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Ingenuity is the name of the game

By Staff Sgt. Eric Brown
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Throughout history, soldiers have come up with ingenious ways of improving the Army's equipment to fit their needs in the past and they continue to do so now. For example, during the Vietnam conflict, there were vehicles such as the "Eve of Destruction," to which soldiers applied double steel plates and heavy guns to counter the ever-present logistic ambushes.

This type of resourcefulness continues today, with National Guard and Reserve soldiers from the 32nd Transportation Group, headquartered in Tampa, Fla. The soldiers presented a static display Oct. 24 of a beefed-up HUMMV,

Heavy Equipment Transporter, two-and-half-ton truck and a trailer with a reinforced fighting position mounted on top.

"A lot of things are unconventional out there [in Iraq], so we must adapt unconventionally, too," said 1st Lt. Jaycen L. Miles, a platoon leader with the 346th Transportation Bn., from Albuquerque, N.M.

The vehicles featured M249 squad automatic weapons, M2 50-caliber machine guns and Mark-19 automatic grenade launchers -- all installed on vehicles that normally do not carry this type of firepower.

The HET, which is primarily used to haul heavy armor, was retrofitted with a door-mounted

SAW to provide firepower for the protection of the convoy and to help deter ambushes.

"It is intimidating to see it [weapons] out the window of the vehicle and gives a message to the enemy that we're ready for them," said Staff Sgt. Charles W. Brown, a heavy wheeled vehicle driver with the 257th Trans. Co. and native of Fresno, Calif.

It all started when Sgt. 1st Class James Hamilton's company, the 762nd Transportation Co., was delivering rations and water to a unit in Iraq and continuously received some type of small arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire. The native of Akron, Ohio, and the soldiers in his unit then started to gather excess parts and material and applied them to their vehicles for improved survivability.

"The command received word of what we were doing and our commander gave us the green light to continue," said Hamilton. "We're getting ready to modify the design of the trailer with two Mark-19s and two additional SAWs."

The operators of the vehicles have qualified with the new weapon platforms at a range and are fully mission capable for defending convoys, said Hamilton.

As Sgt. Maj. Robert D. Casher, a native of Pennsylvania and operations sergeant major for the 32nd Trans. Group said, "This is soldier ingenuity at its best."



Brig. Gen. Abraham J. Turner, CFLCC C-3, handed out coins to soldiers of the 32nd Trans. Group (COMP) for their hard work in designing and retrofitting the vehicles' weapon platforms. (Photos by Staff Sgt. Eric Brown)



Spotlight

On messages from the homefront

Every day Americans send thousands of messages of support for troops to publications like *Defend America*. Here are a few:

"Thank you so much for all you guys are doing and God be with you each and everyone. My son is going to be sent over very soon, so my heart goes out to all who still have loved one over there. So God Bless and you are in our hearts forever." Patricia Arnold, Arkansas.

"A MILLION thanks to each and one of you! You guys and gals are the reason why we are FREE! Cheers to past, present and future military brave men and women!" Love, Brandon, Julie and Jewelle Kutka, Chicago, Ill.

"A long time ago I was in your place. Not in the same country but stuck overseas for nearly two years. The biggest thrill you will have is when you step off the boat and on American soil. Good luck to you and may you be home soon. My age is 82. Thank you for protecting my family and me and risking it all for our country. I salute you." Dan P. Trosclair, La.



"Thank you is such a small statement to say for the bravery that you all show daily. I am so thankful for all that you guys do. I would like to tell you how appreciated your hard work and dedication through all of these trials and tribulations have been. I am patiently awaiting my husband's safe return also, but I would like to say one more time thank you. This is the home of the free BECAUSE OF THE BRAVE!!! God Bless You All." Amy Warren, Clarksville, Tenn.

"To all the troops serving our great country, God Bless you and your families. Our son is serving in Iraq with the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all. Thank you for the sacrifices you and your families make. I'm proud my son serves with so many men and women of such honor and character as each American defending our freedom!" Brett & Deb Herrington

"Bless all of you for your dedication and support for our freedom to live in this beautiful country of America. Two of my brothers fought in the Vietnam war so in my heart I know of the sacrifices a soldier makes for his country. Know that we at home are waiting, praying for each and everyone of you to return home to your loved ones. Prayer during times of trials and wonderment will pull you through ... I will fly our country's flag outside my home until I leave this planet as we DO have the best country in the world. That is because of men and women like you who are dedicated to good on this earth ... God bless you and your families." Nancy Jo McDermott, Apple Valley, Minn.

"May God bless you and I thank you for your great sacrifice. I'm very proud to be an American and you are surely the pride of true Americans who are with you all the way." M. Woodside, New York

Soldier Talk

What is the best thing about being in Kuwait?



The experience of being here has been a character builder.

- Sgt. 1st Class
Judy Hoffmeister
377th TSC



I enjoy working with people and seeing their different backgrounds.

- Lt. Col. Diane Chalberg
455th Trans. Det.
(C.S.)



I met a lot of new people and made some new friends.

- Sgt. Latanya Thomas
377th TSC



The adventure and the experience that I have had here.

- Pfc. Kelly Hereford
1175th Trans. Co.



The living environment. I am thankful it is not as harsh as some other soldiers had.

- Master Sgt. Joann Whipple
143rd TRANSCOM



The energy of the soldiers and watching them grow and mature.

- Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Brown
357th Trans. Bn.

News Briefs



Winning paddlers.... Sgt. 1st Class Frederick Kumph (center), 226th Area Support Group, won the Camp Arifjan table tennis tournament. He is joined here by runnersup Sgt. Eugene Woods (left), 336th Finance Command, and Pfc. Raymon Raos, 514th Quartermaster. Photo courtesy of LeaAnn Spidell, KBR.

Rumsfeld calls Iraqi progress "remarkable"

WASHINGTON - (From Defend America) Despite media reports to the contrary, "the situation in Iraq is not doom and gloom," Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said here Oct. 30.

While the task in Iraq is "difficult, dangerous and complicated," he said, "there has also been impressive progress across a range of Coalition activities."

The U.S.-led Coalition's "remarkable" achievements "dwarf any previous historical experience," Rumsfeld assured about 250 government officials, business and civic leaders gathered at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for Empower America's tenth anniversary celebration.

What's been accomplished in Iraq to date is "impressive and it deserves recognition," Rumsfeld told Empower America's members and guests. "I think our country has a great deal to be proud of, and certainly, the men and women in uniform who have done such a superb job have a great deal to be proud of," he said, drawing applause.

Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attack, Rumsfeld said, 46 million people have been liberated from tyranny and dictatorship. Thousands of terrorists have been captured or killed, including two-thirds of al Qaeda's senior operatives and 43 of Iraq's 55 most-wanted.

He compared the progress to date in Iraq to that in post-World War II Germany. The Coalition set up municipal councils throughout Iraq in two months. It

took eight months in post-war Germany. The Coalition set up an Iraqi cabinet of ministers in four months. It took 14 months in post-war Germany.

It took two months to set up an independent Iraqi central bank. It took three years in post-war Germany. It took five months to begin circulating new Iraqi dinars. Establishing a new currency in post-war Germany took three years.

The coalition set up a new Iraqi police force in two months, compared to 14 months in post-war Germany. Coalition officials began training a new Iraq Army within three months, and the first battalion was ready in less than five months. It took 10 years in postwar Germany.

"In less than six months, the Coalition has gone from zero Iraqis providing security for the people of Iraq, to 100,000 Iraqis in the border patrols, site protection, police, civil defense and the Iraqi army."

Convoy blackout times extended

(From CFLCC) During Ramadan, as the sun sets in the western sky, persons participating in the festivities often take to the roadways to rendezvous with friends and family members. This inevitably puts a lot more of Kuwait's citizens on the road in the early evening. The CFLCC command has initiated new convoy "blackout" periods to relieve some of the congestion on the roadways. Tactical vehicles are prohibited on Kuwait roads from 8:30 a.m.-9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.-1:30 p.m. Saturday through Wednesday and 4:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m. daily. The command's initiative not only keeps convoys from running into extensive delays, it lets Kuwaitis know Coalition forces are sensitive to their culture and their way of live.



Spirit in the night... Soldiers gather for an old-fashioned revival service under the stars at Camden Yards. (Photo by Maj. Bobby Hart, 143rd TRANSCOM)



(Photo by Maj. Bobby Hart)



(Photo by Maj. Bobby Hart)

Halloween Ariifan-style



(Photo by Spc. Petersi Liu)



(Photo by Spc. Petersi Liu)



(Photo by Maj. Bobby Hart)



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