THE LAVA FLOW

The Official Newsletter of the 29th Brigade Combat Team

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Commander's Corner

Warriors,

We will soon completed an eighteen month odyssey that carried us through a very demanding post mobilization training validation, a successful rotation to the Joint Readiness Training Center, and a very challenging year long deployment to Iraq in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom 04-06. Shortly, we will turn the page on our final chapter of our odyssey. Awaiting us is a safe passage home through Kuwait to one of six demobilization centers spread throughout the Unites States of America. As we near the end of this great journey, take great pride in completing this odyssey as defenders of our homeland and guardians of peace and freedom abroad.

As warriors during Operations Iraqi Freedom 04-06, we have made it possible for the people of Iraq to vote and to ratify a new constitution. We then made it possible for them to vote again for a parliament that will govern and lead Iraq for the next four years. We have demonstrated determination, courage and perseverance that will make it possible for Iraq and its people to move forward in the 21st Century as peaceful nation. Like Americans from a previous generation who fought to stop Communism and Nazism from taking over in Europe, we have stopped the spread of terrorism from taken hold in Iraq.

As fierce warriors on the streets of Baghdad, in the farms fields and villages surrounding Balad, in Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia we have faced the ideology of al Qaida and have defeated their many attempts to infiltrate the local population through their safe houses, their numer-

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CSM's Message

This is probably the last issue of THE LAVA FLOW for Operation Iraqi Freedom 2004-2006. I want to thank the hard-working Public Affairs staff who made it happened. Great job! You've earned your right to your Shameless Self-Promotion. Of course, I will never forgive you for Yoda.

In retrospect, it's hard to believe that our deployment is nearly over. From the Level 1 Individual Training Tasks we endured which included Individual Movement Techniques, Hand-Grenade toss, First Aid, NBC, "Death by Slides" briefings, standing in long SRP lines; to the Level II training at Fort Bliss, TX. Who cannot forget the trials and tribulations of FOB McGregor and FOB Dona Ana with more weapons firing, SRM/Close Quarters Combat firing, convoy operations and live fire, IED training, ECP operations, freezing days and nights, Modular Tent living, the CPXs, and more briefings. Then came the Mission Rehearsal Exercise or MRE at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, LA and exposure to more FOB living and Force on Force training.

Finally the time came to put all our training to test. Once we got to Kuwait, our Team split up. The 1-487th FA and 227th EN(-) went straight to its final duty station in Kuwait. The rest of us left for Camp Buehring or Camp New York for further training and Pre-Combat preparations. Delta Company, 1-172nd AR and Echo Battery, 216th AD(-) later departed to their station at Eskan Village in Saudi Arabia. Soon after, the rest of the BCT departed on the Ground Assault Convoy, or GAC, into Iraq.

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Commander's Corner

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ous caches, their financers, their weapons suppliers, their smugglers and foreign fighters. We have conducted over 11,000 US combat patrols, nearly 1000 combined patrols with Iraqi Security Forces, found and destroyed nearly 50 weapons caches sites, and detained over 1200 suspected terrorist, send to jail 185 known targets of which over 30 were known cell leaders. We have given the people of Iraq a chance to determine their own future and create a better world for all to live.

As compassion warriors we have provided medical services to over two thousand local nationals, provided medical services into the many villages, provided clothing, children shoes, blankets, purified water and food for the poor. We have medically treated our enemies in order for him to stand trial in the newly formed Iraqi Court system. We have provided jobs, school supplies, wheel chairs, bicycles, soccer balls, and medicine. But more important we have provided hope for a better future. We have showed the Iraqi people that democracy, cooperation and peace leads to a better world.

As professional warriors we have lived the Warrior Ethos each and every day of this odyssey. We have gained the confidence of those we serve and the dignity and respect of our senior leaders. We have been humbled by the death and injuries suffered by our warrior brothers. But in our humility we have gain the strength and inspiration to complete the journey. We will never forget our fallen warrior brothers and will ensure their legacy lives on forever.

Thanks for your commitment and for all you have given. Paulette and I send our very best wishes to each of you and your families as we serve together during another Christmas Season in the Global War on Terrorism.

Lava!

CSM's Message

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No-one who went on the GAC can forget the excitement and anticipation of traveling by ground for 3 days to get to our final destinations either in Baghdad or at LSA Anaconda, Balad.

After we completed the RIP/TOA with the 81st BCT, our Soldiers quickly sharpened their skills on combat patrols, Entry Control Points (ECPs), Towers, Joint Defense Operations Centers (JDOC) (also known as A(rea)DOCs, or B(ase)DOCs depending where you were). Your skills became valuable assets to our mission here. You learned how to recognize and reduce enemy threats, find numerous weapons and ammunition caches, detain suspicious persons, and protect the Force overall.

We also made many friends with the Iraqi citizens through our Medical, Civil Affairs or Humanitarian missions. All together, we must have given out literally thousands of pencils, shoes, candy, beanie babies, and other supplies to the Iraqi citizens. We gained their support through Civil-Military/Information Operations. Some of our Soldiers assisted as Military Transition Teams or Police Transition Teams using their military skills and police skills around LSA Anaconda and Baghdad. They will never forget you.

Let's not forget the Unsung Heroes, and there were many so forgive me if I fail to mention anyone. There were the Mechanics who kept our vehicles running, the Logisticians who kept us supplied, the Personnel/Admin Soldiers who worked on promotions, awards, kept our records and pay straight, the Intel gurus that provided us valuable intelligence predictions, the Mortar crew that provided counter-fire and terrain denial fire; the medics, doctors and nurses at the Medical Facilities who treated our wounded, our Rear Detachments who provided support back home, the LNOs down in Kuwait, our Family Readiness Groups, our interpreters, the TCN and LN workers, the civilian contractors, and, and of course, all the hundreds of individuals and organizations back home that kept our morale up by sending tons of care packages and letters of support.

As we get ready to redeploy and demobilize, remain disciplined and patient as we get ready for this change of mission. Our job is not done until we are all safely back home with our families and friends. Stay vigilant, and let's all go home safe. Many of you are trying to complete your NCOES requirements while still under Title 10 status. That is commendable that you want to get your NCOES requirements out of the way as quickly as possible. Just make sure you have discussed your plans with your Significant Other. They have a say too, and so does your employer.

Last, but not least, let's never forget the sacrifices made by those who were Wounded in Action and Killed in Action. They will always remain in our hearts and memories.

This deployment will go down in history and you are all part of it.

Have a Merry Christmas!

CSM Inouye

WARNING

POISON has been found in alcohol being sold to American troops. Do not purchase or consume items of questionable origin.

General Order 1.A.A. prohibits the consumption of alcohol by U.S. forces currently deployed.

Message from the Governor

Photo provided by the Governor's Office

Aloha and Happy Holidays!

This holiday season is particularly special as we welcome home our returning National Guard troops from the Middle East. Lt. Governor Aiona has been excited and honored to join State Adjutant General, Major General Robert Lee, in personally greeting the first two groups upon their arrival. Unfortunately, I have been out of state and unable to join them in the welcoming home ceremonies. However, as always, I eagerly look forward to the safe return of *all* of our troops in early 2006, and will especially remember those who remain overseas during the holidays.

This is a great time to reflect on the year gone by while looking forward to the opportunities that lie ahead. I believe this was a year to celebrate freedom, as the citizens of Afghanistan and Iraq went to the polls in great numbers and under great risk to show their commitment to democracy and peace and to take rightful control of their country's destiny.

The 29th Brigade Combat Team fought for, defended and protected this freedom. From Hawai'i, Guam, Saipan, American Samoa, California, Alaska, Oregon, Minnesota, Vermont and Washington, you all came together to turn the dream of democracy into a reality. You have not only honorably and courageously served the United States, but you have also made history and touched lives. From securing areas in Anaconda for residents to vote on the Iraqi constitutional referendum, to delivering shoes and clothing to Iraqi children, and spreading the *aloha* spirit through demonstrating the *shaka* and sharing your provisions, you have made an invaluable impact and lasting impression.

We are eternally grateful and indebted to those brave men and women who have given the ultimate sacrifice for this great cause. We will always honor those lives lost, but not forgotten, as we celebrate freedom secured and not forsaken. The importance of their service and duty will always be memorialized, and their sacrifice will never be minimized.

As your deployment comes to a close, I'd like to say it has been my pleasure to communicate with you through this monthly message. I appreciate Captain Kyle Yonemura and his Public Affairs Team for all their efforts in coordinating this newsletter.

I also hope you will continue to share your thoughts with me via e-mail at Governor.Lingle@hawaii.gov or visit my web site at www.hawaii.gov/gov.

May you have a healthy and happy New Year.

Mahalo,

Governor Linda Lingle

Photo by Capt. Kyle Yonemura

Iraqi Police hand out shoes to excited children outside their police station in Yethrib

Community Policing Iraqi style
by Capt. Kyle Yonemura

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq – Members of the 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry, Police Transition Team have shared modern policing techniques, including community policing, with their counterparts in the Iraqi Police Force to help them improve their service to the communities they protect.

"Our community policing goal here is to establish a better relationship between the community and the police so the community isn't afraid to go to the police to report crimes," said Staff Sgt. Walter Kreitlow. In civilian life, Krietlow is an Investigator with the State of Florida. He has 12 years of law enforcement experience under his belt, including experience as a S.W.A.T. team member and a patrol officer.

"Under Saddam Hussein, the police were more feared than respected," said Staff Sgt. William McCoy. In civilian life, McCoy is a police officer with the Honolulu Police Department. "The public won't approach the police if they don't trust them."

The seven man Police Transition Team has trained Iraqi police officers in the town of Yethrib for about nine months now. Yethrib is a town of about 35,000 people that lies north of Logistics Support Area Anaconda. The Iraqi police are trained at LSA Anaconda as well as at their police station and in the field. Thus far, the team has trained 88 Iraqi police officers and has accompanied them on dozens of day and night patrols within the 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry's area of operations.

McCoy sent photos of his joint patrols with the Iraqi police home to his parents, Darlene and Parker "P.J." McCoy, of Elizabeth City, North Carolina. His parents were quick to note that many of the Iraqi children in the photos were without shoes. This gave Darlene, who manages a Goodwill store in Kitty Hawk, N.C., an idea. She and P.J. decided to purchase the children some shoes from her store and mail them to their son. "My parents didn't tell me anything about this, so I got this huge box in the mail filled with 170 pairs of children's shoes," said Staff Sgt. McCoy.

"It broke my heart to see little children in some of the pictures without any shoes on," said Darlene McCoy, "I've always believed that it's important to help those who are less fortunate than we are, so P.J. and I were really excited about doing this."

After receiving the shoes, Staff Sgt. McCoy decided that it would be best if the members of the Iraqi Police Force handed out the shoes. "I thought it would be a good way to help tear down some of the walls between the local Iraqis and their police force," he said. On December 12, McCoy found the perfect opportunity to pass the shoes out. The Police Transition Team, known among themselves as "The Yethrib 5-0," would be in the Town of Yethrib to issue handheld radios to the Iraqi Police. It was decided to ask the Iraqi police to pass the shoes out on that mission.

The Iraqi police, members of the "Yethrib 5-0," and a security force of infantrymen from Company E, 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry set up a distribution point next to the Yethrib Police Station. The response was immediate. Children on a recess break from a nearby school rushed over to the soldiers and police officers. The Iraqiofficers organized the children into a neat line, with the children who didn't have shoes at the front. More

children arrived as the Iraqi police began handing the shoes out. The police and soldiers also handed out donated school supplies and candy; the initially neat line of about 80 children collapsed repeatedly as the children grew more excited and stepped out of line.

The amused and flabbergasted Iraqi police eventually abandoned their attempts to keep the children in a line and just concentrated on handing the shoes out.

"I'm happy to see the children smiling like this," said Iraqi Policeman Omar Kalaf through an interpreter, as he passed out shoes. "Before I became a policeman I avoided the police, under Saddam bad things could happen if you got in their way. Now, there is no problem, but some of the people are still afraid. So something like this [giving shoes to children] will help people know they don't have to be afraid."

The emphasis on community policing appears to have paid off. "Crimes are now being reported and Iraqis are reporting the locations of weapons caches and IEDs [roadside bombs] to the Iraqi police," said Krietlow.

"When we first started training the police here, there were places they were afraid to go—even during the daylight hours," said McCoy, "Now the Iraqi police patrol wherever they want, whenever they want to. The Iraqi police are much more confident and the people have a lot more confidence in them."

According to McCoy, the Police Transitional Training Team is unique in that it is the only one in Iraq that uses National Guardsmen and Army Reservists who are police officers in civilian life to teach the Iraqi Police the skills they need to better protect and serve their neighborhoods. "This completely new program combined with a training curriculum that was unfamiliar to my military chain of command posed some challenges to our operations," said McCoy. "Law enforcement operations require a lot of flexibility and adaptation that sometimes doesn't mix well with less flexible military operations."

During the patrol, the soldiers faced the normal threats they face each time they leave the wire. The patrol discovered a roadside bomb that had been placed along the route as it returned to LSA Anaconda. The bomb had been hidden in the carcass of a goat and was spotted before the soldiers got close. The bomb didn't detonate and the soldiers coordinated to have it destroyed.

The other five members of the Police Transitional Training Team include: Staff Sgt. Clyde Bueno from the Honolulu Police Department, Staff Sgt. Barry Deblake from the Kauai County Police Department, Staff Sgt. Frederick Quinene (a retired police officer from Guam), Sgt. Frank Pangelinan of the Saipan Police Department and Cpl. Mike Davis of the Carl Junction Police Department in Missouri.

"I feel good about what we did here," said McCoy. "There's been a definite change in the attitude of the Iraqis toward their police force. Community policing—Iraqi style—has really paid off."

Photo by Capt. Kyle Yonemura

A young boy demonstrates pushups for soldiers from Company E, 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry.

Cavalry to the Rescue
by Capt. Kyle Yonemura

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq – Soldiers assigned to the 29th Brigade Combat Team used their medical training to save the lives of two Iraqi civilians on November 15, at about 2:30 p.m., while returning to Logistics Support Area Anaconda after a patrol.

Soldiers from F Troop, 82nd Cavalry, an Oregon based unit assigned to the 29th Brigade Combat Team, happened upon a head-on civilian traffic collision between a Volkswagen carrying a man and a woman and a larger utility truck. The collision occurred on Route Dover, a major roadway that runs North of the base. Several Iraqi civilians had stopped and were attempting to aid the injured people.

The soldiers swung into action immediately. Sgt. 1st Class Robert Chase, the patrol leader, had the soldiers form a security perimeter around the collision site. "I called in a report over the radio then requested a MEDEVAC [Medical Evacuation Helicopter] immediately," said Chase, "It was a bad accident, the front ends of both vehicles were completely smashed in." Chase, a native of San Diego, Ca. is a fire support non-commissioned officer with the 1st Battalion, 487th Field Artillery and is attached to the cavalry troop.

Sgt. Sterling Beair, a medic attached to the cavalry troop from the medical company of the 29th Support Battalion immediately swung into action, "Once the site was secure, I assessed the injured passengers to see who needed help first," he said. Beair's quick triage lead him to begin treating the Iraqi male who had been driving the Volkswagen. "Both of his legs had open fractures," said Beair, "He also had a lot of facial trauma so I was worried about him not being able to breathe."

Beair quickly applied a tourniquet to the male's right leg because he was bleeding badly. "While I was treating him, he stopped breathing for about 20 seconds. I suctioned out his mouth and inserted a tube into his throat to help him breathe. He was still pinned behind the steering wheel while I was working on him," he said.

While Beair worked on saving the male driver, Sgt. Ronald Courtain-Tharp, a medic with F Troop began treating the female front seat passenger of the Volkswagen. "Her door was open and she was laying partly in the vehicle and partly out because her leg was pinned between the dashboard and seat," said Courtain-Tharp, "She had an open femur fracture in her left leg with arterial [serious] bleeding, so I put a tourniquet on her." In civilian life, Courtain-Tharp attends nursing school full time at Clackamas Community College in Portland, Oregon.

Adding to the seriousness of the situation was the fact that the gas tanks of both vehicles had been ruptured

Photo courtesy of 229th MI Co.

A soldier from 229th MI Co. makes an assessment of the accident.

and gasoline was leaking beneath the crumpled vehicles. Other soldiers from the patrol, including soldiers from the 229th Military Intelligence Company, saw what needed to be done and quickly smashed out the back window of the Volkswagen and removed the back seat to assist in extracting the injured male.

"I had to rip out the passenger seat to free her [the injured female passenger]," said Courtain-Tharp.

The medics stabilized their patients and with the help of Iraqis who had stopped to assist, and carried them away from the fuel soaked crash site. Beair and Courtain-Tharp

Photo courtesy of 229th MI Co.

Soldiers of Troop F, 82nd Cavalry carry a victim of an automobile accident to a MEDEVAC helicopter.

then assisted the driver of the larger utility truck, who had been removed from the wreckage by other Iraqis. Although injured, the male had fared substantially better than their other two patients.

The medics then loaded all three of the injured civilians onto the MEDEVAC that had landed nearby. The patients were transported to the Air Force hospital on LSA Anaconda for treatment.

After the helicopter left, Sgt. Beair discovered that his medical equipment had been scattered, "the rotor wash from the helicopter had blown my stuff all over the place," he said. While Beair walked through the crash site to collect his equipment, he felt someone patting him gently on the shoulder.

"One of the Iraqis who had stopped to help and was patting Sgt. Beair on the shoulder. He had tears in his eyes. He was crying because he was so grateful. He said 'Thank you!' in English," said Courtain-Tharp.

"I'm really proud of those guys," said Chase, "the teamwork the patrol demonstrated was outstanding."

"Helping people is just part of our jobs," said Courtain-Tharp through a smile, "I feel good about what we did."

Supply section supports 29th BCT HHC

By Sgt. Lauran Robinson

LSA ANACONDA, Iraq – The supply section of Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 29th Brigade Combat Team supplies soldiers with the daily necessities needed for day to day operations and tools needed to carry out missions in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The team of six personnel supports over 400 soldiers in HHC, as well as units attached to the Brigade including: Task Force Konohiki, 227th Combat Engineer Co., Task Force Vanguard, and 229th Military Intelligence Co. The section supplies the units with everything from bottled drinking water to uniforms and ammunition. They have a flexible schedule to meet the demanding needs of the soldiers and are on call 24 hours a day. "The crew has been working hard together. We are a team" said Spc. Janice Dorsey.

The section is responsible for tracking millions of dollars worth of equipment and supplies. They maintain three different logs based on the origin of the supplies: the Hawaii Army National guard, the installation of Logistics Support Area Anaconda, and other equipment provided in theater. The section accounts for every item dispersed to each soldier, and all equipment used to achieve the missions.

Planning and projection plays a huge role in providing soldiers with adequate supplies and equipment. The section is resourceful in getting the supplies requested by the units to accomplish their missions. They retrieve, store, and distribute supplies as needed by the soldiers. "We want to make sure everyone has their supplies. When they win, we win" said Staff Sgt. Donavan Tuisano, the non-commissioned officer in charge.

The HHC, 29th BCT, supply section has had a demanding task supporting soldiers for their missions. "20% is paperwork, 60% is manual labor and the rest is heart, to get the soldiers ready for their mission. I do it for the soldiers out in the combat zone, to support victory." said Sgt. Daivan Bui.

Field Artillery Batallion is Mission Complete in Kuwait.

By Lt. Col. Keith Tamashiro

The 1st Battalion, 487th Field Artillery conducted its Transfer of Authority ceremony on November 27, 2005 at Kuwait Naval Base in Kuwait. This marks the official transfer of mission from the 1st Battalion, 487th Field Artillery to the 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery out of the Army National Guard of the state of Wisconsin. The 1st Battalion, 487th Field Artillery known as the Hiki No (Can Do) battalion is the first battalion within the 29th Brigade Combat Team to complete its mission in theater since being mobilized in August 2004. The battalion is scheduled to return to Hawaii around the first week of December.

The 1st Battalion, 487th Field Artillery was the only battalion to be assigned both a security forces mission of southern Kuwait and base camp operations for Camp Patriot (Kuwait Naval Base) and Camp Spearhead (SPOD). During their 11 month tour in Kuwait, the battalion provided security for key installations and ports as well as the quick reaction forces in response to any crisis within southern Kuwait. As the unit in charge of the base, the battalion provided life support to over 2000 residents ensuring the basic needs of the camp(food, water, maintenance, medical and MWR activities) were met.

Lt Col Keith Tamashiro, commander of the 1st Bn, 487th Field Artillery, expressed how extremely proud he was of the many accomplishments and the positive difference that this battalion has achieved since coming to Kuwait. What makes this battalion special is the ability and willingness to step up to any challenge for we believe no task is impossible to accomplish as a team. After all, we are Hiki No soldiers and our motto: Hiki No – "Can Do" has and will continue to carry us through anything.

The 1st Battalion, 120th Field Artillery from the state of Wisconsin arrived in Kuwait about 2 weeks ago after conducting its train up at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. They will assume all duties and responsibilities of the Hiki No battalion. The battalion is commanded by Lt Col Gary Skon. Lt Col Skon wishes all the Hiki No battalion a safe travel back home to your families, and we look forward to following in your footsteps – the bar is high, but we will strive to match your commitment to excellence.

The transfer of authority ceremony concluded with the lowering of the Hawaii flag and the raising of the Wisconsin flag symbolizing the completion of the battalion's mission. In attendance was Brigadier General Joseph Chaves, Commander of the 29th Brigade Command Team. Although the majority of the battalion will be returning to Hawaii, there are still about 100 fire support personnel attached their maneuver units who will be returning back to Hawaii in January with the rest of the brigade. Tamashiro acknowledged that the Hiki No battalion will not be fully mission complete until all our soldiers set foot on home soil along with our brothers and sisters of the 29th BCT. Our thoughts and prayers remain with them.

Photo courtesy of 1st Bn., 487th FA

Commanding Officer Lt. Col. Keith Tamashiro, and Command Sgt. Maj. Johan Huh of 1st Bn., 487th FA, case the unit colors in the transfer of authority ceremony on November 27th.

Question of the Month

What are you thankful for this holiday season?

By Sgt. Suzette Fernandez

SPC Naomi Suzuki
HHC 29th BCT

"I'm thankful for all the people that have given me support throughout this deployment."

SGT Torrey Pedersen
HHC, 2nd Bn., 299th Infantry

"I'm thankful that we're going home soon!"

SSG Sue Ann Kauanui
229th MI Co.

"I'm thankful I'm still alive — Amen!"

SPC Eric Teramae
HHSB, 1st Bn., 487th FA

"I'm thankful for the liberties and freedom we take for granted everyday."

1LT Jeffery Chang
Co. D, 2nd Bn., 299th Infantry

"I'm thankful that we're going home soon and no one in our unit has been seriously hurt."

29th BCT Safety

By Chief Warrant Officer Randall Au

I would like to share with you a few excerpts of greetings and gratitude sent to soldiers of the 29th BCT from their respective family members:

"Thank you for serving our country and fighting for us to keep us safe. Hope that Iraq will have their democracy and be able to enjoy their freedom. Please remain focused on your mission. You're always in our thoughts and prayers."

"Your bravery is commended for you are sacrificing yourself in a foreign land, miles away from those who 'LOVE' you. You are giving the greatest gift to the world – the gift of FREEDOM. May the Good Lord Keep You Safe and We Pray For Your Homecoming."

"We pray every night for each and every one of you. God Bless you all – till your safe return."

"Mahalo Nui Loa for not only sacrificing your lives for our Freedom, but for sacrificing your time away from your loved ones. I know this is what makes your time over there so difficult. Please find consolation in knowing that your sacrifices are deeply appreciated! Please be careful, stay safe, and take care of each other."

"Amidst the noises of combat, listen to the visions created in your mind of your home, Hawaii. You will hear the shouts of support for all that you are doing …for us! Engulfed by the sandy, frigid air, see the sun basking on our sandy beaches. You will feel the spirit of aloha embracing your soul."

Few events are more regrettable than a Soldier being injured or dying because someone was careless. The soldiers of the 29th Brigade Combat Team have been called upon to resource two on-going missions, first, current combat missions as assigned, and secondly, redeployment operations. Following basic safety principles and using good judgment are essential to maintaining a secure environment in theater and at home. For Army operations, these principles are outlined in numerous "ground safety" guides. We must be diligent about ground safety in and around all Army operations. Leaders must perform a risk assessment before all operations such as convoy operations, container yard operations, wash rack operations, and operations occurring at the Seaport of Embarkation (SPOE). It's the responsibility of every leader to manage the risks—including those posed by the enemy—once the risk assessment is complete. I would like to briefly address the following areas of interest:

1) Training, ground guides, seatbelts, and PMCS

All vehicle operators must be licensed and trained properly for their vehicle. Ground guides are an essential element of safe driver practices, and equally as important is the use of seatbelts in all Army vehicles. Preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS) also must be performed before any vehicle is used. Mechanically unsafe vehicles should never be put into operation before all deficiencies are corrected. Drivers should conduct a 360-degree search around their vehicles to detect problems. The 360-degree search also allows drivers to ensure no one is close to or under the vehicle before they move it.

2) Troop and cargo loads

Another consideration is the vehicle's physical dynamics, which change when loaded with troops or cargo. Vehicles must not operate under conditions where passenger or cargo loads exceed their carrying capacity. Vehicle loads should be inspected and secured before departure, and troop and cargo straps must always be used. Leaders must brief all drivers, assistant drivers, and the highest-ranking vehicle occupant before each mission. Hazardous areas or conditions must be identified and discussed during this brief, along with safe following distances, proper speed, route of travel, rest periods, and signals.

3) Carbon monoxide poisoning

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a potential danger in vehicle operations. Carbon monoxide is a gas emitted from many sources, including internal combustion en-

gines. It's colorless, odorless, tasteless, and deadly. Soldiers must not sleep in vehicles with the engines running. Carbon monoxide is heavier than air and concentrates in low-lying areas, so soldiers should use extreme caution around vehicles parked in depressions. Also know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning: headache, dizziness, sleepiness, and tightness across the forehead. Seek medical attention immediately for any Soldiers exhibiting these symptoms, and move them to fresh air as quickly as possible. Carbon monoxide poisoning will also affect those elements of the 29th BCT residing in transient tents in which Space Heaters are in use.

4) Noise disassociation

Noise disassociation usually occurs around day six of an operation, i.e. extensive motor pool operations, container yard operations. Soldiers hear the noise of vehicles or equipment but fail to observe the direction of the noise. In effect, noises are heard but subconsciously silenced. Soldiers are more likely to be run over if they're suffering from this "masking effect," when noise doesn't trigger an alarm to get out of the way. Soldiers must always find the source of any new sound. If all Soldiers made this practice a habit, ground safety in general would be enhanced greatly.

5) Sleep deprivation

It's well known the human body can't function without sleep. But those of us in uniform often must perform extended missions with little or no sleep. Fatigue causes errors in judgment, slowing of the reflexes, and a general dulling of the senses. A fatigued Soldier is at higher risk of making potentially deadly mistakes than a well-rested one. Soldiers must get a *minimum* of 4 hours continuous sleep every 24 hours—any less will impair military effectiveness.

Though we need not be reminded of the personal sacrifices of each soldier of the 29th BCT, I started this article with selected excerpts of greetings and gratitude from family members written to soldiers of the 29th BCT. My purpose is to remind and encourage all leaders and soldiers of the 29th BCT to continue to remain vigilant in protecting the most priceless gift you have to offer your loved ones, YOU, as those, who are nearest and dearest to our hearts, anxiously await our safe return and to always be mindful of our on-going missions until we all arrive home safely. Maintain your situational awareness at all times and avoid "compartmentalizing" your thought process, never compromising your "attention to detail." Avoid taking any shortcuts in the name of "saving time," adhering to proper policies and procedures governing the operation of which you are engaged in. Keep in the back of your mind that these policies and procedures were written and implemented for YOUR safety and the safety of your fellow soldiers, and that it may have been written and implemented as a result of an injured soldier or worse, the death of a soldier. Leaders at all levels are obligated to ensure safety is paramount in all operations and the safety is the concern of EVERY soldier. May I take this time to wish all of you the Happiest of Holidays and a Safe, Prosperous, and Happy New Year.

RETURNING TO YOUR CIVILIAN JOB: YOUR OBLIGATIONS, RIGHTS & ENFORCEMENT OPTIONS

by Capt. Natalie Lewellen

Lava Brigade soldiers, deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), will soon return home to their families, friends and eventually, to their civilian jobs. As you begin your return to civilian employment, know that you have the protection of federal law in your corner. Effective since December 1994, the Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), codified at Title 38, U.S. Code sections 4301-4333, is a comprehensive set of laws designed to protect the job rights of individuals who voluntarily or

involuntarily leave employment positions to undertake military service. This article highlights your obligations, rights, and enforcement options under USERRA.

OBLIGATIONS / CRITERIA:

To qualify for reemployment protection under USERRA, you must meet five (5) obligations:

1. **Job.** Prior to entering active duty in support of OIF, you must have held a civilian job with a reasonable expectation employment would have continued but for the call to duty.

2. **Notice.** You gave advance notice of your call duty to your civilian employer *before* leaving your civilian position (unless such notice was precluded by "military necessity"). Verbal notice is sufficient. Written notice is better.

3. **Duration.** Time away from the same civilian employer for military service, when added up, may not exceed a total of five (5) years. However, military service in support of OIF does *not* count toward that 5-year limit. USERRA excludes certain periods of military service from the 5-year limit, such as: service performed during time of war or national emergency (other than state active duty); required drills; annual training; and other training necessary for professional development or skill.

4. **Character of Service.** You are released from military service under Honorable or General conditions. If you depart service under Other Than Honorable conditions, receive a Bad Conduct Discharge, Dishonorable Discharge or are otherwise dropped from *military* rolls, you will not be eligible for USERRA's *civilian* employment protection.

5. **Prompt Return to Work**. "Prompt return" depends upon the period of military service. For 31 days-180 days of consecutive military service (some 29th BCT filler troops may fall into this category), you must submit written application for reemployment within 14 days of completing military service. Your application / letter must state that you were previously employed there and that you were away on military service. Note that "military service" is not "complete" until after terminal leave has run out. Also be advised the requirement is to submit application for reemployment within 14 days, not actually *begin* working within 14 days. Troops on active duty **181 days or more** (most deployed 29th BCT soldiers) have **90 days** after completion of military service within which to submit application for reemployment. Of course, if you are eager to get back on the payroll, you may always submit application sooner (sample letter at end of article).

Be advised that anytime you are away from your civilian employment for over 30 days, your employer has the right to ask for proof. A copy of your orders, DD 214 or letter from your commander will suffice. Your employer also has a right to ask you to complete a reasonable amount of paperwork associated with reemployment and to require the completion of such paperwork within the above-stated timelines (i.e. within the 90 days). For that reason, while you are certainly encouraged to take some time before you return to work, it may be wise not to wait until, say, the 90th day to submit application.

BASIC ENTITLEMENTS / RIGHTS:

Prompt Reinstatement. "Prompt reinstatement" for military service of **31 days or more** generally means within a few days, depending on the circumstances.

Seniority & Status. For 90 days or less of military service, you are entitled to the same exact job upon your return to work. For military service **91 days or more**, you are entitled to return to a position of like seniority, status and pay. During your absence, your employer is required to treat you as any other employee on a leave of absence with similar seniority and status (for holiday bonuses, life insurance, loans, etc.). When you return to work, you step on the seniority "escalator" at the point at which you would be, pretending you never left for military duty, to include entitlement to seniority-based benefits or increases associated with that new place on the escalator. You must also be treated like your peers with regard to *non*-seniority-based raises,

promotions, day/night shift designations, department rotations, and yes, even including pay cuts or layoffs.

Re-Training. Your employer is required to make "reasonable efforts" to qualify or re-qualify you for your position. Reasonable efforts include training on new equipment, new techniques or refresher training for job skills not used during military service. Your employer must also accommodate service-connected disabilities.

Reinstatement of Health Benefits. If you participated in a company-sponsored health program, you and your family are entitled immediate reinstatement of health benefits upon your return to work. There are no waiting periods and no exclusion for pre-existing conditions (other than VA-determined service-connected conditions).

Fired For Cause Only. Upon your return to work, you will enter a "protected period" during which you can only be fired for cause. If you *are* fired during the "protected period" your employer must prove the firing was not because of your military service. For military service of **181 days or more**, the "protected period" lasts **one (1) year**. For 31 days to 180 days of service, the "protected period" runs for 180 days.

Antidiscrimination. An employer may not discriminate or take adverse action against persons who seek to enforce USERRA.

Pension Benefits. With regard to pension plans, your employer must count the period of federal military service as if it were service with the employer. This rule applies to benefit eligibility (vesting), calculation of benefit computation, etc. If employee contributions or deferrals are a part of your pension plan, returning soldiers get up to 3 times the period of absence or 5 years (whichever is less) to make up the contributions.

USERRA ENFORCEMENT:

Department of Labor. For help with communicating to your employer your rights under USERRA, contact the Department of Labors Veteran's Employment & Training Service (VETS) at www.dol.gov/vets or 1-800-487-2365. DOL-VETS is committed to investigating and resolving reemployment issues. If DOL cannot resolve the issue for you, your case may be referred to the Department of Justice for possible litigation.

ESGR Ombudsmen Services Program. The National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is another option. This program is staffed by volunteers, works with the Department of Labor, and specifically addresses employment problems associated with National Guard or Reserve service. For more information on how ESGR can assist you, visit www.esgr.org or call, toll-free, 1-800-336-4590.

Individual Litigation. Of course, you always have the right to retain an attorney at your own expense and file suit in federal court against your employer to enforce USERRA.

JAG CORPS LIMITATIONS:

The Departments of Labor and Justice will not pursue relief if a soldier is already represented by an attorney. Additionally, Army Regulation prohibits legal assistance JAGs from taking action that could be viewed as "representation", such as contacting employers on USERRA issues. Your legal assistance office is limited to conducting briefings on USERRA, providing sample letter formats and advising soldiers of their obligations, rights, and enforcement options. Your nearest JAG office stands ready to answer any questions you may have about USERRA or other legal assistance matters.

(Please see the Sample Application for Reemployment on the next page)

Sample Application for Reemployment

[Employee's Home Address]

[Date]

[Employer's Business Address]

RE: Application for Reinstatement - Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), Title 38, United States Code, Section 4312

Dear Sir/Madam:

On **[date]**, I entered active duty with the **[service]**. On **[date]**, I was honorably released from active duty with the service.

Please accept this letter as a formal request to be reinstated in my former job. With your permission, I plan to report for work on **[date]**. Please call me at the number listed below if this date is not convenient. Pursuant to the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, Title 38, United States Code, Sections 4301-33, I am entitled to be reinstated as soon as possible in my former position.

If you have any questions about the provisions of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, toll-free 1-800-336-4590, will be happy to answer them.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Phone number]

OPSEC Reminder

By Maj. Sonny Del Toro

The upcoming festive season will provide opportunities to divulge sensitive information to forces that expect to do harm to our soldiers. To stop that from happening, it is extremely important that before you send pictures home look at them carefully to identify weapon systems, vehicles, radio systems or simple signs that can be used to confirm troop movements, SOP's, and CCIR.

See your Platoon Sgt or Platoon Leader if you have questions. If they have questions have them ask your unit commander.

Sergeant Major of the Army has recently stated "From this day forward, every NCO and soldier, from me as the Sergeant Major of the Army down to the newest Private, will place more emphasis on OPSEC. I further expect every NCO to become educated on OPSEC and to train those under their leadership to make OPSEC a routine part of their daily lives".

The OPSEC training the Sergeant Major of the Army is talking about is a 13 slide presentation. Slide #6 of the presentation is particularly important. The highlights are

- Ensure information posted has no significant value to the adversary
- Consider the audience when you're posting to a blog, personal web page or EMail
- Always assume the adversary is reading your material
- *Believe* the bad guys when they threaten you
- Work **with** your OPSEC Officer – follow policies and procedures!

There is also an OPSEC outbrief that is required by your unit OPSEC representative before you leave theater.

Have a Happy Holiday Season, please keep us secure and protected.

Traumatic Injury Protection Under Service member's Group Life Insurance (TSGLI)

By Maj. Keith Yoshida

A new insurance program to cover severely injured service members during their recuperation takes effect December 1, 2005.

The new plan, an extension of the Service members' Group Life Insurance program, was mandated by Congress and is formally known as TSGLI. It is designed to provide financial assistance to service members during their recovery period from a serious traumatic injury.

As of Thursday, December 1, 2005 all members eligible for SGLI will become insured for traumatic injury protection of up to $100,000 unless they decline SGLI coverage. If a soldier suffers a loss from a traumatic injury, they are eligible to receive monetary compensation for a total amount of not less than $25,000 and not greater than $100,000. A flat monthly premium of $1 will be added to the monthly SGLI deduction, regardless of the amount of a member's SGLI coverage.

The monthly premium for the maximum $400,000 in life insurance under SGLI is $26.

The traumatic injury insurance is not disability compensation and has no effect on eligibility for compensation and pension benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs or disability benefits provided through the military. Rather, it is an insurance product similar to commercial dismemberment policies, defense officials said.

The law that created the new program has a retroactive provision — any service member who suffered a qualifying injury between Oct. 7, 2001 and December 1, 2005 is eligible for TSGLI benefits if the injury was a direct result of service in Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom.

Method of payment, Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT): the benefit will be electronically credited to the bank account specified. This account should be the account of record for payroll purposes. If EFT is not chosen, and there is not guardian or Attorney in Fact, the payment will be made through Prudential's Alliance Account.

Prudential Alliance Account: the benefit will be deposited into Prudential Alliance Account in the service member's name. The Alliance Account offers the following features. A personal interest bearing account, which gives the service member ready access to the money, whenever it is needed. To use the account, the service member can simply write a check for the withdrawal amount. The minimum withdrawal is $250. The service member may write out one check for the entire amount and close the account, or write checks as the money is needed. Interest will continue to be earned on any balance maintained in the account.

TSGLI will be paid directly to the member, except when: the member is incompetent- In such event, payment will be made by check or EFT to the members Guardian or Attorney in Fact under a durable Power of Attorney. Please include copies of letters of guardianship, conservation ship, or Power of Attorney, etc. In this case, Alliance Account payment is not an option. If the member dies after qualifying for payment but before payment can be made then payment will be made to the member's listed SGLI beneficiary (ies).

TSGLI coverage does not apply to spouses or children covered under the Family SGLI to members who don't carry SGLI coverage.

TSGLI covers a range of traumatic injuries, including, but not limited to:

Total and permanent loss of sight in one or both eyes

Loss of hand or foot by severance at or above the wrist or ankle, total and permanent loss of hearing in one or both ears

Loss of thumb and index finger of the same hand by severance at or above the metacarpophalangeal joints Quadriplegia, paraplegia, or hemiplegia

3rd degree or worse burns covering 30 percent of the body or 30 percent of face

Coma or the inability to carry out two of the six activities of daily living due to traumatic brain injury

Photo by Sgt. Lauran Robinson

Maj. Charles Underhill and Master Sgt. Live Tau head the 29th BCT Unit Ministry Team.

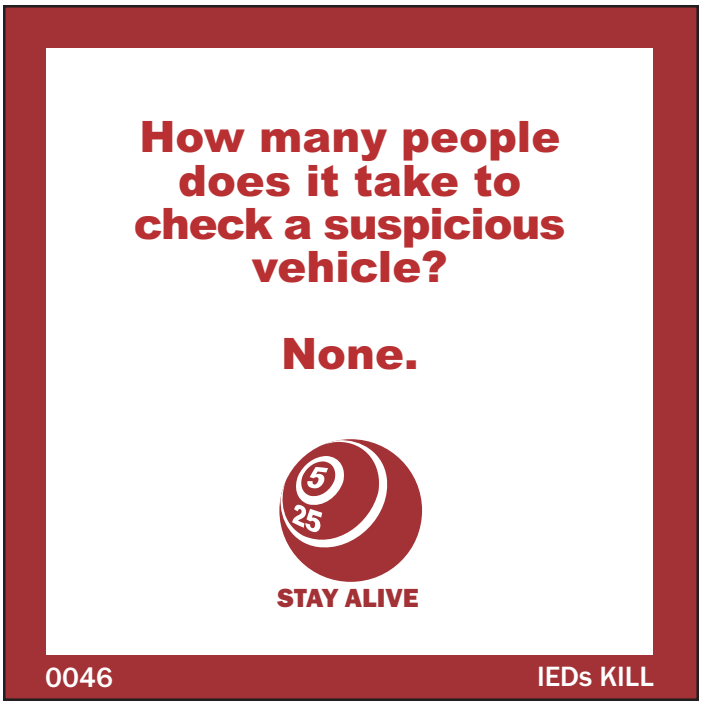
Message from the Unit Ministry Team

It doesn't seem like it was very long ago since we arrived here at our new home away from home. Now, we are within a month of redeployment. In the 29th BCT we have soldiers from all walks of life performing their military duty. Your contribution and dedication to the mission has accomplished a milestone for the LAVA BRIGADE. We are part of history in bringing democracy to the Iraqi people.

We thank our families back home for their prayers and support. All the letters, care packages, e-mails etc…have helped all of us realize that we have loved ones and friends that love and care about us while we are serving our country. We may call LSAA a home, but there is no place like home. This may be the longest some of us have ever been away from home. You may wonder if all this is worth it. Doing the right thing for the right reason, even in difficult circumstances, is always worth it.

It is only a few more days before we can all celebrate Christmas. I thank God that even while we are here in Iraq, soldiers have not forgotten the real spirit of Christmas. Some already have Christmas trees with lights and all the beautiful decorations. Let this Christmas away from home be one to treasure in your memories. As we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ let us remember these things. Isaiah 9:6 says "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace." Mother Teresa said, "The coming of Jesus at Bethlehem brought joy to the world and to every human heart. May his coming this Christmas bring to each one of us that peace and joy that he desires." Jack Hayford said, "You don't need candlelight and fireside glow to make Christmas happen. It's Him. It's priceless to discover that pleasure of his company."

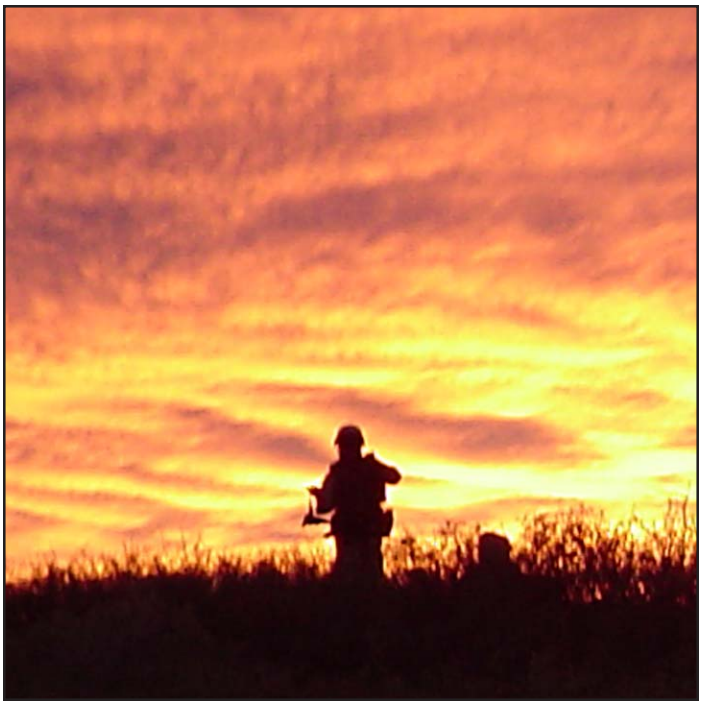
In a month we will be redeploying back to Hawaii. Many of us are thinking about reuniting with our families and loved ones next month. I will caution all of you; it's not over until it's over. We are still engaged in the mission at hand. It is not quite over yet until we all get on the plane going home. So stay focused, be vigilant and keep on sustaining until we are finished. When you have done everything asked of you and more, than you can say as Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:7 "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith." Your family and country appreciate what you have done. Now be proud of your accomplishments.



A DIFFERENT CHRISTMAS POEM

Author Unknown

The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light,
I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.
My wife was asleep, her head on my chest,
My daughter beside me, angelic in rest.
Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white
transforming the yard to a winter delight.
The sparkling lights in the tree I believe,
Completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.
My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,
Secure and surrounded by love I would sleep.
In perfect contentment, or so it would seem,
So I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.
The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,
But I opened my eyes when it tickled my ear.
Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know,
Then the sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.
My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,
And I crept to the door just to see who was near.
Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,
a lone figure stood, his face weary and tight.
A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old,
Perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,
Standing watch over me, and my wife and child.
"What are you doing?" I asked without fear,
"Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your sleeve,
You should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"
For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,
Away from the cold and the snow blown drifts.
To the window that danced with a warm fire's light.
Then he sighed and he said "It's really all right,
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night."
"It's my duty to stand at the front of the line,
That separates you from the darkest of times.
No one had to ask or beg or implore me,
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.
My Gramps died at 'Pearl on a day December,"
Then he sighed, "That's a Christmas 'Gram will remember."
My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam',
And now it is my turn and so, here I am.
I've not seen my own son in more than a while,
But my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her smile.
Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,
The red, white, and blue... an American flag.
"I can live through the cold and the being alone,
Away from my family, my house and my home.
I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet,
I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat.
I can carry the weight of killing another,
Or lay down my life with my sister and brother..
Who stand at the front against any and all,
To ensure for all time that this flag will not fall."
"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright,
Your family is waiting and I'll be all right."
"But isn't there something I can do, at the least,
Give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?"
It seems all too little for all that you've done,
For being away from your wife and your son."
Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret,
"Just tell us you love us, and never forget.
To fight for our rights back at home while we're gone,
To stand your own watch, no matter how long.
For when we come home, either standing or dead,
To know you remember we fought and we bled.
Is payment enough, and with that we will trust,
That we mattered to you as you mattered to us.



Message in a Bottle

Happy 17th wedding Anniversary SSG-Lester K. Delos Reyes, and I am looking forward to being married another 17 more years and beyond...I love you and can't wait to be with you again. Just keep safe and focus well on your mission with the time remaining there! Your loving wife...Roberta K. Delos Reyes

Sgt. Justin Dock 100/442 INF, HHC Scout platoon Happy 25th Birthday! Love, Mom

THANK YOU ALL for Serving and Protecting our Country! There are no words to express how truly grateful I am that the Lord has blessed you all with the Strength, Courage, Determination, Guidance, and Love to be our *HEROES* Take Care & God Bless ~Margaret Eugenio

CW2 Tracy Tobias, HHC 29th Spt. December 18th 2005. Happy 17th Anniversary, Tracy! Jacob, Luke and I miss you and are so very proud of you. God Bless. Leland Tobias

Happy 17th wedding Anniversary SSG-Lester K. Delos Reyes. We've been married for that many years and I'm looking forward to being married another 17 more years and beyond...I love you and can't wait to be with you again. Just keep safe and focus well on your mission with the time remaining there! Your loving wife...Roberta K. Delos Reyes

To Roy Yamada, SSG, HHC 2-299 IN, your entire family and friends are thinking of you and await your return – Merry Christmas ("Baby, it's cold outside") and Happy New Year (gonna miss the firecrackers!). Love you – proud to be 'da wife' - Kim

To my husband Spc. Kaawa,Delbert Delta Co. 2-299th Infantry.Merry Christmas and Happy New Year babe!!! I wish we could spend it together, it won't be the same without you.Nothing is the same without you here. I love you and miss you so much and can't wait to see you! I'm very proud of you! Much Love Aloha your wife Julie,Bryson,Tua-Nei,Teiraua,Nicole,Aulii,Maka and the rest of Da Kaawa Ohana.

Happy Birthday to Spc William G. Dolan, Jr. (100/442 C-3/B4), we love you, are proud of you and can't wait till your return. Love you, Dad, Mom & the rest of your Ohana.

To my husband SFC Henry Choy (HHC 29th BCT) Wishing you a "Happy Birthday" on Nov. 23 and just wanted to say that I had such a wonderful time when you were home for R&R, miss you and see you in a few months!! Love You, Arleen

To my husband, my love, my everything, Sgt. Jason Kahana-Travis. Your babies and I just wanted to say that we love and miss you so very much and also wanted to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I love you with all my heart baby, forever and ever. Always, Kehau

To my husband, SGT Sheldon Gaison, D.Co., 2-299 INF, I Love You and Miss You Very Much! The holidays are not the same without you. And to ALL the soldiers overseas, Wishing all of you a Happy Holidays! God Bless each and everyone of you during the holidays! Soon you will be home with your loved ones! Thank you all very much for your dedication and commitment to our country! Hawai'i loves you all! Aloha, Bonnie Gaison and Ohana.

Photo by Capt. Kyle Yonemura

Members of the 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry sing Christmas songs at Provider Chapel.

Photo Gallery

Photo by Capt. Kyle Yonemura

An Iraqi police officer places some donated shoes on the feet of a child.

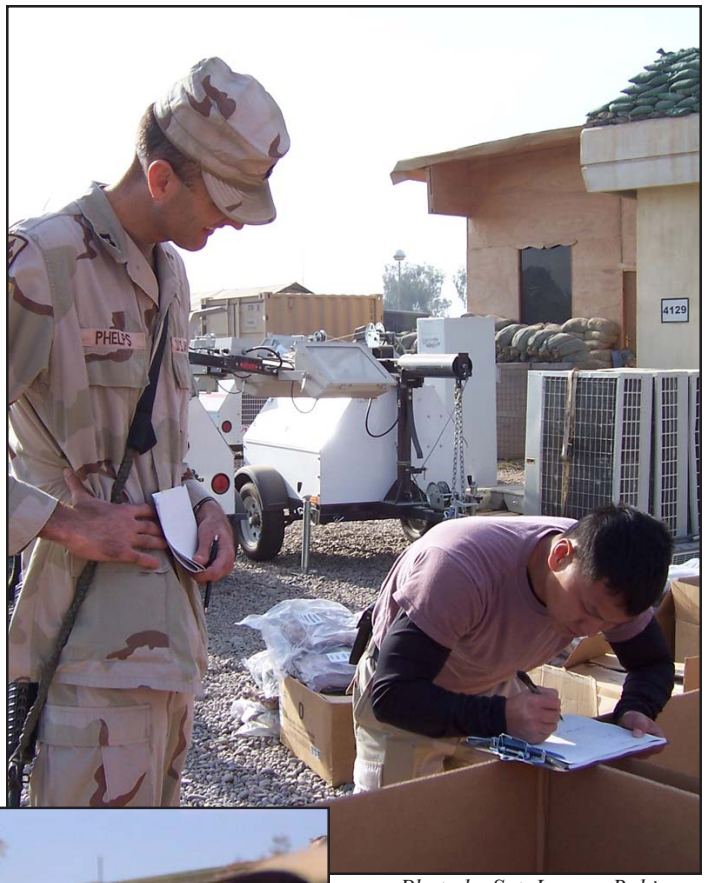


Photo by Sgt. Lauran Robinson

(above) Sgt. Daivan Bui fills out paperwork to account for issued items turned in by Capt. Lloyd Phelps in preparation for redeployment.

Photo by Sgt. Lauran Robinson

(left) 1st Lt. Denise Cavaros-Cavasier briefs the soldiers on their mission before leaving the gates of LSA Anaconda on Thanksgiving Day.

(right) A soldier from Company E, 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry hands out toothbrushes to children.

Photo by Capt. Kyle Yonemura

Photo by Capt. Kyle Yonemura

(above) Sgt. Peter Go, a combat medic with the 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry treats an Iraqi man who had been accidentally shot at a wedding celebration. Iraqis celebrate weddings and other special events by firing weapons into the air.

Photo by Sgt. Lauran Robinson

(right) Staff Sgt. David Lora-Medina of Task Force Konohiki gets into the moves with one of the translators as they dance to Iraqi music on Thanksgiving Day at FOB O'Ryan.

Photo Gallery

(left) Sgt. Corey Ragragola receives an Army Commendation medal from Brig. Gen. Joseph Chaves. Many soldiers in the brigade performed well and earned awards for their efforts.

Photo by Capt. Kyle Yonemura

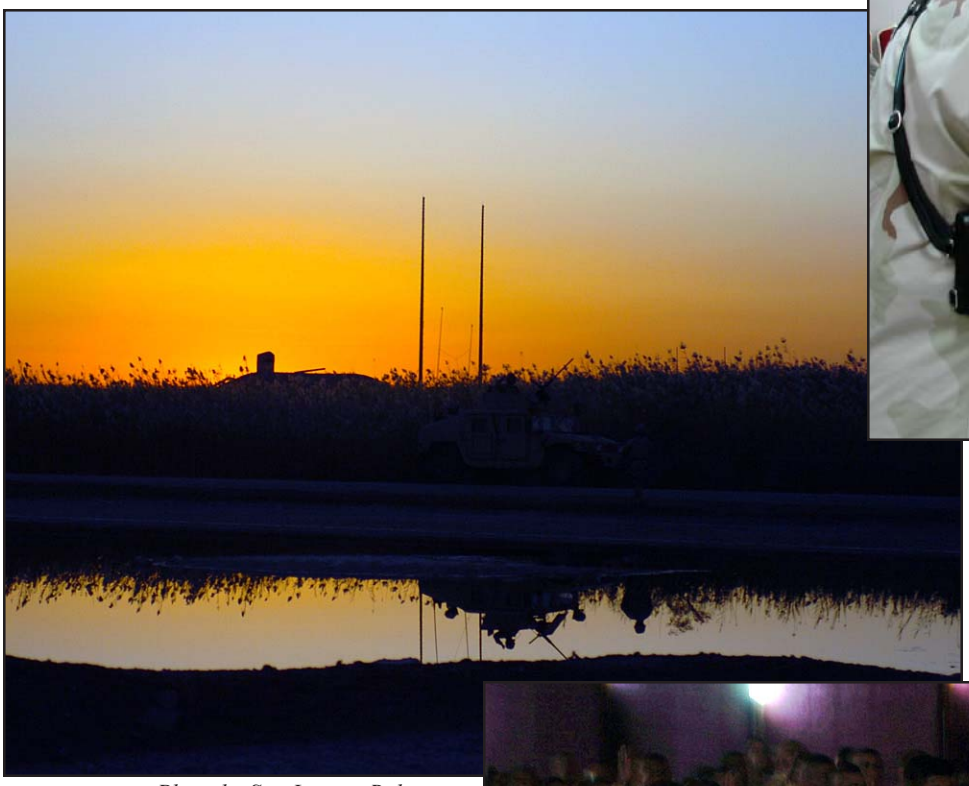


Photo by Sgt. Lauran Robinson

(above) A security element from the 29th BCT Military police prepares to leave at FOB O'Ryan as the sun sets on Thanksgiving Day.

Photo by Sgt. Lauran Robinson

(right) Soldiers of the 29th BCT, many from U.S. territories such as American Samoa, Guam, and Saipan, are sworn in as naturalized U.S. citizens on December 17th.

Shameless Self-Promotion

The Lava Flow Staff

This is the final edition of The Lava Flow. It has been an honor and a pleasure for us to share the stories of the men and women serving with the 29th BCT in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, as well as bringing messages of support to the troops.

We'd like to thank all those who have helped make The Lava Flow a success. Our mission could not have been successful without the support of the leadership of the various units we visited. They allowed us access to their soldiers in their motor pools, on patrols, in their clinic, at their entry control points, etc. This access, combined with the willingness of their soldiers to selflessly share their experiences with us, made this all possible. Unit Public Affairs Representatives have been instrumental in assisting us with coordination and ensuring that the soldiers of their units received copies of the Lava Flow. We'd also like to acknowledge our friend Capt. Raymond Hill, a UPAR with the 1st Bn.,184 Infantry, who was killed in action while delivering school supplies to children in Baghdad. He was a kind and gentle soul and we miss him greatly.

The overwhelming support from families back home has been a reward in and of itself. It has been an unforgettable experience watching the heroes of the 29th BCT in action.

Mahalo.

Capt. Kyle Yonemura, Sgt. Lauran Robinson and Spc. Jayson Howell