



The Old Ironsides Report



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Training, instincts and wrestling experience pay off for 1st AD soldier



Pfc. Jessica Lynn Nicholson, 21, a 1st Armored Division soldier with HHC, 40th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade, was recently awarded the Army commendation medal "for valor and courage in the face of enemy action" in Baghdad, Iraq.

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Conrad College
372nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq – When quick action is required in an emergency situation, a soldier often doesn't have time to think. The soldier's training and instincts take over.

Pfc. Jessica Lynn Nicholson, 21, a 1st Armored Division soldier with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 40th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade, Division Engineers, found out how true that adage is recently when she was working at a security checkpoint in Baghdad.

The reason she, a tracked-vehicle mechanic, was assigned to the checkpoint was to search women.

"But, that day (about 9 a.m. on June 7) there were a lot of people gathering at this checkpoint and it was very busy. So, I was asked to search some men, too," said Nicholson.

"While other soldiers were searching a car, the driver had stepped out of the car and I was searching the driver. He didn't have any weapons on his person," she said.

"The other soldiers checking the vehicle at first thought it was clear. Then one of the soldiers thought that something didn't seem right. So, he searched the car again." She added.

During the second search, the soldier spotted a grenade hidden behind the visor on the driver's side. The soldier shouted, "Grenade!"

"I immediately got man down on the ground, face down, and I remember pressing his face into a sandbag," Nicholson said. She continued to hold him down until other soldiers came over and zip-cuffed the man.

The man then claimed he had the grenade because he was going to turn it in to the U.S. soldiers. But they did not believe that story, because he had not mentioned it, or indicated anything like that, until after the soldiers had found the grenade and after he had been subdued and was handcuffed with the plastic zip-strips.

"I really don't remember exactly how I got him on the ground, but it was practically instantaneous," she said, blushing. "I don't remember the details of putting him down. I just remember, suddenly, I had him down on the ground with his face pressed into a sandbag and I kept holding him there."

She said the man then started crying and someone said he might have been embarrassed because it was a shame for a man in Iraq to get beat up by a woman.

She later recalled that she had done some wrestling at Beatty High School in Beatty, Nev., and that experience, plus her Army training, gave her the right stuff to subdue the Iraqi man.

Nicholson, 5'6" and 120 pounds, said she had wrestled against boys in high school, because the boys and girls were not separated for wrestling, so, throwing a man down was nothing new to her.

Asked the size of the Iraqi man, she said, "He was about my height, but heavier. I would say he was a little out of shape."

Asked if she had grown up as a tomboy, Nicholson said, "No, I was even a cheerleader for a little while. I guess I kind of grew up out in the middle of nowhere," she said, "and I just always had to do whatever needed to be done." She grew up in Silverton, Idaho, and, when she was 15, her family moved to Winnemucca, Nev.

She said she has also boxed with some of the men in her company. Asked if she wore boxing gloves, she replied, "Oh yes, of course, we had boxing gloves. I wouldn't want to hurt them."

She is the daughter of Jim and Kris Nicholson of Winnemucca, Nev. She has been in the Army for a year and a half.

Nicholson's weapon is an M-249 SAW (Squad Automatic Weapon), which she carries with her everywhere she goes. She has nicknamed her SAW, "Camille." "It's my baby," she said.

The citation on her Army Commendation Medal certificate says, "This is to certify that the Secretary of the Army has awarded the Army Commendation Medal to Private First Class Jessica L. Nicholson, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 40th Engineer Battalion, for valor and courage in the face of enemy actions while assigned to the 40th Engineer Battalion. Her decisive actions at a security checkpoint prevented the enemy from endangering the lives of her fellow soldiers."

The Old Ironsides Report November 3, 2003

U.S. 'copter shot down near Fallujah, Iraq, killing 15, wounding 21

New York Times

Fallujah, Iraq, Nov. 2 -- An American Chinook helicopter crashed here today, killing 15 soldiers and wounding 21 others. It was the deadliest single incident for Americans since the United States invaded Iraq in March.

The helicopter was hit by a missile and exploded in midair, several witnesses in this farming community 40 miles west of Baghdad said, in an area where anti-American sentiment is high. A second explosion followed when the helicopter hit the ground, they said. Another missile narrowly missed a second Chinook, the witnesses said. Their accounts matched descriptions of a shoulder fired missile.

The United States military said it could not confirm that a missile caused the crash.

Guerrillas fired the missiles from a heavy grove of palm trees a few hundred yards north of the crash site, the witnesses said.

The site of the crash is a farming community about five miles southwest of Fallujah, a city where anti-American sentiment is high and residents clash almost every day with American soldiers. In a separate attack, an American convoy was bombed today in Fallujah, destroying at least one armored vehicle.

Villagers near the site of the crash said they were happy that the helicopter had gone down and American soldiers had died.

Ali Hassan, a farmer who lives about 200 yards from the crash site, said, "The resistance is getting stronger and stronger every day." He said one of his sons, Aamer, throws stones at soldiers. "Imagine what he will do when he grows up," he said.

SPORTS

Bryant eases his way back into fold with Laker teammates

Los Angeles Times

PHOENIX — Nothing unusual to report — but, during this topsy-turvy season in Lakerland, that qualifies as news.

Kobe Bryant played his first game of the regular season, his first true road game of any kind since he was charged with felony sexual assault, and he was just sort of ... there.

Nothing spectacular, nothing excessively wild. Somewhere between ho and hum.

He dribbled around, he looked for his teammates, he pulled up for the occasional jump shot. His five shots in the first half were the fewest among the Laker starters, his 15 points in the game were on the lower end of a balanced group of Laker scorers in an unspectacular 103-99 victory over the Phoenix Suns.

The crowd tried to boo Bryant every time he touched the ball, but it couldn't really sustain it. One chorus of boos in the first half was quickly answered by chants of "Ko-be, Ko-be" by the numerous Laker fans in the building. In fact, I saw more fans wearing Bryant's No. 8 Laker jersey than any other player's. Bryant was booed when he won the All-Star game's most-valuable-player award in Philadelphia, and he came into Saturday's game at America West Arena expecting something even worse.

But the Phoenix crowd turned into a non-factor. His teammates carried their share of the load and, all in all, "It was about the easiest 37 minutes I ever played," Bryant said.

"It's a long season," Bryant said. "I keep my mind focused on winning that championship. It felt good to be out there playing, don't get me wrong, but I want to win another ring."

Chaplain's thought for the day

Do Not Disturb

An airline captain hired a new stewardess. The first route they were flying had a stay-over in another city. Upon their arrival, the captain showed the stewardess the best place for airline personnel to eat, shop and stay overnight.

The next morning, as the pilot was preparing the crew for the day's route, he noticed the new stewardess was missing. He knew which room she was in at the hotel and called her up wondering what happened to her.

She answered the phone, crying, and said she couldn't get out of her room.

"You can't get out of your room?" the captain asked, "Why not?"

The stewardess replied, "There are only three doors in here," she sobbed. "One is the bathroom, one is the closet, and one has a sign on it that says, 'Do Not Disturb!'"

Have you ever felt you didn't have access to God through the avenue of prayer because there's a "Do Not Disturb" sign hanging on His door? If there's one there, you can be sure God didn't put it there. Access is always available, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." (1 John 5:14)

Go ahead, open the door! You'll be glad you did.

This Day in History

3 November 1986

Iran arms sales revealed

From HistoryChannel.com

The Lebanese magazine Ash Shira reported that the United States had been secretly selling arms to Iran in an effort to secure the release of seven American hostages held by pro-Iranian groups in Lebanon. The revelation, confirmed by U.S. intelligence sources on Nov. 6, 1986, came as a shock to officials outside President Ronald Reagan's inner circle and went against the stated policy of the administration. In addition to violating the U.S. arms embargo against Iran, the arms sales contradicted President Reagan's vow never to negotiate with terrorists. On Nov. 25, controversy over the administration's secret dealings with Iran deepened dramatically when Attorney General Edwin Meese revealed that proceeds from the arms sales were diverted to fund Nicaraguan rebels--the Contras--who were fighting a guerrilla war against the elected leftist government of Nicaragua. The Contra connection caused outrage in Congress, which in 1982 had passed the Boland Amendment prohibiting the use of federal money "for the purpose of overthrowing the government of Nicaragua." The same day that the Iran-Contra connection was disclosed, President Reagan accepted the resignation of his national security adviser, Vice Admiral John Poindexter, and fired Lt. Col. Oliver North, a Poindexter aide. Both men had played key roles in the Iran-Contra operation. Reagan accepted responsibility for the arms-for-hostages deal but denied any knowledge of the diversion of funds to the Contras.