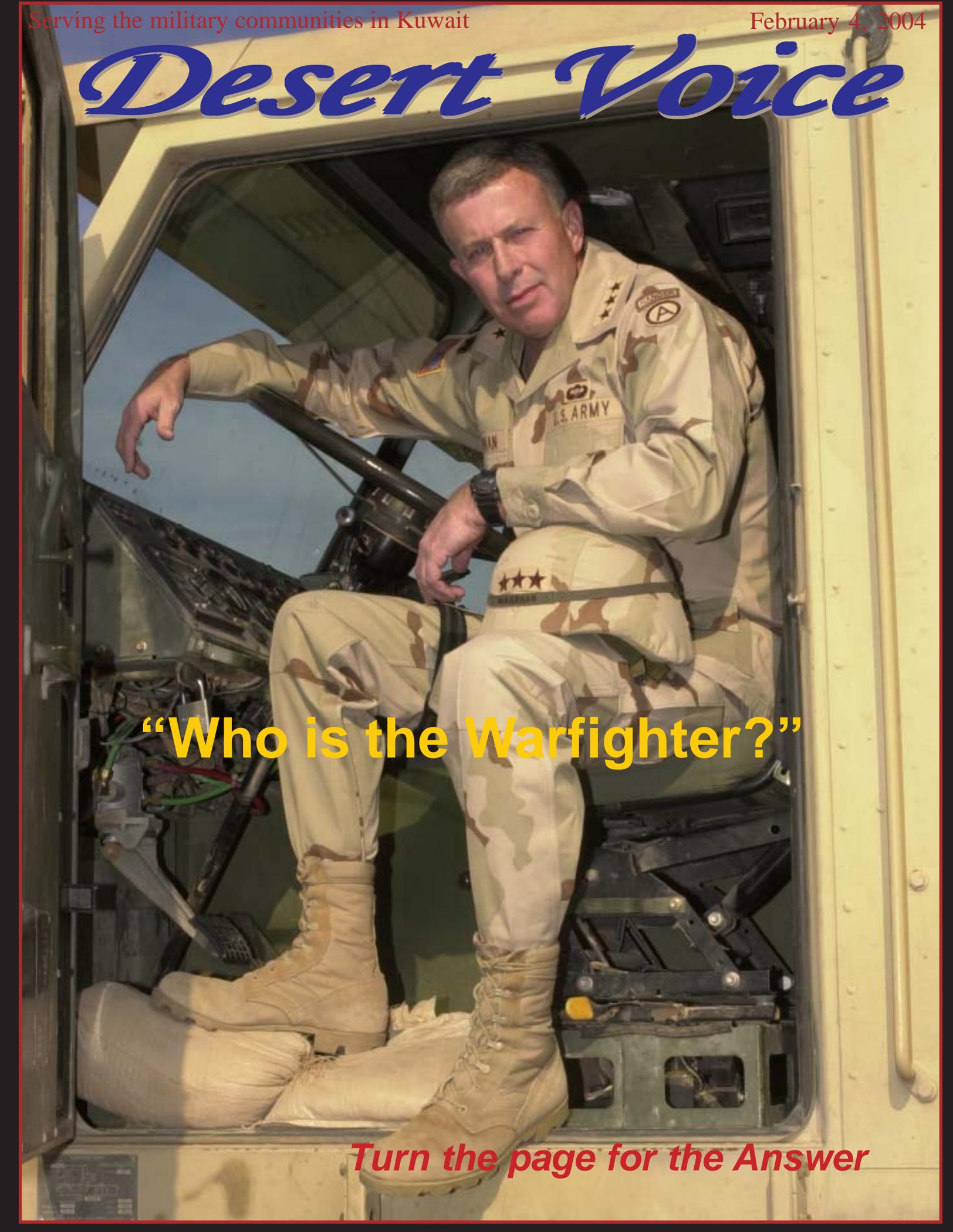


Desert Voice

A photograph of a U.S. Army officer sitting in the cockpit of a military aircraft. The officer is wearing a desert camouflage uniform with "U.S. ARMY" and "AN" visible on his chest. He has four stars on his collar, indicating a Major rank. He is wearing a helmet with three stars on the side. The cockpit is filled with various instruments and controls. The officer is looking towards the camera with a slight smile.

“Who is the Warfighter?”

Turn the page for the Answer

Inspiration

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.
Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

~Psalms 27 1-3

Forward, march...



Photo by Michael J. Carden

Soldiers assigned to the 10th Mountain Division's Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment pass a shepherd and his flock while on foot patrol in the Iraqi city of Fallujah.

Third Army/U.S. ARCENT/
CFLCC commanding general
Lt. Gen. David D. McKiernan

Third U.S. Army/U.S. ARCENT/CFLCC
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**"I pray daily to do my duty,
retain my self-confidence
and accomplish my destiny."**

-- Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.
Diary entry, 20 June 1943

*If you are interested in
USO photos, all photos
are posted on the NIPR
under CFLCC PAO
public folders.*



Soldiers of 2/82nd Brigade Combat Team pose for a picture with visiting FORSCOM Commanding General Larry R. Ellis.

Camel Tracks

"At the canteen on base, we sold snacks, coffee and soda for 25 cents. One night, we decided to charge officers 50 cents. It was explained as a "Sir charge."

-- Robert Thorne



Lt. Gen. David D. McKiernan, speaks to troops on being a Warfighter from behind the wheel of an M-1070 Heavy Equipment Transporter (HET).

Photo by Staff Sgt. Eric Brown

Volume 25, Number 18

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Who is the Warfighter?

Our Soldiers get the job done.

In recent years, in consecutive campaigns, they have defeated two notorious foes — the Taliban and the forces of Saddam Hussein. Our men and women who participated in those campaigns proved themselves world-class Warfighters. They were mission-focused and operated with winning attitudes.

Attitudes that said, *we will not fail*.

There's a tendency, however, to think that such attitudes, and the resulting successes, belong only to the 'trigger-pullers,' an exclusive club of Soldiers who live to put steel on target. While such forces certainly form a cutting spearhead, the fact is, that tip does not get to where it needs to be with what it needs to have, without the support of tens of thousands of other Warfighters. Warriors of early times valued the arrow that flew straight and true and for that, they needed bows that were strong and steady.

Here at the start of the 21st century every Soldier needs to understand that not only are we locked in a global war against terrorism, but that each of them is a Warfighter in this campaign. The nineties saw whatever excess we might have had trimmed away, bringing our military to its fighting weight. Therefore, we cannot afford to have anyone on the sidelines. If you are serving on my team here in Kuwait and Iraq, whatever your position is, *all of you* are my Warfighters.

That means that in this theater the Warfighters are identifiable by the flag

patches they wear on their shoulders. Where step the flags of the coalition is the front. That flag tells me that your nation has sent you here on a mission of such importance that it is willing to risk its own blood.

Whether engineer or analyst, maintenance or medical personnel, behind the wheels of one of our many convoys, or any of the hundreds of other vital skills we need to succeed, the flag on your shoulder says you're part of an operation vital to our nations' interests. It says that our citizens recognize you as a Warfighter.

With no easily definable frontline in this war, there is no safe area. Soldiers who had been told they were part of 'noncombat' units have shot it out with the enemy and killed them. They have won medals for valor and Purple Hearts for combat wounds. They've been captured as prisoners of war, killed by enemy fire and buried as heroes in their national cemeteries.

Given the nature of this enemy and his means and motives, we must be prepared to engage him wherever and whenever we can. In such wars it is not always the great strategies that win out, but more often the determination of Soldiers who remain alert and physically ready — men and women who believe in the cause for which they are fighting.

Such a tremendous responsibility demands individuals with strong character. Being a Warfighter is hard, dangerous work that requires great courage and commitment. In this theater you are more than the muscle that drove the



Lt. Gen. David D. McKiernan

spearheads of earlier campaigns. You are the campaign. Each of you, as a Warfighter, is working to overcome the obstacles in your lanes with determination and self-sacrifice.

All of us share a great pride in our country and are prepared to do whatever it takes to ensure freedom prevails. I ask each of you, as a Warfighter, to stay focused on your missions and continue to look long-term, beyond yourselves.

This is your time in your nations' history. When later generations ask what role you played in this great struggle, you can hold your head high. You can say you looked inside yourselves and stepped forward in the service of your country. You can say you brought important skills to the fight. You can say with pride you served as a Warfighter.

A proud salute,

Lt. Gen. David D. McKiernan



You are the Warfighter!

From a Warfighter

NOTE: The following email was sent to senior Army leaders from a Warfighter deployed to Iraq. The individual's name and references to specific units have been edited because the message was intended for the Chief of Staff and Sergeant Major of the Army, not for public dissemination. The Chief of Staff of The Army wants to share this message with the Army and the public because it exemplifies the spirit that makes all our Soldiers Warfighters.

——Original Message——

From: A Warfighter
Sent: Thursday, December 11, 2003 1:17 AM
To: Schoomaker, Peter J GEN CSA
Cc: Tilley, Jack L SMA
Subject: Who is The Warfighter?

Sir,

I was prompted to write to you by something that our Division CSM (Command Sergeant Major) said at our Combat Patch Ceremony for the DISCOM (Division Support Command). We had the ceremony in coincidence with our division's birthday. He expressed his and the Division Commander's heartfelt pride and deep gratitude for all hard work and effort that DISCOM Soldiers have done to support and enable the Warfighter to perform his mission. This statement, though I am absolutely sure was sincere, gave me pause. I appreciate and applaud the Army's renewed focus and reassessment of priorities to more effectively serve our great Nation in time of War.

Each and every one of my Soldiers is more than simply a logistician, a computer systems analyst, or a mechanic. Each one of my Soldiers does more than simply provide support and resources to enable other Warfighters to perform their operational commitments. Each one of my Soldiers is a Warfighter. Every Soldier in Iraq serving to liberate and guarantee a future of freedom and prosperity for the Iraqi people shares the title and honor of Warfighter. Support personnel facing the danger of cowardly improvised explosive devices and small arms fire as they move all classes of supply on the battlefield, tired and cold Soldiers standing watch on observation point guard, cooks and mechanics huddled in shelters as mortars fall on forward operations bases all over Iraq all face a deadly and determined adversary; all are equally committed to acquit themselves with bravery and honor as they serve the Nation they love. The Warfighter is not a member of an exclusive club, attainable by the few, served by the many.

The Warfighter is all of us, each committed to our mutual success, each ready and eager to fulfill that role which those charged with the sacred responsibility of leadership ask us to perform. I would ask of you to remember that the asymmetric battlefield expands the scope and role of Combat Service Support personnel who now find themselves performing double duty as a Warfighter and trained specialist supporting operational commitments. I would ask that you remind us all that we are riflemen and Soldiers first and foremost. I would ask that you encourage and challenge the Army to recognize that each of us are "the Warfighter."

Very respectfully yours,
A Warfighter
Iraq



SERGEANT MAJOR'S SHOT - GROUP

Embodied in the heart and soul of the young Soldier is a spirit that needs to be nurtured, coached, mentored and stimulated.

It is evident in the stories we tell of times past and battles won. It is the same story from generation to generation.

The culture and environment may change but the spirit lives on and on.

The young Soldier today is no different than the Soldier of yester-years gone by.

His weapons, though enhanced by new technology, had its origin and disciplines rooted in older technologies.

He is a winner and a fighter; he wants to be challenged and expects his leaders to set the conditions for success.

He fights his nation's wars and pays the ultimate price defending her causes and way of life.

Let's be mindful and watchful of those who promote the rhetoric with intent to undermine and belittle the young Soldier of today. We cannot afford to tolerate or allow that sentiment to bear fruit. If we do, we will rob the future leaders of their past.

Young Soldiers with their spirit nurtured, coached, mentored and stimulated will become old Soldiers; leaders who in turn will have their stories to tell to develop the next generation.

What stories will they have to tell?!

Today when you see a young Soldier, spend some time — talk to him—engage him.

Listen to what he has to say. Yes, I said listen! Share your past! Give him purpose and direction.

Our Army is a great organization with rich traditions and history, built upon the stories told by our old veterans who were once young Soldiers.

Our young Soldiers yearn for some perspective and are looking for us to lead in training, standards, and discipline.

We can only accomplish this by setting the example, which will facilitate their growth into the future leaders they will become. Their future is our future, what example are we setting?

You can be sure they are following.



Command Sgt. Major
Marlon P. Phipps
Coalition Forces Land Component Command

Last Airborne Cav. Soldier to retire

Story by Spc. Marc Loi

13th Public Affairs Detachment

Eight commanders-in-chief, two tours in Vietnam, three differences armed services in nearly 40 years wearing the uniform – that about sums up the illustrious career of Master Sgt. James Gross, the last Cavalry Soldier still wearing an airborne patch. The numbers may not represent, however, the experiences and stories the seasoned Warfighter gained since his joined the Navy Reserves in 1964.

Realizing he wouldn't see any combat action in the Navy, Gross asked for a discharge. In the summer of 1965, he joined the Army, whereupon he attended infantry training and infantry school.

Though at a time when many young men fled America to dodge the draft, Gross said joining the military wasn't an option – he was going to join regardless, because his family has served in every war, including the Revolutionary War, the Spanish-American War and both the World Wars.

So in November, 1966, the grandson of a Marine who served in World War I and son of a Navy Sea Bee who served in World War II, joined thousands of other young men and women in Vietnam.

On May 19, 1966, the plane Gross flew on landed just north of Saigon at Tan Son Nhat International Airport in the middle of the night.

"I remember it was very hot," he said. "I was only there for a couple of hours.

"They told us to get some rest because we would be on our way in a couple of hours."

And they promise held true. Though he would later serve with the 1st Aviation Group, 48th Assault Helicopter Company, as a door gunner, Gross will always remember his first unit the most.

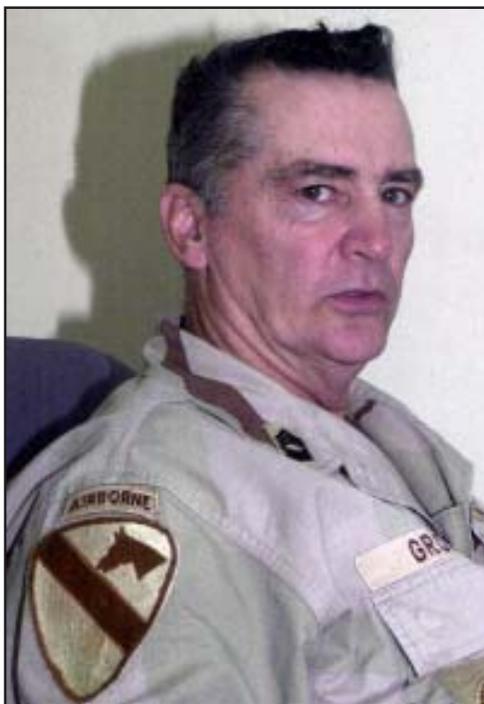
A few hours later, Gross was shipped to a Cavalry Division – Charlie Company, 1/12th Infantry Division, he remembered.

Three days later, Pfc. James Gross, fresh out of infantry training, saw his first action in Vietnam. He also saw 18 soldiers die that day.

"We were going off the hill and the mortar platoon stayed up there because they were going to get picked up my Chinooks," he said. "They hit the platoon.

"We brought in a few others for support, but ended up having 18 of the 21 guys die."

For Gross, training came in handy, but he said he still couldn't believe his eyes. As they started to remove the bodies, Gross saw



a soldier who had been shot 20 times and was still alive.

"It was unreal," he said. "But at least I didn't throw up. I was well trained and just followed orders."

The memory of the first action may be memorable, but there are also other memories for Gross; particularly, Gross remembers the friends he lost and the way he found out about friends who died.

One time, Gross was pulling security of a bridge and found out friends he trained with and flew to Vietnam with were killed in a separate attack.

"I personally knew those guys, I came over there with them," he said.

But the loss of his friends only fueled Gross to fight harder. He knew the North Vietnamese did not take prisoners, he said. The only way to get out alive was to fight to the death.

But he made it out alive after two tours of Vietnam. Though he survived the war, coming home was an entirely different story for him and many of the Soldiers.

"We didn't deserve anything special, but we didn't deserve any cold shoulders, either," Gross said.

As tension in Vietnam heightened, so did the tension in America. Protestors took to the street, and unlike now, American Soldiers were not recognized. They were turned away upon their returns.

"The images that they showed on TV made us look like killers," Gross said.

"You think – 480 killed a month, that's 16 a

day for 10 years. All of us had problems," he said. "There was no one in the infantry who came back without problems."

But Spc. James Gross still stayed in the Army. He became an "acting jack," – a specialist wearing a sergeant's rank and holding sergeants' responsibility.

In 1970, Gross got out.

But he wasn't out for long. He missed the camaraderie, he said. In 1971, Gross enlisted to wear the uniform again. But he wanted a challenge this time around, so he decided to become a Marine.

Joining the Marine Corps brought Gross to Japan, and again to a combat zone in Thailand to brief pilots coming in and out of the war zone.

He was promoted to sergeant in 2 years, after relinquishing his rank and joining the Marine Corps as a private first class, an E-2 rank in the Corps.

Then Marine Sgt. James Gross hit a wall – he could no longer get promoted. Realizing that if he wanted a career in the military, he would need to get promoted, Gross got out of the Corps and came back into the Army.

Back in the Army, Gross' career blossomed. He got promoted to staff sergeant and became a drill sergeant.

Perhaps having seen war first-hand made Gross more passionate as a drill sergeant. Because he received good training prior to going to Vietnam, Gross wanted to give trainees the same benefits.

"I wanted to teach trainees and make them better Soldiers," said Gross. "That's how we keep them alive."

In 1991, Master Sgt. James Gross served in the Inactive Army Reserves, volunteering his time to teach Soldiers about the art of war. Gross didn't do this for money; he did it for promotion points, he said.

In 2003, Mr. James Gross, a graphic artist and father of two children, ages 8 and 9, was called back to duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The seasoned Warfighter couldn't join an infantry unit, however. Instead, he came to Camp Doha, Kuwait, where he works as the Coalition Forces Land Component Command housing officer.

At the end of February, Gross will hang up his boots once again. Instead of being a master sergeant, Gross will be Daddy again.

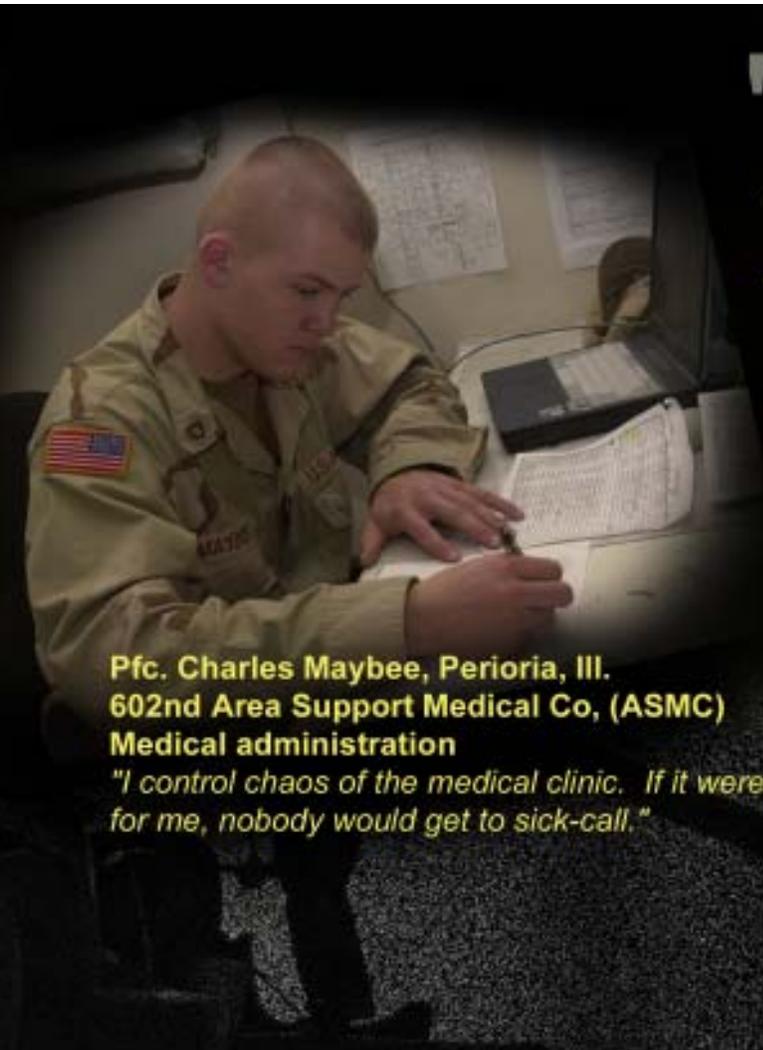
He'll return to Freeport, Mich., to his wife and their two children. He realizes a retirement is necessary.

"You've got to go when it's time to go," he said. "Some people hang around too long."



Sgt. Chad Bordelon, Hessme, La.
2023rd Transportation Co. (HET)
Vehicle mechanic

"Everyday I come out here and try to keep the trucks up so drivers can do their missions."



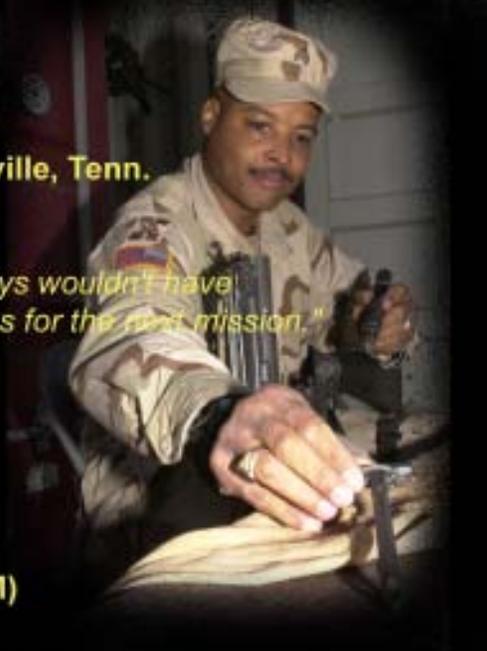
Pfc. Charles Maybee, Perioria, Ill.
602nd Area Support Medical Co. (ASMC)
Medical administration

"I control chaos of the medical clinic. If it weren't for me, nobody would get to sick-call."



David Aebischer
Communication Electrical Command (CECOM)
logistics assistant representative (LAR)

"I support power generation all over Kuwait and southern Iraq."



Sgt. Charles Reid, Nashville, Tenn.
Unit Armorer
1175 Trans Co. (HET)

"If it weren't for me, my guys wouldn't have clean, maintained weapons for the next mission."

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The Warfighter

is is your time in your nations' history. When later generations ask what role you played in this great struggle, you can hold your head high. You can say you looked aside yourselves and stepped forward in the service of your country. You can say you brought important skills to the fight. You can say with pride you served as a Warfighter!

Lt. Gen. David D. McKiernan, Third Army, USARCENT, CFLCC Commander



Sgt. Nathan Whitman, Elizabethton, Tenn.
6/6 Cavalry, 11th Aviation
Apache helicopter crew chief
"I clean these Apaches so that we don't bring any foreign debris back to Germany."



Staff Sgt. Steven Campbell, Birmingham, Ala.
E. Company, 131st Aviation
UH-60 helicopter Technical inspector
"When our mechanics complete their work on aircraft, I inspect it to make sure it's first class work."



Diana Jackson, London, Ky.
HET
Company operations officer
"Company missions go through me at our HETs can haul equipment employing and redeploying units."



Spc. Annalyn Manlulu, Guam
602nd Area Support Medical Co. (ASMC)
Medical Administration
"I sign in and out patients and ensure all medical records are filed and organized correctly."



Photos and illustration by Staff Sgt. Eric Brown
13th Public Affairs Detachment

Upcoming events

Camp Arifjan

Wednesday

Country Night, 7 p.m.,
Community Center

Thursday

Horseshoe Tournament
sign-up cut-off

Friday

Black History Trivia Contest, 6 p.m.,
Community Center

Saturday

Country night, 7 p.m.,
Community Center

Sunday

Pre-Saint Patrick's Day Craft day, 5 p.m.,
Club Mirage

Monday

Hearts Tournament, Yahtzee Tournament
6 p.m., Community Center
Basketball League, 6 p.m.,
Gym

Tuesday

Volleyball League,
6 p.m., Gym

Camp Doha

Wednesday

Country Night,
7 p.m., Frosty's

Friday

Soccer Tournament signup cutoff

Saturday

Deadlift competition,
7 p.m. Gym

Sunday

Spa Day, 11 a.m.-8 p.m.,
Marble Palace

CAMP DOHA MOVIES

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Wednesday | 2 p.m. | Cold Creek Manor |
| | 5:30 p.m. | Master and Commander |
| | 8 p.m. | Scary Movie -3 |
| Thursday | 2 p.m. | Marci X |
| | 5:30 p.m. | Matrix Revolutions |
| | 8 p.m. | Looney Toons back in action |
| Friday | 2 p.m. | The Order |
| | 5:30 p.m. | The Last Samurai |
| | 8 p.m. | Runaway Jury |
| Saturday | 2 p.m. | The Missing |
| | 5:30 p.m. | Gothika |
| | 8 p.m. | Cat in the Hat |
| Sunday | 2 p.m. | Master and Cdr. |
| | 5:30 p.m. | The Missing |
| | 8 p.m. | Texas Chainsaw I |
| Monday | 2 p.m. | Once Upon a time in Mexico |
| | 5:30 p.m. | Runaway Jury |
| | 8 p.m. | Intolerable Cruelty |
| Tuesday | 2 p.m. | Radio |
| | 5:30 p.m. | The Rundown |
| | 8 p.m. | Scary Movie -3 |



CAMP ARIFJAN MOVIES

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------|
| Wednesday | 5:30 p.m. | Bull Durham |
| | 8 p.m. | Fallen |
| Thursday | 5:30 p.m. | Animal House |
| | 8 p.m. | A Few Good Men |
| Friday | 5:30 p.m. | Santa Claus 2 |
| | 8 p.m. | Canadian Bacon |
| Saturday | 5:30 p.m. | Addicted to love |
| | 8 p.m. | Deep Impact |
| Sunday | 5:30 p.m. | Twister |
| | 8 p.m. | Air Force One |
| Monday | 5:30 p.m. | Runaway Jury |
| | 8 p.m. | Intolerable Cruelty |
| Tuesday | 5:30 p.m. | The Rundown |
| | 8 p.m. | Scary Movie 3 |



"WE DO IT YOUR WAY,"

now at Camp Wolverine



Photo by Staff Sgt. Eric Brown

Col. Shelley Richardson, commander of AAFES Europe and Cpt. Sybil Maxam, mayor of Camp Wolverine (APOD), celebrate Burger King's grand opening at Camp Wolverine by a ribbon cutting ceremony Jan. 24. AAFES lived up to their motto, "We go where you go", with the opening of Burger King's third fast-food establishment within the Kuwait military community. The order for the eating establishment only took five days from conception to the first servicemember enjoying the chains signature burger, the 'Whopper'.

Company/Battery/Troop Level SINGLES TENNIS TOURNAMENT

at Marble Palace

February 08 - 10

Signup at
Marble Palace or Fitness Center
by February 07 MLT 1700 hrs.

For more information call
OUTDOOR RECREATION at 438 3335/2688.

Company/Battery/Troop Level

SOCCER Tournament

Camp Doha

February 08 - 10

Sign-up by 06 February
at the Fitness Center

For more information call
Fitness Center 438 5033/438 4529.

ARCENT-KUWAIT CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH (BHM) 2004 EVENTS

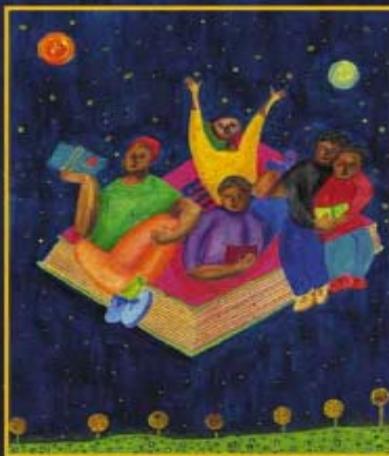
BHM Opening Program and Breakfast -
DFAC /0730/ 1 Feb 04

BHM TALENT SHOW -
MR. Frosty's-2000, 21 Feb 04

ESSAY CONTEST-NLT 20 Feb 04
"What BHM Means To Me"
(email submissions to:
Patricia.dyess@kuwait.army.mil)

BHM Movie Days - Feb 7, 14, 21 & 28
(Via CCTV)

BHM PROGRAM & DINNER
1900, 28 Feb 04 - Marble Palace
Dinner Served



Black History Month
Bransu is Board of Education (50th Anniversary)
February

From Basic to Baghdad

Story and photo by
Staff Sgt. Eric Brown
13th Public Affairs Detachment

Only 12 months have past since Pfc. Benjamin Hohmann, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3/325 Airborne Combat Team (ABCT) out of Fort Bragg, N.C., joined the Army, but he is already a bona fide war veteran and has the All-American combat patch to prove it. As a support Soldier, he has made his mark as a Warfighter in the U.S. Army.

The Sheboygan, Wis. native initially enlisted to be an airborne Soldier in the 82nd Airborne Division and to smartly take advantage of the many opportunities afforded to those who sacrifice for their country, but soon found himself in a war-torn country requiring the use of skills his drill instructors had taught him only a few months prior.

Hohmann, a 19 year-old vehicle mechanic, who entered basic training at Ft. Benning, Ga., then Advanced Individual Training (AIT) at Ft. Jackson, S.C., always wanted to be in an airborne unit, that is why after basic training, he proceeded back to Benning for airborne school. Hohmann was trained and ready for his very first assignment-with the 82nd Airborne Division.

"I was really excited because I wanted to go to an [airborne] unit and was assigned to the 3/325 ABCT at Ft. Bragg," said Hohmann. "I really didn't know what to expect."

Arrival at his unit was organized and swift, with non-commissioned officers guiding the new private every which way ensuring he had all of the field gear

necessary for a likely deployment order. He was also informed that his maintenance unit was already in Iraq and he should be prepared for deployment sooner than later.

Sooner came before later. On a Tuesday after a hasty 4-day weekend, feeling apprehensive with his new military life and the fact he hadn't met any of his new leaders or peers, he shipped out to the war-torn country of Iraq to link-up with the rest of his platoon.

Reality hit when he touched ground in Iraq, fell in with his platoon and began performing the duties he learned in the previous months. What he didn't realize was the compound, which he was assigned, would be in the cross hairs of anti-American insurgents.

"Sometimes you would hear bullets going over your head at night...that was interesting," said Hohmann. "We were working a lot and performing guard duty while being mortared and bullets were flying."

On one frightful evening Hohmann's compound was rocked with six mortar rounds, injuring a few Soldiers; but his training kicked into full gear, laying a bead of return fire came second nature to the young private.

Hohmann said, "The training you receive while in basic seems ridiculous at the time, but when you get into combat, it really helps. Simple things like keeping your weapon clean at all times...if you don't [clean you weapon] you'll be performing 'SPORTS' all of the time instead of returning fire.

"Attention to detail is very important. A simple



thing like a soda can, in Iraq, may be used to hide an IED. Back in America, you may grab a soda can on the ground and throw it away."

After heading into harms way for a long 12 months, accompanying his platoon and the 82nd during its advance to Baghdad, Hohmann has become an important part of the organization and a respected member of the platoon. In fact, Hohmann's battalion commander gave the platoon a coin for its hard work and in turn, his platoon sergeant gave the coin directly to Hohmann.

"The battalion commander gave the coin to the platoon for excellence and for working hard, but the platoon sergeant singled me out and gave the coin directly to me."

When asked what he

would tell his grandson about the experiences during the last 12 months, Hohmann simply replied, "I served my country during OIF and served with the same heroes who received the Purple Heart, but I wouldn't consider myself a hero."

Now that the 82nd is on its way home and Hohmann will soon be enjoying some much deserved leave. He plans to take advantage of the opportunities, which were only temporarily put on hold for the war and stay in the Army.

"I want to visit family and friends and go to Ranger school and maybe go to [Special Forces Assessment and Selection]. I also want to do what I can in the military—there are a lot of opportunities to take advantage of."

Maintenance Warriors keep the mission *rolling*

Story by Maj. John Clearwater
13th public Affairs Detachment

The warrior ethos, says General Schoomaker, Army Chief of Staff, “is a mind-set of commitment.” A commitment to the mission that goes far beyond a Soldier’s occupation or unit.

One unit exemplifying that spirit is the



Photo by CW2 Benjamin Stecker

Spc. Hinton of the 2/82nd Brigade Combat Team, repairs a drive shaft of a gun truck at night on a hostile stretch of road near the Tahlil Airfield.

Maintenance Platoon, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, just finishing a one-year tour of duty in Iraq.

“Much of our repair efforts took place at night out along the roadsides in the worst parts of Baghdad, often right after an attack on one of our patrols or convoys,” says CW2 Benjamin Stecker, battalion maintenance technician. “Our goal was to get every vehicle out of the kill zone before the enemy could regroup and attack again.”

Despite supporting a unit whose mission included security along Baghdad’s notorious

Highway 8, Stecker’s platoon managed to maintain an impressive 98% operational readiness rate on all vehicles. More impressive considering the age of the gun trucks being used, and the fact that their battalion doubled its pre-war vehicle fleet without an increase in mechanics.

“We had a lot of new soldiers straight from AIT,” says Stecker. “They learned quickly how to assess battle damage and repair it, even in the most extreme conditions.”

“The grunts like to believe they can road march everywhere and fight hand-to-hand. But they found they needed us to get where they’re going. When the rounds were flying, they were yelling for our gun trucks,” said Stecker.

At the start of the war, keeping the variety of vehicles rolling, which ranged from HMMWVs to 5-ton trucks and heavy wreckers, was a particular challenge. On top of displacing seven times while covering over 500 miles, the platoon kept all the battalion’s vehicles rolling without losing a single one to maintenance faults.

Flexibility and ingenuity became key traits for the platoon as it soon found itself performing law enforcement duties, in addition to their maintenance mission.

“As we moved around Baghdad initially, everyone kept asking us for assistance,” says platoon sergeant Staff Sgt. Angel Colon. “Fortunately we got out of the police business, since not long afterwards the local police station we were using got hit with a huge bomb which destroyed the place.



Photo by CW2 Benjamin Stecker

A Gun Truck with Soldiers of 2/82nd Brigade Combat Team, in battle for the city of As Samawah.

We responded with our wrecker pulling still smoldering cars out of the way to open a path for military traffic.”

The wreckers became a true lifesaver one evening when seven mortar rounds dropped inside the platoon’s compound. One shell exploded near where Stecker and Colon were standing. Luckily, a wrecker happened to be parked between them and the blast, absorbing it and protecting them from serious injury.

Too close for Stecker, a Gulf War veteran, whose wife delivered a baby boy only days he deployed to OIF. At the top of his priorities is getting back to the son he hasn’t seen in a year.

The risks and hard work have paid off for their brigade combat team, which is one of three units being recognized with a Presidential Unit Citation for their service in Iraq. Recognition that is a solid reflection of the mindset of Colon’s maintenance platoon.

“We were right there with the infantry, up on the front lines, from start to finish,” says Colon. “When they needed us we were there.”



The Warrior's Spirit

General George C. Marshall stands as one of the giants of American military history. As the Chief of Staff of the Army (his position was the equivalent to what is now the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs) he poured his life into shaping our armed forces into the arsenal of democracy that was vital to victory in the Second World War. Brilliant and tireless, he was well aware that all the equipment and plans of an army are useless, unless Soldiers were ready and able to use it in the right way and for a just cause.

When General Marshall received the Nobel peace prize in 1953, the presenter quoted from an address that General Marshall had delivered in 1941. In that address Marshall stated: "It is morale that wins the victory. It is not enough to fight. It is the spirit which we bring to the fight that decides the issue. The soldier's heart, the soldier's spirit, the soldier's soul, are everything. Unless the soldier's soul sustain him [her] he [she] cannot be relied on and will fail himself and his commander and his country in the end."

Wearing our nation's uniform does not make a person a Soldier. Soldiers (I include our brothers and sisters in other services as well) must have a "warrior spirit" if we expect to win the battles before us. Recent campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq have shown that the American military is lightning fast and lethal in battle. The months following major combat have shown that American fighting men and women have the heart, soul and spirit it takes to stay the course.

The war on terrorism has required—and will continue to require—stamina and determination. Without strong spirits that are sustained by personal faith and a genuine commitment to our Army values Soldiers are vulnerable to the attrition that comes with a long, difficult struggle. Strong spirits protect us from slack standards and fuzzy thinking. They challenge us to be men and women who do the "hard right" rather than the "easy wrong."

Chaplain (Major) Johnny D. Messer
ARCENT-KU
Command Chaplain

28th PSB soldiers wear many hats

Story by Staff Sgt. Nate Orme
3rd Personnel Command/PAO

CAMP WOLVERINE—If the Soldiers of the 28th Personnel Services Battalion wore a different hat for every task they manage, they would easily have a dozen of them.

The Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., unit arrived in theater April 12 last year and immediately went into action, first setting up and operating a joint military mail terminal (JMMT) to process the deluge of mail for troops serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Later, the unit took over operations to process thousands of military members into and out of theater.

"When we first hit country, we were averaging one million pounds of mail a day," said Lt. Col. Larry Oakes, commander of the 28th PSB, of the mail operation. "That put us as being one of the busiest mail terminals in the world." As many as four 747 cargo planes worth of mail arrived everyday into Kuwait during the early stages of the war, added Oakes.

The unit, in conjunction with other, smaller detachments from the other branches of the military, found a location to set up its terminal at a Kuwaiti military base located near the airport, since the original Camp

Doha mail facilities were inadequate for the amount of mail being received.

"We were the entry point for all mail into theater until July, when the JMMT in Baghdad opened and began distributing to points in Iraq," Oakes said.

One unanticipated job with which the unit had to contend was maintaining all the contracts required while operating the mail terminal in order. The terminal required a multitude of different contractors to come in and install air conditioning, build sleeping quarters, drive mail tractor trailers, receive supplies from the U.S. Postal Service, and eventually to replace most of the military personnel with contracted civilian employees.

"We almost needed to have a contract department to maintain ongoing contracts," said Oakes. "It was also a great opportunity to work with the other branches. We had the Air Force there; Marines were working and living with us; and we had to interact with contractors and the Kuwaiti military."

In contrast to OIF, mail policy in 1991 during Desert Storm did not allow shipment of large packages into theater. This time, packages up to 70 pounds and 138 inches

combined length and girth are permitted. Although this gave troops much more freedom while mailing, it obviously put more strain on the system, said Oakes.

Much of that policy fell on the shoulders of the 28th PSB. The nearly 200 hundred unit members, as well as another 300 sub-unit Soldiers working at camps throughout theater, made it work.

"I was never prouder of being a command sergeant major," said 28th PSB Cmd. Sgt. Maj. William Schlingman of his troops during that time.

Troops were working over 12 hours a day in 120 degree heat at the JMMT. News articles came out that were critical of the mail handling operation in theater. They struck the terminal's troops hard.

"The articles were definitely wrong," said Schlingman. "Soldiers took it very personally. The reporter (of one article) wrote about how poor (mail handling) was, but he never visited. How could he write about something without investigating the conditions? I told our people that we know how we're doing; how we accomplished the mission. We can't play tit for tat with people who don't know."

Eventually the mail terminal operation tempo slowed, CSA Ltd.

contractors came in, and part of the 28th PSB moved over to their current location near the Kuwaiti airport point of debarkation.

"We took over operations from the 324th PSB which recently redeployed home," said battalion executive officer, Maj. Desiree Morasco, a cardiac nurse in her civilian occupation. "We have command and control of the R&R program (rest and recuperation for Soldiers in OIF). We also are involved with the deployment and redeployment processes. We scan soldier's IDs when they come into theater. We also scan sensitive items at the seaport along with the Soldiers who traveled aboard ship while guarding the equipment."

Morasco said a subunit of the 28th PSB, the Reserve's 814th Personnel Services Company from Starkville, Miss., scans units out of country when they redeploy, and another subunit, the Nebraska Guard 105th Personnel Services Detachment, scans Soldiers into theater and assigns holding tents for Soldiers during their temporary stay here before heading home or to other camps in theater.

With the 365-day "boot on ground" policy in effect for units in theater, it means the 28th should be heading home by April 11.

Operation Iraqi Freedom



Photo by Sgt. Igor Paustovski
 Staff Sgt. Ambry of 1-41 Infantry, 1st Armored Division, ready to move out with security convoy of V Corps Assault CP at Camp Virginia. The Division is currently deployed as a part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

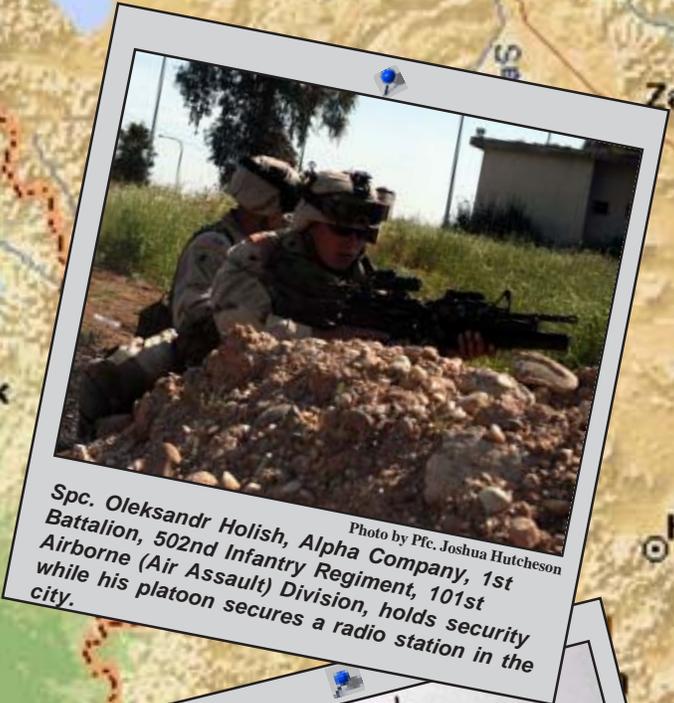


Photo by Pfc. Joshua Hutcheson
 Spc. Oleksandr Holish, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Division, holds security while his platoon secures a radio station in the city.



Photo by PH1 Greg Messier
 An aviation ordnance man runs out from under an F-14D Tomcat after putting the safety pins back in unexpended ordnance so the aircraft can be safely moved around the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson in the Arabian Sea.

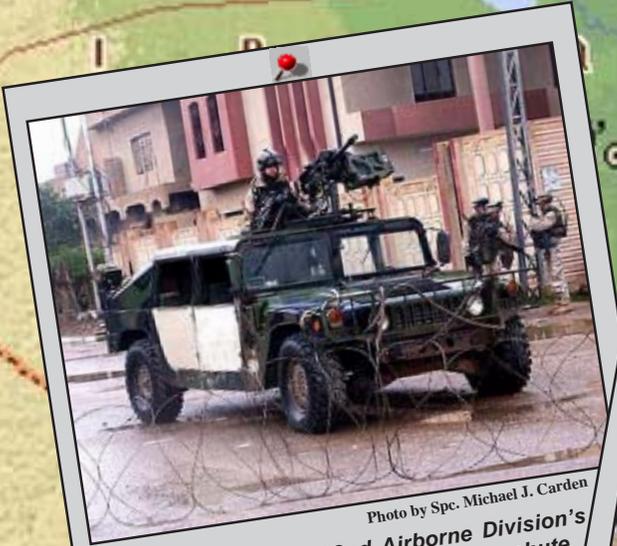


Photo by Spc. Michael J. Carden
 A paratrooper from 82nd Airborne Division's Company D, 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment maintains security from atop his humvee with an automatic grenade launcher at a traffic control point in Fallujah, Iraq.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Joseph Roberts
 Demonstrators protesting against terrorism and violence walk down the streets of Ar Ramadia, Iraq. The protestors are marching with banners calling for peace and a united Iraq. They held a rally outside the mayor's office and the leader of the demonstration met with the mayor.