The combatives tournament, which

was exclusively held for military members, hosted approximately 65 fighters with more than 200 audience members

“The tournament allows them to come out and demonstrate some of the skill sets they have learned and trained,” said 1st Sgt. Wilfrid Chapdelaine, senior instructor for the Army Component of U.S. Central

“The butterflies and everything goes away as soon as you step foot on the mat,” said Sgt. John Chaffee of the 27th Brigade Combat Team.

Command’s combatives program. “Some of that skill set we actually use on the battlefield and not only that it helps them have some friendly competition with their fellow Soldiers.”

In the first round participants competed in five, five-minute fights. Each fight, depending on the style of finish – whether decision or submission – was graded on a point scale from three to six.

“The butterflies and everything goes

away as soon as you step foot on the mat,” said Sgt. John Chaffee of the 27th Brigade Combat Team, who won a bronze medal in the heavyweight division. “However, the first match is always the hardest; you really work all of your kinks out after the first few minutes though.”

After the points were tallied, 24 individuals were selected to fight in the weight division’s bronze-medal fight and championship fight. If the prospect of fighting for a medal was not intense enough, the rules changed; allowing participants to open-hand strike to the face, as well as, punch and kick to the body. Additionally, the time limit of the fight increased to a ten-minute round.

During the medal ceremony – winner or loser – each participant was cheered and revered. Afterwards, the gymnasium stands cleared and the mats were rolled up. However, ACT members ended their day the same way it began – in the corner. Through tattered uniforms and bruised faces, the members were seen laughing and conversing with one another, giving prudence to the notion that while competition is an aspect to the sport; camaraderie is paramount. **A**



Country music superstar and USO veteran Toby Keith hits a high note while singing "American Ride" to a crowd of service members and others at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, April 26.

Playing to the Base: Toby Keith sings at Camp Buehring

Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Raymond Drumsta

4th Battalion, 118th Infantry Regiment

CAMP BUEHRING, Kuwait - Country music superstar and veteran USO entertainer Toby Keith lit up the desert night here April 26, turning the base into a party on his 10th year of entertaining troops overseas.

Soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen and others packed the area in front of the USO stage here, cheering, laughing and often singing along as Keith and his band performed songs on his "Live In Overdrive" USO tour.

It was his 189th USO show, according to USO officials. Keith has done nine USO tours, beginning in 2002, performing for service members in Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia, Macedonia,

Bahrain, Belgium, Cuba, Djibouti, Germany, Italy, South Korea, Cuba, and Kyrgyzstan, according to website.

Keith showed he was an old hand at entertaining as he tore into his opening number, "American Ride." Keith held his mike over the audience, who caught the hint and sang along.

"You can't control it, you can't contain it, it is a phenomena!" Keith shouted to the cheering crowd as he began "Red Solo Cup." Some people in the crowd had red Solo cups and held them above their heads during the song, as well as "Let's Get Drunk and Be Somebody."

Between songs, which included his rendition of Ted Nugent's "Stranglehold," Keith drew laughs from the crowd as he joked about all the places he'd entertained service members, including Kuwait.

Later Keith joked that since service members had the perimeter secured, he was free to do as he liked.

"We might as well be in Wyoming," he said.

The crowd included Soldiers of the 112th Military Police Battalion, Mississippi Army National Guard, who have since deployed back to the United States. During their time in Kuwait, battalion Soldiers secured Khabari Crossing, the critical gateway for U.S. forces going into and out of Iraq, and were on duty there when the last United States forces passed through on their way out of Iraq.

"Are you guys working your way home?" Keith asked the troops at one point. "Or are you working your way out of Iraq? That's a good place to work your way out of."

Keith then sang what he called "the song that started it all" - "I Love This Bar."

"We're gonna get redneck in Kuwait right now!" Keith shouted to the howling crowd before starting the song.

Keith closed the show with "American Soldier," and autographed some red Solo cups for service members before leaving for his next concert date in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Soldiers of the South Carolina Army National Guard's 4th Battalion, 118th Infantry Regiment, which runs Camp Buehring, helped set up equipment, load and unload trucks and provide security for the show.

Keith is scheduled to perform for troops in five countries over 12 days, according to his web site. **A**

**"YOU CAN'T CONTROL IT,
YOU CAN'T CONTAIN IT,
IT IS A PHENOMENA!"**
~Toby Keith



THIRD ARMY/ARCENT
**'BEST
WARRIOR' // //**
// // COMPETITION

Story by Sgt. Jason C. Daniels
Third Army/ARCENT PUBLIC AFFAIRS/12th Public Affairs Detachment



'Best Warrior' Competition

Third Army/ARCENT "Best Warrior" NCO/Soldier tests Army's finest

CAMP BUEHRING, Kuwait - The Third Army/ARCENT "Best Warrior" Noncommissioned Officer/Soldier of the Year Competition was held at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, June 4-7. The competition tested five NCOs and three Soldiers on basic warrior task and drills; night and day land navigation; marksmanship; a written exam; an Army physical fitness test and a formal board.

The eight Soldiers were chosen to compete in the competition by their respected units throughout the Third Army area of operations.

"Any NCO of the Year or Soldier of the Year competition is a win-win," said Command Sgt. Maj. Stephan Frennier, Third Army/ARCENT command sergeant major. "It's a win for the competitor because as they prepare themselves, they make themselves better Soldiers and better NCOs. It's a win for their unit because they will have better Soldiers and better NCOs."

The Soldiers endured early mornings and intense heat throughout the competition. Some of the tasks they had to complete required them to wear their complete body armor in more than 100-degree weather.

"I feel like I did very well today," said Spc. Lane McCartney, Third Army/ARCENT Special Troops Battalion light wheel vehicle mechanic after firing his M16 rifle at the marksmanship event. "However, I won't know how I did until the end of the competition."

The Third Army/ARCENT "Best Warrior" NCO/Soldier of the Year award ceremony was held June 8 at Camp Arifjan. Joining the competitors to celebrate their accomplishments was Third Army/ARCENT Deputy Commanding General Operations, Maj. Gen. Gary H. Cheek.

The winner of the Soldier of the Year went to Spc. Bryan Haworth of New Mexico National Guard, 1st Theater Sustainment Command (Task Force Sinai).

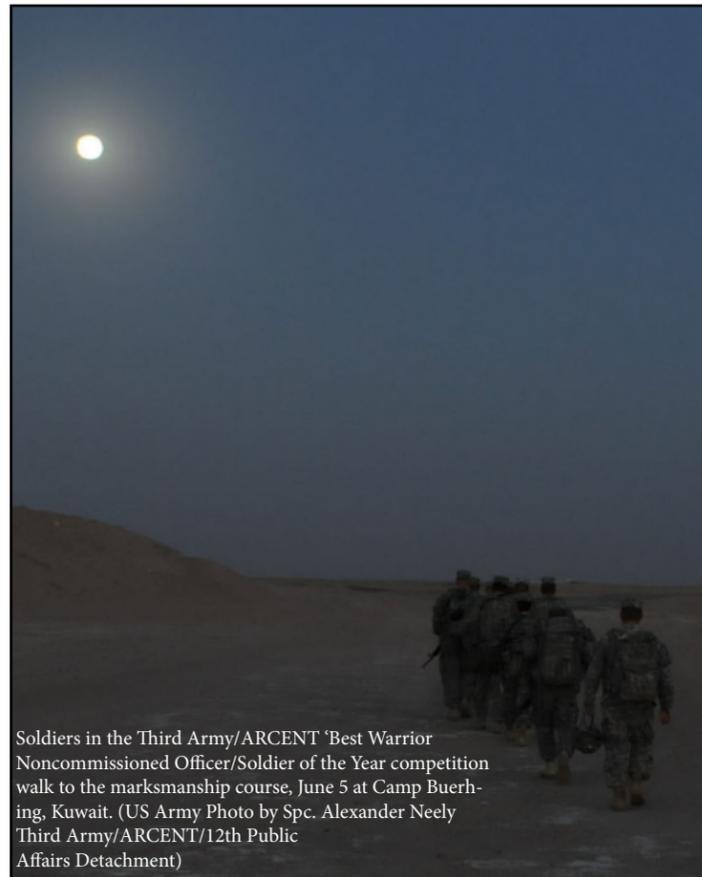
"It's such an honor, and I thank everyone back home who supported me and kept me in their prayers," said Haworth. He also said that he is debating whether to join the active-duty service after his deployment is complete and plans to continue climbing the NCO ladder.

The winner of the NCO of the Year was awarded to Staff Sgt. Jeremy Jackson, also from the New Mexico National Guard, 1st Theater Sustainment Command (Task Force Sinai).

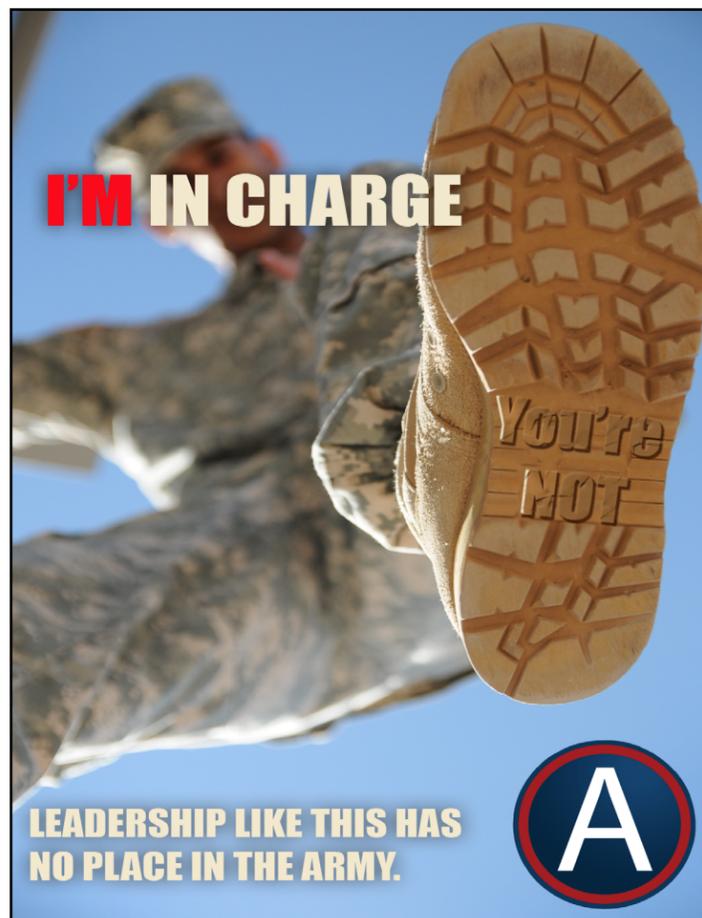
"It's a good feeling to know that all the training and hard work I went through paid off," said Jackson. "I am just going to continue to train for the next stage and hopefully train my Soldiers to take the same steps I did to get to this level."

Jackson and Haworth went on to the U.S. Forces Command NCO/Soldier of Year competition at Fort Bragg, N.C., in July. **A**

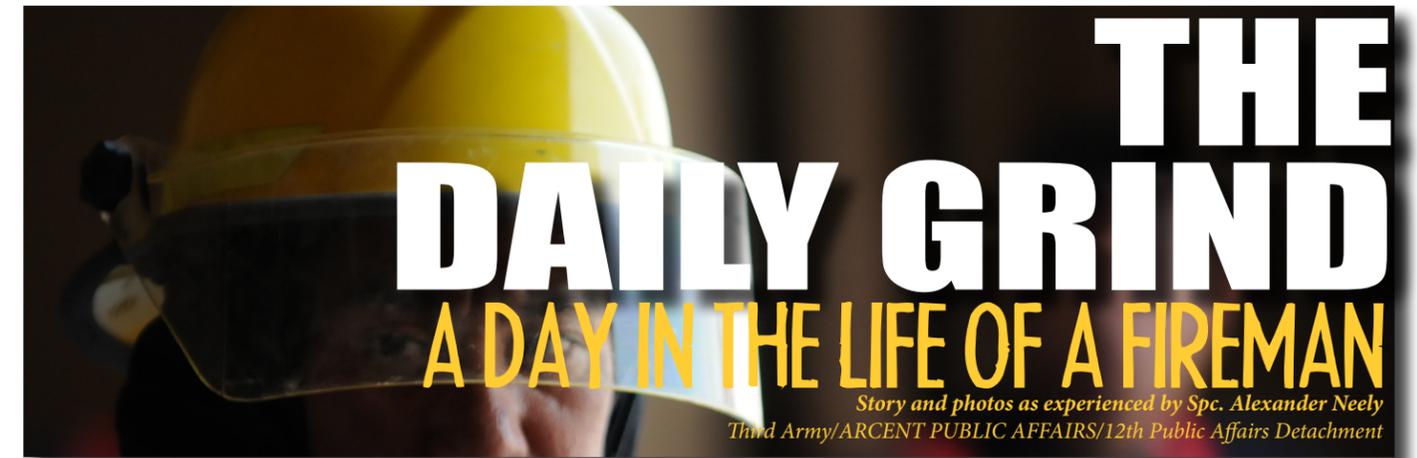
TO SEE WHO WON AT THE FORSCOM COMPETITION, GO TO:
<http://dvidshub.net/video/149430/forscom-best-warrior-competition-winners-part-1>



Soldiers in the Third Army/ARCENT 'Best Warrior' Noncommissioned Officer/Soldier of the Year competition walk to the marksmanship course, June 5 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. (US Army Photo by Spc. Alexander Neely Third Army/ARCENT/12th Public Affairs Detachment)



LEADERSHIP LIKE THIS HAS NO PLACE IN THE ARMY.



Story and photos as experienced by Spc. Alexander Neely
 Third Army/ARCENT PUBLIC AFFAIRS/12th Public Affairs Detachment

Hidden under the shade of the Station 1 Firehouse Area Support Group – Kuwait, firemen conversed in the bays – news was exchanged; orders were assigned; training was announced.

At 8 a.m. around Kuwait, the scene is similar at the 10 firehouses under the ASG – Kuwait banner. With approximately 70 firemen employed over six different camps throughout Kuwait, communication is paramount to ensure safety during emergency responses. However, according to Gary French, a station captain at Station 1 fire department ASG – Kuwait, the most difficult aspect of the job lies outside the firehouse walls.

"The hardest part of our job is probably getting people outside of the department to get an understanding of what we do," said French. "The stigma to overcome is that all we do is sit around, watch TV and don't do anything all day."

In an initial edition of "The Daily Grind," Third Army/USARCENT Public Affairs office decided to shed this stigma by embedding me inside the walls of the firehouse – from the intense training days to the life inside the bays.

I arrived at Station 1 Firehouse at 7:30 a.m.; a half hour before roll-call and an hour and a half after the firehouse wake-up call. *Continued on pg. 16*



Day One: June 10, 2012

Firefighters perform last-minute cleaning duties while station captains exchange information for the coming day.

At the 8 a.m. roll-call, station captains relay fire truck assignments and announce today's training, which was fire hose familiarization, a drop-ceiling simulation, and a search-and-rescue exercise.

After formation, I am informed that I have been assigned to the Heavy Rescue truck. A vehicle, which is appropriately nicknamed the "Tool Box," holds 672 pieces of equipment – a number that is only magnified after taking a tour through each compartment.

"After roll-call we check out every piece of our apparatus to make sure it's functioning; that it's present," said French, who is a 12-year veteran of the United States Air Force. "If there is a piece of equipment on the truck, we have or will train with it at some point during the month."

Out of all the equipment on each of the trucks, none is as foreboding as the ladder (or aerial) on Ladder Truck 1. Standing at 77 feet, with a workable distance of 72 feet, the ladder serves multiple purposes in an emergency.

"We can use it for vertical ventilation, which gives us the chance to get to the top of a roof and ventilate the building by creating holes," said Kenneth Burson, a station captain at Station 1 fire department Area Support Group – Kuwait. "The other capability the ladder has is to perform a technical-rope rescue such as when we gain a high-anchor point and repel down for water rescues."

As intimidating as 77 feet sounded, the vulnerability I felt high above the firehouse created an overwhelming sense of respect for not only the apparatus but the courage of firemen. The muscle fibers in my forearms and fingers burned with tension. My grip on the rungs tattooed ridges into my palm. Despite being attached to the ladder with a harness, the prospect of moving no less entering a burning building seemed impossible.

"To us, it's not chaos because we do this over and over again," said French. "When we go to an emergency it's our responsibility to remain calm and remain focused so that we can get something out of this emergency without chaos."

However, as Colorado Spring, Colorado native Burson admitted, their composed demeanor is attainable through a respectful fear of fire.

"Anybody, on this job, that tells you when they go into a working fire that they are not afraid is lying," said Burson. "In fact, to be perfectly honest, anyone that tells you they are not afraid; I don't want to work with them because you have to have a healthy respect for the moment."

Once back on the ground, I am given a full firemen's



A

uniform – boots, pants, jacket, gloves, hood and helmet. After several failed attempts at dressing in the 60-second time-limit, it is easy to understand what French explained as the "importance of repetition."

"One of the things we do in the fire services is we always do everything the exact same way every time," said French. "If we lose power on this base, and it's completely black and we have to respond to an emergency; we know exactly how our turnouts are set up."

After finally settling in the uniform, the firemen put me through an exercise with the fire hoses, which involves running and turning on the hose. Easy in theory, but moving in the oversized uniform is as stressful as it is awkward.

"The hose you used today would have two to three staffers for that kind of line," said Burson, who further explained that the hose, used on a working fire, will release up to 130 pounds-per-square-inch of water. However, standing out the firehouse, I struggle in attempting to hold a hose pumped to 80 psi.

After lunch, Captain Burson, several firemen and I are brought to a training site across Camp Arifjan. The site, which is constructed out of several shipping compartments, is a mock-building for search-and-rescue simulations.

The first simulation, called the "drop-ceiling exercise," forces a firefighter to crawl through a two-foot high, 25-foot long tube that is covered in cables and wires. If the idea of climbing inside of a tube with cables and wires did not sound claustrophobic enough, the entire task must be completed blind-folded in order to simulate the darkness of black smoke.

There I stood in the shipping compartment in my full-firemen uniform – plus a gas mask and oxygen tank – watching other firemen try to navigate their way through the tunnel. Watching attempt after attempt, it became obvious that getting temporarily stuck was inevitable. However, Burson explained that in those moments one must abstain from stress.

"Inaction is just as bad as the wrong action; just like being in the military, you have to put the stress to the back of your mind," said Burson.

Conversely though, Burson admitted that there are moments in the emergency services when that is not always possible.

"For me personally, by far the toughest day I have had to deal with here was the day we found out we lost one of our own firefighters in a motor vehicle accident," said Burson, who also worked on the site of the World Trade Center collapse after 9/11. "When you respond off-base to a motor vehicle accident; you do your job; you kind of put all the sights, the smells and all the emotion aside and deal with it afterwards. But when it's one of your own it's really hard to keep that emotion in the back of your mind."

Minutes after exiting the tunnel, exasperated and disoriented, Cpt. Burson tells me to keep on the gear for the search-and-rescue portion. A simulation, which is also performed blindfolded, included two firemen entering the mock-building for an emergency rescue.

Despite a confused sense of direction and a waning endurance, my partner and I were able to navigate our way through the building to the victim.

"You don't need to actually see what you're doing because you can feel what you're doing," said Jeffrey Hernandez, station captain at Station 1 fire department ASG – Kuwait. "Whatever

may seem like chaos to somebody else to another person it may seem like, 'OK, this is my environment, this is what I'm used to and this is what I trained for.'"

Back at the fire department at 7 p.m., the firehouse is an ant farm of firemen preparing for dinner. Whether it is firefighting, training or cooking one thing remains a constant throughout the firehouse: the brotherhood.

"All my guys, including me, are thousands of miles away from our families, so we must look out for each other and that brotherhood; we rely on it," said Burson.

At the dinner table, between bites and laughter, it becomes clear that the camaraderie within these walls is not only paramount but quite similar to that of the military.

"It's like being in a war zone; when you are with your squad that is your family," said Hernandez, who is a veteran of the United States Marine Corps. "When you wind up trusting another guy with your life you wind up creating a bond with them just like no other."

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Day Two: June 11, 2012

Although wake-up call is not until 6 a.m., the house is bustling with activity at 5:15 a.m. – some firemen wash the fire trucks, some sweep the bays, while the captains create truck assignments.

“We move people around to keep them fluid, so they don’t get stagnate on any one truck,” said French. “It allows them to gain experience on every single apparatus and piece of equipment.”

Between checking the ignition and siren on the trucks, I am informed by Cpt. Burson that we will be taking part in one of the most grueling training exercises – Hazmat Level A – after the vehicle inspection.

Prior to the simulation, I sit through a beginner’s course on information about the hazmat suit, the proper decontamination process and a brief overview of various chemicals in the area.

The hazmat suit, which stands at over seven-feet tall, is cryptically described by Burson as a “body bag with a window.” The interior temperature of the suit alone, not counting body temperature, will have an increase of 35-40 degrees from the exterior temperature. Over a five-minute period, several firemen helped me into the hazmat suit, along with securing an oxygen tank and gas mask.

“This Level A suit can not only be used for hazmat but for CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear) and since we are in the Middle East; that is our biggest concern” said Burson.

In order to gain a respect for the exaggerated size of the suit, firemen had me perform menial tasks such as replacing batteries in a remote, making a cell phone call and ripping pieces of duct tape. Although simple in explanation, the tasks forced me to truly concentrate on my breathing and finite motor skills.

From there, Cpt. Burson explained what several firemen described as “one of their hardest moments of training” in the fire service. Partnered with another fireman, I must place an injured victim onto a SKED litter and drag the litter around the building one full lap. Once back at the original position, I, along with my partner, will move the injured victim from a Talon-litter and drag the victim for another full lap around the building.

With each step, I am reminded of the 120 degrees outside of the suit, with an apparent searing temperature inside of 155-160 degrees. At the finish line, several firemen help me undress as I collapse into a chair.

Hours later, firemen gather at the soccer field to participate in their mandated, three times-a-week workout. The workout, which involves getting dressed in full uniform (including oxygen tank and gas mask), is specifically designed to practice firemen movements in a working fire.

The workout is as follows: Walk one lap; 30 second plank; 10 push-ups; crawl the width of the soccer field; 30 second plank; 10



push-ups; walk the length of the soccer field; 30 second plank; 10 push-ups; low-crawl width of the soccer field; 30 second plank; 10 push-ups; walk the length of the soccer field; 30 second plank; 10 push-ups.

As I crossed the finish line, unable to catch my breath, I reached out for stability on the back of another fireman. Each fireman, standing in a collective circle, clung to one another for support – a scene that prompted the words of Cpt. French to echo in my head.

“In the fire service, we are a family,” said French. “Cops they do their shift and they go home; we are home; this is my house.” 



SUSTAIN || SHAPE

READY

TRANSITION || COMMUNICATE

SUSTAIN || SHAPE

READY

TRANSITION || COMMUNICATE