



Fort Riley Community



In Step on Channel 2

6:30 a.m. In Step
8 a.m. In Step
Noon In Step
6 p.m. In Step
10 p.m. In Step

May 23, 2003

America's Warfighting Center

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Homecomings can be stressful for soldiers, families

By Michael Watson
Staff writer

When soldiers return home from war, some families will find that the reunion is just as hard as the first days of deployment.

Ch. (Col.) Dan Paul said that is because both deployments and reunions add stress because soldiers and spouses get used to new routines.

"When they reunite, everyone in the family will have to readjust," he said. "They have to change their finances and their responsibilities, like who will be taking care of the children. Reunions are a joyful time, but that change has stress."

"Things will have changed at home and soldiers need to tell the spouse they did a good job of maintaining the home. And, spouses need to tell the soldier what changes have been made so the family can start readjusting."

The Army recognizes how difficult it can be for couples reuniting after being apart for many months. To help with this transition, a Deployment Cycle Support program was designed to assist Army personnel as they return to their communities, reunite with families and loved ones and reestablish the readiness of the

force. To make the transition home as smooth as possible, soldiers and civilians will participate in a number of classes, discussions and assessments. Beginning in theater, Paul said soldiers would receive information about reuniting and maintaining their well-being as they return home.

"We will teach the soldiers and families not to have unrealistic expectations," Paul said. "We encourage both to enjoy being back home again, but also to realize that things will take time to return to normal. Go slow, and things will work out."

"One realistic expectation that couples have is about their intimacy."

"Intimacy is a natural desire," Paul said. "But don't fantasize about what the reunion will be like, because fantasies will probably not match what actually happens. After being gone for months and a long 24 hour flight, it takes time to get readjusted to one another."

Often, both also expect the other to pamper them. The soldiers return home from fighting the war and want to be taken care of, but at the same time spouses have been busy at home and they want a break.

"The most important thing is that families talk about their expectations," Paul said. "Both the soldier and spouse should share

their feelings with each other. Communication is the underlying factor in getting back together." That communication will help

answer some of the doubts and worries that families go through, Ch. (Lt. Col.) Karl Kuckhahn, deputy command chaplain, said.

"With any deployment with a length of time of several months, there are questions 'Does he or she still love me? Do I still play an important role to this family?'" Kuckhahn said. "The answers are yes, but it takes time, and families need to talk about these concerns when they come up."

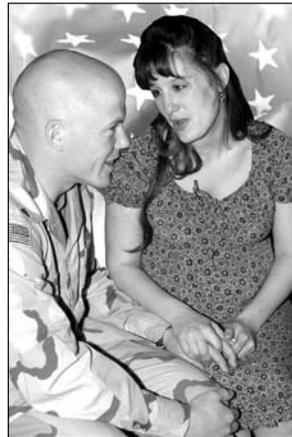
This type of anxiety is a natural part of getting back together, because of the stress involved in being separated, he said. Counseling can be a good thing, but it cannot help people who are not ready.

Kuckhahn said there would be ongoing support for soldiers and their families once the soldiers return. Chaplains will be available to talk with the family readiness groups as well.

Everyone is anxious for the soldiers to come home, Paul said, but nobody knows when that will be. Some units have been told to plan on six to 12 months.

"The best thing to do would be to plan for a longer time period," he said. "That way anything sooner is a blessing. When they do return, there will be a time of readjustment. Things change, and you can't pick things up right where you left off."

Tips on coping with reunions and homecomings are available through chaplains and Unit Ministry Teams.



When soldiers come home...

Deployments are tough times. Families develop new routines, and that can make returning home a little difficult. There are tips to help make the transition smoother.

Tips for reunions

- Avoid competing about who had it worse
- Give space to be alone if needed
- Recognize any problems and talk about them as soon as possible
- Realize that it takes time to open up and feel the love again
- Have good communication and remember that emotions can distort messages

Troops returning home to get counseling, reunion training

By Joe Burlas
Army News Service

Soldiers and Department of the Army civilians returning from Iraq will receive a lot of help in transitioning from the stress of combat operations to normal garrison life under a new Army plan.

Brig. Gen. Steven Schook, director of GI's Human Resources Policy Directorate, announced the implementation of the Deployment Cycle Support Contingency Plan at a Pentagon press conference May 13.

"America provides to the Army its most precious thing — its people — and we as an institution are going to do all we can to ensure that we bring our people back from doing America's duty and get

them ready to be fully reintegrated back into American society," Schook said.

The plan calls for returning soldiers and civilians to remain with their unit or organization through mandatory medical and mental health screenings, as well as reunion training designed to ease soldiers' move back into family relationships beyond getting on a homeward-bound plane. Unit leaders will also use a new "tip card" to screen their soldiers for any personal problems — suicidal thoughts, financial troubles or possible causes of strained family relationships.

"They may find if they've been gone six months to a year that their wife may have exerted a greater role in running the household," Schook said. "The kids have adjusted to the wife's new role in that

household. So as they come back, they are going to find a different set of conditions in that home."

Family members will also be offered the opportunity to receive reunion training and to identify any issues in their family that might cause friction when the soldier returns through family readiness groups.

The screenings and reunion training, overseas and at home, will allow leaders to manage potential friction points for returning soldiers before they become serious problems, Schook said.

Another feature of the plan formally hands off identified soldiers issues from leaders overseas to an official or agency at home station to follow up and resolve as needed, Schook said.

The Army hasn't always done a good job of following through on issues identified during deployments — often leaving it up to individual soldiers to follow through once they got home, he said. Now, a soldier with a known financial issue, for example, will have an appointment with an Army Community Service financial counselor waiting for him upon return instead of maybe or maybe not making an appointment himself. That soldier will now have to see the counselor prior to taking any leave.

Once home, soldiers remain on duty with their units for up to 10 days — spending half of each day undergoing more integration training and evaluations with the remaining half day free to spend with family or to take care of per-

sonal business. Once all members of the returning unit complete the plan's mandatory tasks, the soldiers are free to take "block leave," usually lasting two weeks.

In the past, soldiers returning from lengthy overseas deployments generally conducted an inventory of equipment, given a safety briefing and then were released on block leave. In some cases, commanders requested and got chaplains, family advocacy counselors and other specialists to brief soldiers prior to releasing them if those services were available.

Because the plan calls for many previously optional services to be mandatory and to avoid overloading home station

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Asian Pacific American Heritage Month celebrated on post

By Ryan D. Wood
Staff Writer

Brig. Gen. James T. Hirai, deputy commandant, U.S. Army Command General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, addressed soldiers at Fort Riley during the post's Asian Pacific American Heritage Month observance on May 14.

An ethnic dancing presentation and free Asian cuisine was also offered to all who attended. In his remarks, Hirai spoke to the assembled soldiers and civilians not from the perspective of glorifying the acts and achievements of the Asian Pacific-American culture, but rather spoke about the good that all soldiers can do and the good that they can achieve in their lives.

"If you are expecting a speech highlighting the many accomplishments of Asian Pacific Islander Americans throughout the history of this country and in particular, this country, I'm going to disappoint you," said Hirai. "Instead, I'd like to just relate a story to you."

Hirai went on to speak about a man named Dr. Kent M. Keith who wrote a poem for a high school leadership course as a 19-

year-old college student. In the poem, Keith issued a challenge to the students that he called the Paradoxical Commandments of Leadership. "People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. Love them anyway," he said.

Hirai said, "If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway. If you are successful, you will have false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway. The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway. Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway. The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the smallest minds. Think big anyway," Hirai said.

"People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs. Fight for a few underdogs anyway. What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway. People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. Help people anyway. And, Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have

anyway," he said. Hirai said the poem ended up making its way around the world, and a form of the poem was, in later years, attributed to Mother Teresa. A copy of the words were found on the wall of one of the orphanages in Calcutta, India. When it came to Keith's attention that his poem had made it so far,

"I just think that if people in America new how well the Army was doing in that regard, I think that they would see it as I do, and that is a model of how to treat people."

—Brig. Gen. James T. Hirai
Deputy Commandant, U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College

he was inspired to re-release the poem in book form. After reading the poem, Hirai spoke about the impact the idea could have.

"On one hand, you could consider it pretty amazing that a young person's ideas could motivate thousands of people world wide. On the other hand, it is not amazing that there is a universal thirst by which we can chart our lives," said Hirai.

"We all place a premium on words that can help us find meaning for our existence and help us live purposeful lives," Hirai said. "These paradoxical commandments are a worthy compliment of the thoughtful and practical terms with which to lead our lives."

"I hope that for all of you, in spite of bad times, you'll see fit to love, to do good, to succeed, to be honest and frank, to think big, to

fight for underdogs, to build, to help people and to give the world the best you have every day," Hirai said.

After the speech, Hirai spoke informally about his views on Asian Pacific-American Day. "I think that we have moved far beyond anybody's expectations about being the kind of force that we can be proud of — Where people are rewarded, promoted and selected for jobs based upon their competence, not because of any other characteristic that may happen to come into the Army with," he said.

"I just think that if people in America new how well the Army was doing in that regard, I think that they would see it as I do, and that is a model of how to treat people," he said.

Explaining the future of the these type of observations in the Army and the goals of the military in its EO plans, Hirai was confident in the current levels of education possessed by most soldiers. However, he said there was still some work to be done.

"I don't know if there is a steady state where we can say OK, we can kick back, we got it, we are perfect," said Hirai. He said this is a country based upon humans needs, competencies and frailties and we all need constant reminders of what it takes to build a team like the United States Army.

"We are a nation of immigrants," he added. "Diversity has caused us to be the kind of nation that is the most technologically advanced, and I think, the most powerful, but also the most compassionate nation."



Margie Llangas performs a fan dance (habanera botolena) during Asian Pacific American Heritage festivities at Barlow Theater May 14.

Middle school student orientation scheduled

By Kay Forman
School Liaison

Unified School District 475, which serves Fort Riley, Junction City, Milford and Grandview Plaza, is offering a summer transition program to assist those students who will be new to the USD 475 middle schools for the 2003-04 school year. Current 5th graders attending USD 475 schools previously received information through their elementary schools about this program. However, if they did not register

at that time, they can also register now. The objective of this program is to assist all incoming middle school students in their transition to the new school and to alleviate some of the anxiety students experience during their first year in a new middle school environment. The program objectives are to: acquaint students with the middle school building; teach time management, study and organization skills, including the use of the Middle School Planner book; review expectations, which include the discipline process and

classroom management; explain the requirements for promotion to the next grade and discuss the social skills and relationships necessary to be successful at the middle school. The program also provides an opportunity for students to meet and talk with students in all grades and get acquainted with the locker system - organization and use of the combination locks. Students will also get acquainted with activity programs, such as Trooper Time at Fort Riley Middle School or Cat Time at Junction City Middle School. In addition, students will

review library procedures. Interested students will be assigned to a weeklong session and they may choose a morning session, 9 - 11 a.m. or an afternoon session, noon - 2 p.m. at the middle school they plan to attend next fall. Sessions will be held each week for four weeks in June, beginning June 9. A registration form may be obtained from Kay Forman at the School Liaison Office, building 6620, on Normandy Drive. For more information, call 239-1558.

Program helps family members find jobs

A new program helping family members of federal and civilian Army employees find jobs with relocations is being tested. Transition Employment Assistance for Army Medical Command/Army Medical Department (TEAM) is running as a pilot program through Aug. 3. The program is designed to assist family members of Army employees

continue their employment or begin employment as they relocate to a new assignment. Once Army employees are given relocation orders, family members can submit their resume to the TEAM database. A TEAM coordinator will then pass the resume on to the MEDCOM supervisor in the new location, who will review all resumes

and make placement decisions. MEDCOM then passes their decisions down to the Civilian Personnel Operations Center, who will notify the family members and work out all details of employment. To be eligible to use TEAM, either the family member or sponsor must be affiliated with MEDCOM or AMEDD, and have

received notice of a permanent change of station. The family member must also be eligible for placement in a federal position. Visit the TEAM website for additional information, or to create and submit resumes, <http://cwpers.amedd.army.mil> or call Ollie Willis with the Employment Readiness Program, 239-9435.

Reservists provide needed legal services

By SJA and Staff Reports

William Kumpke is a judge with Social Security Administration in St. Louis, Mo. On average, he hears 65 to 80 cases per week. Kumpke is also a colonel in the United States Army Reserves, and has been separated from his wife, four children, home and full-time job to serve his country for the past four months.

Enduring a 30 percent loss in pay, Kumpke was mobilized to Fort Riley with the 6025th Garrison Support Unit in January and has been serving in the Staff Judge Advocate Office. But he said he is excited to be here.

"I am thankful for the professional opportunity to work once again as a soldier," said Kumpke. "This call to active duty gives members of the 6025th GSU's Office of the Staff Judge Advocate an opportunity to enhance

their military legal skills." Kumpke is one of many Reservists assisting Fort Riley's SJA with mobilizations and deployments.

A TEAM coordinator has brought a wealth of expertise and experience to the SJA, said Capt. Timothy Thomas, chief, Legal Assistance Office, SJA. "Reservist assistance has been nothing short of invaluable," said Thomas. "These soldiers give up a lot to be mobilized, but it is clear that the services of the activated reservists have been crucial to the success of Fort Riley's mission."

Reservists who are called to active duty must leave their jobs and homes, and report to a duty station. Among those working in the SJA are the 6025th GSU and the 8th Legal Services Organization.

The legal personnel of these units help prepare cases for trial,

conduct Soldier Readiness Processing, brief soldiers on the law of war and rules of engagement, provide legal assistance to clients and process claims," said Thomas.

Even with the sacrifices these reservists have made, they complete their missions with eagerness and motivation. Their presence has allowed Legal Assistance to expand to night and weekend hours, said Thomas.

"I am grateful for my chance to do what I can for deploying soldiers," said Pfc. Frank Mosley, 8th LSO. Mosley, who only recently completed Advance Individual Training, and was attending community college before mobilizing to Fort Riley, has been assisting the Legal Assistance Office in conducting Soldier Readiness Processing.

Thomas said their skills are nothing short of impressive.

"These two Reserve organizations bring a gold mine of technical competence and enthusiasm to the Office of the SJA," said Thomas. "In the last three months alone, the Legal Assistance Office has processed more personnel through SRPs than the previous entire year."

Among those working in the SJA are Sgt. 1st Class Hollan, a legal secretary, 1st Lt. Faith Maughan, a prosecutor for the Reno County, Kan., District Attorney's Office and Capt. David Laws, a privately practicing attorney.

With all the outside expertise, and all of the reservists' sacrifices, Sgt. Stacey Amos, 6025th GSU, said she is pleased to help. "I am glad that we were mobilized to help take care of the soldiers," said Amos, "because they are over there taking care of me."



David, Katrin and Payton Helmling, along with their mother, Kimberly Helmling raise an American flag over Custer Hill Elementary School. The flag, which flew over Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, was sent home by their father, James Helmling, 531st Transportation Company and donated to the school by the family.

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staffs, the Army is prepared to augment those staffs "to focus efforts at time and place of our choosing" with specialists from other places in the Army, Schook said.

Schook acknowledged last summer's string of five mobilizations involving Fort Bragg, N.C. soldiers who had recently returned from operations in Afghanistan played a role in developing the DCS contingency plan. However, he said, it was not the only or even primary factor considered in developing the plan. Developing the plan was simply the right thing to do in an Army that has changed significantly since the Gulf War, Schook said.

One of those changes has been heavier reliance of the reserve component in current operations, at home and abroad. Another change has been the shift of a primarily unmarried force to a force where more than 50 percent are married. And, an operational tempo with an increased need for deployments has also played a role, Schook said.

The plan doesn't stop with the returning troops being sent home on leave. Returning soldiers, civilians and their family members will have access to a 1-800-based employee assistance program for a year after returning.

The EAP offers directions of where to get all types of services in the local community, mental health screening on the phone and up to six free face-to-face mental health visits with a professional outside the chain of command. This is of particular importance to the reserve component where units may be in armories hundreds of miles from an active-duty installation and thus do not have access to ACS or the medical system active-duty soldiers do, Schook said. It also allows a significant amount of privacy for soldiers or civilians who are concerned that seeking mental health assistance may impact their careers. The exception to privacy includes anything required by law to be reported, such as the commission of a crime.

While Schook wasn't ready to announce what units are coming home first and when, he did say the 1-800 EAP number will be up

and running by early June. A similar program is already working for the Fort Bragg community under a separate contract. Likewise, the U.S. Army Recruiting Command has started using an EAP phone/Web-based system for initial-entry soldiers and their family in the past year.

For Lt. Col. Glen Bloomstrom, a family ministry chaplain with the Office of the Chief of Chap-

lains, the DCS plan isn't a cure-all, but rather a process to better assist soldiers and civilians as they return.

"The purpose is leverage lessons learned (from past operations)," Bloomstrom said. "It's to allow systems already in place time to work. It is to allow commanders to catch issues before they become fixed over time and focus resources as needed."

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Fort Riley Sports

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Having fun more important than winning in youth soccer

By William Biles
Staff Writer

The Milford Broncos played their last 2003 Fort Riley Soccer League game hoping to end on a high note, but failed when they were defeated, 6 - 1, by the Wakefield Jets Saturday at Fort Riley Field No. 2.

The Jets ended their spring season with a record of 5 - 3, while the Broncos completed their perfect season with a record of 0 - 8.

The first quarter was full of action, as both teams put points on the scoreboard. The Jets struck first when Zack Cannizzo scored on a shot that deflected off of the defending Karsen Wisherd.

The Broncos scored just minutes after the Cannizzo score, when Brittney Draper drove the ball to the back of the net, tying the score at one apiece.

However, the Jets retaliated when Daniel Fowler drove the ball past the Broncos' goalie, Alex Gaines on a free kick due to a hand ball by the Broncos.

Even though the Broncos didn't end their season with a win, they were able to take with them a season full of experience.

"You can see from the beginning of the year to this point in time, where they have developed skills. They are actually playing the game as a team," said Mark Clark, coach, Milford Broncos.

The Broncos season, although a losing one, had its perks.

"They're not pressured. We don't have a winning season, so I

told them to let it all hang out. The main thing is for them to have fun playing," said Clark. "But, they would like to get that first win."

The only problem with the season, according to the coaches, is that it is too short.

"If the season was a little bit longer, I would be happier. It was only in the last few games that they started to come together as a team. By the time they start to get into the groove, half the season is over," said Bill Noveroske, coach, Wakefield Jets.

"It wouldn't hurt if we had more teams too," he added.

Although the score doesn't reflect the skill of the Bronco team, Noveroske had respect for their ability.

"They're a young team, but they fight, they're scrappy and are a good passing team. I think in the next year or two they will be a real good team," he said.

Clark also had kind words for the opposing team.

"They're pretty stiff and probably one of the best teams in the league. They are very talented," he said.

At the end of the second quarter, the score was 3 - 1 in favor of the Jets, thanks to a score from Jet player Elliot Begnoche.

A combination of scores in the third and fourth quarter, one by the Jets' Cody Barber and another two by Cannizzo, made the final score 6 - 1.

At the end of the game, Clark told his team how well they had progressed throughout the season. He told them how their time to

rise to the top will be coming. Older players will be moving on, together, will no doubt put them on top.

But the overall advice the coaches gave their team was the same.

"Having fun playing is the most important part of the game," they both concluded.



Wakefield Jets' Zack Cannizzo, forward, kicks the ball around Milford Broncos' Karsen Wisherd, fullback, during the last game of the 2003 Fort Riley Spring Soccer League. The Jets won the game, 6 - 1.

All-Army wrestlers win third consecutive U.S. national title

By Tim Hippius

USACFSC Public Affairs

LAS VEGAS - Reigning Greco-Roman super heavyweight world champion Dremiel Byers and 2001 U.S. World Team member Keith Sieracki won gold medals May 10 to lead the All-Army wrestling team to its third consecutive crown in the 2003 U.S. National Wrestling Championships.

"A three-peat, that means you're a dynasty," beamed Army Staff Sgt. Glenn Nieradka, who won a silver medal in the 60-kilogram Greco division. "That means we rank right up there with the Chicago Bulls, and our coach is Michael Jordan."

His Elderness of Rare Air, however, has not demonstrated the ability to compete and coach like Army Staff Sgt. Shu Lewis, a four-time national individual champion honored earlier in the event

as USA Wrestling's 2002 Greco-Roman Coach of the Year. Lewis led 21 soldiers to their third national championship in as many years since he retired from the mat and took the helm.

"The proof is in the pudding," Lewis said of Army's recent dominance in the U.S. National and Armed Forces Championships. "I don't know if this is a dynasty. This might be our last one. I honestly didn't think we had won it because New York Athletic Club had more national-caliber guys here than we did."

"But our guys were ready to compete. It was the Army against the world. We knew the importance of being successful here this weekend. We have our brothers and sisters over in Iraq holding down for us, so that's the least we could do. When this press is released and it hits Armed Forces News or wherever it's going to go, our brothers and sisters will see that we are holding down for them, too... When

it comes time to battle, our guys find a way to overcome the situation and accomplish the mission.

To thunderous chants of "Bam, bam, boom!" from his adoring Army teammates, Byers climaxed the night by lifting and throwing Air Force Senior Airman Corey Farkas for a 3-0 victory in the 264.5-pound Greco finale.

"The thing people don't realize about The Big Easy is that he's getting better every match - win, lose or draw," Lewis said of Byers, who, before the finals was honored as USA Wrestling's 2002 Greco-Roman Wrestler of the Year. "He's getting better and he's getting smarter. This is not a guy like 90 percent of the people who are wrestling at this level in the United States; those guys have been wrestling for 15 years. This guy has only been wrestling since 1996 and he's a world champion and a multiple-time national champion.

"All the pressure was on him. All the

papers were already writing: 'Rulon [Gardner] does it again.' But Byers is the most exciting heavyweight ever in American history and he has better lifts than [Alexander] Karelin has ever had... Rulon was fortunate to knock off the Russian giant and he's going to be famous for that for the rest of his life. That's good for him and that's good for the sport of wrestling, but Byers is the man. There's a changing of the guard, and that's the bottom line."

Farkas stole some of Byers' thunder by upsetting Rulon Gardner, America's darling of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, with a 4-2 overtime victory in the semifinals.

Byers was disappointed about missing a rematch with Gardner, but he was happy for runner-up Farkas, who recorded the biggest victory of his life. Byers was also happy to win a national title for his wife, Army Sgt. Sherwanda Byers, who is deployed to Camp Virginia in Kuwait.

"Everyone wants to see the big man cry when he gets his medal and they want to see the heavyweight do his thing," said Byers, 28, of Kings Mountain, N.C., who defeated Army teammate Spc. Paul Devlin 4-0 in the semifinals before disposing of Farkas. "I miss my wife and I wish she was here to witness this. Please tell her: 'I hope you come home soon. I love you.'"

Devlin, 21, of Livingston, N.J., lost 7-1 to Gardner to finish fourth in the tournament.

Sgt. Sieracki, 31, of Richland Center, Wis., won his fourth national championship with a 6-1 victory over Kenneth Cook of Cyclone Wrestling Club. He was elated to tie Lewis' mark of four national titles.

"I caught him tonight," said Sieracki, who won at nationals in 1996 and 2001-

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Outdoor myths abundant in Kansas, some tall tales put to rest

By Alan Hynck

DES Administrator

Urban legends abound not only in the large cities but also in rural America. Wildlife legends are no exception. Some are based on the ones that are biologically untrue, while others are steeped in a deep-seated conspiracy theory that is hard to break. They make a great story, but do nothing to help educate the public about wildlife resources and, in many ways, are doing harm.

Here are a few myths, their origins and some rationale as to why they are untrue.

Myth: Throwing rice at weddings is harmful to birds.

This claim has been around for 10 years or so and was reinforced by an Ann Landers column a few years back, claiming that rice will expand in a bird's stomach and cause them to bloat up and die. Sounds awful, doesn't it? But have you ever seen any exploding birds after a wedding? It never happens. In fact, birds are often big pests in rice fields. Some rice farmers may wish the pesky birds would explode, but they never do.

Uncooked, milled rice is no more harmful to birds than is rice in the field. Rice does not make birds bloat and die.

The irony in this is that a common alternative to rice is the release of balloons, which is a documented danger to wildlife. Rice does have a danger though. Not to birds, but rather to humans. Scattered on a hard surface, such as the steps of a church or a dance floor, it puts anyone who walks across that surface at risk of taking a nasty slip. It is far better to prohibit rice throwing at a wedding than to end up with an injured guest. But don't do it for the birds, do it for the in-laws!

MYTH: Water Moccasins in Kansas

It is true that cottonmouths, commonly referred to as water moccasins, are found in Kansas. However, these snakes have only been naturally found in the Spring River in Cherokee County in extreme southeastern Kansas. A few were deliberately released in the Verdigris River in Montgomery County, Kan, which is also in the southeastern corner of the state. However, none of these

have been seen since 1970. Cottonmouths are found in warmer climates of the southeastern United States. The fact that some were released, but perished, in the Verdigris River is a good indication of why they are not in the

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Fort Riley vicinity. The weather and habitat to the north and west of Cherokee County is just too inhospitable for cottonmouths to survive. Even Cherokee County is in the extreme northwestern range for these snakes, and very few inhabit the area.

Cottonmouths have an irritable disposition and their proximity to water puts them at odds with recreationists. However, very few people are actually bitten by these snakes. Northern water snakes are most likely the cause of confusion in Kansas. These snakes inhabit areas in and around water and are heavy bodied and aggressive, much like a cottonmouth. But they are non-venomous.

MYTH: Large Volkswagen size catfish lurk at the bottom of

Tuttle Creek Lake.

This one has been around since the Corps of Engineers began building large earthen dams on rivers. How big catfish can actually get is widely disputed, but the world record is 123 pounds,

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which was caught near Independence. It is true that a flathead could get somewhat larger than that, but the potential for a man-eater at the base of Tuttle Creek dam is quite a stretch.

MYTH: Turkeys eat young quail

This is a recent legend that has spread like wildfire. The story goes that someone found some ingested quail in the stomach of a harvested turkey. There is one big problem with this story though, either the hunter shot the turkey out of season or the story is completely false. Turkey season occurs at least a month before quail begin to rear young.

Now it is true that a turkey could eat a young quail, but there has never been any proof that it has happened in the wild. Some

studies were done where domestic turkeys were put in a pen with young quail, and some of the quail were eaten. However, extensive video studies of quail nests in the wild have not revealed a single instance of turkey depredation on quail, even with a high population of turkeys. The origin of this legend likely comes from the fact that the turkey population exploded in this area at about the same time quail numbers started to decline. The decline in quail numbers is not fully understood, but there is no evidence pointing to turkeys eating quail as the culprit.

MYTH: Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks released some mountain lions to control the deer population

This legend likely has more to do with people looking for a good conspiracy theory than actually making any sense. The story goes that KDWP (and other states) have been secretly releasing radio-tracked mountain lions in an attempt to keep the deer herd in check. This story really has a lot of problems. First off, for any release of that magnitude, there would have to be public hearings and a release of information simi-

lar to the gray wolves being reintroduced in Yellowstone National Park. Secondly, why would KDWP do such a thing? Deer hunting likely produces more income in permit sales and tourism to the state than any other wildlife. With money as tight as it is, why would they jeopardize one of their most income producing resources?

The second part to this myth is the story of a local hunter or farmer shooting a mountain lion and putting it in his freezer. Without inquires, a Conservation Officer met him at the door asking to see the mountain lion. Supposedly, the animal was affixed with a radio tracking device implanted in its ear. First off, the technology to have a transmitter that small with any kind of range has not yet been made. And if it has, the cost would be extraordinary. Standard tracking devices require a sizable battery that would be impossible to implant.

For more information, contact the DES, Conservation Division, 239-6211, or visit <http://www.riley.army.mil/Services/Fort/Environment/NatResources> on the Internet.

ITR

The Information, Ticketing and Registration Office is located in building 6918 (across from the PX). The hours of operation are Monday - Friday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., Saturdays 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. and the office is closed on federal holidays. For further information call ITR at (785)239-5614 or 239-4415. Check out the Department of Army Leisure Travel website at www.offdaytravel.com for more great deals on travel. ITR services and discount attractions tickets available to active duty military, retirees, National Guard, Reservists, Department of Army Civilians and family members.

Operation Salute

Anheuser-Busch announced that it will give single-day admission to SeaWorld, Busch Gardens

and Sesame Place parks to active duty military, active reservists, U.S. Coast Guardsmen and as many as four of their direct dependents, beginning the Friday of Memorial Day weekend and concluding Veterans Day, Nov. 11. "Operation Salute" will give free admission at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, Busch Gardens Williamsburg, SeaWorld Orlando, SeaWorld San Diego, SeaWorld San Antonio and Sesame Place, Langhorne, Pa. Tickets available at gate only. Let ITR put together a vacation package to include other attractions and hotel accommodations.

Vacation Planning?

Discount military attraction tickets are available to Walt Disney World, Disneyland and Uni-

versal properties. Stop by and pick up brochures and let ITR assist you with your dream vacation. Many tickets are not dated, so it's easy to set up a payment savings plan.

Heartland Park Topeka

Welcome to the most intense, earth-shattering sport on the planet! Nowhere else can you actually see your favorite drivers as they stroll through the pits, hear the thrum of mega-horsepower machines and get a taste of what it's like living life in the fast lane. O'Reilly Summer Nationals is in Topeka this weekend.

Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center

They lost it. They found it. We

restored it. Now it's in your hands. In this interactive exhibit for the whole family, you'll go on a virtual ride with Mercury astronaut Gus Grissom 118 miles into space and then go three miles below the ocean's surface to rescue Liberty Bell 7, untouched for decades. You'll get to pilot a Mercury capsule, take a ride in a centrifuge, operate a deep-sea ROV and much more. See it. Live it. Just don't lose it. At the Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center in Hutchinson through May 26. Discounts are available through ITR.

Worlds of Fun

It will leave you screaming for more! Worlds of Fun is now open for the season with Spring Special discounted tickets through ITR. Hurray, the special discount

ends June 30. Get ready for another season of your favorite fun-filled rides and attractions at Worlds of Fun.

As you make your way through 175 acres of excitement and family entertainment, you're sure to find that Worlds of Fun will always leave you screaming for more! Those looking for intense thrills will be sure to head to the world-famous Mamba and Boomerang roller coasters. After going 75 miles-per-hour on one coaster, then riding through another completely backwards, you'll learn the real meaning of "Open up and say AAAAGH!"

Straight out of the pages of the world-famous comic strip, everybody's favorite beagle and his friends are hosting an exciting collection of family rides and

attractions at Camp Snoopy, Worlds of Fun's family play land. Camp Snoopy is over one acre and home to rides and attractions designed especially for families.

Country Stampede

Have you ever attended a party with thousands of friends, national recording artists and four days of non-stop music and fun? Country Stampede is a weekend festival June 26-29 at Tuttle Creek State Park, Manhattan.

The weekend is fun filled and action packed with great performers, including: Kenny Chesney, Martina McBride, Chris LeDoux, Sawyer Brown and many more. There will also be fantastic food, colorful crafts and much, much more!

Keep summer fun: Remember boating, swimming safety

Army Corps of Engineers

Before heading out to the lake this holiday weekend, review a few water safety tips from the Army Corps of Engineers.

Know your boat and know the rules of the road. Check your boat for all required safety equipment. Consider the size of your boat, the number of passengers and the amount of extra equipment that will be on-board. Don't overload the boat! If you will be in a power boat, check your electrical system and fuel system for gas fumes. Follow manufacturer's suggested procedures BEFORE starting up

the engine. Wear your life jacket - don't just carry one on board. Leave your alcohol behind. Work to increase your safety, not increase your risks! Check the weather forecast. And, always file a float plan with a member of your family or friend.

For those of you going swimming this summer, there are swimming safety tips as well. Since most drowning

victims had no intention of being in water and since most people drown within 10-30 feet of safety, it is important that you and your family learn to swim.



Remember: Never rely on toys such as inner tubes and water wings to stay afloat. Don't take chances, by over estimating your swimming skills. Swim only in designated swimming areas and

never swim alone.

Each year, approximately 6,000 people drown in the United States according to the Corps of Engineers. Drowning is the second leading cause of accidental deaths for persons 15-44 years of age. What is really surprising is that two-thirds of the people who drown never had an intention of being in the water!

Each year about 200 children drown and several thousand others are treated in hospitals for submersion accidents, accidents which leave children with permanent brain damage and respiratory health problems.

Remember, it only takes a few seconds for a small child to wander away. Children have a natural curiosity and attraction to water.

Alcohol can be another risk factor when having summer fun near the water. It's a fact, alcohol and water do not mix! Unfortunately, many people ignore this and each year about 3,000 of them are wrong. More than half of all the people that drown had consumed alcohol prior to their accident.

Being intoxicated is not necessary for alcohol to be a threat to your safety. Just one beer will impair your balance, vision,

judgement and reaction time, thus making you a potential danger to yourself and others.

Research shows that four hours of boating, exposure to noise, vibration, sun, glare and wind produces fatigue that makes you act as if you were legally intoxicated. If you combine alcohol consumption with this boating fatigue condition, it intensifies the effects and increases your accident risk.

So remember, don't include alcohol in your outing, if you planning to have fun in, on or near the water.

Wrestling

continued from page 15

2003. "It's just nice to reach a level that Shon Lewis has reached, but no matter what I do in my wrestling career, I don't think I could ever be quite the wrestler that Shon Lewis was."

Army Pfc. Tina George, a silver medalist in the 2002 World Championships, also struck silver in Las Vegas. She was 24 seconds away from a gold medal when she dropped a 6-4 decision to Jela O'Donnell in the women's 55-kilogram gold-medal match. George, who was taking college finals and battling illness the week before nationals, accepted the setback as a wakeup call.

"I blew it," George said with a laugh. "Maybe I just shut down a little too early. I don't think I was as focused as I should've been because I've beaten her so many times before. I probably didn't wrestle with as much intensity as I needed. I just need to get healthy, get refocused, and get back in the game. It will be okay."

Even more important than team titles and individual medals, the

Army qualified all 10 of its Greco-Roman wrestlers for the 2003 World Team Trials, scheduled for June 20-22 in Indianapolis, with a top-seven finish at nationals.

"For the first time ever," Lewis said with a grin. Before any U.S. wrestler enters serious thoughts about becoming a world champion on home soil or in Europe, he or she must survive the intensity and immense pressure of the World Team Trials.

With the 2003 World Freestyle Championships in New York City and the Greco-Roman Worlds in France, the struggle for podium tops will be nearly as great as in the 2004 U.S. Olympic Trials. Team USA representation for the 2003 Pan American Games at Santa Domingo, Dominican Republic, also will be determined at Indianapolis.

"The next thing we need to conquer is the world," said Nieradka, who "just couldn't get the engines going" in his 6-0 loss to

Jim Gruenwald of Sunkist Kids. "In a couple years, this is going to be like a mini-tournament to the worlds. We need to conquer the world."

Air Force 1st Lt. Philip Johnston, 25, of Anchorage, Alaska, lost 4-0 to Minnesota Storm's Garrett Lowney in the 96-kilogram Greco finale to help his team win the Division II title for smaller teams. Air Force's Jacob Hey, who upset Dennis Hall in the consolation finals, finished third after losing 6-1 to NYAC's Joe Warren.

Marine Lance Cpl. Jacob Clark defeated Air Force Senior Airman Aaron Sieracki, 3-0, for third place in the 84-kilogram Greco division.

Army Spc. Glenn Garrison, 29, of Portland, Ore., defeated Army Spc. Oscar Wood, 27, of Gresham, Ore., 9-0, for third place in the 145-pound Greco division. Air Force's Steve Woods, who lost in the semis to champion Kevin Braeken, finished fifth in that class.

Army Pfc. Iris Smith, 23, of

Albany, Ga., was 10 seconds away from a semifinal victory in the women's 72-kilogram division before being pinned by Sunkist Kids' Samantha Lang. She rebounded to finish third.

Army 2nd Lt. Dominic Black, already qualified for the World Team Trials, finished fourth in the 96-kilogram freestyle division after taking more than a year off the mat. He lost 3-1 to defending national champion Tim Hartung of the Minnesota Storm.

Army Sgt. Jason Kutz, 28, of Altoona, Pa., also qualified for the World Team Trials with a fourth-place finish in the 60-kilogram freestyle division, as did Spc. Anthony Gibbons, 29, of Fort Myers, Fla., who finished fourth in the 55-kilogram Greco division after losing 4-1 to Gator Wrestling Club's Sam Hazewinkel.

Duaine Martin led the U.S. Marine Corps with a fifth-place finish.

Lieutenants Neal Rodak and Josh Feldman led the Navy with a pair of seventh-place finishes.



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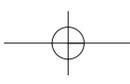
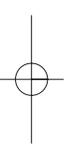
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Devin Coonrod, American Red Cross supervisor, checks the pressure on the arm of Spec. Ralph Schenck, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry. He was one of the first people to donate blood on Monday. The goal for the two-day blood drive was 120 units.

Program focuses on finding spouses jobs

By Victoria Palmer
Army News Service

Expanding employment opportunities for Army spouses while fulfilling corporate America's demand for skilled workers was the topic of the Army Spouse Employment Partnership Program working session in Arlington, Va., May 12.

Representatives from 17 corporations were among those who attended the meeting, coordinated by the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center as a follow up to the Army Spouse Employment Summit hosted by the chief of staff of the Army in December 2002.

This month's meeting began with a welcome by program chairman John McLaurin III, deputy assistant secretary of the Army (Human Resources), who highlighted the qualities and values Army spouses bring to the workplace.

"Army spouses have values extremely important to the private sector," McLaurin said. "They know teamwork, they're flexible, they're dedicated and they know how to get things done."

With the goal to formalize the partnership working group structure, session participants worked together on clarifying the partnership mission, vision statement and goals, and developing guiding

principles and action items. Attendees also met in five work groups: critical success indicators, pilot program development, best practices, strategic communications and Web site development. The groups, each consisting of several corporate partners and an Army subject matter expert, will continue work over the next several months to develop the program.

"We're hoping to kick off the program with signed statements of commitment by corporate partners at the beginning of the new fiscal year in October," said Nancy Whitsett, spouse employment partnership program manager at USACFSC. The program will then be implemented at pilot sites before going Army-wide, Whitsett said.

"This is a phenomenal process, a great project. I can't see how corporate America would lose, nor do I see how the Army could lose with this," said Delores Johnson, family programs director at USACFSC. "This is going to cre-

ate jobs for spouses and give the corporate community access to a very talented, very diverse labor pool." The diversity of employable candidates among Army spouses was of key interest to corporate attendees.

"I desperately need bilingual," remarked A m y D o b b s , sourcing a n d recruiting s e n i o r manager for Bell

South during the meeting general discussion, which elicited agreement from other attendees. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2002 directed DoD to examine existing spouse employment programs with the goal of improving retention of service members by increasing the employability of their spouses.

Developing partnerships with Fortune 500 companies in close proximity to military installations offers them the opportunity to have a human resource person at each installation through the Army Community Service Employment Readiness Program

Johnson said she believes the program can be implemented in the quick time frame that the corporate partners are looking for. "Their enthusiasm is unbridled. I love it. It is the most exciting project we've been involved with in a very long time," she said. The Employment Readiness Program is an activity of the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center in Alexandria, Va., the headquarters Department of the Army agency responsible for Morale, Welfare, and Recreation, including family programs. Additional information is available at www.armymwr.com

"Army spouses have values extremely important to the private sector."
—John McLaurin III
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army

Department of Defense forming plan to combine exchange systems

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press

DoD is working on a plan to consolidate the service exchanges under one roof, said Charles Abell, principal deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

Congress must approve any move to merge the Army and Air Forces Exchange Service, the Navy Exchange and the Marine Corps Exchange. Provided the legislators give the go-ahead, Abell said it will still be "some years" down the road before the move occurs.

"We may be looking at a five-year process here," he said. "It may be less if we're more aggressive, and we're going to do it very carefully."

Abell said DoD will be sensitive to the stakeholders in the process. "We're going to listen to a lot of people," he said. "The whole goal here is to make it better at the end, and if we can't do that, then we won't do this."

Retired Air Force Maj. Gen. C.J. Wax is developing the plan for a united exchange service. Wax is the former commander of AAFES - the largest exchange service with about 52,000 employees. It is a \$7.5 billion retail, food and services business that operates about 12,000 facilities in 29 countries and 50 states.

The Navy Exchange Service Command is headquartered in Virginia Beach, Va., and employs over 16,000 people in more than 100 locations worldwide. The Marine Corps Exchange - with sales of \$645 million - is the smallest system with a workforce of about 4,000.

DoD has discussed consolidating the exchanges in the past. Abell said that high-level support for the proposal will work toward it actually happening.

"Secretary Rumsfeld is an advocate for transformation," he said. "He implores us to be bold rather than timid. This is something that makes sense to me, and it makes sense to a lot of other people as well."

One aspect officials hope will improve under the consolidation is the dividend the exchanges return to the services' morale welfare and recreation funds.

According to the AAFES Web site information, for example, MWR-type programs received \$243.9 million in fiscal 2001, which was distributed as follows: Army, \$145.4 million; Air Force, \$86.4 million; Marine Corps, \$10.2 million; and Navy, \$1.7 million. That per capita dividend translated into \$277.94 for every soldier and airman.

"(The dividend) has gone down over the last four or five years," Abell said. "We've got to do something to arrest that. This is a way to save costs, and thus improve our dividend."

Abell said a consolidation will "be transparent" to exchange workers and shoppers. "Marines are still going to go to a Marine Exchange, sailors are still going to go in to a Navy Exchange, ... and airmen go into a BX and soldiers go into a PX," he said. "What we're changing is the 'back room' things and the management above the store level."

He said shoppers should see improved service, availability, variety and the ultimate result of better dividends.

Consolidating the infrastructure above store level means the

system could cut down on duplication. "I don't need three people doing the same thing - there will be economies of scale there," he said. "We don't need three trucks driving up and down (Interstate) 95 - one for the Marine Exchange, one from the Army-Air Force Exchange, one from the Navy Exchange - ... going past each others' bases. We could have fewer trucks stopping at each base."

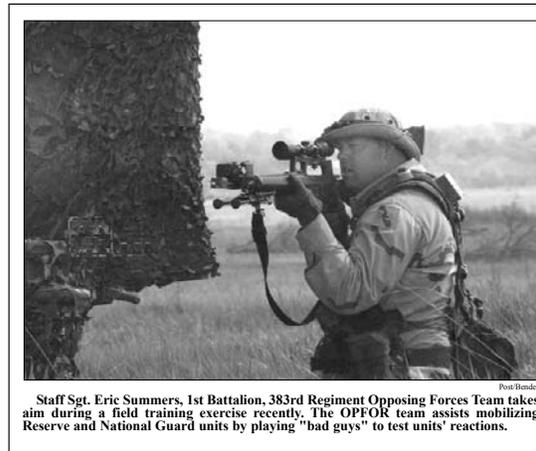
Another savings could come from a consolidated information technology system and fewer accountants, comptrollers and chief executive officers.

Store employees do not have to worry about their jobs. "If it takes a certain number of people to run the exchange at one base, it's probably going to take the same number of people to run that exchange after ... consolidation," he said. "If you work at the exchange, if you shop at the exchange, you should not see any difference."

Abell said there is no target figure for savings. "It's not about saving money," he said. "It's about improving the dividend to the MWR accounts to all the services. There's not much appropriated dollars at play here at all."

"This is a nonappropriated activity. It buys its goods and services with nonappropriated funds. So, I'm not looking for savings here; I'm looking for benefit."

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Staff Sgt. Eric Summers, 1st Battalion, 383rd Regiment Opposing Forces Team takes aim during a field training exercise recently. The OPFOR team assists mobilizing Reserve and National Guard units by playing "bad guys" to test units' reactions.

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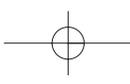
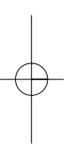
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Coalition progresses in Iraq

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press

Each day the conditions in Iraq are improving and the life for the Iraqi population is starting to return to the "normal pre-war standard," said Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld.

In his briefing to the Pentagon press, the secretary also said the department has no objection to officials from the International Atomic Energy Agency going back to Iraq.

Rumsfeld said the coalition would find it helpful for the U.N. scientists to tell coalition forces what was in the sealed areas of the atomic energy plants. He said the decision for sending the IAEA back is up to the United Nations.

Rumsfeld stressed that there are still problems in Iraq. No nation making the transition from a tyranny to a civil society "has been immune to the difficulties and challenges of taking that path," he said.

Rumsfeld gave some examples of the "good news" coming out of Iraq. Some 65 percent of the students in Baghdad have returned to school and a committee of Sunni and Shia Iraqis are working together to develop a new curriculum for the schools.

The U.N. Children's Fund is distributing the "school in a box" to the cities of Basra, Umm Qasr and Safwahn. Each kit contains enough supplies for a school's worth of students for a year.

Passenger rail service between Basra and Baghdad has resumed and rail service between Baghdad and Mosul and Baghdad and Umm Qasr has started again, he said.

There will be a new mayor of Kirkuk sworn in on May 27. The city of Mosul elected its first mayor and town council.

In Baghdad, criminal courts have been reopened and U.S. soldiers have testified in cases involving looting.

"Throughout the country civil servants are returning to work and some 900,000 Iraqi civil servants have been provided emergency payments," Rumsfeld said.

Coalition officials met with trustworthy Iraqi military leaders who provided a list of 27,000 officers, noncommissioned officers and defense ministry civilians who may be ready to assist in security activities, he said.

Residential electric customers in the north and south of Iraq have more electric service today than at any time in the last 12 years. In Basra, Iraqis are dealing with a decaying infrastructure by launching Operation Leak Stop. Iraqi plumbers move through the city repairing water pipes.

In Kirkuk 13 of 16 primary health care centers and 46 of 56 health care facilities are operational.

Coalition officials are employing more than 1,500 Iraqis to handle trash duties and to clean up overflowing sewage.

The secretary said Iraqi Media Network began broadcasting last week and that its first broadcast included reports on Mosul elections and the resumed train service to Baghdad.

Iraqi cities are seeing the first uncensored newspapers and magazines in 20 years, he said.

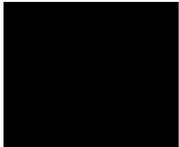
More than 4,500 Iraqi police are back on duty in Baghdad and other cities are rehiring trustworthy men for their police forces.

"Reports of looting, curfew violations and gunfire are decreasing," Rumsfeld said.

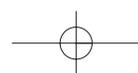
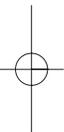
The secretary also discussed antiquities. "There now appears to be growing evidence that the theft at the museum was most likely an inside job and only an estimated 38 items seem to be currently confirmed as missing," he said.

Bottom line: There are challenges in the country, Rumsfeld said, but the conditions have improved and in the days and weeks ahead, they will continue to get better.

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Letters to the Front

"We are so very proud of you all. Stay strong, and keep up the good work. We love and miss you all. Stay safe, and we are here waiting for you with open arms."- Leigh Ann Smith, military spouse, Bushnell, Fla.

"To my son-in-law, Sgt. Ryan Roush, who was recently deployed to Iraq, be extra careful over there because my daughter, Heather, says I'll be a grandmother again about 10 months after you return. I'm looking forward to that, as your son, Ethan, is

already the light of my life, and I need a few more rays of sunshine. I send you my love, and lots of folks here in Texas are praying for you and all the brave men and women over there. We love and appreciate you all so much!"- Cathy Lawson, Winnboro, Texas

"Hey, to Sgt. 1st Class Dale S. Covill, 3rd BC I, and all the men with him. Take care of business and get home. We are here for all of you, and love you."- Judith Noonan, "great" mother-in-law of Sgt. 1st Class Covill

"To Pvt. David Hampton, 1st Bn., 41st Inf., I love you very much and miss you a lot. I hope to hear from you soon. Please be very careful. You are all that I think about. I am so ready for you to come home. Please keep being real careful, and remember that I love you so much and I miss you bunches. Also remember that I will always be here for you. I'm never leaving. I love you, my wonderful husband!"- Shelly Hampton, Marmaduke, Ark.

"To Capt. Michael Dumer, 4th Bn., 1st FA, I love you so much and am always thinking of you. Your 'kids' and I miss you very, very much, and wish you a safe return home very soon! Be safe, Michael, and stay strong!"- Love always, Amanda, Fester and Molly, military family, Manhattan, Kan.

"I would like to send my thoughts and prayers to my husband, Spc. Eladio Benitez, and all the other soldiers over in Iraq. I want them to know that I support

them and pray for them everyday, for their safety and a safe return home. We miss them very much and can't wait until they come home."- Crystal Benitez, military spouse, Milford, Kan.

"I just wanted to let you know that you and all active duty personnel in Iraq are in our prayers. We know that you are doing a great job for us. We pray for your safe return. Be safe, and God bless."- Nita Miller, secretary, Directorate of Logistics

If you would like to send messages of support to our troops deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom, email your message to the Post editor at afzpmpr@riley.army.mil. Soldiers, please include your name, rank, unit and hometown. Military spouses and civilians, please include your name, job and hometown.

You can also drop off a message at the Soldier and Family Support Center, Building 7264, at the front desk.

Letters from the Field

"Hello to my wife, Sheila, Korie, 5, and Junior, 7 months. I want to say that I love and miss all of you very much. Dad's doing fine here. When the mission is complete, we will all come home. I'll keep you in my prayers."- Love Always, Staff Sgt. Eric N. Dietrich, Maintenance Supervisor, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Bn., 34th Armor

"To my wife, Andrea and son Hayden, 2, I hope you guys are doing good. We're good over here. We will be home as soon as we can. I love you and miss both of you very much."- I love you, Pfc. Roy Hall, Mechanic, Task Force 2nd Bn., 34th Armor

"Hey to my wife, Laura, Adri-an, 4, Tyler, 2, and Kieran, 1, I'm still here in Korea, as you know. I

thought I would write to tell you thanks for your support. I love you guys and miss you."- Staff Sgt. Travis Hogan, platoon sergeant, Company A, 2nd Platoon, 2nd Bn., 34th Armor

"Hello Sarah. We are having lots of fun over here... NOT! I miss you very much and love you more. I can't wait to see you after we get home."- I love you, Sgt.

Richard Lambert, HHC, 2nd Bn., 34th Armor

"Hi to Danelle, Dakota, 11 months, and Amanda, 20. I love you and miss you all. I hope to make it home in time for our anniversary and Dakota's birthday."- Love Always, Staff Sgt. Douglas Patterson, Task Force 2nd Bn., 34th Armor

"To Erica and my daughter, Tressa, 8, I love you both very much. I'm doing fine, but can't wait to see you. Get the boat ready!"- Love always, Sgt. 1st Class Clifford Bell, AKA Diddy, A. Co. maintenance team chief, Task Force 2nd Bn., 34th Armor

"To Noreen, how are you doing my love? I hope you and the girls are doing well. I am doing just

fine. I will be home soon. Take care and I love you."- Love always, Sgt. Christian Munoz, A-Team maintenance, HHC, 2nd Bn., 34th Armor

"To Sheila Adams and family, I love you and miss you all very much. See you soon and take care of yourselves."- Love, Sgt. Montgomery Adams, M88 commander, Task Force 2nd Bn., 34th Armor

Red Cross seeking youth volunteers

Applications for the American Red Cross Summer Youth Program are due soon.

Kelly Sutton, Fort Riley station manager, said the program is a good way for teen-agers to have fun and get volunteer hours at the same time.

"I think the summer youth program activities are something that the children enjoy," she said. "One young man is coming back for his fourth year. Any teen-ager who is interested should come to the orientation and see what activities we have to offer."

Orientation will be June 4, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., at Irwin Army Community Hospital. All interested volunteers must attend.

The volunteer activities range from working at the museums to working at the veterinary clinic on post.

Applications are available at the American Red Cross office, building 7264, and may be picked up during office hours. A parent must sign the application in front of an American Red Cross worker.

Participants must be 13 by June 1 to participate. All applications must be received by May 30. If you have any questions, contact the American Red Cross, 239-1887.

Soldiers decon Seattle during exercise

By Spc. Kelly A. Rinehart
Army News Service

Last week's national terrorism combative exercise, dubbed TOPOFF 2 as short for "top officials," provided decontamination training for military and civilian emergency response teams.

Both Chicago and Seattle were chosen as areas for hypothetical biological and radioactive explosions. As a participant, Seattle was afforded the opportunity to assess its ability to gather city, state and federal assets in response to a weapons of mass destruction attack.

The exercise even included the creation of a mock media net-

work, VNN, to provide the opportunity for government and civilian media officials to practice the necessary partnership of getting emergency information to the public, according to Kamer Davis, VNN project director.

In Seattle, the Army Reserve soldiers of the 349th Chemical Company, Fort Lawton, Wash., were at Northwest Hospital to provide decontamination of incoming casualties from a nearby mock "dirty bomb" explosion. The scenario was set for the hospital to receive overflow patients after hospitals closer to ground zero were filled.

Before the wounded could be admitted to the hospital, soldiers

in full chemical protective gear directed the injured through a series of tents designated for removal of contaminated clothing, washing of radioactive contamination, and warming.

In recent years the 349th's responsibilities have increased from military decontamination and smoke operations to include response to weapons of mass destruction in the civilian sector. TOPOFF was unique for the 349th because of the required level of cooperation with city, state and federal emergency response teams.

Spc. Trisha M. Grauman, a chemical specialist with the 349th Chemical Company, was happy to

have civilian doctors and nurses on site.

"We can focus on our job, and they can focus on theirs," Grauman said.

If a critical patient needed cleaning, medical personnel could move with the patient through the decontamination process helping to stabilize the victim. The teamwork between the civilian and military workers promoted not only the safety of the injured, but also the safety of the remaining personnel and patients.

Grauman said she also hoped that the exposure to one another would decrease any intimidation or misinformation that civilians and military groups might have toward one another.

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