

SandSPORTer

143rd Transportation Command

October 19, 2003

Greetings next best thing for soldiers

From staff

Soldiers who will be away from their loved ones this holiday season got an opportunity to ease the pain of separation a little thanks to the hard work of a three-man team from Army and Air Force News out of San Antonio, Tex.

The team, comprised of Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Posten, Sgt. 1st Class Pete Rimar and Spc. San Luciano Vera, visited six countries in theater and culminated this week at 11 locations in Kuwait.

While traveling through Kuwait, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Qatar and Kazakhstan since Sept. 7, the team completed holiday greetings for 4,574 soldiers including 1,037 in Kuwait.

"The team did a great job down here," said Maj. Bobby Hart, public affairs officer for the 143rd Transportation Command, who coordinated the Kuwait portion of

the trip. "They got up early, worked through lunch and late into the evenings. I was really impressed with their professionalism and enthusiasm."

Posten said the team's enthusiasm comes from the response it gets from the soldiers. "It is a small sacrifice on our part to do this. It's a good feeling to be able to be a conduit for soldiers to do a personal greeting back to their families. It's a good morale boost for the troops and a real pick-me-up for us."

The greetings the team film are sent back to a network of more than 1,100 television and radio stations in the United States and are aired in the television markets of the soldiers' hometowns.

"I think the most impressive thing was how patient the team was with soldiers," Hart said. "It didn't matter what rank the person



Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Posten prepares a soldier for his shoot.

was, the team made them all feel like they were the most important person that they had worked with all day. In fact, they seemed to make extra efforts with the young, lower-ranking soldiers to ensure their greeting was right."

The team's patience didn't prevent a little good-natured ribbing of soldiers, however. Hart said that the cheerful banter helped to keep the soldiers—many who were in front of a professional television camera for the first time—at ease.

"It really makes it worthwhile for us to hear the stories the soldiers tell," Rimar said. "Many of these people are Reservists who left their families, their jobs and are sacrificing for their country. We had one sergeant whose son is a captain serving in Baghdad. His son changed units when his father deployed so he could come be over here with his dad.

"To help the father send a message to his son saying how proud he is got to us all," Rimar said.

Vera echoed those sentiments when he said, "We know these soldiers and their families are making big sacrifices. The holidays will be a tough time on them and hopefully this will help. It's sort of like our gift to the soldiers and their families."



Holiday greetings team members Spc. San Luciano Vera and Sgt. 1st Class Pete Rimar, along with Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Posten, worked from before dawn until after dark videoing 4,574 soldiers. (Photos by Maj. Bobby Hart)



Spotlight

Ramadan: Holiest of Muslim Holidays

By Maj. Bobby Hart

Beginning some time around the evening of Oct. 26, more than one billion Muslims throughout the world will begin celebrating the holiest holiday for their religion. As guests in a Muslim country, it is imperative for coalition troops to learn the background and restrictions connected with Ramadan to avoid undue confrontations and embarrassment.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. Dates for Ramadan--which are derived from Islam's lunar calendar--vary from year to year. This year, the celebration begins on the evening of Oct. 26 or 27--a religious authority determines the exact date according to the appearance of the crescent moon--and ends on the evening of Nov. 24 with the celebration for breaking the fast--Eid Al Fitr--which begins on Nov. 25 and lasts for three days.

The month of Ramadan became sacred to Muslims because it was on the twentyseventh night of Ramadan that the first words of the Koran, the Muslim holy book, were revealed to the prophet Muhammad who founded Islam. The month became doubly sacred because it was the month when Muhammad achieved his first major armed victory--at Badr--by leading 300 of his followers to decisive victory against 1,000 Meccans.

It is during this month that Muslims observe the Fast of Ramadan. Muslims fast the entire month during the daylight hours and in the evening eat small meals and visit with friends and family. It is a time of worship and contemplation and a time to strengthen family and community ties. Fasting during Ramadan is obligatory for everyone who can do it. Sick people, pregnant women and some travelers in certain conditions are exempt from the fast but must make up any days missed when they are able. The Ramadan fast is observed from dawn until sunset, during which time Muslims may not eat, smoke, have sex or drink--even water.

Ramadan nights usually turn into joyous social occasions, with much visiting and exchanges of hospitality. The biggest change U.S. or Coalition troops may see will be that throughout the month, political, military and business activity among Muslims will generally decrease as devout Muslims observe religious practices.

People--both Muslim and non-Muslim--caught eating, drinking or smoking in public during daylight hours are usually fined from 100 to 150 Kuwaiti dinars and can be incarcerated for one or two days.

No special force protection measures are expected for Coalition troops during Ramadan, but servicemembers should be aware of possible pitfalls. Non-essential nighttime travel should be avoided and non-Muslims should avoid crowded areas.

As always, remember we are guests here, and a little common sense can keep us from offending our hosts.

(Information from 143rd TRANSCOM G-5 briefing on Ramadan and <http://www.submission.org/ramadan.html>.)

Soldier Talk

What does the Evangelistic Outreach program at Camden Yards mean to you?



It's a good Christian alternative to activities her and a chance to fellowship.

Sgt. Vanessa Plater
1083rd Trans



It brings joy to my heart. I hope others will join us out here.

Sgt. John Corak
1175th Trans



It's stress relief. I look forward to it all week.

Staff Sgt. Beverly Sails
1175th Trans



To watch something like this grow and bloom charges me. I love it.

Maj. Carl Stewart
143rd TRANSCOM



This is truly an expression of spiritual freedom.

Sgt. Audria Reeves
1175th Trans



I love it. I've played guitar all my life and this lets me share with others.

Sgt. Daniel Bender
829th Eng

News Briefs



Lt. Gen. David D. McKiernan pinned a star on Brig. Gen. Ennis C. Whitehead, III, forward commander of the 143rd, Saturday in a ceremony at Camp Arifjan. (Photo by Maj. Bobby Hart)

143rd (forward) promotes boss

Lt. Gen. David D. McKiernan, commander of Coalition Forces Land Component Command, pinned a star on Brig. Gen. Ennis C. Whitehead, III, commander of the 143rd TRANSCOM (forward), in a ceremony at Arifjan on Saturday. McKiernan spoke of the successes of both Whitehead and the 143rd in his remarks and said what the 143rd has accomplished during Operation Iraqi Freedom is "nothing short of phenomenal." Whitehead thanked many people during his remarks and said that although the most important people responsible for the promotion--his family--could not be present, he was proud and honored to be able to share the occasion "with my new military family--the members of the 143rd Transportation Command."

Blackout periods affect more than convoys

Some soldiers are still confused over the tactical vehicle blackout periods that are in effect in Kuwait. Kuwaiti officials were concerned about the number of convoys and additional traffic that are on their highways during the times school children are being transported. Coalition officials responded by banning all tactical vehicle traffic between the hours of 6:30 a.m. to 8 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday through Wednesday. The blackout applies to individual tactical vehicles--including Humvees--as well as con-

voys. All entry control points will prohibit tactical vehicles from leaving a facility within 45 minutes prior to any blackout period.

Senate nixes retiring at 55

The Senate rejected an attempt Wednesday to reduce the age at which National Guard and reserve members can start receiving retirement checks. During debate on the \$87 billion wartime supplemental funding bill, Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, Senate Appropriations Committee chairman, objected to the reserve retirement proposal because of its cost - an estimated \$8.3 billion over five years and \$16.4 billion over 10 years. The proposal, offered as an amendment to the Senate version of the bill, would have allowed reservists to start drawing retired pay at age 55, five years earlier than allowed under current law. Stevens said he didn't see the need to change a retirement plan that has been in place and worked well since 1947. "There is no reason right now to say any reservist who stays for a career has been misled," Stevens said, as he raised a point of order against the reserve retirement amendment on grounds it would exceed spending limits. Sen. Jon Corzine, D-N.J., who sponsored the amendment, said there is an increasingly urgent need to improve reserve benefits. "This is the appropriate time, given what kind of challenge we are laying down for our National Guard and reserve," Corzine said. "We have increased their responsibilities. We have put severe challenges in front of time and their families and it is our responsibility, in my view, to recognize that and to address it."



Facility dedicated...Dignitaries help Lt. Col. Charles Viet, Deputy Commander of the 111th Eng. Group, cut the ribbon opening the Robert Edward Rooney Marshalling Yard at Shuaybah. Rooney died in an accident at the port on Sept. 25. (Photo by Maj. Bobby Hart)



Latin Beat, a local band made up of contractors, provided the music and Arifjan soldiers took the opportunity to hit the dance floor as Hispanic Heritage month came to a conclusion with the concert and dance at Camp Arifjan. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Nate Orme)



Kuwaiti caterer Eassa Alzaid gets into the Hispanic spirit. (Photo by Maj. Bobby Hart)



Spcs. Ed Negrón, Emily Catala and Sgt. Mihaly Ramirez, 143rd, helped with the event. (Photo by Spc. Peters Liu)



Hispanic cuisine was the fare of the day and Shuaiba troops made the most of it. (Photo by Maj. Bobby Hart)



Banners representing many Hispanic countries flew over Shuaiba. (Photo by Maj. Bobby Hart)

Hispanic Heritage Month

culminated this week with special events and dances throughout Kuwait, including Camp Arifjan and Shuaiba Port. At Shuaiba, members of the 143rd helped plan a prayer breakfast and Hispanic dinner and festival.

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