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First Army's Warfighter Division trains unit in preparation for deployment

By Capt. Kimeisha McCullum



Lt. Col. Mark A. Waldron, First Army's chief of Warfighter Division, facilitates the 34th Infantry Division After Action Review at the end of the three-day training exercise held in Camp Ripley, MN from May 2-4. (Photo by Capt. Kimeisha McCullum)

Faces from across ten different states were working hard as they continued their training in preparation for final validation before deploying to Bosnia in support of Sustainment Force 14 in October. Uniformed soldiers roaming back and forth, gathering information, briefing higher and answering questions in order to meet the objectives set by the commander and higher headquarters, kept the soldiers quite busy during this three-day exercise.

Training involved the 34th Infantry Division, known as the "Red Bulls", from Rosemount, MN, and was located in the Minnesota National Guard Armory at Camp Ripley. The overall participation of this exercise, held May 2 through 4, brought together a wide mix of soldiers, uniforms and experience to train on SFOR planning and responding procedures. It consisted of soldiers and contractors from the 34th headquarters, First United States Army and III Corps from Fort Hood, TX.

In-depth planning by First Army's Warfighter division trainers, III Corps trainers and contractors provided the backbone for this successful training. Expert observer-controllers/trainers, or OC/Ts, provided continual feedback to the unit. All of this equated to assisting the unit in learning their trade.

OC/Ts plan, execute, train and evaluate the technical competence and tactical proficiency of their RC/NG units to ensure they are qualified and ready for their mission.

"One advantage of the OCs is the growth we see in the staff we train, said Lt. Mark A. Waldron, First Army's Chief of the Warfighter Division. "This is one of the nicer things we do – we see these young soldiers and officers grow in their ability to accomplish Stability and Support Operation (SASO) missions. It's very pleasing, like watching your kids grow up with a mindset of - I am a peacekeeper."

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Soldiers, Civilians and Family Members,

*"In the deadly chaos that is battle,
it is trust that stirs soldiers to action
and trust that binds them together in the
most harrowing of circumstances."*

— *Chief of Staff, U.S. Army*

Soldiers in the Army have proudly served and protected this great nation for 228 years. The price of American freedom has been paid for in the blood and lives of our men and women in uniform. Since, major combat operations ended in Iraq on the first of May, more than forty-five soldiers have been killed in hostile actions or accidents. We have a solemn responsibility to be well-prepared for demobilization operations, continued deployments and for ensuring the development of strong training programs for our reserve component soldiers. These citizen soldiers and their families are contributing and sacrificing so much for our country and we owe them our best efforts.

As I travel throughout the First U.S. Army area, I am profoundly grateful for the dedication and professionalism I see displayed by the National Guard, Army Reserve, mobilization stations, training support divisions, brigades and battalions. You are a superb team and part of the most respected Army in the world. I feel fortunate to be associated with you.

Please keep in mind those heroes we have memorialized in recent days, for theirs is the greatest of sacrifices and highest order of selfless service.

As we plan for the summer, whether for family trips or annual training for our soldiers, always keep safety in the forefront of all that you do.

Thank you for your hard work and tremendous efforts. Best wishes for a safe summer.

Lt. Gen. Joseph R. Inge
First in Deed



Brig. Gen. Dennis E. Hardy (left), accepts command of 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) and Fort Riley, from Lt. Gen. Joseph R. Inge, commanding general, First United States Army, during an Assumption of Command Ceremony May 15 at Cavalry Parade Field. Hardy came to Fort Riley from Washington D.C. where he was the Director of Force Management in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G3. (Photo by Ray Davis/TASC)

'To Our Soldiers' provides direct link to Gi's

By Bruce Anderson

The Army has established a new Web link that makes it easier to send a greeting to soldiers serving in the War on Terrorism.

The link, called "To Our Soldiers," is on the Army HomePage. People interested in sending a message to a soldier can also access the program directly at <http://www.army.mil/tooursoldiers/>.

To Our Soldiers is designed for posting a message to an individual soldier or to a group, but is not designed to be a letter writing service, instant-messaging service, e-mail service, bulletin board or general chat service.



Not for fame



Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey J. Mellinger

wounded.

Last week, I had the opportunity to attend a memorial service for three soldiers killed by a car bomb during Operation Iraqi Freedom. One of the three killed had written home weeks before his death, saying that he would rather have the respect of just one of his peers than the thanks of the whole country. From the crowd gathered, he had gained that respect many times over.

The ceremony included all the parts one would expect – speeches by leaders and chaplains, flags and ceremony, and the paying of Taps. A missing man formation of A-10 Warthogs flew over at the proper moment; somber moments during which most of the audience appeared introspective.

But at the conclusion of the memorial service, twenty-eight young men from the unit were ordered forward to receive Purple Heart medals for wounds they received in combat. Some moved out quickly to assume their positions, then hesitated while those who could not move so fast (or could not move at all, and required assistance). After a few moments, all were in place.

First to receive his Purple Heart was a young soldier, rolled out in a wheelchair, and helped to his feet by his parents, one on each arm. One eye socket was shattered and scarred, the wound still healing. But his was an interesting tale. Wounded during a fight to secure a dam, this young soldier was found lying on his back by his command sergeant major. The sergeant major found the soldier's helmet nearby, covered in blood. The soldier had a large piece of fragmentation protruding from the side of his head, and he was quietly reciting the Ranger Creed to keep calm. Now, that's a powerful commentary on the strength and courage of our soldiers.

Above the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery are the words, "Not for fame or reward, not for place or rank, not lured by ambition or goaded by necessity, but in simple obedience to duty as they understood it, these men suffered all, sacrificed all, dared all and died."

We hear the casualty reports, and know the awful cost of war. We see the funerals (or are fortunate enough to be present or participate). But we generally don't hear about the wounded, and the continuing price of freedom that they pay every day. I'd like to talk about just a few of our

The rest received their recognition in turn. After the ceremony concluded, most gathered around the more severely wounded soldiers, offering support. And there were many who gathered around the father of one of the killed (a retired Army officer himself), telling of his bravery and care and concern for his fellow soldiers.

Over the last weekend, I visited one of my former squad leaders in a local rehabilitation center. He is now a sergeant first class, assigned to a top special operations unit. During a fight in Iraq, he was shot point-blank with an AK-47. The bullet entered his hip, bounced around, and came to rest at his spinal column. He was thankful to be alive, and more thankful that his mother had made him drink so much milk as a child. For you see, the bullet did lots of internal organ damage, but didn't sever the spinal cord. His will be a long rehabilitation, but one day, I expect he'll regain the use of his leg. And he was humble, and feeling poorly for those around him who were in "much worse shape."

During the battle for Baghdad, a wounded soldier insisted on being evacuated with his personal weapon (weapons are generally secured as casualties are evacuated), and later shoots an attacker as he was being transported on a litter to his unit's aid station.

And there are hundreds of other stories just like these. Take a moment to reflect on some of the costs our wounded will pay for years to come. And when you have a free day, try visiting your local VA hospital and just say thanks.



Private for a day

By Staff Sgt. David Strobel

As soldiers from the Tennessee National Guard prepare to defend a strip of Ft. Campbell from a simulated threat to the south, a new “private” joins them.



Sgt. 1st Class Eric Senn, usually an Observer/Controller/Trainer with the 3/337th Training Support Battalion at Ft. Knox, covers his sector.

Sgt. 1st Class Eric Senn is usually an Observer/Controller/Trainer with the 3/337th Training Support Battalion at Ft. Knox. His job normally demands that he watch and evaluate troops during training. But in a new interim program designed to give OCTs better empathy for their students, Senn is now on the receiving end of training.

In what OCTs are calling “Private for a Day,” trainers are setting aside the demands of evaluating and correcting soldiers and picking up MILES and a rifle.

“I like being in the line units,” said Senn. “I spent two years in the combat engineers. I enjoyed being in a foxhole again, pointing my M-16 at the enemy.”

Another OCT from the 3/337th, Staff Sgt. Dean Chambers, covered his rank and name tag, called himself “Pvt. Benjamin,” and joined the 212th Engineers running through his Base Defense lane.

“I got to know how the troops feel, what they’re experiencing, understand their motivations,” said Chambers. “My adrenaline got going when the OPFOR attacked. And it really got going when they popped CS gas.”

“As an OCT, we’re always running around,” said Senn. In the foxhole, trying to stay in a prone position, it’s tough. I forgot how long it seems, just waiting.” The idea came from Col. James Zanol, commander of 4th Brigade, 85th Division. “The trainers have to perform the task themselves, to understand how difficult it is to do the task under tactical conditions. This gives a better perspective to coach, teach and mentor.”

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Injured soldiers honored on Army birthday

by Alfonso Lopez



Walter Reed Army Medical Center patients, youngest on the left Spc. Luke Halderman, and oldest on the right, Staff Sgt. Flourice Gray, cut the Army birthday cake with Acting Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee June 11 at the hospital dining facility. (photo by SGT Reeba Critser)

Injured soldiers from Operation Iraqi Freedom shared an Army birthday cake with Acting Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee June 11.

A gathering of recovering troops convened at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center for a special birthday party, this being the Army’s 228th year. This ceremony was held for those who would otherwise be unable to attend festivities elsewhere.

Brownlee greeted each of the soldiers, after which all joined in singing happy birthday to the Army. Both the youngest and oldest soldier there joined Brownlee to cut the cake.

Just before moving on to patients in other wards, an awards ceremony was held. Cpl. Ricky A. Nelson and Pfc. Daniel Bazavilvazo, both from Fort Stewart, Ga., received Purple Hearts presented to them by Brownlee.

Brownlee told the soldiers: “I think the American people understand more than they ever have how important the military is, because you are the only ones that are standing between them and those ruthless and dangerous terrorists that are out there in the world.”

Walter Reed has been responsible for mending about 310 patients to date from Operation Iraqi Freedom.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Strykers' mobility surprises enemy in Polk's urban battle

by Spc. Lorie Jewell, Pfc. Andrew Hillegass and Spc. Marc Loi

An explosive battle for control of the village of Shughart-Gordon capped the 10-day exercise "Arrowhead Lightning II," the final operational certification for the Army's first Stryker Brigade Combat Team.



Soldiers of 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team), take some time to rest after a long night battling Opposing Forces in the city of Shughart-Gordon at the Joint Readiness Training Center (Photo by Pfc. Andrew Hillegass)

Elements of the SBCT (3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division) swiftly enveloped the town of Shughart-Gordon just before evening chow May 24, and flushed out all enemy troops long before breakfast the next morning. Joint Readiness Training Center observer/controllers reported that the SBCT reconnaissance unit had the town under surveillance by mid-Saturday afternoon, and indicated that the SBCT assault could begin at any time, according to Lt. Col. Joseph Piek, Fort Lewis Transformation Public Affairs Officer. Only the Opposing Force didn't know that.

The SBCT's main assault task force, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, surprised planners of the mock battle by reaching the town about 5 p.m., roughly 10 hours ahead of schedule, said site supervisor Cayln Rayburn. "Most units I've seen at the city don't make contact at Shughart-Gordon until around midnight," Rayburn said. "The speed in which the SBCT arrived is amazing."

"They're a lot more mobile," Spc. Michael Williams, an Opposing Force soldier, said about the Strykers.

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"They can come in quicker and the soldiers can dismount a lot quicker." Williams said that he and other OPFOR soldiers anticipated a good battle, having prepared several days for the SBCT. What they didn't expect, however, is how soon the attack would take place. "The Americans are invading!" one woman screamed at about 5:30 p.m. As citizens scrambled into their homes, OPFOR soldiers scrambled into different buildings, including the local elementary school and hospital.

The reason for this is the OPFOR hopes to give units on rotation the most realistic scenario possible. In a real-world situation, an enemy may just occupy a school or hospital, even though it is against the laws of war, Williams said. The town, built to resemble a city in a third-world country, offers training for urban combat tactics. Commanders can use their own strategies and timetables for capturing the town, Rayburn added. Fighting started when soldiers from Company A's second platoon dismounted from their Strykers to look for a tunnel, said observer controller Sgt. 1st Class Lawrence Pousard.

"They took some small arms fire from opposition forces inside the town, returned fire, and it just escalated from there," Pousard said. About three hours after the first shot was fired, the first Stryker made its way into Shughart-Gordon after an Engineer Squad Vehicle breached the concertina wires placed around the city.

Just before 1 a.m., Stryker brigade troops had cleared and secured half of the town's buildings. Around the same time and a few miles away, several opposition soldiers riding in the backs of three pick-up trucks tried to ambush the regiment's headquarters company. Soldiers maintaining a security perimeter returned fire, engaging firefight that ended after about five minutes when the trucks sped off toward Shughart-Gordon. By 5 a.m., opposition forces were fleeing the city, leaving Stryker Brigade soldiers to clear the remaining buildings and take control of the town. A few hours later, SBCT soldiers regrouped to assume defensive positions throughout the town. The Strykers' mobility and agility allowed the Blue Force soldiers to partake in some unconventional warfare tactics of their own, such as parking the Stryker right next to a building and climbing through the window for access, Williams said. "We learned a lot on both sides," said Staff Sgt. Michael J. Gateley, mortar section leader.

4th Brigade, 87th Division spearheads training for Reserve Component units

Story by Staff Sgt. Paul M. McGuire

With the 3rd Infantry Division deployed overseas, one might think this would be a good place to enjoy some quite solitude amid the pines and moss-draped oaks that blanket this south Georgia post – home of the “Rock of the Marne.”

One would be wrong.

That’s because soldiers still abound here. The only difference is that most of them don’t wear the diagonally striped patch of the 3rd ID.

As a major regional mobilization site for Army Reserve and National Guard units, Fort Stewart is teeming with troops preparing for deployment or other operations.

As recently as mid-March, there were 81 units on the ground involved in some phase of mobilization, whether in-processing, training, or readying equipment for movement. For most units, this process takes about two weeks. The biggest slice of that time is devoted to training.

Spearheading the training effort is 4th Brigade, 87th Division (Training Support), which is headquartered at Fort Stewart.

“The brigade has been a key part of the mobilization effort here,” said Col. Larry Burch, Brigade Commander.

According to Burch, 4th Brigade is currently training soldiers to support three major operations: Operation Noble Eagle in support of NORTHCOM, Operation Enduring Freedom in support of CENTCOM, and Operation Joint Guardian (KFOR 5A) in support of EU-COM.

The brigade’s mission involves developing a training matrix based on each incoming unit’s Mission Essential Task List (METL). A typical matrix includes a variety of common tasks, including first aid, chem-bio defense, and ordnance identification. Units also receive training on METL-specific weapons, such as the M-16 rifle, M-203 grenade launcher, and M-249 squad automatic weapon.

Training is the second of three phases in the mobilization process. First, units arrive at the Fort Stewart Mobilization Readiness Center and undergo in-processing for medical, dental, personnel, finance,

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legal, and family readiness. Once a unit has been validated, 4th Brigade Observer-Controller Trainers begin conducting the required training. The final phase is equipment validation.

Mobilization support is not a Monday thru Friday job. Everyone involved in the process operates seven days a week. Describing how his soldiers have adapted to the increased operational tempo demanded by this mission, Burch said, “They’ve responded as professional soldiers do – with total mission commitment. The country is at war, and our nation requires its soldiers to fulfill the duties of our chosen profession.” Among the professionals at work with the 4th Brigade are more than 100 Reservists who were activated for this specific mission. According to Burch, they play an integral role.

“They have stepped up to the plate and understand that the Army is a results-based organization,” he said. “It’s one Army and one standard. There is no difference between active and Reserve Component soldiers. The brigade continues to work as a team to accomplish its mission.”

By all accounts, the brigade is accomplishing its mission to the highest standards. “Generally speaking, 4th Brigade can turn out a validation packet the day after completion of the last portion of training – That’s as good as anyone on post,” said Maj. Odell Lewis, lead action officer with the Fort Stewart Mobilization Readiness Center. “We can’t get the soldier readiness packets that quickly, and we certainly can’t get the equipment validation packets that quickly.”

COL Burch credited the Fort Stewart team with providing the essential support to enable his brigade to succeed. “We have a ‘good neighbor’ relationship with the garrison,” he said. “When we identify a shortfall in equipment or soldier readiness, they are very responsive to assist with any needs.”

The job of the 4th Brigade is also made easier by the fact that units arrive at the mobilization station ready to learn. “They take this training very seriously,” said SFC Jonathon Lee, a trainer with the 3/306, 4th Brigade, 87th TSD. “Most units are very open-eyed and open-eared. They absorb everything. You see them writing it all down. They really want the knowledge. “They always tell us, ‘thank you for the good training,’” he said.

Special airline fares for families of military members wounded/injured in support of Iraqi Freedom

News Release

By Darcy I. Lilley, Lt Col, USAF

ATA, United Airlines, Delta Airlines, Continental Airlines, and US Airways are offering special fares for family members to visit their wounded or injured military members recovering from wounds received in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Each airline program is unique so please read them carefully.

American Trans Air (ATA): Free travel for immediate family members. This offer is valid for immediate family members of active duty United States Armed Forces personnel convalescing in any U.S. hospital due to injuries suffered during military action in Iraq, and to immediate family members of soldiers killed during the military conflict in Iraq to attend funeral services. Immediate family members include spouse, children, foster children, parents, step-parents, parents-in-law, siblings, and grandparents. Passengers may book one round-trip or one-way travel on ATA/ATA connection. Travel is valid on published routing from and to the 48 continuous United States, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Travel is valid through July 31, 2003. Call 1-800-435-9282 to make reservations. Refer agent to ATA's military family travel assistance program. Passengers must present a medical/hospital/US Armed Forces certificate letter.

United Airlines: For immediate family members a discounted "special care fare" will be made available for transportation to military specified locations. The special care fare represents an additional discount off United's already discounted emergency fare. Eligible passengers are spouse, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, grandchild, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews. Loved ones who wish to use this fare will need to provide appropriate documentation. There is no current expiration date for this travel option and travel must be ticketed by United Airlines. Call 1-800-864-8331 to make reservations.

Delta Airlines: Delta Airlines is providing a special assistance program for family members of active duty U.S. Armed Forces personnel convalescing in U.S. military hospitals in Germany as a result of injuries sustained in Operation Iraqi Freedom. A discount of 30 percent off current published sale fares (Rule A033) will apply with proper documentation.

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Round trip travel is valid on current published sale fares from the 48 contiguous states, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico to Frankfurt and Stuttgart. Travel is offered on Delta, Delta Connection, Delta Shuttle and Song (not applicable to Delta code share flights). Travel must be completed by June 18, 2003. No advance purchase is required. Family members must present an authorization letter from the military member's command, red cross office, or casualty assistance office. One free change is permitted. Subsequent changes may be subject to charges as per Delta rules. Reservations may be made by contacting your local official/leisure government travel office or by calling Delta direct. Passengers may contact Delta Airlines at 800-325-1212. Refer the ticket agent to page 12147 in their reservation system. Ticketing should include the published fare basis used followed by the ticket designator PI39. Commander's letter must be faxed along with a copy of the auditor's coupon to the military/government assist desk at 404-773-0916. Travel agencies can refer their questions to the Delta Airlines military and government assist desk at 1-800-325-1771 (this number is for travel agency use only).

Continental Airlines: Will provide military families by providing fare flexibility. Continental will waive advance purchase and minimum stay requirements for family members that are visiting military personnel recovering from injuries sustained in Iraq. Family members include spouse, children, mother, father, siblings, and grandparents. Call 1-800-468-7022 between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m. CDT to set up reservations. Letter from military member's command should be faxed to 281-553-3347. Include on fax cover sheet your Continental confirmation number, your full name and phone number, e-mail address and billing address, credit card number with expiration date. If using American Express include the CID number. Reservations will be held for 48 hours pending receipt of letter from commander and information above. Once received an electronic ticket will be issued.

US Airways: US Airways has introduced their "Salute Savings" discount fare program for U.S. military with special fares as low as \$79 each way,

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DOD announces mishap reduction initiative

The DoD announced today that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has challenged the heads of the military departments and the defense agencies to reduce the number of mishaps and the mishap rates by 50 percent in the next two years. This action was taken as the mishap rates have recently increased and the secretary wants to reverse this trend.

"World-class organizations do not tolerate preventable accidents," said Rumsfeld in a May 19 memo: <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/May2003/U06916-03.pdf>. "These goals are achievable, and will directly increase our operational readiness. We owe no less to the men and women who defend our nation."

This direction applies to all DoD activities and includes military on and off-duty, active duty, as well as Reserve and National Guard forces, and all civilian employees. The reduction goal also applies to all operations of aircraft, weapons, ordnance, motor vehicles, maritime assets, and installations.

Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness David S.C. Chu has been designated to lead the accident reduction effort. This is a concerted effort to engage all levels of DoD leadership in mishap prevention strategies and initiatives. Initiatives include: developing a real-time mishap decision support system; applying commercial technologies, where practical, on high-risk equipment such as aircraft; and finding ways to implement best practices from industry and other government agencies into DoD activities.

Special fares (Con't)

based on roundtrip purchase. US Airways "Salute Savings" rates are available to Active Duty and Reserve military and their immediate families through government-contracted commercial travel offices throughout the U.S. the fares are valid for tickets purchased through Dec 31, 2003 and travel completed by Feb 12, 2004. Tickets must be purchased as round trip and are available for travel originating in the U.S. to destinations across the US Airways system, including Europe, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean. For information on these fares, military personnel or their military ID card carrying family members should contact their commercial travel office on base/post. Tickets are nonrefundable and must be purchased at least three days in advance of departure. One Saturday night stay is required, and a maximum 30 day stay is allowed. Seats are limited and other restrictions apply. Fares are available to the immediate families of members of the armed forces when the member is part of the traveling party. Immediate family member is defined as a parent, guardian, spouse, and child.

Procedures: Family member contacts the military member's command structure and requests authorization letter. Letter must contain the military members name, rank, medical treatment facility, and the names of immediate family members. The names of family members not listed in DEERS may be provided by the military member. The member provides the authorization letter to the air carriers upon request. HQ AMC/LGTP will continue to monitor the air carriers and provide updates to the field as policy changes.

Army partially lifts Stop-Loss order

The Army has lifted "Stop Loss" for active-component units and for soldiers in about half of the specialties that had been required to stay on active duty. Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Reginald J. Brown approved the partial lifting of Stop Loss May 27.

This lifting of Stop Loss will allow about 16,000 active-component, 4,900 Army Reserve and 675 National Guard soldiers to leave active duty if they want between now and October, personnel officials said.

Checkpoint operations

By Staff Sgt. David Strobel

As a woman drove toward the U.S checkpoint in a small truck, six pairs of eyes watched for any sign of danger. Each soldier wondered if she was a threat. These activated reservists from the 678th Personnel Services Battalion knew their lives could soon be on the line.



SPC Keith English inspects a truck with a mirror.

“We’ve watched the news. We’ve seen that over the past few weeks several gate guards have been blown away,” said Sgt. David Remaley, a cook with the 678th PSBn. Remaley crouched behind a Jersey barrier and drew a bead down the barrel of his M-16 on the woman at his checkpoint. Another soldier from the 678th, Pfc. Omar Lewis, spoke with her and tried to figure out if she was safe to allow past his post.

“We’ll be in the rear area, and everybody in the rear is subject to pulling gate guard,” said Remaley. “We need to know these operations.”

Instructors from the Fourth Brigade make sure activated soldiers here at Fort Knox learn from the car bombing deaths of soldiers in Iraq. “We’re running three separate blocks of instruction here,” said Capt. Brian Frederick of the 2/340th Training Support Battalion out of Louisville. “These are each one hour classes. Here, we train how to search a vehicle. Over there,” he said, pointing to a grassy hill on the south side of Godman Army Airfield, “That’s where we’re teaching how to search an individual. And down by the yellow barriers and razor wire is where we practice running a roadblock. All of these, put together make our checkpoint operations lane.”

“Where should a checkpoint be located?” asked Master Sgt. Denny Buck, also an instructor from 4th Brigade’s 2/340th TSBn. “At a chokepoint?” answers one soldier from the 678th PSBn. “Yes, anywhere you can keep control and minimize traffic in your area.”

“Show respect and be aware of the possible danger. Know those two things and they’ll save your life,” said Buck.

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Department of Defense announces new compensation program

The Department of Defense announced a new compensation program in partnership with the Department of Veteran Affairs for many disabled military retirees. The new program called Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) became effective May 31 for qualified combat-related disabled retirees. Eligible members are those retirees who have 20 years of service for retired pay computation and who either have disabilities because of combat injuries for which they have been awarded the Purple Heart or who are rated at least 60 percent disabled because of armed conflict, hazardous duty, training exercises, or mishaps involving military equipment.

Payments for qualified retirees will accrue beginning June 1 with first payments possible on July 1. Members must apply to their own branch of service using DD Form 2860, "Application for Combat-Related Special Compensation". The form is available at: <http://web1.whs.osd.mil/icdhome/ddeforms.htm> and <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/crsc>. Retirees may also call their retirement services representative for assistance in getting a form.

Service reviews will determine which disabilities, if any, are combat-related or are the result of an injury for which the member was awarded a Purple Heart. Combat-related disabilities will include those that are the direct result of armed conflict or from conditions that simulate combat, or that result from the performance of uniquely hazardous military duties, or caused by an instrumentality of war.

Retirees will be informed of denied applications and the reason for denial. They may reapply later if they are able to show they meet the program criteria or appeal the decision if they believe their disabilities were combat-related, but were denied compensation by their service.



2-138th FA learns to defend

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. David Strobel



Staff Sgt. Bernhard Kaita and Sgt. Kevin Reid, OPFOR with 3rd Bn 337th Training Regiment play drunken locals at the checkpoint. They're giving the 2-138th Field Artillery soldiers practice handling a variety of situations the artillerymen may encounter protecting vital facilities during their activation for Operation Noble Eagle III.

Around the corner and out of sight from the military checkpoint, a man in a tee shirt and blue jeans leaned into a car and asked, "Is the delivery already done for that chlorine gas?" The driver, a woman also wearing civilian clothes, told him the delivery is almost complete and the truck

will be heading out soon. "OK, we'll hit the truck as it goes out the checkpoint," said Master Sergeant James Guffey of the 3/337th Training Support Brigade.

Moments later, Guffey tossed an M-19 grenade under the back of a truck making its way around the yellow plastic barriers of the checkpoint. In three seconds, a pop and yellow smoke poured out of the grenade, simulating a chemical spill. Soldiers from the Kentucky Army National Guard's 2-138th Field Artillery reacted to the training threat, pulled on their protective masks and yelled "gas, gas, gas!"

The 170 artillerymen were using their basic soldiering skills to perform the new job of Homeland Security, and trainers from Fort Knox were making sure they did the job right. But before they're certified, they have to pass through the Situational Training Exercise, which runs 24 hours a day for three days. The instructors and the troops use Cassidy Village, deep in the range area of Fort Campbell to practice and hone defensive and antiterrorism skills.

The two soldiers nearest the simulated chemical spill used their chemical protective gear to keep themselves safe, but an Observer/Controller playing a civilian guard wasn't so lucky. "We had a casualty here," said Corporal Russell Hicks of Bardstown. "First thing we do is get our masks on. Then we move the victim out of the area before we treat." The other artilleryman at the checkpoint,

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Warfighter Division (Con't)

It's rewarding to us to see we are making an impact said Waldron. Our reward comes from their success. Elements of the 34th Infantry Division Headquarters were brought together to train in order to function as an operational division headquarters rather than a combat division headquarters. Each training exercise presented unique issues that challenged the unit and its staff.

"OC/T duties are to teach, coach and mentor the 34th ID staff in functioning as a staff in a SASO environment," said Waldron. "We start with a division staff trained and focused on combat operations and we have to refocus them on operations in a SASO environment."

"This training teaches them the basics before getting into country and refines it once they are in Bosnia," said Maj. Bill Childers, First Army's Warfighter Plans Officer. "It is more complex at this level and it helps them work together as a staff. It also prepares them for the complexities in Bosnia."

"This exercise is very important," said Maj. Tony Dodd, First Army's Warfighter Operations Officer. "All of these missions we are training them on, they will encounter in Bosnia."

"This is very beneficial," said Sgt. Patrick L. Arel, 34th Infantry Division G2 battle non-commissioned officer. "Even though there are different situations, this training exercise will get us prepared to encounter real world situations once in country."

The success of the unit's training will be measured by its ability to deploy a higher headquarters to deliver military support and provide peacekeeping operations. First U.S. Army will continue to ensure that that success is always met.



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Anheuser-Busch gives troops, their families free admission to Sea World, Busch Gardens, Sesame Place

Anheuser-Busch announced it will give free single-day admission to its Sea World, Busch Gardens and Sesame Place parks to active duty military, active reservists, U.S. Coast Guard, National Guardsmen and as many as four of their direct dependents, beginning the Friday of Memorial Day, May 23 and concluding Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2003. The offer also has been extended to all coalition forces serving with US. troops in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"The men and women in our armed forces have made tremendous sacrifices, risking their lives and being separated from their families during the war," said August A. Busch III, chairman of Anheuser-Busch Cos., Inc., which operates nine U.S. theme parks. "We wanted to express our deep gratitude for their service, and this gives those who serve and their families some needed relaxation and enjoyment."

"It is our privilege to offer our parks to the men and women of our armed forces and their families," said Patrick Stokes, president and chief executive officer, Anheuser-Busch Cos., Inc. "It is a small gesture of thanks for the hardships endured every day by our soldiers and those closest to them."

"Operation Salute" will give free admission at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay; Busch Gardens Williamsburg; Sea World Orlando; Sea World San Diego; Sea World San Antonio; and Sesame Place in Langhorne, Pa.

"Operation Salute is exactly what we mean at the USO when we talk about the incredible power of 'Thank You,'" said Edward A. "Ned" Powell, president and chief executive officer of the United Service Organizations (USO). "It is an extraordinary example of a company's recognition of the sacrifices our military makes on behalf of all Americans."

Anheuser-Busch has previously honored U.S. armed forces with free admission to its theme parks. Nearly 1 million service members and their families visited free during Yellow Ribbon Summer following the first Gulf War and during the Anheuser-Busch Salute to America's Heroes, a post-9/11 tribute that included all branches of the U.S. military.

"Service With A Smile"

2-138th (Cont)

Sgt. Samuel O'Brian of Bardstown asked, "Did the 9-line request come through?" Hicks let him know, "Medivac and ventilators are on the way."

An evaluator, Sgt. First Class Larry Long, watched as another Observer/Controller fell to the ground, twitching with convulsions. "That guy is trying to see if they'll get distracted from their duties. Seems to have worked. See," he said, pointing out the pattern of defenders turning towards the soldier playing a chemical spill victim. "They're all focusing on the man down." But less than a minute later, he watched as the soldiers in masks resolved the confusion. "They're back on post. The situation is in hand."

"We're trying to squeeze in six months of events into 2 to three days," said Maj. Stephen Showalter, Operations Officer for 3/337th Training Battalion. "We keep running, we just don't stop." In many ways, this training and validation is much more intense and compressed than anything these troops will encounter in their real-life mission. It's applying the principle, 'more sweat in peace, less blood in war.'

"Their mission is a lot more than just gate guard duties," said Showalter. "These troops can be called up for a quick reaction force, run security patrols, do building searches, things like that." Lt. Col. Jim Glenn, commander of the training battalion, said he's pleased with how well the Guard unit is performing. "When they arrive, they're a little hesitant, unsure of what they should do," said Glenn. "But by the end of the first day, we have 'em where we want them... a little on edge, a little suspicious, curious and alert."

Another Observer/Controller with a lot of practical experience in Homeland Security was also happy with how well the troops made the switch. "Their MOS is so different from their assigned duties," said Sgt. First Class Elaina Back, a police officer in civilian as well as military life. "Within hours, they were adapting to what we expected from them. For example, we pulled out the man in charge. Immediately, the next in line, the first squad leader stepped right up and took control. That's just what they're supposed to do."

The 2-138th Field Artillery passed muster and earned their validation. Their new assignment will be to assist defending Fort. Campbell from intrusion or other terrorist threats.

Checkpoint (Cont)

Other instructors pass on hard-won lessons from Iraq. “You want to mark your minefields. That’ll prevent friendly casualties, keep people where you want them,” said Master Sgt. Don Harshey. “Control them, Channel them. You want your enemy on your ‘X,’ in the sights of your team’s weapons.”



Watched over by SGT Wendy Walker of the 678th Personnel Services Battalion, Sgt. First Class Kevin Fuller, Observer/Controller Explains how to properly search a suspect. “Crush, pull. Crush, pull. You’d be surprised how much you can hide under an armpit. If you get a few hairs, that’s ok. Always maintain control.” SGT David King of 3/337th Training Brigade plays

This training is both old and new. Activated soldiers training to deploy to southwest Asia weren’t required to learn checkpoint operations. But after four soldiers near Najaf and another three in central Iraq were killed in car bombings, 4th Brigade’s commander, Col. James Zanol, saw a need. “I was watching the news coverage just like everyone else. I knew we had the opportunity to prepare mobilized soldiers for the threat.

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We had already had a checkpoint operations lane ready for Operation Noble Eagle. We just modified it to theater conditions.”

Lt. Col. David Collins, 4th Brigade’s Operations Officer, led the efforts to bring the lessons of Iraq to Fort Knox. “We got in touch with ARCENT, the land component in southwest Asia. We got their TTPs (Tactics, Techniques and Procedures,) found out how they want to handle high-risk checkpoints. We’re making sure mobilized soldiers know how to do this the right way.”



Pfc. Michael Garth, 678th PSB cook, closes the gate.



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