

DUTY FIRST!

APRIL 2010

Unofficial 1st Infantry Division Magazine of Soldiers and Families | www.riley.army.mil

Kicking off Spring

Warmer temperatures
mean recreation, travel

**Soldiers assist Iraqis
with country's elections**

**Combat Aviation Brigade
deploys to Iraq**

THE BIG RED ONE CREED

TEAMWORK is the foundation of the Big Red One. I shall never fail my team, for I maintain the standard. My conduct and self-discipline set the example for others to follow.

HONOR is what I stand for—an American Soldier on duty for my country. My loyalty is intense. I display care for my fellow Soldiers and my chain of command through courage, respect, integrity and compassion.

I have learned to **ENDURE**, to thrive in adversity. The harsh reality of combat gives me the enthusiasm for realistic training. I am physically and mentally strong to meet the demanding situations my unit encounters.

We are one in the Big Red One. Our **BROTHERHOOD** gives us strength to fight on to any objective and accomplish the mission as our veterans have done before us. I live the legacy of my division.

READINESS is my priority. To be ready for any mission, anytime, anywhere. My business is first-class training and living high standards of care and equipment, weaponry and tactical and technical competence.

My **ORGANIZATION** is my strength. The BRO is bigger than any one individual. It gives me purpose, self-confidence, competitive spirit, intestinal fortitude and the desire to fight with all my heart.



Duty **1** First!

No Mission too Difficult. No Sacrifice too Great.

April 2010 | www.riley.army.mil

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Cover: A 701st BSB Soldier defends the ball from a 1st Sust Bde. Soldier during a soccer game July 27, 2009, as part of Victory Week competitions.

PHOTO BY SPC. SHANTELL CAMPBELL, 4 IBCT PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

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Witnessing historic elections

Maj. Gen. Vincent Brooks

On March 7, Soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division had a chance to witness history as the Iraqi people made their voices heard at the polls. It will be remembered as the day when freedom and democracy spoke to the world as Iraqis cast their votes to elect a new national government.

There was no doubt in my mind that the Iraqi elections would be successful and they proved that Iraq is emerging as a secure, stable democracy. It was a powerful day and a terrific example for the world, and especially for the Middle East, to emulate.

These were the second national parliamentary elections since the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. Unlike the first elections in 2005, the Government of Iraq's security forces led the effort by ensuring a safe and secure process for its citizens.

The general election took place at 2,733 voting centers across the nine southern provinces of Iraq. More than 4,128,500 Iraqis voted in this historic general election. Voter turnout across the nine southern provinces was about 60 percent. Babil Province recorded the highest turnout at 63 percent and Maysan the lowest with 50 percent.

Nineteen election observer teams from UNAMI, the U.S. Embassy and the European Union traveled to many polling stations across the south to ensure



the elections were fair, legitimate and impartial.

Arab media described the 2010 Iraqi national elections in this way, "Iraq is the envy of the Arab world—no country in the Middle East gives citizens more freedoms than Iraq, including a free press and uncensored Internet access."

The Government of Iraq made allowances for Special Needs Voting on March 4, allowing personnel from the Ministries of Defense and Interior, hospital patients and detainees to vote in advance of the March 7 general election. Meanwhile, Iraq's out-of-country voters numbered 150,000 and cast their vote at polling stations worldwide.

Iraqi voters, representing nearly 60 percent of the southern region's

population, became part of the "Purple Revolution," referring to the ink used on the voter's forefingers signifying that they have participated in the election. Iraqis proved they would not be intimidated or influenced in order to cast votes to effect change in Iraq. Women voted in large numbers across the southern provinces with Diwaniya and Maysan recording the highest number of women, especially young women seeking to influence Iraq's future.

The Iraqi Security Force's efforts across the nine southern provinces ensured attacks in the USD-South area of responsibility were minimal and ensured USD-South Forces remained in the background. The ISF security efforts marginalized voter influence from violent extremist organizations as their presence was effective throughout the southern region. The USD-South's role in Iraq's national elections was to provide security support to the Government of Iraq in accordance with the Security Framework Agreement signed by the Government of Iraq and the United States.

We were honored to play a role in this historic day. Now, we will continue in our role of supporting Iraq to ensure the new government is safely seated. We can all be proud of the work done by both our 1st Inf. Div. Soldiers and the Iraqi Security Forces on this important day.

Duty First! 

Love for baseball never dies

Division Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Champagne

One of my favorite times of the year is nearly upon us: baseball season. Nothing spells out an all-American summer day like a ballpark—it's right up there with apple pie and Chevy trucks.

Whether it's at Kauffman Stadium with the Royals, at Tointon Family Stadium watching the Wildcats, or at Ralston Stadium taking in a Junction City Generals game, they all add up to some well-spent down time.

America's favorite pastime comes in all forms during the summer and opening day is just around the corner. Regardless of age, the sound of a bat cracking and the snap of a glove as a ball is caught are sounds that come with some of the best memories you can create.

For many of us, the love of baseball starts as early as the age of 4 on our first T-ball team and continues through our youth in the form of little league. Some of the best times of childhood are out on the ballfield learning to play catch with your dad and then hearing him cheer for you when you finally put those skills to use. As community members, we



should support the dreams and dedication of our young people by supporting the teams they play on—whether it's cheering them on, bringing a cooler of drinks or helping drum up support for some new uniforms. Those are the experiences that breed the ethics of being a team player, working hard and striving for a goal—things that follow us the rest of our lives.

Sometimes the baseball passion continues through high school and college,

but far more frequently, we find ourselves on recreational teams, bonding with friends and playing to the point of sore muscles and joints. This summer at Sacco Softball Complex, dozens of softball teams will take to the fields as players enjoy time in the batter's box and the thump of the ball in their gloves. One of those teams is profiled in this month's magazine—its players have hit the field together for almost eight years, even finding time to play during their deployment. Visit the Fort Riley Sports Office at King Field House, find a team and join the fun—and if you can't play, go support your unit's team. Nothing builds teamwork and camaraderie like some time at the ballpark.

When you can't play, or have a free night, our local semi-pro team of the Junction City Generals or our nearby Wildcat team give us a fun evening just watching. With plenty of food, drinks and company, you can't beat a good game on a lazy summer evening. It's doesn't get any better than that.

Let's play ball!

Duty First! 

getting the

TOTAL

p a c k a g e

COURTESY PHOTO



Military members eligible for great travel discounts

By Stephanie Hoff
Duty First! Magazine

Whether you want to vacation across the country or just venture outside of Fort Riley's gates, great vacation and travel discounts are available for military members.

Fort Riley's Information, Ticketing and Registration office serves active-duty Soldiers, Family members, members of the military reserves, retirees and Department of Defense civilians. The office provides a wide assortment of packages and services to help make anyone's vacation dreams become reality.

"The biggest value is the savings they get with the military discounts," said Teresa Mayes, Fort Riley ITR manager. "Almost everything that we do through our office, they get military discounts that they would not receive without contacting us."

Mayes said the biggest difference between

the ITR office and a travel agency is that they're a part of the Directorate of Family, Morale, Welfare and Recreation.

"We're a part of MWR. Everything that we do goes back to the Morale, Welfare and Recreation fund that supports the Soldiers and Families programs here at Fort Riley," she said. "That's why we always appreciate their business and the money comes back to benefit Fort Riley programs."

The ITR office can assist with receiving military discounts and savings on most any vacation or getaway packages, no matter the destination.

"Pretty much just about every state, we have some travel program for," she said. "If we don't, then what we can do is network with other ITR offices."

Florida is a popular destination getaway frequently requested by ITR patrons.

"We do a lot of stuff for Florida, big time," Mayes said.

Military discounts (and even free tickets) are available for service members and their Families for theme parks and the Kennedy Space Center. "Military Salutes"—free or discounted tickets—are offered by popular vacation destinations, such as Disney World, Universal Studios and SeaWorld. Complimentary tickets for the active-duty service member and up to three immediate Family members are available for all Anheuser-Busch properties to include SeaWorld, Busch Gardens, and Adventure Island.

Boarding a luxury cruise ship or relaxing on the beach of an all-inclusive resort has become exceedingly popular for travelers and with military discounts added to their current promotions, the savings currently available for service members is phenomenal, Mayes said.

"When you think about the economy and that sort of thing, some of these vacation destinations are competing for a lot of other people's business, so there are some great deals out there, let me tell you," Mayes said. "Cruising used to be so terribly expensive. It's a value right now, it truly is. A lot of our Soldiers are cruising now."



STEPHANIE HOFF, DUTY FIRST! MAGAZINE

ABOVE: Ann James, travel clerk, assists Leroy Reed, a retired Soldier, with booking his upcoming vacation to Hawaii on Feb. 22 at Fort Riley's Information, Ticketing and Registration office. **OPPOSITE:** Passengers venture off the cruise ship "Fantasy," operated by Carnival Cruise Lines to tour Progreso, Mexico in Nov. 2007. The military discounts available for cruises booked through the ITR Office have made the vacation option very popular for Fort Riley patrons, said Teresa Mayes, Fort Riley's ITR manager.

For the military vacationer looking for a closer commute to their destination, Branson, Mo., should not be overlooked, Mayes said. A wide variety of Branson hotels, condominiums and restaurants offer as much as 20 percent military discounts.

"A lot of people think of Branson as country shows only. Believe me, it's far from that. They have the Titanic Museum and Showboat Branson Belle. It's more like a Broadway performance variety," she said. "It really offers a good variety for everyone, with all types of entertainment."

"It's a six-hour drive, so you can easily do that in a long weekend."

Military discounted tickets are also available to sporting events and shows as close as Manhattan, Topeka and Kansas City.

Tickets frequently purchased at the ITR office include Kansas City Chiefs football games and Worlds and Oceans of Fun theme parks. Kansas Speedway tickets and several performances at the Topeka Expo Centre are now available at the Fort Riley ITR office.

(continued on page 6)

ITR OFFICES

- **Fort Riley ITR**
Building 6918, Trooper Drive
785-239-5614
www.rileymwr.com
Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday–Friday
- **Fort Knox ITR**
1053 Spearhead Division Ave.
502-624-5030
http://www.knoxmwr.com
Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday–Friday
- **Fort Sill Adventure Travel**
1718 Macomb Road
580-250-4040
www.sillmwr.com
Hours: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday–Friday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday
- **Fort Leonard Wood ITR Office**
Building 490
573-329-8587
www.fortleonardwoodmwr.com/itr
Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday–Friday

Safeguard yourself, valuables when traveling

By Stephanie Hoff
Duty First! Magazine

Thinking about safety while on vacation is generally never at the top of a priority list. However, taking the time for a few simple precautions before and during your vacation can save you time, anxiety and numerous frustrations in the future.

Below is a list of recommended precautions for travelers to help make their vacation enjoyable and safe:

- Leave all non-essential credit cards and documents at home. "Cleaning" out your wallet before you travel can greatly decrease the risk of credit card fraud or identify thief, if your wallet was to be stolen or lost during your travels.

- Prepare and review your travel arrangements before you leave. Reviewing maps and directions of your chosen travel route before you leave will not only save you time on the road but also decrease the risk of vehicular accidents.

- Inspect your vehicle's fluid levels and tires. Preparing your vehicle for summer travels cannot only prevent you from being stranded alongside the road, but save you significant dollar costs. Having your oil changed, air-filter checked and tires inspected before you travel are some of the pre-travel inspections travelers should complete before hitting the road.

- The Ready Army campaign encourages Soldiers and Family members to prepare emergency kits for their homes and vehicles. A similar, compact kit should be prepared when traveling. Bandages, antibacterial wipes and antibiotic ointment should be included in case injuries arise.

- Don't drive tired and schedule rest stops. All travelers are encouraged to avoid late-night driving and include scheduled rest stops in their itinerary.

- Vacationers traveling to new or unknown destinations are advised to make contact lists for their destinations that include the phone numbers and addresses for important locations, such as nearest hospitals, taxi services or the U.S. Embassy, if traveling internationally.

- Don't just rely on your GPS or cell

TO LEARN MORE

Additional travel safety information is available by visiting these sites:

<http://www.travelsense.org>

www.safety.army.mil

www.ready.army.mil

<http://www.cdc.gov>

phone. Having a map on hand, can prevent frustrations and travelers from getting lost if their device was to malfunction or they travel into areas out of the service range.

- Create several copies of your travel arrangements and provide a commander, Family member or friend a copy so your current whereabouts are always known by others. For airline travelers it is recommended to have several copies of your itinerary (and Passport if traveling internationally) placed in separate pieces of luggage in the event one suitcase was to become lost or stolen.

- Don't withdraw large sums of money. A majority of travel experts recommend withdrawing smaller amounts and paying the additional ATM transaction fees to help prevent the loss or theft of an even greater amount of money.

- Divide cash and credit cards into different suitcases. This provides the traveler with a source of funds in the event one bag is lost or stolen.

- Carry zippered purses and travel bags. Besides keeping all of one's belongings from falling out during the trip, zippered bags serve as an extra obstacle for thieves attempting to pick-pocket vacationers in crowded tourist locations.

- Travelers are advised to bring with them the phone numbers for their credit card companies in the event their cards become lost or stolen while on vacation. Having the phone numbers can prevent frustrations and decrease the amount of money lost.

- Stay hydrated. Dehydration has caused the demise of many vacationers traveling to warm and sunny climates. Drink plenty of water and avoid alcoholic beverages while enjoying the outdoors.

(continued from page 5)

"(The Soldier or Family member) can also purchase some of these tickets at the gate and still receive the military discount," she said. "Unfortunately, after taxes for example, they still have to pay a little bit more than purchasing them through our office."

The annual Country Stampede in Manhattan is very popular summer activity for Soldiers and Family members, Mayes said. Eligible ITR patrons can purchase a special military discount ticket for all four-days of festivities for just a little more than the cost of a single-day ticket.

Networking with other ITR offices around the country, and world, has created additional cost-saving vacations to popular destinations such as Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon.

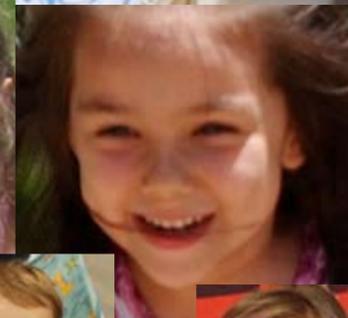
"We have a lot of people wanting to go to Las Vegas. We're starting to get a little more bargains by working with the ITR office at Nellis Air Force Base," Mayes said. "The key thing is to give us a call, if we don't have it; we do the research for the customer. Plus, we can network with other ITR offices. Every ITR office has region-specific items they sell."

For the customers who are undecided about their preferred vacation destinations, the ITR office staff can provide information on different locations and assistance with their questions and concerns.

"I think another big value is that (the customer) can walk in, and believe me, we have many who walk in and they don't really know what they want to do," Mayes said. "We can provide them with brochures and give them some ideas. It's really the value of the total package."

Celebrating the Month of the

Military Child



EVENTS:

1 April: MOMC and Child Abuse Prevention Proclamation signing, 4 p.m. at School Age Services

4 April: Easter Brunch, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Easter Egg Hunt, 1:30 to 3 p.m. at Riley's Conference Center

10 April: Pancake Breakfast, 8 to 10 a.m. at School Age Services

13 April: Autism Spectrum Disorder Presentation, 1:30 and 6 p.m. at Army Community Services

18 April: Family Fun Bowling Tournament, noon at the Fort Riley Bowling Center

22 April: Community Garden Ribbon Cutting, 10 a.m. at Forsyth Housing Area

23 April: Forsyth East Ribbon Cutting, 1 p.m. at Forsyth East CDC, Bldg. 2420

23 April: MOMC Festival begins at 4 p.m., Gary Sinise and the Lt. Dan Band Concert begins at 7 p.m., Marshall Airfield

23 April: Gold Medal Remembrance Ceremony, 5 p.m. at Marshall Airfield

24 April: NPS/EFMP Spring Fling, 10 a.m. to noon at Army Community Services)

30 April: MOMC Parade, 3:30 p.m. at Warren CDC



Sgt. Aaron Combs, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor, 1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team, left, completes a simulated course with a fellow team member for the Fort Riley Airsoft Team (F.R.A.T.).

COURTESY OF SGT. AARON COMBS

not your typical FRAT BOYS

Fort Riley Airsoft team a family offering leadership training | Story by Stephanie Hoff

When asked, the majority of Soldiers would probably not opt to spend their off hours dressed in full gear and training for combat, but Sgt. Aaron Combs isn't one of them.

Combs, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment, 1st

Heavy Brigade Combat Team, is a member of the Fort Riley Airsoft Team and is currently the team's commander.

"I had been really big into paintball before and I knew Airsoft was along those lines, but it was a little

bit different," Combs said. "This is my first experience with it. I love it. It's amazing"

The sport of Airsoft requires its participants to operate firearm replicas, shooting plastic bullets, and battle competitively in simulated scenarios. Airsoft challenges and scenarios vary greatly in style and structure, depending on the location, budget and the organization hosting the event. Combat situations on the simulated battlefield often involve the use of common military tactics to achieve the goals set in each scenario. Participants typically use varying types of Airsoft weaponry along with either real or replica military gear and uniforms.

"The gear that we use is full military gear; (the team members) can take plates and everything. I roll in full kit," Combs said. The firearms used by the team members can vary greatly from M4s, M16s and Bushmasters, he said. "The guns we use are a lot different than the little ones you can get at Wal-Mart or something like that. They're really high end and you know when you get hit, you feel it."

Airsoft scenarios allow Soldiers to train and prepare for military operations in a multiple array of environments and situations while in a recreational atmosphere. F.R.A.T. team members receive opportunities to train in environments such as urban operations, woodland operations and land navigation.

"We go out and train on the weekends on basic Soldier skills. Pretty much all of our training comes out of the Army Training Manuals, field manuals, STPs, TTPs, that kind of stuff," Combs said. "We train hard, but at the same time; it's enjoyable learning. Not only are (the members) learning about their job, Soldier-wise, it also builds leadership."

The F.R.A.T. initially began at Fort Riley in March 2006 by a group of Soldiers as a recreational activity. The military expertise and experience gained from the sport, was quickly recognized and the team became officially organized in May 2006. It has since evolved and progressed into a fully operational team, with nearly 30 members from a variety of military operation specialties.

"It's open to any MOS, actually we encourage that because of the diversity it provides to the team," Combs said. "Active duty, reserve component, retirees, civilians, it's open to almost anybody."

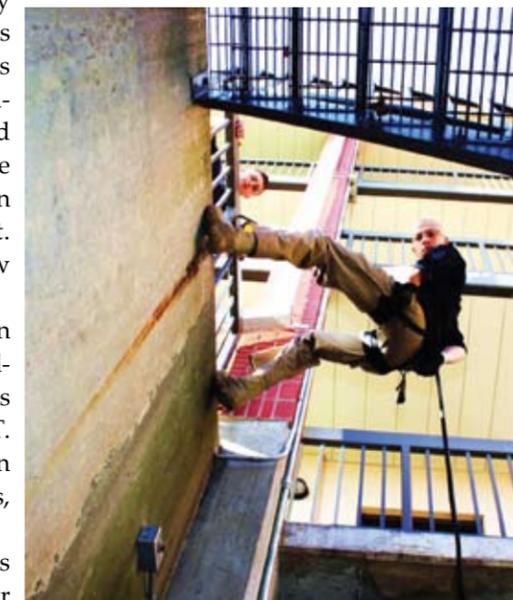
Combs has served as the team's commander since May 2009 and said one of the best benefits he has seen is the leadership skills the sport provides to younger Soldiers who may not have otherwise received the opportunity to lead fellow Soldiers.

"The leadership potential is amazing. I've seen a lot of guys grow, from not knowing anything and being unsure



COURTESY OF SGT. AARON COMBS

ABOVE: Sgt. Aaron Combs, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor, 1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team, provides security to his team while completing a simulated course. Nearly 30 Soldiers, including Combs, make up the Fort Riley Airsoft Team. LEFT: Sgt. Aaron Combs practices repelling while training with the Fort Riley Airsoft Team. Combs currently serves as the team's commander.



TO LEARN MORE

■ Soldiers interested in more information or becoming a member of the F.R.A.T. can visit: www.ftrileyairsoft.net

of themselves, to being team leaders," he said.

In addition to serving as a recreational opportunity for its team members during their off-duty hours, the F.R.A.T. promotes a safe and nontoxic lifestyle for its members. None of the team's members have received a driving under the influence infraction or had a reported safety instance since 2006.

"It's amazing; one of the coolest things about the team is that it's not just a team," Combs said. "We joke we're 'frat' boys, but it really is a brotherhood. The camaraderie is amazing. It's not just we meet on the weekends and shoot each other. We actually go out and do other things and hang out."

"The team is their family. It's a group of Soldiers that really care about each other. There's nothing that I wouldn't do for anybody on the team and likewise. In that respect, it's really, really cool." ■

Sky High

Skydiving allows Soldier to push himself to limits

By Jordan Chapman
Duty First! Magazine

THE SKIES ARE BLUE, THE WIND IS LIGHT, THE MOOD IS INVITING AND THE CAMARADERIE IS PALPABLE AS A FORT RILEY SOLDIER STROLLS INTO AN AIRPLANE HANGAR FEB. 27 IN WAMEGO, KAN. HE EXCHANGES GREETINGS WITH OTHERS AS IF HE'D JUST ARRIVED HOME, BUT HE IS ON A MISSION.

He receives training briefings and answers currency questions, he re-familiarizes himself with malfunction procedures, preparing for the worst but expecting the best; his eyes are alert and attentive and though he listens with the highest degree, his eyes never stray far from the parachuting rig not 10 feet away, ready to be packed, waiting to be jumped.

A man of passion and duty, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Chris Vaske, 1st Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Combat Aviation Brigade, has found a way to work and play in his favorite environment — the sky.

Though currently headed into his second deployment to Iraq piloting OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters conducting security operations, many of his state-side weekends are filled with jumping out of aircraft as a form of release, each jump fulfilling a skydiving goal that he has carried with him his entire life.

"It's one of those things I've always wanted to do ever since I was a little kid. I've always kind of liked adrenaline things," Vaske said. After being stationed at Fort Riley, Vaske found he had the opportunity to make a skydive through the Kansas State University Parachute Club. He successfully completed his first jump in October 2009, though he admitted it was the second jump that really inspired him to try and



JORDAN CHAPMAN/DUTY FIRST! MAGAZINE
Getting his "knees in the breeze," Chief Warrant Officer 2 Chris Vaske, 1st Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Combat Aviation Brigade, watches the plane as he falls away toward the Kansas State University Parachute Club drop zone Feb. 27.

achieve his A-License, the first of four progressive skydiving licenses a jumper can earn.

"That first jump, it's all adrenaline and unknown. It's the second jump you can really keep your head about you. The first jump, I just remember letting go," he laughed, later stating he was able to reach close to 20 skydives before his deployment.

While Vaske pilots helicopters for a living, he explained one reason skydiving appeals to him is because he has to learn to fly a whole new vehicle, his body.

"It's really not just jumping out of airplane. There are so many technical aspects to it," he described, illustrating with his hands that slight movements can mean the difference of

when presented with extreme environments.

"Most of the people in the military have 'type-A' personalities. That's the kind of person that skydives, a person who wants to push the limits a little bit ... if you can go through all that other stuff, basic and all the schools, really, skydiving is just a matter of letting go," Vaske said with a grin, explaining he enjoys his time out at the K-State drop zone because it gives him the opportunity to deal with people off post.

"It gives Soldiers the opportunity to not be around military (personnel) all of the time," he said, pointing at the many college students and civilians from the surrounding area that populated the hanger. "It's good to get away a little bit."



JORDAN CHAPMAN, DUTY FIRST! MAGAZINE

FROM TOP LEFT CLOCKWISE: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Chris Vaske, 1st Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Combat Aviation Brigade, works to pack his parachute for his first of seven jumps made Feb. 27 at the Kansas State University Parachute Club at the Wamego, Kan., airport. Vaske inspects the suspension lines of his parachute Feb. 27 before making his first of many jumps that day. Two experienced Kansas State University Parachute Club skydivers pack their parachutes while Vaske, center, continues to work diligently on his own pack job. After the plane door opens, Vaske looks outside to take in the view before making a skydive with the Kansas State University Parachute Club Feb. 27 out of the Wamego, Kan., airport.

being in control and being out of control when traveling 120 miles per hour. "(Little movements) are going to totally change the way you fall," he continued, though setting up a landing pattern while under canopy came naturally to him.

"Canopy control, I've never really had any issues. It's always made perfect sense to me because the way you set up into the wind is the exact same way I would set up any landing in a helicopter ... it's just so intuitive because I've been flying for so long," he said.

Pilots may be able to set up a landing pattern without flaw, but Vaske said any Soldier in the Army that has the desire to make a skydive would be able to do so successfully because of the way they think and their ability to achieve

Along with interacting with citizens from the surrounding communities, Vaske also feels that skydiving can act as a stress release in a relatively safe environment. "I think it's a good way for guys to come out and blow off steam, to push the limits ... so you're not out driving down Fort Riley Boulevard doing 100 miles per hour. You can come out here in a very controlled environment with instructors (training you and helping out) to get your adrenaline fix," he said, explaining that because there is so much to learn a new skydiver can quickly become enveloped in the sport.

"Plus it's fun just to jump out of airplanes," Vaske said as he moved back to continue packing his parachute, making sure everything was right for his next jump.



HEAD OVER HEELS

Soldier finds passion with rock climbing

By Jordan Chapman
Duty First! Magazine

If a cliff-face were used as a metaphor for life, Pfc. Don Radke would have climbed it already. An experienced rock climber of 20 years, a veteran skydiver with 2,900 jumps, and an avid scuba diver who has touched on surfing while successfully pursuing careers as a police officer, EMT, firefighter and overseas contractor, this 1st Brigade Soldier has a passion for adventure sports that allow him to be drawn closer to nature while at the same time challenging him to control a fear that is inherent with each sport or activity.

Though he enjoys skydiving and exploring the underwater world, his heart and soul lies with rock climbing, a sport he found interest in during his second year of high-school ROTC while he was attending a spring camp.

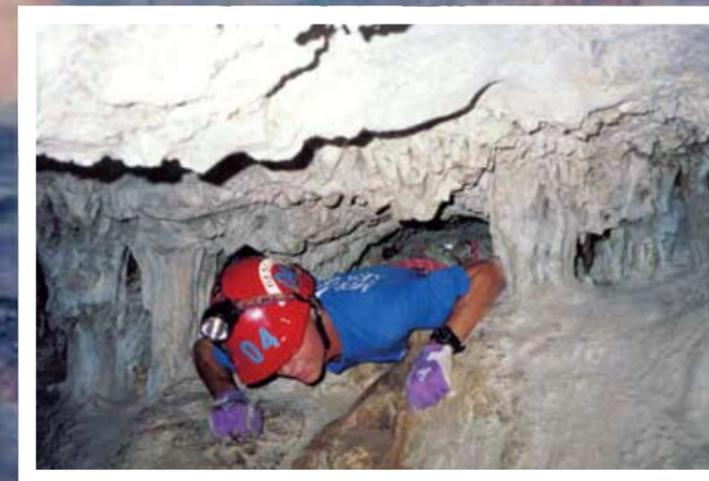
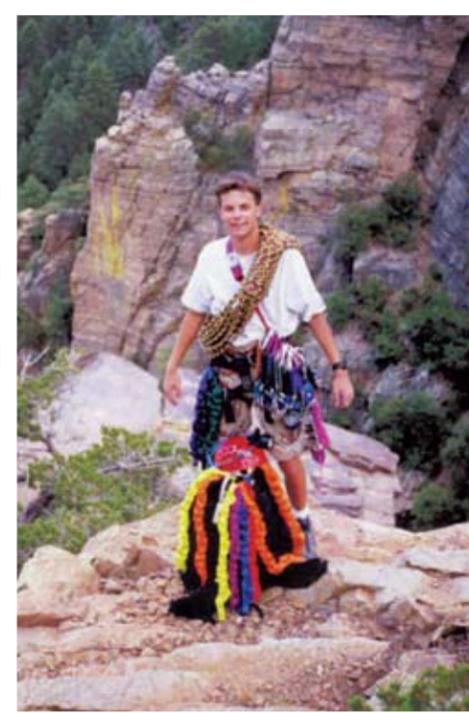
"You get to go out for a week and do all kinds of Army stuff — fly in helicopters, rappel off cliffs and I was hooked," Radke said. "I fell head over heels in love with the verticalness of it all," he continued, stating he joined his school's Outdoor Adventure Club during his senior

year, which couldn't involve much climbing due to liability reasons, though he was able to learn much about mountaineering skills during his time spent there.

Nothing could stop Radke when he turned 18, though. "The day I hit 18-years-old I went down to the sheriff's office in Sierra-Vista, Ariz., and signed up for the search and rescue team," he said. Through that volunteer service, he was able to learn medical skills and high angle rescue techniques. "That essentially certified me ... to work with ropes, extract injured hikers and climbers from areas that aren't accessible by foot or by vehicle."

Throughout his time working for the search and rescue team, Radke was able to learn much about big wall, small wall and cave rescues, finding what he liked most about the sport is that, unlike skydiving and scuba diving where a student learns by following, rock-climbing requires the climber to learn on their own.

"The only way to learn is to get out and do it, and that involves a level of risk," he said. "It is an uncontrolled control ... you can have the best equipment



in the world and it doesn't matter how safe you are, disaster happens," he said. For Radke, though, the passion and benefits received from the sport outweigh the risks.

"I find myself drawn closer to nature by climbing," he said. "There is no sound other than the clanking of gear now and then and some grunting here and there."

Along with the passion, at the same time, Radke has to constantly confront the worst case scenario. "What makes a climber great is the ability to control absolute fear. Climbing is always the constant fear of falling, even with ropes. There is always the fear of falling and becoming injured," he said, trying, yet failing to describe the feeling of beating the odds, but knowing for certain that living an active lifestyle helps him every day that he is in the Army.

"For me, to be in the Army, you have to be an active person or you're never going to survive," Radke said. He noted that he feels each adventure sport he has participated in has helped him become a better leader and hopes to join the ranks of the noncommissioned officer in the future.

Radke also feels extreme sporting would be beneficial to many Soldiers. "Studies are showing that when Soldiers come home and can find an adventure activity to get into, it actually decreases the suicide rate. A lot of Soldiers come home looking for the same thrill they got, as opposed to being in combat, but now they can't do it ... they end up taking things too far without training and end up getting hurt or getting killed," he said.

Finding that passion isn't always difficult, though some searching may be involved, but Soldiers will know it when they find it when they experience the feeling. For Radke, it could only be explained by the late Patrick Swayze's spiritual and thrill character, Bodhi, from the movie "Point Break: "It's a state of mind; it's that place where you lose yourself and find yourself."

Radke never wants to lose that feeling. "There is definitely a place in my world, till the day I die, for adventure activity," he said. ▀

COURTESY PHOTOS

ABOVE: Pfc. Don Radke, Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade rappels down a cliff face while rock-climbing in Arizona. OPPOSITE PAGE FROM TOP: Radke poses for a camera after finishing a climb in Arizona when he was about 18 years old. At 18, Radke, makes his way out of a cave system after a search and rescue operation. Radke performs what climbers call a "spiderman" while rock-climbing in Arizona.

WARMER

s p o r t s

warmer weather has people on the lookout for aquatic activities

With the onset of warmer weather undoubtedly comes the urge to migrate back outside amongst the trees, wind and the inviting landscapes of more than 150 lakes, 10,000 stream miles and 55,000 ponds scattered throughout Kansas, where Soldiers and their Families can find multiple water activities and sports that they can take part in.

Soldiers may find the most accessible and inviting lakes are right on their doorstep.

The largest man-made lake in Kansas, Milford Lake, is located north of Junction City and West of Fort Riley and boasts more than 160 miles of shoreline. Neighboring water body, Tuttle Creek Lake, located north of Manhattan, adds an extra 100 miles of shoreline for any summertime swimming needs.

If Soldiers are looking to spend time cruising over the water in boats and jet skies, then any water ramp that can be found within the lake borders is ready for the taking.

Not everyone owns a watercraft, though. For those that prefer to take advantage of day-long rentals, the Fort Riley Marina is ready to offer a day of fun out on the water.

COURTESY PHOTO
1st Infantry Division Soldiers, Family and friends enjoy a day out at Milford Lake by using the facilities and watercraft offered by the Fort Riley Marina.



With pontoon and fishing boats, kayaks, canoes and Jet Ski rentals, the marina offers plenty of opportunity to splash through the 15,700 acres of Milford Lake water just waiting to be explored.

Reopening in May, the marina is located off of Milford Lake and can be accessed by following Highway 77 north to Highway 82. The marina turn off will be located on the left hand side one mile down the roadway.

Anyone born before January 1, 1989, and wanting to rent a motorized watercraft will need to pass a boaters safety test and anyone born after that date will need to attain a boater's safety certificate, offered through the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

Prices for rental can be obtained by calling 785-307-3798.

Acorn's Resort

Acorn's Resort, located at 3710 Farnum Creek Road, Milford, Kan., also offers a wide selection of water sports and land activities to interested Soldiers wanting to explore the lake.

The resort offers pontoon and kayaking rentals along with lodging and hiking, hunting and bird watching.

Soldiers who have their own boats or Jet Skis also can take advantage of renting a storage site so they can leave their boats in the water while they continue to explore the nearby terrain and take part in different activities.

More information can be found at <http://acornsresortkansas.com>. Reservations and questions should be directed to 785-463-4000 or 785-210-5567.

Float Your Boat

Renting and owning boats isn't everything. Those with a knack for engineering and imagination may find it fun to try and build their own.

The annual "Float Your Boat" competition, organized by the Geary County Convention and Visitor's Bureau will be at 2 p.m. Aug. 21 at Milford State Park's south boat ramp.

Free entry and open to all, the race requires a boat be constructed out of only cardboard and duct-tape and then paddled by two people through a set course.

To attain more information contact the Geary County CVB at 785-238-2882.

Extreme Kansas Lake Adventure Racing

For Soldiers always up for a challenge, Extreme Kansas Lake Adventure Racing is now in full swing.

Offered at Milford Lake, adventure races will be offered all throughout 2010 and gives teams the chance to show off a variety of skills in any one race.

Teams could find themselves navigating 25 miles of Flint Hills terrain around the lake, using a variety of mountain biking, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, running and rappelling to complete the course, all the while consulting a map to make sure the right track is taken.

Interested individuals can visit <http://www.adventureracekansas.com/> to learn more, find teams or simply become a volunteer to watch the action unfold before them.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION POST NEWSPAPER

Boaters prepare to head out on Milford Lake during the opening of the lake's Fort Riley Marina.

Water activities include water rules

By Jordan Chapman
Duty First! Magazine

Whether taking a break from the heat to cool off in the water of a nearby lake or pond or spending a summer afternoon cruising the waters on a personally owned or rented speedboat or Jet Ski, Soldiers who choose to spend their time at the lake should take the time to meet Kansas safety standards.

For young Soldiers, that safety starts with boating education.

According to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Web site, individuals born before Jan. 1, 1989, will be required to complete an approved boater safety education course in order to operate a motor or sailboat in Kansas public waters.

This rule does not apply to a person who is under the direct supervision of a person older than 18 years of age who possesses a certificate for completion of an approved boater safety education course.

Boating safety courses approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators and recognized by the United States Coast Guard also meet the educational requirements.

Information regarding the availability of safety education courses can be found at <http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us> under the boating menu. Replacing boating education cards also can be done through the KDWP.

Other boating requirements are as follows:

Mufflers – The exhaust of every internal combustion engine used on any motorboat on Kansas waters shall be effectively muffled. The muffler system shall be in good working order and in constant operation. The sound emitted from the engine should not exceed 86 decibels on the “A” weighted scale, when measured 50 feet or more from the motorboat.

Boat numbers and Decals – All vessels powered by gasoline, diesel, electric

motors, or sail must be registered and numbered in Kansas. Sailboards and personal watercraft (PWC) are considered vessels.

Lifejackets – All boats have one Type I, Type II, Type III, or Type V PFD of proper size, in serviceable condition, not in an enclosed compartment and readily accessible for each person on board. Anyone 12 years old and younger must wear a life jacket at all times when on board a boat.

Fire Extinguishers – Every motorboat must have the correct number, size and type of Coast Guard approved fire extinguishers.

Back Flame Arrestor – Inboard, fuel-powered engines must be equipped with a backfire flame arrestor on the carburetor.

Ventilation – All closed-construction, fuel-powered motorboats must have ventilators to remove explosive vapors from engine and fuel tank compartments.

Sound Producing Devices – All motorboats are required to carry a mechanical sound producing device such as a horn or whistle that is audible up to one mile. Vessels 40 feet and longer are also required to carry a bell made of proper material to sound a tone that may be heard during inclement weather.

Marine Toilets and Kansas Clean Vessel Pump-out Sites – It is unlawful to place, leave, or discharge sewage into waters of this state. All boats with a marine sanitation device shall be in compliance with all state and federal requirements and registration.

Visual Distress Signals – Vessel operators use Visual Distress Signals (VDSs) to signal for help during an emergency. VDSs are classified as day signals (visible in bright sunlight), night signals (visible at night), or both day and night signals. VDSs are either pyrotechnic (smoke and flames) or non-pyrotechnic (non-combustible). All VDSs must be in

KANSAS BOATING INFORMATION

■ **BOATING EDUCATION INFORMATION**
Erika Nighswonger, Boating Education Coordinator
KDWP Pratt Operations Office
512 S.E. 25th Ave.
Pratt, KS 67124
Phone: 620-672-5911

■ **BOAT REGISTRATION INFORMATION**
Corey Goemann, Boating Registration
KDWP Pratt Operations Office
512 S.E. 25th Ave.
Pratt, KS 67124
Phone: 620-672-5911
Fax: 620-672-3013

■ **BOATING REGULATIONS INFORMATION**
Dan Hesket, Law Enforcement
KDWP Pratt Operations Office
512 S.E. 25th Ave.
Pratt, KS 67124
Phone: 620-672-5911
Boaters also can visit <http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us> to access dozens of other informative links.

■ **NATIONAL WATER SAFETY PROGRAM**
Safety tips can be viewed at: <http://watersafety.usace.army.mil/safetytips>

serviceable condition, readily accessible, and certified as complying with U.S. Coast Guard requirements.

Navigation Lights – All boats must use navigation lights while operating on Kansas waters between sunset and sunrise.

Online boat registration also can be found on the KDWP site.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also has tips for those who are out swimming in open bodies of water. The organization’s Web site especially emphasizes not drinking while boating or swimming, paying attention to children who are swimming or playing in the water, and knowing how to swim before enjoying time out on the lake. ▀



COURTESY PHOTO

1st Sgt. Roger Matthews with some largemouth bass he hooked during a day of fishing. Matthews is the secretary for the Fort Riley Outdoor Group Bass Club.

Story by Anna Staatz

FISHING

Soldiers enjoy time fishing for the big one

For those who fish, the pastime is fueled by the thrill of the chase and a love of the outdoors. Along the way, some wild and hilarious stories are collected, about the one that got away and the catch that grows a little bigger every time the tale is repeated.

Sgt. Edward Campbell, 701st Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, caught his first fish at the age of 4 and hasn’t stopped since. His biggest catch to date is a 32-pound Mahi Mahi that he caught off the coast of Cape Canaveral, Fla., while fishing with his uncle.

(continued on page 18)

(continued on page 18)

"The fish hit when we trolled past the buoy in such a way that allowed the lure to pass beneath the buoy," Campbell said. "At first we thought we had accidentally snagged the buoy chain, till we realized that the line was streaking away from the buoy. After 20 minutes and many full leaps out of the water, we were finally able to get the fish on board."

Campbell said he is fortunate to have an uncle in Florida with a love of fishing equal to his lawn and enjoys hitting the water with him as much as possible.

"Offshore fishing is fun, but the dangers of being 20 to 40 miles offshore can change a great day into the worst day of your life in seconds," Campbell said. He noted that one of the craziest days he can remember is when he and his uncle were caught up in a surprise weather change while about 25 miles off the coast of Cape Canaveral. The two battled through waves, rain and a drastic temperature change. When they finally pulled into the boat ramp, the sun came back out and the storm rolled away.

Campbell attributes his love of fishing as something that kept him out of trouble as a teenager and as an adult, it's a hobby that allows him to get away and think. He said while stationed at Fort Riley, he has fished the area's offerings with great success, especially Milford Lake.

"I started fishing Milford in the spring of 2006 and have caught my largest Walleye, Smallmouth (Bass) and Striper of 8, 6 and 19 pounds, respectively," Campbell said.

His lure of choice is a one-fourth-ounce spinner bait in either white with chrome blades or chartreuse with copper blades. Once he finds the fish, Campbell said he switches to crank bait or jig. However, he notes, he likes spin-

ner bait most of all for several reasons, not the least of which is that he can get almost everything to hit it.

For 1st Sgt. Roger Matthews, 72nd Chemical Company, fishing was also a love that started young. Matthews said he started fishing when he was about 5 years old, and now, as the secretary of the Fort Riley Outdoor Group Bass Club, he continues the tradition, taking his young son to club meetings with him.

Matthews said he had participated in similar fishing clubs at other locations he'd been to, but so far, his experience at Fort Riley has been the best because members have a strong camaraderie and are not as competitive with each other.

"I was just out fishing at Milford and a local guy came up and asked me if I'd be interested in the Bass Club," Matthews said.

The club meets at 7 p.m. on the first Wednesday of every month at the Sirlain Stockade in Junction City. Club members have two affiliations open to them—the Kansas Bass Federation and the National Bass Federation, which allows them to fish Bass Open tournaments. Matthews said the club has a little more than 30 members and membership is open to boaters and non-boaters.

"There's great camaraderie and fellowship between local residents and Soldiers," Matthews said. "It's been a good place for me to develop friends in the area."

This year, club members will fish at tournaments in McPherson, Milford, Banner Creek and Council Grove. Matthews said for the remaining six months of the year, the club will vote on which tournaments to participate in. More information is available at www.froggz-bass.com.



Searching for that perfect fishing hole?

By Anna Staatz
Duty First! Magazine

Anglers looking for a good catch don't have to go far if they're stationed at Fort Riley. The post has 29 lakes or ponds available for use by Soldiers and local residents, stocked with bass varieties, channel catfish, bluegill and trout.

Those fishing on Fort Riley may obtain an outdoor recreation map at the Directorate of Public Works, Environmental Division, located in building 404. Visitors also need to be sure that the area they are recreating in is open for fishing by calling 785-239-6669. The hotline lists open areas and is updated Mondays and Thursdays. Finally, vehicles should have a natural resource vehicle marker, which can be picked up at building 404.

State fishing laws apply to Fort Riley areas—anglers be-

tween the ages of 16 and 65 must have a Kansas fishing license and a trout permit if they are fishing for trout. Guests are also eligible for the Fort Riley Master Angler Award – which recognizes a catch that meets or exceeds the weight requirement for that particular species. Weight requirements are posted on Fort Riley's Web site, and by contacting the Environmental Division. A certified scale is available at 407 Pershing Ct. during the week, and at the state park areas of Milford Lake and Tuttle Creek during the weekends.

Similar rules apply if you are stationed with the Big Red One elsewhere—always follow state guidelines and check with post conservation or recreation offices for additional guidance.



FISHING PERMITS, LICENSING INFO

- **Fort Riley**
Fort Riley Open Areas Hotline: 785-239-6669
Fort Riley recreation information: www.riley.army.mil. Search for DPW-Environmental Division.
Kansas fishing information: www.kdwp.state.ks.us
FROGGZ BASS Club information: www.froggzbass.com; or call Jesse Cornell, 785-564-7316.
- **Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.**
Recreation users must sign in with Range Control at Building 5260.
Questions concerning hunting and fishing may be directed to Range Control, 573-596-2525
Questions concerning fishing regulations may be directed to the Fort Leonard Wood Game Warden Office at 573-596-0596.
For fishing permits, call the MWR Outdoor Adventures Center, 573-596-4223.
- **Fort Sill, Okla.**
Fort Sill does not require additional permits to fish in post areas.
State information: <http://oklahomafishing-guides.com>
- **Fort Knox, Ky.**
Anyone older than 16 must have a Kentucky fishing license, a Fort Knox fishing permit and a trout permit if fishing for trout.
A recreation assignment sheet must be obtained at the Hunt Control Office, 502-624-7311.
For more information: www.knox.army.mil/fw/fishing_info.asp.

COURTESY PHOTO

OPPOSITE PAGE: Sgt. Edward Campbell has been "hooked" on fishing since he was 4 and enjoys all types of fishing. FROM TOP: Campbell is shown with a redfish, a small dolphin, and a smallmouth bass.

Softball team's familiarity breeds ...

A WINNING

Playing together consistently for eight years is generally considered a milestone for almost any sports team. Add to that the constant coming and going of a career in the Army and the occurrence becomes pretty rare.

Five Fort Riley Soldiers have competed together on the softball field for seven years and four are preparing to round off their eighth year this upcoming season.

The 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment, 1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team's softball program has had a continual staffing of players since 2002. Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Wilson, Staff Sgts. William Griffith, Kerrick Bostick and Aaron Sims and Sgt. Albert Blanks have participated in the battalion's post softball team for almost eight years.

"We've had a lot of people come and go. But that little core of names have been together for a long time," Griffith said.

Coaching and managing the team has become increasingly effortless as the same players take the field each year, said Blanks, the team's coach.

"It's pretty much a self-coach team. Everybody knows where they're going to play and where they're going to hit in the line-up," Blanks said. "It's nice having the same people each year because you pretty much know where everybody is going to hit, what positions they're going to play and how things are going to work out. There's usually never a problem on the field."

The unit's deployment in 2005 didn't deter the players from putting on their batting gloves and cleats during their down time.

"We tried to play every other weekend in Iraq, when the weather was nice," Griffith said. "We would maybe get to practice together once a week. It was definitely good practice for when we came back."

Scheduling became one of the major challenges for the team during their deployment. Impromptu games and tournaments became the norm due to the different patrol schedules of players and the teams.

"We would just make a couple of calls to the guys that we knew and see if we could get a few teams out there to play," Griffith said.



AARON SIMS
INFIELDER

COURTESY PHOTO

Staff Sgt. Aaron Sims waits for the pitch during a 2008 softball game on Fort Riley. Sims is preparing to round off his eighth year with the 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment, 1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team's softball team.

TRADITION

Four of the Soldiers plan to once again sign their names on the team's batting line up when this summer's season kicks off.

"If the (Sacco Softball Complex) is built, we're going to have a battalion team that consists of basically the same guys again," Blanks said. "It's nice playing with the same people every year."

The team has additionally taken their skilled cohesion to compete in tournaments in Fort Riley's neighboring communities. In addition to generally playing two nights a week on post, the team generally participates in 10 to 15 tournaments off-post, each season, Blanks said.

Being awarded as Fort Riley's league champions and scoring 39 runs in one game have been some of the career highlights for the team and its players.

"Our commander at the time said we couldn't score 40 ... well we didn't. We scored 39 and we got close," Griffith said. "When you score 39 points on a team and you're not trying to do it on purpose, you're just playing regular; you're playing the way you always do; it's kind of cool."

The Soldiers face a new challenge with the arrival of the upcoming season: themselves. Some teammates will find themselves in opposite dug-outs following the move of one of their players to another unit and several of the players will compete opposite one another in a co-ed league off post.

"Some of us are going to get to play against each other instead of with each other," Blanks said. "It'll be different competing against each other, but it should also make it pretty fun."

While the competition may differ while competing in other leagues, returning to their long-time comrades on the "Dreadnaught" team on Fort Riley will always be a constant for the players on the 2nd Bn., 34th Armor Regt. roster.

"It definitely makes you a better team because you know them. You know exactly how each other is going to play," Griffith said. "You know what they're going to do, you know what their strong points are, you know what their weak points are and plus we just have a good time together. We have fun."



WILLIAM GRIFFITH
INFIELDER

COURTESY PHOTO

Staff Sgt. William Griffith prepares to field the ball in 2003 while playing softball for the 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment, 1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team. Five Soldiers have played for seven seasons with the battalion.

Story by Stephanie Hoff | Duty First! Magazine



Unit Movements



JORDAN CHAPMAN, DUTY FIRST! MAGAZINE

Chief Warrant Officer II Randy Varady, 1st Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Aviation Regiment, holds his 5-month-old daughter, Raegan, while his wife, Tara, takes a lasting photo after the CAB deployment ceremony held at Marshall Army Air Field on March 2. This will be Varady's fourth deployment.

'Deploying the best'

1st Combat Aviation Brigade to help usher in Operation New Dawn

By Jordan Chapman
Duty First! Magazine

The last time Soldiers of the 1st Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) flew over the sands of Iraq, they logged more than a quarter million flight hours and by doing so saw a 70 percent decrease in violence throughout a 15-month deployment, but that wasn't enough. The 'Demon' Brigade is heading back refreshed, retrained and ready for victory.

"We're deploying the best Combat Aviation Brigade in the United States military and quite honestly, we don't take the best lightly," said Brig. Gen. David Petersen, 1st Infantry Division deputy commanding general-rear, to a hanger full of Family members, fellow Soldiers and surrounding community leaders during the brigade's deployment ceremony March 2.

Petersen felt confident that he could rely on the Soldiers before him to complete their missions and to assist in ushering out Operation

Iraqi Freedom and be present to insure Operation New Dawn begins and is moving forward come Sept. 1. At that time, OND will replace the previous OIF campaign.

"Always remember you are the best trained, best equipped and the best Soldiers on the face of the earth ... what you're doing is taking care of your Families and giving a nation hope," Petersen said.

CAB commander Col. Frank Muth could agree with Petersen's comments and said that though deployments aren't always easy, duty calls, confident that the passion he sees in his Soldiers every day will lead them to success and a safe return home.

"Standing before you are Soldiers who are committed and who will make a difference in Iraq," Muth said. Muth took responsibility of the brigade mid-summer of 2009.

Since that time, he has capitalized on the experience that is still within the brigade as well as taken new ideas and talents from incoming Soldiers to create a team and trust that will continue brigade success and improvement.

Correlation and teamwork between the CAB Soldiers has also taken two battalions to the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif., and the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., to test their skills, work on their missions and continue working together to better their success upon deployment.

"The great thing is those battalions, when they deploy, they are going to take pieces of the other battalions and create taskforces," Muth said in a previous interview. "When they deploy they will take Apaches, Chinooks and Blackhawks ... and form a cohesive team and that multi-complex capability which has all aviation aspects to it. I'm proud that I get to stand in formation with these Soldiers every day."

Families of Soldiers also have been preparing for the deployment, taking time to go



JORDAN CHAPMAN, DUTY FIRST! MAGAZINE

1st Combat Aviation Brigade Commander Col. Frank Muth and Brig. Gen. David Petersen, deputy commanding general-rear of the 1st Inf. Div., salute the flag during the CAB deployment ceremony March 2 at Marshall Army Air Field.

Always remember you are the best trained, best equipped and the best Soldiers on the face of the earth ... what you're doing is taking care of your Families and giving a nation hope."

— Brig. Gen. David Petersen
1st Infantry Division deputy commanding general-rear

on vacation, go home or just spend quality time together during the weeks of block leave each Soldier has received prior to this point.

Lt. Col. Christopher Prather, 2nd General Support Aviation Battalion, 1st Aviation Regiment, said he and his Family took the time to take a Disney cruise where his son, Aidan, 5, was able to meet Mickey Mouse.

While Prather was over the ocean, Spc. Titus Richardson, also of 2nd GSAB, 1st Avn. Regt., and his wife Latisha spent time celebrating their son's second birthday a few weeks early so everyone could take part.

"We went to the zoo," the Richardson's said, each adding that Caden revealed his excitement for monkeys while they were there. "He loves the monkeys," Latisha said, with love in her eyes, and courage in her heart as she said goodbye to her husband as he leaves for his 12-month deployment. ▀

forward

Building civil capacity a joint effort

By Spc. Jason Kemp
1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs Office

BASRA, Iraq — One of the most important missions in Iraq is that of civil capacity — improving security, economy and utilities. All of those are areas that 1st Infantry Division Soldiers are working to help the Iraqi people improve.

“My last tour ended just as the surge was beginning in late 2006, so the change is primarily in the atmosphere,” said Lt. Col. Paul Schmidt, civil affairs officer with 1st Inf. Div. “There are still the same great, courageous people to work with, but I sense a much greater feeling of pride and hope for the future now than before.”

A lot has changed since 2006. Now the Big Red One is deployed to Iraq, heading up United States Division-South. Schmidt said the pride of the Iraqi people is demonstrated in their expectation that the country become a better place.

“This country is becoming more and more stable because the Iraqi people are demanding it now in greater numbers,” Schmidt said.

He also noted that progress is seen in the work of local governments and Iraqi security forces.

“We are really at a point where stability operations and building civil capacity is extremely important,” Schmidt said. “Local government officials are very effective across the USD-S AO [area of operations], but with increasing stability and effectiveness of ISF, we can really make great progress in assisting the Iraqis with providing services to the people and solving problems.”

In order to achieve that progress, USD-S and the U.S. Department of State’s provincial reconstruction teams are working together to build effective relationships that not only thrive and mature, but thoroughly benefit the country of Iraq.

“The State Department is the lead for building civil capacity, but they are not



STAFF SGT. NATALIE HEDRICK, 3RD INF. DIV. PAO

First Lt. Paul Lively, Co. A, 1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt., 3rd Heavy Bde., 3rd Inf. Div., gives a mission brief Feb. 16, 2010, at Forward Operating Base Echo, Iraq. The mission that day involved evaluating farmers’ lands for “tunnel houses,” low-tech versions of greenhouse, to boost their productivity.

resourced to do everything we need to accomplish, so it is accomplished through a partnership between DOS and DOD,” Schmidt said. “They provide leadership of the PRTs as well as subject matter experts in governance, economic development, rule of law, agriculture and others, and we provide them the ability to move safely in order to perform their critical functions with Iraqi officials.”

The cooperation between U.S. civilians and military elements is crucial, Schmidt said.

“The relationship is important and based on strong communication,” he said. “I think we do a good job capitalizing on the strengths of each organization in order to maximize and synchronize our efforts to assist the Iraqis in building capacity for themselves.”

As Iraq has stabilized, the work done in the civilian sector has moved to the forefront, and more people are involved. Schmidt noted, however, that not just civil affairs units were capable of completing tasks. A greater emphasis has been placed on U.S. Forces at all levels becoming more

proficient at civil affairs tasks, Schmidt said. The civil affairs mission includes nation assistance and civil information management in order to share details on every aspect of the relationship between civilians and military elements.

In addition, civil affairs Soldiers are involved with programs to assist with governance, economic development, rule of law and essential services, often helping Iraqi officials develop projects to improve those areas. Civil affairs teams even act as civil liaisons between the Iraqi officials and military commanders, and provide the same service to a wide variety of non-governmental and international organizations.

With troops being pulled out of Iraq and the stability of the country in the hands of the Iraqi government, the liaisons from U.S. civil affairs teams are playing a vital role in creating a working society.

“Civil affairs Soldiers made a great impact in Japan and Germany throughout and following WWII and the same is happening now in Iraq and Afghanistan,” Schmidt said. ▀

Iraqis lead efforts in election protection

Iraqi security forces, army and police key to smooth election

By Sgt. Nathaniel Smith
1st Infantry Division Public Affairs

BASRA, Iraq — In 2005, Iraq held two rounds of elections in the midst of chaos and heavy security.

What a difference five years make.

On March 7, Iraqis took to the ballot booths again to make their voices heard with one large difference: the elections were for Iraqis with security provided by Iraqis.

Iraqi Army Maj. Gen. Habib Hussein, the commander of the 10th Iraqi Army Division, said there were zero incidents in the Maysan Province thanks to the teamwork between Iraqi Army soldiers and Iraqi police.

“We all worked together, and we were successful because of the coordination between us,” Habib said. “We are very happy and pleased to see the people as a family participate.”

Habib added the security effort was broken down into three phases: pre-election, during the election, and now the third phase, post-election.

Ali Salman, a Basra voter, said the process went off without any problems in his neighborhood.

“Everybody was happy, and there wasn’t any trouble at all,” Salman said. “For me, the elections are very important for establishing better security.”

“The Iraqi security forces, police and Army, did an excellent job today,” he said.

Col. Steven Bullimore, the commander of the 17th Fires Brigade, United States Division-South, said his Soldiers’ role was purely to train Iraqi Security Forces in tactics related to searching vehicles and people, first aid skills, and crowd control techniques.

“Our role in this was a support role,” Bullimore said. “I am absolutely amazed



SGT. NATHANIEL SMITH, 1ST INF. DIV. PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Maj. Gen. Habib Hussein, the commander of the 10th Iraqi Army Division, addresses media during the election March 7.



SGT. NATHANIEL SMITH, 1ST INF. DIV. PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Ali Salman, a voter in the Basra Province of southern Iraq, shows off his ink-stained finger after voting March 7. The purple ink indicates that he has voted and has become a symbol of Iraqi pride in voting in 2010.

We all worked together, and we were successful because of the coordination between us. We are very happy and pleased to see the people as a family participate.”

— Iraqi Army Maj. Gen. Habib Hussein
Commander, 10th Iraqi Army Division

at how successfully this was run and how smoothly this was run.”

Bullimore, who was in Iraq for the 2005 voting, added the 2010 elections were completely different from the last.

“In 2005, I was in Baqubah,” Bullimore said. “At four in the morning, we had to shoot our way in with the ballots, then after the polls closed, we had to shoot our way out to take the ballots out.”

Col. Aziz Swilm, a spokesman for the 10th Iraqi Army Division, said the process ran so smoothly thanks to good planning.

“This plan was laid down two months ago, involving coordination between the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and federal police,” Swilm said. “The special elections had no incidents, and today’s general elections, everything was successful.”

“Whole families are participating. That means we have good security here in Maysan.”

Swilm added he has seen progress every time his fellow Iraqis have headed to the polls.

Once results are announced, the next phase of the election process is for the newly-elected officials to select the senior leaders in the Iraqi government. ▀



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